

Improving Intelligibility and Pronunciation Through Phonics Instruction for 5th Grade EFL Learners of Chilean Public Schools

Carolina Bustos Martínez, María Jesús Millar Zurita
Universidad Austral de Chile, Valdivia, Chile

Based on the curriculum proposed by the Chilean Ministry of Education, schools are offered textbooks and complementary guides for teachers as a tool for the learning process of the students. Bearing in mind that the Ministry suggests a list of learning targets that must be accomplished at the end of the academic year, the author of said textbooks offers activities that are meant to fulfil these objectives. However, and considering that one of the goals of the Ministry is that 5th grade students, at the end of their learning process, communicate an intelligible message with a proper pronunciation, a lack of activities and methodologies focused on the improvement of these aspects can be noticed. Therefore, this proposal will present teachers with phonics as a methodology that may help students improve intelligibility and the recognition and production of segmental aspects of pronunciation.

Keywords: intelligibility, pronunciation, phonics, 5th grade, Chile

Introduction

As general knowledge, pronunciation is one of the most important aspects of the English language and, moreover, an intelligible message with a proper pronunciation is one of the goals when acquiring a target language; this given that a message may not be completely understandable if the speaker does not possess a total command of the sounds that compose the language that is being spoken. However, when referring to the Chilean EFL context, these aspects (intelligibility and pronunciation) are underestimated, giving more emphasis to other features of the English language such as grammar or the development of reading and listening skills.

Considering the relevance of the acquisition of English pronunciation, this literature review seeks to present a glance of what pronunciation entails and the actual situation within the Chilean context, focusing on the first grade of public education with a mandatory English curriculum, i.e., 5th grade and, specifically, on the tools offered, i.e., the curriculum proposal, the students' textbook, and the teacher's guide.

Pronunciation

When referring to pronunciation, this term is usually misunderstood as an equivalent of phonetics. However, both terms are not the same. Phonetics is a branch of core linguistics that deals with "the study of speech sounds and how they are produced" (Singh & Singh, 2006). On the contrary, pronunciation is, in general terms,

producing sound in two senses. First, and given that sound is part of the code of a particular language, pronunciation is understood as “the production and reception of sounds of speech”. Secondly, there is the use of sound as a means to negotiate meaning in context. From this, one can conclude that pronunciation is part of the process of negotiation within the acts of speaking (Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994, p. 3). Another way of differentiating both terms is by examining the definitions found in both the Oxford Dictionary and the Cambridge Dictionary. Referring to phonetics, this term is defined as “the study and classification of speech sounds” (Oxford Dictionary, 2018). Respecting pronunciation, however, the Cambridge Dictionary (2018) suggests that it is not only the way in which people say words (in terms of accents), but also how intonation, stress, and rhythm are used when communicating.

Intelligibility as a Dimension of Pronunciation

Schiavetti states that intelligibility is “the match between the intention of the speaker and the response of the listener to speech passed through the transmission system” (1992, in Munro, 2018). From there, it is stated that the goal of pronunciation is an “intelligible speech, irrespective of how native-like it sounds” (Derwing & Munro, 2015), idea that has been continuously supported by scholars, as stated in Munro (2018). Focusing on pronunciation teaching, Sweet (1900) also stated that intelligibility is the main goal, idea that serves as basis for the Intelligibility Principle established by Levis. Within this principle, the author states that the fundamental objective is that “learners simply need to be understandable” (Levis, 2005, p. 370).

Former beliefs regarding the achievement of a “comfortably intelligible pronunciation” (Abercrombie, 1949, p. 120), stated that the teaching process should focus on suprasegmental features leading to a more favourable and immediate intelligibility (Levis, 2005, p. 371). However, Jenkins (2000) stated a new approach to this belief. She proclaimed that, when non-native speakers of English are communicating with each other, segmental features are more relevant when referring to intelligibility. Furthermore, she not only stressed the importance of segmental features, but affirmed that some suprasegmental features actually “obstruct intelligibility” (Jenkins, 2000, p. 135, in Zielinski, 2015, p. 398).

Segmental Aspects vs. Suprasegmental Aspects of Pronunciation

Taking into consideration the definitions of pronunciation, and within the continuous research into the acquisition, learning and teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), it is possible to encounter the appreciation of characteristics of pronunciation that might affect the intelligibility of the speaker/learner. Such features of pronunciation are identified as segmentals and suprasegmentals. The former refers to individual sounds and the latter is not limited to single sounds, but related to elements of speech e.g., rhythm, intonation, syllable structure, and stress (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018). The term “segmentals” is also characterized “as minimally distinctive units of sound that can alter the meaning of a word” (Celce-Murcia, 2010, in Jones, 2016). Segmentals is divided into consonant and vowel sounds and considering its description, it is possible to say that this feature of pronunciation describes phonemes (sounds) which can modify the understanding of an entire word/idea when mispronounced. On the contrary, suprasegmentals is portrayed as “features of pronunciation that stretch over more than one sound or segment” (Grant, 2014, in Jones, 2016). Prosody (as it is also known) is considered to be pivotal to communication and focused on a better comprehensibility in the short run (Celce-Murcia, 2010, in Jones, 2016).

Referring to the improvement of an understandable speech (using understandable as a synonym of intelligible), a controversial debate has been positioned in relation to whether segmentals or suprasegmentals is

more important. Some scholars (Collins & Mees, 2003; Derwing & Munro, 1997; Fraser, 2001; Jenkins, 2000) support the premise that segmental and suprasegmental features must be categorized as separate entities and this has been evidenced when talking about “the impact on intelligibility and/or comprehensibility of teaching that focuses on different pronunciation features” (Zielinski, 2015). For instance, Saito (2011) concentrated his study on a teaching strategy focused on segmental features, and Tanner and Landon (2009) attempted the same but with suprasegmental features. On the contrary, an integration of characteristics from both aspects has been proposed in order to appropriately use these features in the instruction process of EFL learners (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010, in Zielinski, 2015). In order to define which phonological feature should be promoted, one must first think about the previous knowledge of the students, as well as their specific needs (Busy Teacher, 2018; Kelly, 2000), and the context in which the learning process takes place.

Despite the fact that some scholars state that both segmental and suprasegmental aspects are to be taught together when working on improving intelligibility (Adult Migrant English Program Research Centre [AMEP], 2002), it is important to acknowledge that the context in which this proposal is based on does not require EFL learners to produce meaningful sentences (suprasegmentals), but to recognize the English sounds (segmentals) in order to establish a pronunciation basis of the target language. Furthermore, in the current approaches to pronunciation (Jenkins, 2000), segmental aspects are firstly taught, since they relate to the foundations of pronunciation, such as the articulation of individual sounds, being this an elementary section to work on (AMEP, 2002). Learning to pronounce the sounds of English, such as consonants and vowels, has been taught in different countries as part of the elementary process of acquisition of the language; as affirmed in Capliez (2011), “vowels and consonants are the basis for English pronunciation learning in French schools”. In the same way, an Indonesian research found that EFL teachers preferred segmental aspects of pronunciation over suprasegmental ones:

The main issue of components of pronunciation which emerged from the interviews was a necessity of the balance treatment of both segmental and suprasegmental features in pronunciation teaching. All the teachers agreed that segmental and suprasegmental features should be the priority in pronunciation teaching. However, when the interviewees were asked a further question *Which segmental and suprasegmental features should be considered more in pronunciation teaching?* All of them preferred segmental features (vowels and consonants) as their priority because they found that there was a significant difference between the system of English pronunciation and that of learners’ mother tongue. (Moedjito, 2008, pp. 137-138)

It is also argued that teachers must know, firstly, how and where the sound is made, being this fact quite significant at the moment of instruction in an EFL context; although this will only be achieved through careful listening and practice, encouraging students to use segmental features of pronunciation more than suprasegmentals (AMEP, 2002).

Considering the previous discussion, it is clearly stated that pronunciation and phonetics are completely different from one another. Pronunciation is the production and reception of sounds of speech, and phonetics is the study of it. In order to further our understanding, it was taken into account that intelligibility is an important aspect of pronunciation since EFL learners have the necessity to be understandable. With this aim in mind, the two approaches of EFL pronunciation teaching (segmentals and suprasegmentals) that might affect the process of acquisition, have been previously described. Their status as separate entities have also been recognized; according to different scholars, they might work in conjunction as well as separately. Contrary to these ideas, this proposal is focused on current pronunciation teaching trends that state that segmental aspects are to be considered essential and necessary when referring to intelligibility.

Phonics

Before examining in depth what phonics is and how it is used to teach literacy, it is necessary to explain previous concepts that will help set a basis to work with.

Phonological awareness is the sensitivity and ability of an individual to hear and manipulate the sound structure of a language (H. K. Yopp & R. H. Yopp, 2009). It involves working with sound at three levels: word, syllable, and phoneme level. Within the diverse aspects of phonological awareness, one can identify phonemic awareness and phonics. It is of great importance to distinguish one from the other since they, even when used as synonyms from time to time, are not the same. On the one hand, and according to Yopp (1992), phonemic awareness refers to the understanding that spoken words are composed of a series of individual sounds. In H. K. Yopp and R. H. Yopp (2009), it is also stated that phonemic awareness is the most difficult aspect of phonological awareness, this given that the individual has “to attend to and manipulate phonemes, the smallest sounds in speech” (p. 2). On the other hand, phonics refers to “the use of sound-symbol relationships to recognize words” (University of Oregon, 2009). The latter will be further explained in the following section.

Phonics as a Method

According to Bald, phonics is the “systematic teaching of the sounds conveyed by letters and groups of letters and includes teaching children to combine and blend these to read or write words” (2007, in words of Khabiri & Rezagholizadeh, 2014, p. 1463). Furthermore, Goodman (1993) defines phonics as the relationship between the patterns and systems of oral and written language. In the same way, Hinson and Smith (1993) stated that phonics is a system that maps sounds (phonemes) to letters (graphemes). In addition to these definitions, Adams (1990) affirms that the main purpose of this method is the direct teaching of sound-letter relationships, understanding that “one should remember the change in the spelling pattern or the sound made by a symbol, not the entire words appearance” (So, n.d., p.50). The same author declares that “phonics improves the memory retention of pronunciation, and [therefore] one can put more effort into deciphering meaning” (1990, p. 34).

Focusing on phonics instruction, Blevins (2006) affirmed that there are several ways to teach it. “However, what most types of phonics instruction do have in common is that they focus on the teaching of sound-spelling relationships so that a young reader can come up with an approximate pronunciation of a word” (Blevins, 2006, p. 8). So (n.d.) supports this claim, adding that “a letter, being a symbol of a sound, is not supposed to make the student think of anything else but its sound” (p. 36). Within this area, there are two major approaches that have been widely discussed among scholars (Blevins, 2006; Cunningham, 2000; Dakin, 1999), synthetic phonics and analytic phonics. For this purpose, definitions of Blevins will be discussed. Firstly, the synthetic approach can also be identified as direct or explicit phonics and it follows “a bottom-up model of learning to read” (Blevins, 2006, p. 111), that is to say, it builds from part to whole (Dakin, 1999). Secondly, one can encounter the analytic phonics approach, “also known as indirect or implicit phonics ... with this approach, children begin with words and are asked to deduce the sound-spelling relationship” (Blevins, 2006, p. 102).

It is important to make the readers aware that, based on the arguments previously exposed, the focus of this proposal will be on the synthetic approach. In the Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading, also known as the Rose Report (Rose, 2006), it was concluded that “there is much convincing evidence to show from the practice observed that ... ‘synthetic’ phonics is the form of systematic phonic work that offers the vast majority of beginners the best route to becoming skilled readers” (p. 19). Such evidence refers to the two studies carried out by Johnston and Watson (2004, in Wyse & Goswami, 2008). In Experiment 2, chronologically carried

out before Experiment 1, an improvement is shown in the word reading age of students taught under a systematic synthetic phonics instruction, moving from 3 years 6 months ahead of chronological age (prior to the start of the studies) to 5 years 7 months ahead of chronological age (three months after the intervention ended). It is of great importance to notice the improvement of the word reading age in such a short period of intervention (10 weeks). Rose also stated that, among the different strengths that synthetic phonics possesses, it is important to stress that, with this approach, children are explicitly taught the principles they need to know, “whereas other approaches, such as ‘analytic’ phonics, expect children to deduce them” (2006, p. 19). It is worth mentioning that the United Kingdom is not the only English-speaking country that has recognized the importance of synthetic phonics instruction to improve literacy. Countries such as Australia, New Zealand, and the United States, have also acknowledged the importance of a systematic phonics instruction and, therefore, implemented the synthetic approach as an effective method for reading instruction in the first years of formal schooling (Bowey, 2006; Soler & Openshaw, 2007; Wyse & Goswami, 2008).

Synthetic phonics teaching

Wyse and Goswami (2008) claimed that “synthetic phonics is regarded as going from ‘part to whole’, focusing initially on the smallest grain size of the phoneme” (p. 700). Moreover, Bowey (2006) affirmed that “synthetic phonics teaches children letter-sound correspondences and sound blending skills, so that they can phonologically recode unfamiliar words embodying those correspondences for themselves by translating letters into sounds and blending them together” (p. 80). According to Blevins (2006), this approach follows a three-step methodology: “children begin by learning to recognize letters, then blend words, and finally read connected text” (p. 111). The same author stated that synthetic phonics follows a gradual and explicit sequence to teach children the sounds of English:

1. The letter names are taught.
2. The sound that each letter stands for is taught and reviewed. Some rules or generalizations might be discussed.
3. The principle of blending sounds to form words is taught.
4. Opportunities to blend unknown words in context are provided. (p. 111)

When referring to an EFL context, Wyse and Goswami (2008) stated that “in countries like Greece, Finland, Italy and Spain, syllable structure is simple (mainly consonant–vowel syllables)” (p. 693). Landerl (2000) claims that, therefore, for such languages, teaching reading by synthetic phonics can be extremely effective (as cited in Wyse & Goswami, 2008, p. 693).

It is important to clarify that, even though the synthetic phonics approach is used as part of the reading instruction process in ESL contexts (Wyse & Goswami, 2008), for the purpose of this proposal, this approach will be used as a means for improving pronunciation skills. Pronunciation, as explained in chapter 1, is the “production and reception of sounds of speech” (Dalton & Seidlhofer, 1994, p. 3). Within the extent of pronunciation, one can identify segmental aspects, which relate to individual sounds (phonemes). On the contrary, phonics, as unravelled in this chapter, is an approach that maps phonemes to graphemes (Hinson & Smith, 1993). It is at this point that a connection between pronunciation and phonics can be encountered; by implementing phonics as an alternative teaching approach, through the combination and blending of consonant and vowel sounds (segmental aspect of pronunciation), to develop the foundation of an intelligible English pronunciation.

Chilean Context

When referring to the EFL context in Chile, three main documents can be studied. First, one can encounter the English curriculum proposed by the Ministry of Education (2013), in which schools and teachers will find established objectives that must be accomplished throughout the academic year. Based on this proposal, a student's textbook and a corresponding teacher's guide (Landaeta, 2016) were developed as a tool to facilitate the teaching process.

In order to state the current context on which this proposal will be based on, descriptions of these documents are necessary and, for this purpose, special attention is to be paid to the curriculum proposal and the teacher's guide.

English Curriculum for 5th Grade

When referring to the Chilean context, MINEDUC proposes a curriculum which establishes the foundation that schools and their teachers must follow in order to accomplish the learning process of the students. This curriculum considers a total of 16 learning targets (OA i.e. *Objetivos de Aprendizaje*), from which 12 must be constantly achieved all year round, in order to guarantee a joint progression of abilities and objectives.

The current curriculum revolves around the four abilities of communication in the English language, i.e., listening comprehension, reading comprehension, speaking, and writing. For the purpose of this proposal, the focus will be on the speaking skill. The Ministry of Education (2013) defines speaking as a productive ability of the English language "that entails using the language to communicate orally" thus, it consists "of communicating an intelligible message with a proper pronunciation" (p. 31).

It is important to mention that the abilities are developed in conjunction with the progression of the objectives. This progressive development considers a cycle of two years of education (5th and 6th grade). Within these two years, the progression of the speaking ability regarding pronunciation establishes that there must be a proper emission of the sounds of the English language; emphasizing that, within 5th and 6th grade, students should be familiarised with the sounds of the target language. It is within this process that students also implicitly acquire the sounds of English through listening and reading comprehension (p. 30).

According to the English curriculum, 5th and 6th grade students should listen to playful texts such as dialogues, rhymes, and easy-to-follow-and-repeat songs, which will benefit the development of a proper pronunciation and will facilitate the process of acknowledgement of the target language. In the same way, the Ministry proposes vocabulary acquisition as a means for developing sound recognition.

The English curriculum, as stated before, arranges learning targets (OAs) that settle the minimum performances expected from the students in each subject and grade. These OAs include the skills, knowledge, and attitudes considered to be relevant in order to achieve a holistic development.

The Supreme Decree 439/2012 establishes a unique list of learning targets for 5th grade composed of 16 OAs, from which four focus on listening comprehension, five on reading comprehension, four on oral production, and the last three on written production (as stated in the English Curriculum). For the purpose of this proposal, the second (OA_2) and tenth (OA_10) objectives (listening comprehension and oral production respectively) will be considered. On the one hand, OA_2 states that "students are capable of identifying ... sounds and the repetition of those sounds to create awareness of the English phonemes" (p. 46). On the other hand, OA_10 states that "students will be capable of producing and reproducing monologues, songs, rhymes and dialogues, to identify and recognize the target language sounds" (p. 47).

The structural organization of the school year is divided into four units, being these: unit 1, “My World”; unit 2, “The Place Where I Live”; unit 3, “What We Eat”; and unit 4, “What’s the Weather Like”. Each unit displays the learning targets in conjunction with the proposed assessment indicators, including examples of activities that the teacher may take into consideration. Since this proposal is focused on OA_2 and OA_10, only the indicators that are directly related to them will be presented. It is also of great importance to mention that said examples of activities will not be analyzed.

The organization of each unit in terms of targets and assessment indicators are displayed in the following tables.

Table 1

Learning Objectives and Assessment Indicators for Unit 1

Unit 1 “My World”	
OA_2 Listening comprehension	OA_10 Speaking
The student is capable of identifying sounds and the repetition of those sounds to create awareness of the English phonemes.	Students will be capable of producing and reproducing monologues, songs, rhymes, and dialogues, to identify and recognize the target language sounds.
Assessment indicators	Assessment indicators
Students that have achieved the expected learning objective will: Recognize and repeat the alphabet letters, associating them to their corresponding sound in rhymes and songs such as: <i>come little children, come with me, I will teach you abc; a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z; that’s the alphabet you see, all the way from A to Z.</i> Recognize rhymed or repeated sounds; as for example in: <i>Hi Mary! How are you? Fine, thanks. What about you?</i> in songs and in short and simple rhymes. Recognize repeated sounds and associate them to the represented words in rhymes and songs.	Students that have achieved the expected learning objective will: Repeat words and common-used expressions out loud, imitating the pronunciation of the teacher. Identify and imitate some authentic English sounds in rhymes and songs with the assistance of the teacher.

Note. Adapted from *Idioma Extranjero: inglés. Programa de Estudio Quinto Año Básico* (pp. 59, 63), by Ministerio de Educación, 2013, Santiago, Chile: MINEDUC.

Table 2

Learning Objectives and Assessment Indicators for Unit 2

Unit 2 “The Place Where I Live”	
OA_2 Listening comprehension	OA_10 Speaking
The student is capable of identifying sounds and the repetition of those sounds to create awareness of the English phonemes.	Students will be capable of producing and reproducing monologues, songs, rhymes, and dialogues, to identify and recognize the target language sounds.
Assessment indicators	Assessment indicators
Students that have achieved the expected learning objective will: Listen to short and simple songs and rhymes, and recognize rhymed and repeated sounds; for example: <i>I have two eyes to see with, I have two feet to run, I have two wave with, and nose I have but one. I have two ears to hear with, and a tongue to say “good day”.</i>	Students that have achieved the expected learning objective will: Repeat words and sentences out loud, imitating the pronunciation of the teacher. Read commonly used words and simple sentences, imitating the pronunciation of the teacher.

Note. Adapted from *Idioma Extranjero: inglés. Programa de Estudio Quinto Año Básico* (pp. 99, 103), by Ministerio de Educación, 2013, Santiago, Chile: MINEDUC.

Table 3

Learning Objectives and Assessment Indicators for Unit 3

Unit 3 “What We Eat”	
OA_2 Listening comprehension	OA_10 Speaking
The student is capable of identifying sounds and the repetition of those sounds to create awareness of the English phonemes.	Students will be capable of producing and reproducing monologues, songs, rhymes, and dialogues, to identify and recognize the target language sounds.
Assessment indicators	Assessment indicators
Students that have achieved the expected learning objective will:	Students that have achieved the expected learning objective:
Recognize repeated sounds and rhyming sounds in songs and rhymes.	Read words and sentences out loud making some mistakes on pronunciation with assistance by the teacher.
Recognize sounds associating them to their written form in songs and rhymes.	Produce presentations and dialogues, attempting to imitate the pronunciation of some words according to the example presented by the teacher.
Classify words according to their similar sounds.	

Note. Adapted from *Idioma Extranjero: inglés. Programa de Estudio Quinto Año Básico* (pp. 139, 144), by Ministerio de Educación, 2013, Santiago, Chile: MINEDUC.

Table 4

Learning Objectives and Assessment Indicators for Unit 4

Unit 4 “What’s the Weather Like”	
OA_2 Listening comprehension	OA_10 Speaking
The student is capable of identifying sounds and the repetition of those sounds to create awareness of the English phonemes.	Students will be capable of producing and reproducing monologues, songs, rhymes, and dialogues, to identify and recognize the target language sounds.
Assessment indicators	Assessment indicators
Students that have achieved the expected learning objective will:	Students that have achieved the expected learning objective will:
Recognize and repeat word families in rhymes, as in: <i>you take a word like cat, that’s sounds a lot like rat, and always rhyme with bat, then goes along with hat.</i>	Repeat commonly used words and expressions out loud, imitating the pronunciation of the teacher.
Identify and repeat word families and associate them to words that are familiar to them in rhymes, songs, and tales.	Identify and imitate authentic English sounds in rhymes and songs being assisted by the teacher.
Sing and repeat traditional songs and rhymes, recognizing sound repetition.	
Recognize sounds in songs, rhymes, tales, or dialogues, associating them to their written form.	
Classify words according to their similar sounds.	
Recognize sounds in the listened texts and mention similar texts familiar to them.	

Note. Adapted from *Idioma Extranjero: inglés. Programa de Estudio Quinto Año Básico* (pp. 177, 181), by Ministerio de Educación, 2013, Santiago, Chile: MINEDUC.

Students’ Textbook

Landaeta (2016), based on the curriculum proposal by the Ministry of Education, created a student’s book in which she invites 5th grade students to complete different tasks and activities that will not only construct a foundation on basic English grammar rules and its different skills, but will also contribute to their holistic development as members of a society. As well as the curriculum proposal, this textbook is divided into four units being these: Unit 1, My Life; Unit 2, We Live Here; Unit 3, Delicious; and Unit 4, Hot and Cold.

It is important to mention that, in the student’s textbook, there are proposed activities and different instances that are supposed to promote the students’ metacognitive processes.

Teacher’s Guide

Taking into consideration the learning targets and the assessment indicators proposed by the Ministry of

Education in the English curriculum for 5th grade, Landaeta (2016) designed a didactic guide divided into two volumes. The teacher's guide offers advice, tools, tips, and complementary activities, in a manner that the tutor/instructor, apart from developing and improving the contents of each lesson from the student's textbook, integrates these with topics from other subjects. This integration of contents seeks to achieve the transversal and holistic development that the Ministry proposes within the learning targets. The guide also offers previous complementary activities that can be conducted in conjunction with the activities from the student's textbook, hence setting a prior context for the students.

Unit 1

In Unit 1, My Life, the OAs that are being worked with are present in Lessons 1 and 3. In lesson 1, the author offers four complementary activities (2, 3, 4 and 5), along with two extra information sections (#3 and #4), and activities to develop with audio recordings 3 and 5.

After analyzing all the activities proposed by the author, it was possible to conclude that only the activity for recording #3 has to do with OAs 2 and 10, since it tells the teacher to help students with the pronunciation of certain words in order to better develop further activities. It is important to mention that none of the complementary activities have relation to neither learning target. Also, the extra information sections reference the importance of words and their meanings and the amount of new vocabulary to teach each class. Therefore, these have no relation to the learning targets.

In the same way, for Lesson 3, the author proposes four complementary activities (11, 12, 13 and 14), as well as three extra information sections (#6, #7, and #8), and an activity to develop with audio recording #10. In the analysis, it was assumed that only the activity for recording #10 deals with both learning targets. The proposed exercise expects the teacher to check with the students the pronunciation of certain words that may cause trouble while listening to the recording. However, there is an exercise that can be modified so as to help students recognize sounds. In complementary activity 11, the teacher is asked to help the students associate pictures of objects to different free-time activities. As a suggestion and in order to adjust this activity, the teacher could present the pictures of the objects and their names asking the students to write down the words as they are spelled (using phonics). Once all students have identified the correct sounds of each word, they should be able to associate these words with hobbies.

Unit 2

In Unit 2, We Live Here, both learning targets are worked in Lessons 1 and 3. In Lesson 1, teachers are offered four complementary activities (2, 3, 4, and 5), one extra information section (#2), and activities for audio recordings 15 and 17. In the same way, in Lesson 3 the author developed five complementary activities (11, 12, 13, 14, and 15), two extra information sections (#6 and #7), and activities for audio recordings 21 and 22.

On the one hand, and referring to lesson one, three proposed activities (complementary activity 3 along with the extra information section #2 and the activity for recording 15) fully accomplished the learning targets since they request the students to recognize and differentiate English sounds (such as /h/, the blendings /th/ and /ch/, and the vowel sounds /i/ and /i:/). Apart from these activities, there are three proposed activities that could be adjusted to fulfil the targets. Complementary activities 2 and 4 work with vocabulary and, as previously exposed, the teacher could present the blended sounds to form words. It is important to notice that the teacher could adapt the activity proposed for audio recording #17 in the same way.

On the other hand, in Lesson 3, there is just one exercise (complementary activity 12) that could be modified

in order to fully accomplish the learning targets. This activity also focuses on vocabulary and it requests students to work with cognates such as a *restaurant*, *museum*, *stadium*, *supermarket*, and *lake*. As a recommendation for this activity, at the moment of presenting each cognate, the teacher presents the difference between both the English and the Spanish pronunciation. Making this distinction will help students recognize the target language sounds and, therefore, gain awareness of the English phonemes.

Unit 3

In Unit 3, Delicious, the OAs that are being worked with are present in Lessons 1 and 3. In Lesson 1, only OA_2 is present. In addition, the author offers six complementary activities (3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8), along with two extra information sections (2 and 3) and two activities to develop with audio recordings (27 and 28).

After a deep analysis of all of these activities proposed by the author, it is possible to state that only activities 4, 5, and 6 have to do with OA_2 since students practice the pronunciation of vocabulary in different ways. In recordings 27 and 28, only recording 27 has to do with both OAs since students listen and analyze the pronunciation of two different groups of words. Regarding the extra information sections, only one of them references students' pronunciation practice, vaguely describing the audio-lingual method, which proposes a concept of learning focusing on the pronunciation of the foreign language.

It is relevant to mention that in this lesson, unlike from the rest, there is a section named "frequent mistakes" mistakes that students may make while developing the activities are presented, in this case the notion of /i/ and the pronunciation of the word *fruit* or *friend*.

In Lesson 3, contrary to Lesson 1, both OA_2 and OA_10 are present. Following the same organization as the past lessons, the author offers four complementary activities (18, 19, 20, and 21), along with two deepening windows (6 and 7) and three activities for the audio recordings (32, 33, 34). In this lesson, it is possible to encounter the fact that none of the complementary activities have relation to neither OA_2 nor OA_10. Also, the deepening windows make reference to a grammar point and the importance of listening comprehension, therefore, they have no relation to the learning targets. Finally, only one audio recording (33) has to do with learning targets 2 and 10, given that students are invited to practice and recognize the pronunciation of the vocabulary words through a repetition activity.

Unit 4

In Unit 4, Hot and Cold, both OAs are developed in Lesson 3 but in Lesson 1, only OA_2 is present. In addition, the author offers four complementary activities (3, 4, 5, and 6), along with an extra information section and an activity to develop with audio recording 40.

In Lesson 1 it is possible to find only one complementary activity that accomplishes OA_2 (activity number 3) since it promotes the acquisition of the pronunciation and notion of vocabulary words before showing their written form to the students. In addition, the extra information section does not relate to OA_2 due to the fact that it refers to the use of prediction as a useful tool for listening comprehension activities. Finally, recording number 40 has to do with OA_2 because students recognize vocabulary and sounds in an oral text, also proposing that the teacher reads it out loud, facilitating the comprehension of the students.

Lastly, in Lesson 3, OAs 2 and 10 are present, offering five complementary activities (12, 13, 14, 15, and 16) along with two extra information sections (4 and 5) and an activity to develop with audio recording 43. This section has only one complementary activity that accomplishes learning targets 2 and 10 (activity number 14). This activity, proposed for students with visual and auditory learning styles, makes students identify the written

form of frequency adverbs and so, identify sounds through a repetition activity. As in the previous analyzed lesson, the extra information section does not relate to the learning targets since it refers to the improvement of a listening comprehension activity and the willingness of students to talk in English, suggesting prior preparation. Regarding the suggested activity to develop through audio recording #43, OA_2 is accomplished since students recognize sounds and vocabulary. As well as in Unit 3, the section “frequent mistakes” is presented, in which the author suggests the teacher indicates the difference between phonemes /i/ and /i:/ since students may not be able to distinguish between the two phonemes when reproducing sounds.

Summarizing, it is important to restate the fact that this analysis only took into account the lessons of each unit that worked along with the learning targets 2 and 10. Taking this into consideration, it is feasible to conclude that among the complementary material that the author proposed (134 in total), only 15 (11%) have relation to both OA_2 and OA_10. Itemising, from a total of 75 complementary activities, 30 extra information sections and 29 audio activities, only 7, 2, and 6 respectively, attempt to develop sound recognition and pronunciation skills in students. These numbers suggest that, even though both objectives (OA_2 and OA_10) refer partially to pronunciation and sound recognition, the workload proposed by the curriculum is insufficient, affecting intelligibility as its main goal.

Discussion

Considering the description given about the Chilean context regarding 5th grade EFL instruction, we were able to identify several disagreements concerning the development of English pronunciation proposed by MINEDUC. From this vantage point, a deep examination of these controversies will be elaborated.

First, it was possible to encounter the fact that, from 16 learning targets proposed, only two (OA_2 and OA_10) partially refer to pronunciation aspects. The Ministry, alluding to the speaking ability, states that the goal is to achieve an intelligible message with a proper pronunciation, although the description of proper pronunciation is not given. However, in the proposed curriculum, and as said before, only two of 16 objectives refer to aspects of pronunciation, being these: the recognition and repetition of sounds to create awareness of the English phonemes (OA_2), and the action of producing and reproducing monologues, songs, rhymes, and dialogues to identify and recognize the target language sounds (OA_10). Bearing in mind the above-stated literature, we can determine that MINEDUC did take into consideration the fact that intelligibility is the main aim of pronunciation teaching (Sweet, 1900). Nevertheless, the importance of an intelligible message has only been mentioned; moreover, segmental aspects of pronunciation (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018; Celce-Murcia, 2010; Jenkins, 2000) have been implicitly incorporated within the curriculum but a further clarification of the importance of this aspect towards the acquisition of an intelligible pronunciation has not been considered.

Secondly, we could determine that, when stating the learning targets, the Ministry failed in terms of considering the real background that 5th graders from public schools possess. Thereupon, consequences of this disregard and its impact over the proposal of learning targets and their assessment indicators will be discussed.

On the one hand and referring to the OAs, it was possible to recognize that, even when both learning targets were suggested as a means of establishing a foundation of pronunciation, there were not enough activities to achieve these objectives. This is evidenced in the analysis of both the student’s textbook and the teacher’s guide: within the student’s book we could encounter a minimum number of pronunciation-related exercises; and, within the teacher’s guide there were only 15 complementary activities linked to pronunciation and, specifically, to sound recognition (/h/, the blendings /th/, and /ch/, and the vowel sounds /i/ and /i:/). On the other hand, regarding

the learning objectives, the Ministry suggests different assessment indicators that are supposed to be accomplished at the end of each unit. Taking into consideration that fifth grade is the first level of public education with a mandatory English curriculum, we determined that these assessment indicators are distant from the students' realities, since many fifth graders do not share the same English foundation (R. Robles, personal communication, June 20th, 2018; Yilorm & Acosta, 2016). This inequality implies that teachers will face difficulties when working along with the student's textbook. In order to clarify this idea, we have analyzed the assessment indicators of both objectives (OA_2 and OA_10) for Unit 4. Within this unit we can encounter the second objective to be developed in Lesson 1 and the tenth objective to be developed in Lessons 1 and 3. Regarding Lesson 1, the only activity that develops both learning targets is activity number 1 (Landaeta, 2016, p. 134) (see Figure 1), which encourage students to recognize the /h/ sound. In this exercise, both learning targets are achieved. However, from six assessment indicators suggested for OA_2 and two assessment indicators for OA_10, we identified that only one assessment indicator per objective was accomplished, i.e., to classify words according to their similar sounds (OA_2) and repeat commonly used words and expressions out loud, imitating the pronunciation of the teacher (OA_10). It is important to state that in Lesson 3, there is no activity related to the tenth objective, hence students will not be able to accomplish the indicators for this OA.

As a third argument, at the end of the two-year progressive development cycle (5th and 6th grade), students should accomplish a "proper production of the English sounds" (Ministerio de Educación, 2013, p. 33). In this way, we noticed that the Ministry suggests tools for accomplishing this goal, such as using vocabulary to foster the recognition of sounds of the target language. Within the curriculum, it is stated that activities focused on vocabulary acquisition allow students to know how these words sound and are pronounced, among others (Ministerio de Educación, 2013, p. 38). Regardless of this statement, the proposal does not offer any examples on how to carry out this connection, leaving this task exclusively to teachers.

Lesson 1

Listening

1 Practice these words with your teacher:

hot - house - hat - here - healthy

What's the difference with "h" in Spanish, as in *hora*, *hogar* and *hondo*?

Figure 1. Activity 1, Lesson 1, Unit 4: Hot and Cold.

Reprinted from *English 5, student's book* (p. 134), by T. Landaeta (2016), Santiago, Chile: Ediciones SM Chile S.A.

Teaching Proposal

We believe there is no consistent proposal from the ministry in which the basics of pronunciation are explicitly presented to the students. Furthermore, throughout the previous analysis, we were able to determine that the Ministry does not propose any specific methodology for teaching pronunciation within the classroom. While analyzing the teacher's guide, we witnessed a deficit of reinforcement within the pronunciation area.

Among these deficits, the author proposed a specific methodology (Audio-lingual method) to improve common pronunciation mistakes that students may face, lacking a further clarification of its adequate use and without offering the necessary tools to work with.

It is as a result of these deficits that we propose phonics as an approach for diminishing the methodological gap that actually exists, through the development of activities that will promote intelligible pronunciation.

We believe that phonics works as a method for improving intelligibility in primary students since its main purpose is the direct teaching of sound-letter relationships (Adams, 1990), associations that may not yet be developed, since 5th grade students usually possess dissimilar backgrounds. Likewise, Adams' idea promotes the compliance of the second learning target which partially entails the recognition of English sounds. Moreover, this approach improves the retention of word pronunciation, leading students to decipher meaning of words (Adams, 1990) and, therefore, helping them set a foundation in English pronunciation. Among the different approaches to phonics, we support the use of the synthetic phonics approach. This strategy helps students recognize letter-sound correspondences and improve sound blending skills, i.e., they will be able to interpret letters into sounds, blend them together and, eventually, rearrange unfamiliar words phonologically (Bowey, 2006). Following this path of identifying individual sounds, we can distinguish a correlation between the principles of segmental aspects (phoneme recognition) and the foundations of the synthetic phonics approach; focusing on the smallest fragment of the word in order to achieve a gradual acquisition of the fundamentals of pronunciation (Wyse & Goswami, 2008). It is for this reason that we think beginners, as in this case 5th grade students, would become skilled speakers following the systematic proposal of synthetic phonics, as evidenced in the results of the Rose Report (2006).

References

- Abercrombie, D. (1949). Teaching pronunciation. *English Language Teaching*, 3, 113-122.
- Adams, M. J. (1990). *Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Adult Migrant English Program Research Centre. (2002). *What is pronunciation?* [Fact sheet]. Retrieved from http://www.ameprc.mq.edu.au/docs/fact_sheets/01Pronunciation.pdf
- Blevins, W. (2006). *Phonics from A to Z. A practical guide*. New York, USA: Scholastic Inc.
- Bowey, J. A. (2006). Need for systematic synthetic phonics teaching within the early reading curriculum. *Australian Psychologist*, 41(2), 79-84. Retrieved from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00050060600610334>
- Busy Teacher. (2018). *Mind your 'P's and 'Q's. Teaching pronunciation at the segmental level*. Retrieved from <https://busyteacher.org/14533-teaching-pronunciation-segmental-level.html>
- Capliez, M. (2011). *Experimental research into the acquisition of English rhythm and prosody by French learners*. Retrieved from http://www.freelang.com/publications/memoires/marc_capliez/Acquisition%20of%20English%20rhythm%20and%20prosody%20by%20French%20learners.pdf
- Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D., & Goodwin, J. (2010). *Teaching pronunciation. A course book and reference guide*. New York, USA: Cambridge University Press.
- Collins, B., & Mess, I. M. (2003). *Practical phonetics and phonology. A resource book for students*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Cunningham, P. (2000). *Phonics they use. Words for reading and writing*. New York, USA: Pearson.
- Dakin, A. (1999). The effectiveness of a skill based explicit phonics reading program K-2 as measured by student performance and teacher evaluation, Master's thesis. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED430215.pdf>
- Dalton, C., & Seidlhofer, B. (1994). *Pronunciation*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from <https://books.google.cl/books?id=rDp7SITbwHEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=pronunciation&hl=es&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwji ts6ooaTaAhVDFJAKHT2dCkkQ6AEIJAA#v=onepage&q=pronunciation&f=false>

- Derwing, T. M., & Munro, M. J. (1997). Accent, intelligibility, and comprehensibility. Evidence from four L1s. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 19, 1-16. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/44488664?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents
- Derwing, T. M., & Munro, M. J. (2015). *Pronunciation fundamentals. Evidence-based perspectives for L2 teaching and research*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: John Benjamins Publishing Co.
- Fraser, H. (2001). *Teaching pronunciation: A handbook for teachers and trainers. Three frameworks for an integrated approach*. NSW: Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs.
- Goodman, K. (1993). *Phonics phacts*. New Hampshire, USA: Heinemann.
- Hinson, M., & Smith, P. (Eds.). (1993). *Phonics and phonic resources*. Staffordshire, UK: NASEN Enterprises Limited.
- Jenkins, J. (2000). *The phonology of English as an international language: New models, New norms, new goals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jones, T. (Ed.). (2016). *Pronunciation in the classroom. The overlooked essential*. Virginia, USA: TESOL Press.
- Khabiri, M., & Rezagholizadeh, R. (2014). The comparative effect of teaching spelling through mnemonics and phonics on EFL Learners' vocabulary achievement and retention. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 4(7), 1463-1468. Retrieved from <http://www.academypublication.com/issues/past/tpls/vol04/07/21.pdf>
- Kelly, G. (2000). *How to teach pronunciation*. Essex, UK: Pearson Educational Limited.
- Landaeta, T. (2016). *English 5, teacher's guide volume I & II*. Santiago, Chile: Ediciones SM Chile S.A.
- Landaeta, T. (2016). *English 5, student's book*. Santiago, Chile: Ediciones SM Chile S.A.
- Levis, J. M. (2005). Changing contexts and shifting paradigms in pronunciation teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39(3), 369-377. Retrieved from http://www.personal.psu.edu/kej1/APLNG_493/old_site/levin.pdf
- Lloyd, S. (1998). *The phonics handbook*. Chigwell: Jolly Learning Ltd.
- Ministerio de Educación. (2013). *Idioma Extranjero: inglés. Programa de Estudio Quinto Año Básico*. Santiago, Chile: MINEDUC. Retrieved from <http://www.curriculumnacional.cl/inicio/1b-6b/quinto-basico/idioma-extranjero-ingles/>
- Moedjito. (2008). Priorities in English pronunciation teaching in EFL classrooms. *K@ta*, 10(2), 129-142. Retrieved from <http://kata.petra.ac.id/index.php/ing/article/viewFile/16884/16868>
- Munro, M. J. (2018). Dimension of pronunciation. In O. Kang, R. I. Thomson, and J. M. Murphy (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of contemporary English pronunciation* (1st ed., pp. 676-706). New York, NY: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Phonetics. (2018). *Oxford Dictionary Online*. Retrieved from <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/phonetics>
- Pronunciation. (2018). *Cambridge Dictionary Online*. Retrieved from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/speaking/pronunciation>
- Rose, J. (2006). *Independent review of the teaching of early reading*. Nottingham: DfES Publications. Retrieved from <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/5551/2/report.pdf>
- Saito, K. (2011). Examining the role of explicit phonetic instruction in nativelike and comprehensible pronunciation development: An instructed SLA approach to L2 phonology. *Language Awareness*, 20(1), 45-59. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09658416.2010.540326>
- Segmental. (2018). *Encyclopaedia Britannica online*. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/segmental>
- Singh, S., & Singh, K. (2006). *Phonetics, principles and practices*. San Diego, CA: Plural Publishing, Inc.
- Smith, L., & Nelson, C. (2006). World Englishes and issues of intelligibility. In B. B. Kachru, Y. Kachru, and C. L. Nelson (Eds.), *The handbook of world Englishes* (1st ed., pp. 428-445). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- So, G. (n.d.). Phonics for Chinese EFL learners, Master's thesis. Retrieved from https://usat.cie.ca/media/cms_page_media/10/ENG064-Phonics_for_EFL_Chinese_Learners.pdf
- Soler, J., & Openshaw, R. (2007). To be or not to be?: The politics of teaching phonics in England and New Zealand. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 7(3), 333-352. Retrieved from <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.574.1284&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Suprasegmental. (2018). *Encyclopaedia Britannica online*. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/suprasegmental>
- Sweet, H. (1900). *The practical study of languages: A guide for teachers and learners*. New York, NY: Henry Holt & Co.
- Tanner, M. W., & Landon, M. M. (2009). The effects of computer-assisted pronunciation readings on ESL learners' use of pausing, stress, intonation, and overall comprehensibility. *Language Learning and Technology*, 13(3), 51-56. Retrieved from <http://www.lltjournal.org/item/2677>
- University of Oregon. (2009). *Big ideas in beginning reading. Phonemic awareness: Concepts and research*. Oregon, USA: College of Education, University of Oregon. Retrieved from http://reading.uoregon.edu/resources/bibr_pa_concepts.pdf

- Wyse, D., & Goswami, U. (2008). Synthetic phonics and the teaching of reading. *British Educational Research Journal*, 34(6), 691-710. Retrieved from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01411920802268912>
- Yilorm, Y., & Acosta, H. (2016). Neoliberalismo y proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de la lengua inglesa en Chile: una mirada dialéctica al estado del arte en sectores vulnerables. *Revista Cubana de Educación Superior*, 3, 125-136. Retrieved from <http://scielo.sld.cu/pdf/rces/v35n3/rces10316.pdf>
- Yopp, H. K. (1992). Developing phonemic awareness in young children. *The Reading Teacher*, 45(9), 696-703. Retrieved from <https://www.isaacschools.org/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=2323&dataid=1422&FileName=Developing%20phonemic%20awareness%20in%20young%20children.pdf>
- Yopp, H. K., & Yopp, R. H. (2009). Phonological awareness is child's play! *Young Children*, 64(1), 12-21. Retrieved from http://teachingcommons.cdl.edu/tk/modules_teachers/documents/PhonologicalAwarenessIsChildsPlay.pdf
- Zielinski, B. (2015). The segmental/suprasegmental debate. In M. Reed and J. M. Levis (Eds.), *The handbook of English pronunciation* (1st ed., pp. 397-412). West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.