

Pronunciation Instruction at Secondary Schools in Spain: A Survey Study

La enseñanza de la pronunciación en la educación secundaria en España: Estudio mediante encuesta

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Abstract

Learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Spain are often expected to possess a good command of its pronunciation when finishing secondary education, but this expectation is not always met. Although recent studies support the beneficial effect of pronunciation instruction to improve students' communicative skills in a foreign language, EFL teachers tend to avoid it due to a lack of confidence and training. The present study aims at investigating whether having received training in phonetics/phonology and/or pronunciation teaching affects EFL practitioners' choices of the pronunciation features to teach. The study builds on a research project on pronunciation instruction in EFL Spanish secondary schools. Thirty-eight teachers around the country participated via online survey between May and October 2023. Five different pronunciation features were examined: vowel sounds, consonant sounds, stress, rhythm and intonation. Percentages were calculated and Fisher's exact tests were run. Despite the lack of statistical

significance, percentages revealed that those participants who had received training in general pronunciation, specific pronunciation instruction, or both tended to teach segmental aspects rather than suprasegmental ones. Furthermore, rhythm was the pronunciation feature least taught. By contrast, those participants with no instruction claimed to teach suprasegmentals more often than segmentals. Although more subjects are needed to reach conclusive results, and teaching methods and techniques need to be examined more in depth, this study contributes to shedding more light on the current role of pronunciation instruction in Spanish schools, and the potential improvements to enhance effective pronunciation teaching in the EFL classroom.

Keywords: English as a foreign language (EFL); pronunciation teaching; teacher professional development; pronunciation training

Resumen

En España se espera que los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera dominen su pronunciación al finalizar la educación secundaria, pero no siempre esta expectativa se cumple. Aunque estudios recientes respaldan el efecto beneficioso de la enseñanza de la pronunciación para mejorar las habilidades comunicativas de los estudiantes en una lengua extranjera, los profesores tienden a evitarla debido a una falta de confianza y formación. El presente estudio investiga si haber recibido formación en fonética/fonología y/o enseñanza de la pronunciación afecta las elecciones de los aspectos a enseñar. Treinta y ocho profesores de todo el país participaron en una encuesta en línea entre mayo y octubre de 2023. Se examinaron cinco aspectos diferentes: sonidos vocálicos, sonidos consonánticos, acento, ritmo y entonación. Se calcularon porcentajes y se realizaron pruebas exactas de Fisher. A pesar de la falta de significación estadística, los porcentajes revelaron que quienes habían recibido formación general en pronunciación, instrucción específica de pronunciación o ambas tendían a enseñar aspectos segmentales en lugar de suprasegmentales. Además, el ritmo era el

aspecto de pronunciación que menos se enseñaba. Por el contrario, quienes no habían recibido instrucción afirmaron enseñar aspectos suprasegmentales más que segmentales. Aunque se necesitan más participantes para llegar a resultados concluyentes y se deben estudiar métodos y técnicas de enseñanza más en profundidad, este estudio contribuye a esclarecer el papel actual de la instrucción de pronunciación en las escuelas españolas y examinar posibles mejoras en la enseñanza de la pronunciación efectiva en el aula de inglés como lengua extranjera.

Palabras clave: Inglés como lengua extranjera; enseñanza de la pronunciación; formación del profesorado; formación en pronunciación

1. Introduction

Research conducted since the 2000s has supported the effectiveness of pronunciation instruction in English as a second (ESL) and foreign (EFL) language classrooms when it comes to improving students' communication skills (Darcy et al., 2012; Derwing, 2008; Derwing & Munro, 2015; Isaacs, 2009; Levis, 2005, 2018; Saito, 2012; Sicola & Darcy, 2015, among others). Nevertheless, the English classroom does not reflect these findings very often, as many practitioners still avoid teaching pronunciation (Burns, 2006; Couper, 2016; Foote et al., 2011; Henderson et al., 2012, Isaacs, 2009; Kirkova-Naskova et al., 2013; Levis, 2005; MacDonald, 2002; Nagle et al., 2020). Consequently, students cannot benefit from pronunciation explanations and practice that can enhance their ability to communicate in the target language (L2) (Delicado Cantero & Speed, 2015; Sicola & Darcy, 2015). However, little investigation has analyzed how teachers implement their knowledge in class (Baker, 2014; Darcy, et al., 2020).

In some studies on teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards pronunciation instruction (PI) teachers reported that they did not know how or what to teach, and that they had not received enough or proper training to teach pronunciation effectively (Basturkmen,

2012; Breitzkreutz, et al., 2001; Couper, 2016; Foote et al., 2011; Henderson et al., 2012; Kirkova-Naskova et al., 2013; Macdonald, 2002). Studying the extent to which training affects teachers' choices in their lectures can help understand the current state of pronunciation teaching in the EFL classroom; reveal gaps in teachers' instruction; and design better teacher training courses that focus on instructors' needs to teach pronunciation successfully (Baker, 2014; Burgess & Spencer, 2000; Buss, 2016; Nagle et al., 2020).

The identification and relevance of pronunciation features that influence a learners' overall intelligibility has been at the core of pronunciation teaching research for several years now. Such aspects are mainly divided into segmentals (i.e., individual vowels and consonant sounds) and suprasegmentals (i.e., prosodic features such as stress, rhythm and intonation). Some researchers have argued that suprasegmentals play a crucial role in guaranteeing successful communication, while others highlight the importance of pronouncing individual sounds correctly to avoid communication breakdowns (see Wang, 2022, for a review).

The debate remains open. The present study belongs to a broader project concerning EFL teachers' pronunciation state in secondary Spanish education. This follow-up study complements previous research on teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards pronunciation instruction (Quesada Vázquez, 2024) by examining how training in pronunciation and pronunciation teaching might influence teachers' choices of the pronunciation features that they teach in their classes.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Research versus practice in pronunciation teaching

Introducing pronunciation in the ESL and EFL classrooms remains controversial. Although some researchers keep questioning its long-lasting effects, many others agree on the benefits of pronunciation instruction (Derwing, 2008; Derwing & Munro, 2015; Isaacs, 2009;

Levis, 2005, 2018; Saito, 2012). Saito (2012) compiled fifteen quasi-experimental studies on the effectiveness of pronunciation teaching. All the studies except two showed significant improvement, and longer-lasting results when the teachers framed explicit pronunciation practice within a communicative setting. Two years later, Lee et al. (2014) gathered eighty-six quantitative studies that examined the effectiveness of pronunciation teaching in the last thirty-two years. Like Saito (2012), the authors observed that those students who received pronunciation instruction improved more than those who did not and that the improvement reported by the more recent studies was noticeably higher than that of previous research. The authors concluded that this improvement could result from testing a wider range of features and techniques in recent years.

However, the number of classroom-based studies in the field is still limited (see Dewing & Munro, 2015, for a review), and determining how to teach pronunciation seems to remain a pedagogical issue. As a consequence, practitioners usually decide what and how to teach based on their beliefs, knowledge, training, and curriculum limitations, usually without relying on research foundations.

2.2. Determining what to teach

Nowadays, no consensus exists on the most effective aspects to teach pronunciation and the pedagogy to do so (Darcy et al., 2012; Munro & Derwing, 2006), even though many researchers have suggested different approaches and techniques (Burgess & Spencer, 2000; Celce-Murcia, et al., 1996; Darcy et al., 2012; Darcy et al., 2020; Derwing & Munro, 2005; Gilbert, 2008; Levis & Echelberger, 2022; Saito, 2012; Sicola & Darcy, 2015). One of the main constraints is time: 86% of the teachers surveyed in Foote et al. (2011) claimed to have spent only 6% of class time teaching pronunciation. Likewise, Delicado Cantero and Speed (2015) reported that many of their subjects dedicated only a few minutes (and not always) to teaching

pronunciation in their classes. In her class observations of three French and four Spanish teaching assistants of elementary courses, Huensch (2019b) found that very little time was allocated to pronunciation in their classrooms. Darcy et al. (2012), as well as other researchers like Levis and Echelverger (2022), argued that pronunciation should be integrated as part of the educational curriculum together with other linguistic aspects such as grammar or vocabulary. Furthermore, they claimed that pronunciation should be present in the curriculum at every level to help students familiarize themselves with it as soon as possible, thus easing the learning process when reaching higher proficiency stages.

Since time is limited in the classroom, determining which pronunciation aspects are most efficient to teach becomes key to guaranteeing successful learning. One way of doing so is by examining the ‘functional load’ of the different pronunciation aspects according to, first, intelligibility and comprehensibility criteria, and second, frequency (Munro & Derwing, 2006). For instance, the contrast between the English vowel sounds /i/ -/ɪ/ is known to have a high functional load for L1 Spanish speakers learning English, who only have /i/ in their vowel sound system; these are frequent phonemes in the target language that usually imply a difference in meaning, so inability to distinguish them can lead to communication breakdowns (Valenzuela & French, 2023). As differences in pronunciation depend on how close the target language and the students’ mother tongue (L1) are, the functional load of a pronunciation feature can be very high in one language context, but very low in another. For instance, Japanese learners of English might find challenging to distinguish between /r/ and /l/ due to the phoneme inventory of Japanese, but this distinction should not be a problem for Spanish speakers, who have both sounds in their language.

On the other hand, the segmentals-suprasegmentals dichotomy has always been at the core of the debate. Due to the current prevalence of the intelligibility principle (Levis, 2005), some researchers argue that PI should prioritize suprasegmentals: stress,

rhythm and intonation are pronunciation features that are considered to boost students' overall intelligibility, comprehensibility and fluency, thus enhancing learners' communicative skills. In contrast, other researchers believe that suprasegmental and segmental features are intertwined and cannot be understood as independent features, so it is necessary to teach both to the same extent to ensure improvement (Wang, 2022).

Burgess and Spencer (2000) took a step further on the difficulties that practitioners might encounter when trying to introduce pronunciation teaching in their classes. Specifically, the authors stated that teachers' struggles fall not only on the features to tackle, but also the order in which these features are introduced in the learning process, the discourses used to practice them, the choice of methods, and the amount of detail to go into for each feature. These problems go beyond the teacher's knowledge of the target pronunciation. On the one hand, they are linked to pronunciation differences between the students' L2 and L1 to anticipate learning issues; on the other hand, these problems have to do with employing effective teaching practices in addition to knowing the pronunciation concepts. Teachers, hence, need to have enough phonological knowledge to teach pronunciation and know how to teach it effectively, which is not always the case because pronunciation teaching is not often part of the training offered by the teacher training programs in which these teachers enroll.

2.3. Pronunciation in teacher training programs

Several survey studies about teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards pronunciation teaching agree that many practitioners complain about the scarcity of training received during their professional development regarding general phonetics and phonology, and, especially, pronunciation instruction (Breitkreutz et al., 2001; Burri et al., 2017; Burri & Baker, 2021; Buss, 2016; Couper, 2016; Foote et al., 2011; Henderson et al., 2012; Huensch, 2019a, 2019b; Kirkova-Naskova

et al., 2013; Macdonald, 2002; Nagle et al., 2018; Saito, 2012; Sicola & Darcy, 2015; Walker, 1999). Burgess and Spencer (2000) claimed that phonetic and phonological knowledge and pronunciation teaching methodology depend on each other. Consequently, having received training in one, two, or none of these aspects directly affect teachers' practices in class. Furthermore, many English practitioners are not always English graduates; some are professionals of different fields who have taken a course in Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and had limited phonological knowledge when they started their English-teaching studies. Moreover, TESOL training programs frequently include little to no training in how to teach pronunciation (Sicola & Darcy, 2015). In these programs, it is common to tackle pronunciation briefly from a theoretical point of view, but there is a lack of hands-on activities. Neither do these teachers receive any guidelines on how to evaluate pronunciation, which is another concern for them, especially when their command is limited. As a result, teachers seem to feel ill-equipped and not confident enough to teach pronunciation (Burns, 2006; Couper, 2016; Darcy et al, 2012; Foote et al., 2011; Henderson et al., 2012, Isaacs, 2009; Kirkova-Naskova et al., 2013; Levis, 2005; MacDonald, 2002; Nagle et al., 2020; Sicola & Darcy, 2015).

However, a limited number of studies have examined the pronunciation features practitioners teach in their classes and how training is related. Burgess and Spencer (2000) distributed fifty questionnaires among different institutions offering courses in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). The purpose was to examine the phonological features that were taught and practiced, the way in which these were practiced, and the main difficulties that learners experienced. Results revealed that teachers especially focused on intonation, vowel reduction, and stress, together with segmental features. Rhythm was not always present in the classroom. Teachers usually addressed pronunciation issues as they arose and tended to teach it integrated with other skills. As for students' concerns, they found suprasegmentals particularly difficult, and struggled with perceiving similar sounds between the

L1 and the L2, and producing unfamiliar sounds.

Baker (2014) examined five English language practitioners teaching in the same North American intensive English program by means of interviews, class observations, and student's satisfaction surveys. These teachers had all obtained a master's degree in TESOL, but not all the programs had pronunciation training: three of the teachers had received a full course on pronunciation instruction; two of them a course that mixed pronunciation, speaking and listening instruction; and the other teacher did not receive any pronunciation training. The author observed that those teachers who received a pronunciation instruction course used a wider range of techniques to teach pronunciation in the classroom. She also noticed that all the participants in the study tended to use controlled practices rather than guided and free activities, which tended to include repetition drills, visual identification, production practice, and explanations.

A few survey studies have investigated English teachers' training and the techniques employed (i.e., the use of word drills, reading-aloud passages, and so on) to introduce pronunciation in Spanish EFL classes (Kirkova-Naskova et al., 2013; Walker, 1999). However, these studies have not inquired about the specific pronunciation aspects practiced. In fact, to our knowledge, no studies have been examining this issue among EFL teachers in Spain. Therefore, this study aims at filling this gap in the literature by examining how training influences EFL teachers' choices in secondary schools in Spain. To this end, the following research questions are formulated:

RQ1. Which are the pronunciation features that are taught in EFL classes in Spanish secondary schools?

RQ2. To what extent does training affect EFL teachers' choices of the pronunciation features to teach in Spanish secondary schools?

3. Method

3.1. Survey

An online survey was designed and administered via Outlook Forms. It consisted of forty-seven questions distributed in four sections: background, beliefs, training, and teaching. The data pertinent to this study were extracted from the subjects' answers to some of the questions in the first, third, and fourth sections. Data in section 2 are not examined in this study, which were already analyzed in the first study of the project (Quesada Vázquez, 2024).

The seventeen questions in Section 1 gathered information used to outline the participants' profile: they had to answer general questions about their age, gender, education and nationality, together with more specific questions on the type of institution at which they were teaching, the educational level of their students and the number of students per class (for a detailed description of the questions in this section, see Quesada Vázquez, 2024). Section 3 was made up of eight questions: participants were asked whether they had received training in pronunciation (i.e., general phonetics and phonology) and how to teach pronunciation, and when and where they received each type of training. This information was used to distribute the participants according to the training received. Finally, section 4 contained nineteen questions regarding their teaching practices: details on the aspects taught, the textbooks and resources used, the theoretical concepts and techniques employed in their lessons, the role of pronunciation in the course assessment, and their opinions on their students' attitudes towards pronunciation were compiled through yes/no questions, option questions, and open questions. This paper will concentrate on the results obtained in question 30, "Which of these pronunciation features do you teach in class?", complemented with information obtained from questions 31 to 36 (see Appendix I).

The questionnaire was first validated by five professors from different Spanish universities with English pronunciation teaching

as their research expertise (see Appendix II). Once the suggested modifications were made, the survey was sent to the students of the master's degree in Bilingual Education at Nebrija University to conduct a pilot study: only two students replied, since most of the postgraduates that academic year were teaching in primary, not secondary, schools. Hence, the survey became open to the general public to reach a wider population. Snowball sampling and social media posting were the two data collected methods used. Specifically, the survey was shared with colleagues who in turn shared it with their professional colleagues, and on Facebook teaching groups, Twitter, and LinkedIn. This paper will examine the answers compiled for the first six months during which the survey was open (i.e., between May and October 2023).

3.2. Participants

Although forty-three professors filled in the survey, five of them had to be discarded from the analysis because they were not teachers of English, but of other subjects, such as Math or Science in English. Hence, this study consists of a total of thirty-eight subjects. The average age was 42.29 years of age, and the mean of teaching experience was 15.46 years. All participants were Spanish except for two British. Regarding their gender, thirty of them were female, seven male, and one participant preferred not to say. Participants were teaching at fifteen different provinces: six subjects worked in Madrid, four in Asturias, Murcia and Seville, three in Badajoz and Navarra, two in Barcelona and La Coruña, and one in Albacete, Alicante, Granada, Guadalajara, Huelva, Jaén, Las Palmas, Tarragona, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, and Zaragoza.

Thirty participants were teaching at one type of institution: eighteen were teaching at public schools (47%), seven at private schools (18%), two at charter schools (5%), and two at bilingual schools (5%). Eight of them reported to be teaching at two institutions at the same time: they claimed that they were teaching

at both a public and a bilingual school (11%), a private and a public school (8%), a charter and a bilingual school (3%), and a private and a bilingual school (3%). Twenty teachers claimed to have experience at the last two levels of compulsory secondary education (3rd and 4th of ESO), eighteen at the first level of compulsory education (1st of ESO), fifteen at the first level of non-compulsory education (1st of bachillerato), eleven at the second stage of compulsory education (2nd of ESO), and six at the second stage of non-compulsory education (2nd of bachillerato). Regarding number of students per class, 47% of the participants had more than twenty students per class, twenty-five to thirty students being the most chosen option (21%). Almost half of the subjects stated they taught at public schools, so it is not surprising that they had to face a common reality: overcrowded classes.

3.3. Data analysis

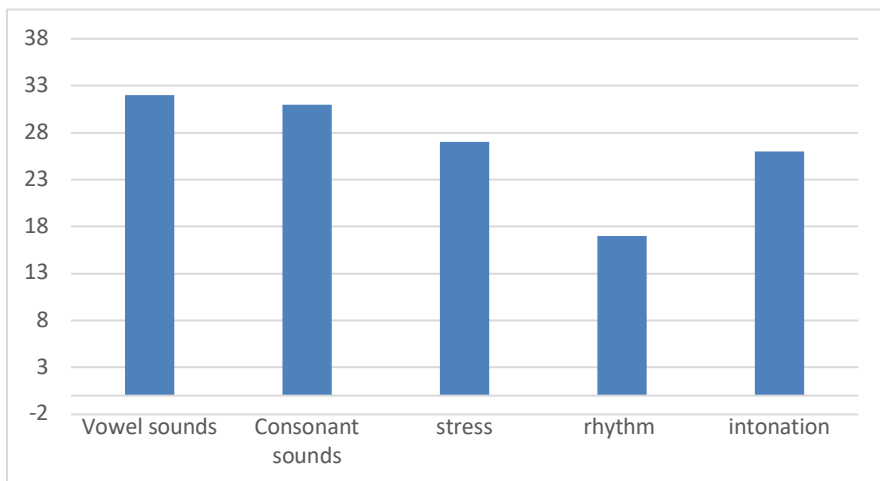
To examine the effect of previous training in general pronunciation (i.e., phonetics/phonology) and/or how to teach pronunciation on practitioners' teaching choices, a general overview of their choice is first presented; then, percentages according to the instruction received are displayed; and finally, several Fisher's exact tests are run to determine the significance of the association between the different type of training received and the pronunciation features introduced in the classroom. To further interpret the results obtained, findings are complemented with percentages regarding the textbooks and resources that these teachers use, and the sources from which they received training.

4. Results

Segmentals seem to be more present in the classroom than suprasegmentals. As observed in Figure 1, thirty-two out of thirty-eight of the respondents (84%) stated they teach vowel sounds,

whereas thirty-one of them (82%) teach consonant sounds. Regarding suprasegmentals, stress and intonation were taught by twenty-seven (71%) and twenty-six (68%) of the participants respectively, while rhythm was only introduced in the classroom by seventeen of the teachers (45%). These results do not fully correlate with their thoughts: in the first study, which analyzed the participants' beliefs, rhythm was considered the least important feature to teach. Therefore, it appears logical that participants will teach it less often than other pronunciation features. In contrast, intonation was thought to be the most important feature, chosen by thirty-four of those polled (Quesada Vázquez, 2024). However, only twenty-six of the participants introduce it in their lessons.

Fig. 1. *Answers to question 30 “Which pronunciation features do you teach in class?”*



When examining the influence of general training in phonetics/phonology on the participants' teaching choices, we see that those who had received this type of training ($N = 30$) follow the general tendency shown in Figure 1 (see Table 1); that is, more practitioners teach segmentals (vowel sounds: 90%; consonant

sounds: 86.67%) than suprasegmentals (stress: 73.33%; intonation: 70%; rhythm: 40%). Nonetheless, the same percentage of teachers who did not receive training in general pronunciation (N = 8) is revealed for every aspect under analysis (62.5%). However, many more participants received general training than those who did not, so results may vary with a wider and, therefore, more representative sample of the population.

Table 1. *Percentages of the number of teachers introducing the different pronunciation aspects under study according to general pronunciation training*

Aspects taught	PT (N = 30)	NPT (N =8)
Vowel sounds	90%	62.5%
Consonant sounds	86.67%	62.5%
Stress	73.33%	62.5%
Rhythm	40%	62.5%
Intonation	70%	62.5%

Note: PT = Pronunciation training; NPT = No pronunciation training

To analyze the relevance of the impact of this type of training in their decisions to take some aspects into the classroom and avoid others, Fisher's exact tests were run¹ (see Table 2). No statistical significance was found. Hence, results seem to indicate that general pronunciation training does not have a relevant effect on the aspects that teachers choose to introduce as part of their lessons, although a more representative sample of participants will be needed to draw

stronger conclusions.

Table 2. *Results for Fisher’s exact tests when examining the influence of general pronunciation training*

Aspects taught	p
Vowel sounds	.094
Consonant sounds	.146
Stress	.667
Rhythm	.426
Intonation	.689
p = .05	

Next, we examine the effect of previous training in the teaching of pronunciation on teacher’s choices. This time, the number of trained subjects (N = 18) vs. untrained (N = 20) was more balanced (see Table 3). Percentages showed that segmentals are still the most common in the classroom regardless training (PIT: vowel sounds = 88.89%; consonant sounds = 83.33%; NPIT: vowel sounds = 80%; consonant sounds = 80%). Surprisingly, results show that, while rhythm is again the least taught for both groups, those who did not receive training in how to teach pronunciation tend to teach it more (55%) than those who did receive this type of training (33.33%). This is also the case when comparing general pronunciation training (see Table 1).

Table 3. *Percentages of the number of teachers introducing the different pronunciation aspects under study according to pronunciation instruction training*

Aspects taught	PIT (N = 18)	NPIT (N = 20)
Vowel sounds	88.89%	80%
Consonant sounds	83.33%	80%
Stress	66.67%	75%
Rhythm	33.33%	55%
Intonation	72.22%	65%

Note: PIT = Pronunciation instruction training; NPIT = No pronunciation instruction training

Although it is not as present as segmentals in the EFL classroom, more teachers seem to introduce intonation rather than stress when having received training in how to teach pronunciation (intonation = 72.22% vs. stress = 66.67%). In contrast, stress is taught by more practitioners (75%) than intonation (65%) or rhythm (55%) when training was not received. Fisher's exact tests were conducted to examine the effect of training in how to teach pronunciation on the aspects practitioners teach in their sessions. As with the previous tests, no statistical significance was found (see Table 4).

Table 4. *Results for Fisher's exact tests when examining the influence of training in how to teach pronunciation*

Aspects taught	p
Vowel sounds	.663
Consonant sounds	1

Stress	.724
Rhythm	.21
Intonation	.734

p = .05

Finally, the amount of training received was examined. To this end, results were redistributed into four different groups: Group 1 (G1), consisting of those teachers who had received both types of training; Group 2 (G2), made up of those trained just in general pronunciation; Group 3 (G3), comprised of those trained just in pronunciation instruction; and Group 4 (G4), made up of those who had not received any training. As observed in Table 5, when having received training (no matter the amount or type), more teachers introduce segmentals in their classrooms (G1 - vowel sounds: 88%; consonant sounds: 82.35%; G2 - vowel sounds: 92.3%; consonant sounds: 92.3%; G3 - vowel sounds: 100%; consonant sounds: 100%) than those with no training (G4 - vowel sounds: 57.14%; consonant sounds: 57.14%). On the contrary, rhythm continues being the least taught of all the aspects under study when some training has been received (G1 - 35.29%; G2 - 46.15%; G3 - 0%), while more practitioners did not receive training that teach it (G4 - 71.43%). On the other hand, more G1 practitioners introduce intonation in their classrooms (76.47%) than stress (70.59%). By contrast, a higher percentage of practitioners who did not receive any training stated they teach suprasegmentals (71.43% for the three suprasegmental features under study) more than segmentals (57.14% for both vowel and consonant sounds).

Table 5. *Pronunciation features taught according to the amount of training received*

Aspects taught	G1 (N = 17)	G2 (N=13)	G3 (N=1)	G4 (N = 7)
Vowel sounds	88%	92.3%	100%	57.14%
Consonant sounds	82.35%	92.3%	100%	57.14%
Stress	70.59%	76.92%	0%	71.43%
Rhythm	35.29%	46.15%	0%	71.43%
Intonation	76.47%	61.54%	0%	71.43%

Note: G1 = pronunciation training + pronunciation instruction training. G2 = pronunciation training + no pronunciation instruction training. G3 = no pronunciation training + pronunciation instruction training. G4 = No pronunciation training + no pronunciation instruction training.

It is striking that G3 does not introduce suprasegmentals in their classrooms when having received specific training in pronunciation teaching. However, there is only one subject under this condition, so more respondents are needed to see if this tendency holds. In general terms, groups are unbalanced, as there are many more teachers in G1 and G2 (N = 17 and N = 13 respectively) than in G3 (N = 1) and G4 (N = 7), so more respondents would be needed to draw more solid conclusions towards the tendencies found. Fisher's exact tests were also run to study the relevance of the amount of training received. Again, results did not show significance for any of the tests conducted (see Table 6).

Table 6. *Results for Fisher's exact tests when examining the influence of the amount of training received*

Aspects taught	p
Vowel sounds	.244
Consonant sounds	.297
Stress	.609

Rhythm	.312
Intonation	.486

p = .05

Since many of the participants claimed that they need more pronunciation training (Quesada Vázquez, 2024), different types of training sources were examined. Half of the respondents stated that they had received training in phonetics and phonology in a subject of their bachelor’s degree. There were 26.3% of the participants who were trained in a course of their master’s, 26.3% attending sporadic workshops and conferences, and only 5.3% in a course at work. 18.4% of the respondents did not receive this type of training.

Percentages vary considerably when examining training in how to teach pronunciation. This time, half of the participants stated not having received this training. There were 28.9% who received it at work, 23.7% during their bachelor’s, and 7.9% during their master’s. None of the respondents attended sporadic workshops and conferences in which training in pronunciation pedagogy was offered.

Practitioners were also inquired about the pronunciation features included in their textbooks, and those aspects that they taught using other type of resources. Twenty-six out of the thirty-eight subjects (68.42%) claimed that segmentals are included in their textbook. Suprasegmentals, however, are not that common: only fifteen of the participants (39.47%) stated that intonation is found in their textbook, and thirteen (34.21%) that stress and rhythm are present.

With regards to other resources used, those participants who employed materials in addition to the textbook help themselves with online resources mainly. Specifically, these participants mentioned that they use songs, YouTube videos, online podcasts and worksheets from websites like BBC English and the British Council, and videos

from social networking sites, such as Instagram or TikTok. As for the pronunciation features that they teach with these materials, eighteen subjects (47.37%) use them to teach intonation and consonant sounds, whereas seventeen (44.74%) employ the materials to teach vowel sounds, fifteen (39.47%) stress, and ten (26.32%) rhythm.

As expected, segmentals are very present in the textbooks and the resources employed, since these were seen as the most taught aspects. However, it is surprising that, although intonation practice is not as common in textbooks as exercises of vowel or consonant sounds, it is easier to find activities in those books aimed at teaching intonation rather than stress or rhythm. Furthermore, practitioners seem to look for resources that complement intonation instruction in the same extent that they look for segmentals. Nevertheless, throughout the section, it has been seen that practitioners do not consider that they teach intonation as much as stress in most of the training conditions studied. This and other pertinent questions will be further discussed in the following section.

5. Discussion

Results reveal that vowel and consonant sounds are the most frequently taught pronunciation features in Spanish secondary EFL classrooms (Research Question 1); more than 80% of the respondents stated that they incorporate these two pronunciation features into their lessons. However, when voicing their opinions on these features, the first study of the project reported that the subjects do not believe that vowel and consonant sounds are more relevant to teach than some suprasegmentals, particularly intonation (Quesada Vázquez, 2024). Nevertheless, the present study has shown that segmentals are more often found in the textbooks that these teachers use, which might help them teach them more due to their easy accessibility. When examining other resources that practitioners use to introduce different pronunciation aspects in

their classrooms, many teachers also use them to further teach segmentals. Hence, it seems that segmentals are the main features taught in EFL classes regardless of the teachers' views.

On the other hand, some suprasegmentals seem to be more present in the EFL classroom than others. Stress and intonation are taught by approximately two thirds of the respondents, while rhythm is taught by slightly more than one third (see Figure 1). As mentioned in the previous section, these results partially correlate with the ones obtained in the previous study, since rhythm is not believed to be as important to teach as the other features. However, intonation is considered the most important feature, but not that often taught in class (Quesada Vázquez, 2024). When resources are analyzed, it seems that all the suprasegmental features are found in the different textbooks used to almost the same extent. Nonetheless, practitioners tend to use more additional resources for intonation rather than rhythm instruction. Hence, teachers might look for more ways to introduce intonation in their classes because they believe in their benefits more than the ones generated by teaching rhythm. These findings go along the lines of Burgess and Spencer's (2000), whose participants claimed to teach both segmentals and suprasegmentals, but acknowledged that rhythm was not always taught. Furthermore, the authors found that students considered suprasegmentals especially difficult. In the present study, these features are not included in textbooks as often as segmentals, but several teachers look for extra resources to support the teaching of suprasegmentals such as intonation and stress. Perhaps, thus, the main resources provided to conduct the lessons should include more developed activities and exercises based on suprasegmentals to encourage more teachers to introduce them in their sessions.

With regards to the influence of training on teachers' choices, no statistical significance was found (Research Question 2). However, some compelling tendencies emerged. First, lack of training (see Table 5), especially in general phonetics/phonology (see Table 1), appears to affect the teachers' decisions about the features to teach: while those who received training (no matter how much and what

type) follow the general tendency of teaching segmentals more than suprasegmentals, those who did not receive general phonetics/phonology training claimed to teach all the aspects to the same extent. Furthermore, those who did not have any preparation at all stated to teach suprasegmentals more often, contrary to expectations. Burgess and Spencer (2000) acknowledged that phonological knowledge and teaching go hand in hand, and influence practitioners' choices. As previously mentioned, half of the subjects attended a course in general phonetics/phonology during their bachelor's degree, while there were fewer respondents who received this training in subsequent stages of their professional development (master's degree: 26.3%; sporadic workshops and conferences: 26.3%; a course at work: 5.3%). It would be worth exploring whether the subjects of the study are English undergraduates, since they are more likely to have received training in phonetics and phonology if they are than if they had studied a different bachelor's degree and then pursued a master's in TESOL (see the theoretical framework section for a discussion).

Training seems to influence the presence of intonation in the classes as well. As observed in Tables 3 and 5, teachers introduce intonation more often than stress when teaching if they have received training in pronunciation pedagogy. Sicola and Darcy (2015) pointed out that master's programs in English teaching usually lack instruction in how to teach pronunciation. In other words, teachers-to-be are not trained in methods, approaches or techniques to help them incorporate pronunciation into their classes. As suprasegmentals are not that common in textbooks, those teachers with some knowledge in how to teach pronunciation might feel equipped enough to teach intonation, as the feature that is considered more relevant by the surveyors. In this study, half of the respondents did not received training in pronunciation teaching. Additionally, less than 30% of the subjects attending a course at work focused on pronunciation teaching strategies, and only 23.7% and 7.9% took a course during their bachelor's and master's studies, respectively. None of the practitioners attended workshops and

conferences on pronunciation teaching. Hence, this study adds to the bulk of literature reporting on the need for more training in pronunciation teaching (Breitkreutz et al., 2001; Burri et al., 2017; Burri & Baker, 2021; Buss, 2016; Couper, 2016; Foote, et al., 2011; Henderson et al., 2012; Huensch, 2019a, 2019b; Kirkova-Naskova et al., 2013; Macdonald, 2002; Nagle et al., 2018; Saito, 2012; Sicola & Darcy, 2015; Walker, 1999).

6. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate EFL practitioners' pronunciation teaching choices and the influence of training in those on secondary schools in Spain. According to the results, teachers tend to teach segmentals more than suprasegmentals while believing in the benefits of teaching some suprasegmental features like intonation. One reason for the discrepancy might be the accessibility of materials and resources that these teachers have, since vowel and consonant sound practice is included in the different textbooks that they use. Another reason might be the type of training received. For instance, rhythm is rarely taught, while many researchers agree on its relevance to guarantee communication and reduce the possibility of suffering from misunderstanding. It would be worth exploring if practitioners have received enough training in rhythm, since it is probably the most abstract pronunciation feature and, hence, it becomes more difficult to understand and teach properly without appropriate training. Results also show that intonation is more frequently taught when teachers know techniques, approaches, or methodologies to introduce it in class. Thus, specific training in teaching those aspects would provide practitioners with more tools that will help improve their confidence when teaching pronunciation (Baker, 2014). Half of the subjects of this study did not benefit from this type of training and none of them attended conferences or workshops on the issue. Nowadays, teachers' associations around the world such as International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) have special

groups on pronunciation teaching (PronSIG) that organize workshops, conferences, and other gatherings where both teachers and researchers meet to talk about issues and practices. Schools should advertise, promote and sponsor these events to foster their teachers' professional development and ensure that research leads to practical applications. This way practitioners will feel better equipped to directly address the difficulties they encounter in class while teaching pronunciation (Burgess & Spencer, 2000).

Indeed, the findings of this study should be interpreted as preliminary: due to the low number of participants, and additional aspects such as the age range or the type of institution, a more representative population is needed to reach conclusive remarks. As mentioned in the first study, it might be advantageous to increase the data collection instruments by contacting governmental institutions such as the education departments of the autonomous communities in Spain and/or specific schools (Quesada Vázquez, 2024). Further studies concerning this research project will examine the theoretical concepts and the techniques employed to practice pronunciation in the classroom for a more comprehensive overview of the situation (Quesada Vázquez, in press). All this information will help government officials and educators develop future measures and proposals to improve teaching programs and guarantee the professional development of EFL teachers in the Spanish secondary educational system.

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Notes

¹ Chi-square tests were discarded for the analysis because there were cells in every test where the expected count was less than 5.

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Appendixes

Appendix I.

Questions 29 – 36 from the teaching section of the survey

Teaching

29. Which teaching method do you use in class?
30. Which of these pronunciation features do you teach in class?
- vowel sounds
 - consonant sounds
 - rhythm
 - intonation
 - stress
 - none
31. Textbook you use:
32. Is there pronunciation training in the textbook?

Yes

No

33. Which of these pronunciation features are in the textbook? *

- vowel sounds
- consonant sounds
- rhythm
- intonation
- stress
- none

34. Other resources you use to teach English if any:

35. If you have answered question 32, do you use these resources specifically to teach pronunciation?

Yes

No

36. Which of these pronunciation features do you teach with the other resources?

- vowel sounds
- consonant sounds
- rhythm
- intonation
- stress
- none

Appendix II. Survey validation rubric

Survey Validation Rubric for Expert Panel - VREP©

By Marilyn K. Simon with feedback from Jacquelyn White (modified for our research purposes)

Criteria	Operational Definitions	Score				Questions NOT meeting standard (List page and question number) and need to be revised. Please use the comments section to recommend revisions.
		1=Not Acceptable (major modifications needed)	2=Below Expectations (some modifications needed)	3=Meets Expectations (no modifications needed but could be improved with minor changes)	4=Exceeds Expectations (no modifications needed)	
Clarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The questions are direct and specific. The participants can easily understand what is being asked. There are no <i>double-barrelled</i> questions (two questions in one). 					
Wordiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questions are concise. There are no unnecessary words 					
Negative Wording	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questions are asked using the affirmative (e.g., Instead of asking, "Which methods are not used?", the researcher asks, "Which methods are used?") 					
Overlapping Responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No response covers more than one choice. All possibilities are considered. There are no ambiguous questions. 					
Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The questions are unbiased and do not lead the participants to a response. The questions are asked using a neutral tone. 					
Use of Jargon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The terms used are understandable by the target population. There are no clichés or hyperbole in the wording of the questions. 					
Appropriateness of Responses Listed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The choices listed allow participants to respond appropriately. The responses apply to all situations or offer a way for those to respond with unique situations. 					
Use of Technical Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The use of technical language is minimal and appropriate. All acronyms are defined. 					
Application to Praxis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The questions asked to relate to the daily practices or expertise of the potential participants. 					
Relationship to Problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The questions are sufficient to resolve the problem in the study The questions are sufficient to answer the research questions The questions are sufficient to obtain the purpose of the study. 					
Measure of Construct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The survey adequately measures this construct. <i>Pronunciation teaching practices at secondary schools in Spain.</i> 					
Introductory explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the guidelines to carry out the survey clear and concise? Are these complete? 					
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the survey too long? Does the time estimated correspond to reality? 					

Comments and Suggestions

Types of Validity

VREP is designed to measure face validity, construct validity, and content validity. To establish criterion validity would require further research.

Face validity is concerned with how a measure or procedure appears. Does it seem like a reasonable way to gain the information the researchers are attempting to obtain? Does it seem well designed? Does it seem as though it will work reliably? Face validity is independent of established theories for support (Fink, 1995).

Construct validity seeks agreement between a theoretical concept and a specific measuring device or procedure. This requires operational definitions of all constructs being measured.

Content Validity is based on the extent to which a measurement reflects the specific intended domain of content (Carmines & Zeller, 1991, p.20). Experts in the field can determine if an instrument satisfies this requirement. Content validity requires the researcher to define the domains they are attempting to study. Construct and content validity should be demonstrated from a variety of perspectives.

Criterion related validity, also referred to as instrumental validity, is used to demonstrate the accuracy of a measure or procedure by comparing it with another measure or procedure which has been demonstrated to be valid. If after an extensive search of the literature, such an instrument is *not* found, then the instrument that meets the other measures of validity are used to provide criterion related validity for future instruments.

Operationalization is the process of defining a concept or construct that could have a variety of meanings to make the term measurable and distinguishable from similar concepts. Operationalizing enables the concept or construct to be expressed in terms of empirical observations. Operationalizing includes describing what is, and what is not, part of that concept or construct.

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