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Pronunciation Instruction and Learning Objects to Enhance EFL Learners' Pronunciation

Skills

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Thanks Lord for giving sense to my life, supporting me along this process, providing me with all the gifts when I needed to go on, choosing the best people to help me and loving me in spite of all my imperfections. Also I would like to thank all of the professors, in special my supervisor, who guided me, who taught patiently and made efforts to do their best. They have changed my mind and I have learnt a lot from them in order to improve my teaching practice.

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Abstract

The present small scale, exploratory qualitative action research study analyzed the effect of pronunciation instruction (PI) and learning objects (LOs) on EFL ninth graders' recognition and production of the fricative consonants, in a public school. The aforementioned strategy was conducted as a blended course that mixed five face-to-face sessions and five online sessions, in which learners were provided with explicit training and practice exercises. During its implementation, audio-recordings, field-notes, questionnaires and a focus group were used to collect data. The analysis of the information gathered was done by following the stages of the grounded theory approach and it revealed that participants had meaningful improvements on recognition and to some extent on production of fricative sounds. This study extends the understanding of the effectiveness regarding the implementation of pronunciation instruction and the support provided by learning objects in the development of pronunciation skills. However, the influence of this digital tool was not evidenced explicitly, according to the students' perception the only advantage mentioned was to learn pronunciation. That is why further research on this topic is needed in order to find new alternatives to deal with the difficulties that might hinder effective communication.

Key words: Pronunciation; pronunciation instruction; blended learning and learning objects.

Resumen

El presente estudio de investigación cualitativa exploratoria en pequeña escala analizó el efecto de la enseñanza explícita de la pronunciación de las consonantes fricativas y el uso de los objetos virtuales, en las habilidades de percepción y producción de estudiantes de grado noveno de una institución pública. Esta estrategia fue llevada a cabo como un curso mixto que combinó

cinco sesiones presenciales y cinco sesiones virtuales, en las cuales los estudiantes recibieron

preparación explícita y ejercicios prácticos. Durante su implementación se utilizaron grabaciones

de audio, notas de campo, cuestionarios y una entrevista en grupo para la recolección de

información. El análisis de la información obtenida se hizo siguiendo las etapas de la teoría

fundamentada y éste reveló que los participantes tuvieron avances significativos en la percepción

y hasta cierto punto en la producción de los sonidos fricativos. Este estudio amplía el

conocimiento acerca de la efectividad de la instrucción en pronunciación y el apoyo de los

objetos virtuales en el desarrollo de las habilidades de pronunciación. Sin embargo, la influencia

de esta herramienta digital no fue evidenciada explícitamente, según la percepción de los

estudiantes la única ventaja mencionada fue para aprender pronunciación. Por lo anterior, se

necesita más investigación en el tema para encontrar nuevas alternativas con el fin de resolver las

dificultades que podrían entorpecer una comunicación efectiva.

Palabras claves: Pronunciación; instrucción en pronunciación; aprendizaje mixto y

objetos virtuales.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the study

The final goal of any English foreign language (EFL) learner is to speak the language or at least to reach an intelligible level to be understood. In this process, pronunciation plays a significant role in successful communication (Setter & Jenkins, 2005) since "it is responsible for intelligibility" (Seidlhofer, 2001, p. 56). However, pronunciation is often neglected by teachers (Ahmad, Othman, & Senom, 2017; Atli & Bergil, 2012; Kelly, 2000) in Colombia, perhaps due to the fact that public institutions settle for certifying an acceptable writing and reading level (Torres, 2009) in order to prepare students for obtaining good results in the Saber 11 test (i.e. a standardized test that senior students must take to measure the knowledge acquired during high school). Another reason could be that teachers do not feel to be knowledgeable enough to teach it (Kelly, 2000) because pronunciation development demands time, it is the result of rigorous and continuous practice focused on recognition and production of the phonological features that characterize the target language.

Fortunately, there have been many attempts to encourage teachers to improve their methods for teaching pronunciation through several strategies such as drills, minimal pairs, dictation, phonetic transcription, recordings, discrimination exercises and reading aloud practice. One of these attempts is pronunciation instruction (PI), considered as an effective alternative (Atli & Bergil, 2012; Couper, 2003; Derwing & Munro, 2005; Kendrick, 1997; Kissling, 2015; Riveros & Orjuela, 2015; Saito, 2011; Tlazalo & Basurto, 2014) to draw learners' attention on particular distinctions of L2 phonological system and make them aware of the manner how these can be produced at different levels (Pennington & Richards, 1986). Also, to provide learners

with specialized knowledge to identify some graphemes, whose articulation differs from that of sounds in their native language.

Another attempt to enhance the teaching process is the use of technology in the classroom. Since the emergence of CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) in the early 80's, teachers can take advantage of a large variety of resources and tools to offer learners opportunities to practice the foreign language and assess their performance (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007). Learning objects (LOs) are some of these tools that emerge to achieve an educational purpose (Ministerio de Educación Nacional [MEN], 2008) and can facilitate learning (De la Torre Navarro & Dominguez, 2012). Thus, this research study suggests implementing a traditional technique: PI to meet learners' needs on the realization of fricative consonants. And a modern technique: LOs to offer meaningful practice in a blended course, as a strategy to improve learners' pronunciation.

1.2   Rationale of the study

1.2.1   Needs analysis and problem statement

This research study was conducted in a Colombian public school (see Section 3.3.1), with ninth graders, whose oral production skills are the least developed in comparison with other language skills. To contextualize the reader, in elementary level students do not have a teacher who teaches them English using the target language because elementary educators are not specialized in one subject, they have knowledge about different areas. In high school, the learners are assigned an English teacher, but he must restart due to the fact that the processes of teaching and learning present many weaknesses. As a result, the worthy importance is not given to pronunciation, as a key aspect for accurate speech and hence its instruction is of two types: repetition and correction of students' mistakes at the moment (Tlazalo & Basurto, 2014).

Likewise, the syllabi of English proposed for public high schools do not include pronunciation instruction, rather they aim to reach the academic level established by the foreign language standards in order to prepare learners to take the Saber 11 test and to comply with the minimum requirements that university studies pose when they start an undergraduate program.

The learners' needs were confirmed by the analysis of the data collected through three instruments (see Appendix A:): a questionnaire for students (A.1), a semi-structured interview for teachers (A.2) and a test on phonetics focused on perception (A.3). The questionnaire was designed in Spanish because of the learners' language level. In the questionnaire, students answered eight questions, three of them were multiple-choice, three were yes/no answer and two open-questions. The semi-structured interview had eight questions to get information about teachers' insights and the methodology that they implement in English classes for teaching pronunciation. The test on phonetics consisted of five discrimination exercises, in four of them learners were asked to circle the consonant sound they listened to, and in the last exercise they chose the stressed syllable. As a result of the implementation, the data were summarized in three main categories: pronunciation instruction, phonemes and learners' perception.

In relation to pronunciation, students asserted that their level was not as good as it should be (see Appendix A.1.1.1) and they recognized the importance of having a specific time for practicing pronunciation (see Appendix A.1.1.3). Teachers' responses to the interview indicated that they had included listening activities and they had used visual resources to work on pronunciation, and the main learning aim had been to help students have a comprehensible level in communication. According to the answers to the questionnaire some students considered that there were activities in elementary school for practicing pronunciation, but some others did not think so. Furthermore, they mentioned that the activities done were focused on vocabulary and

most of students chose the option *sometimes* to point out the frequency of the activities. Thus, findings indicated there was no specific methodology nor strategies that English teachers implemented exclusively to develop EFL pronunciation.

Teachers and students agreed that the most difficult phoneme is /θ/ and the least difficult are the phonemes they recognize because the graphemes are known as part of Spanish linguistic system. Also, learners referred to some phonemes that they did not master such as: /h/, /ʧ/ and /v/ (Appendix A.1.1.4) and among the difficulties concerning to pronunciation they mentioned: articulation of words and intonation (Appendix A.1.1.5). However, it is relevant to clarify that the difficulties mentioned were general and students did not give specific examples regarding sounds.

Learners' recognition of sounds was measured through a phonetics test, in which consonants with potential pronunciation difficulties for Spanish speakers were included. The results of the test demonstrated that students did not perceive the difference between phonemes that have common features, such as: /ʃ/ in contrast to /ʧ/ and /v/ in contrast to /b/. Likewise, when these phonemes are within a word, they face the same difficulty: they cannot find differences between minimal pairs, as in these cases: *chip* and *ship* and *very* and *berry* (Appendix A.3.1.2). In the third item, learners were asked to identify in each group of words the word that had a different sound; in this item it seems they chose an option according to their visual perception, for example: *Sugar – sun – **city** – sock,* they selected *city* because its first grapheme is different from the others, as in the second (*cut – **kite** – car - church*) and the last options (*virtual- voice – **best** – vacation*). In the fourth item in which students had to choose the correct pronunciation of some words, it seems that they made the decision randomly because some of them chose the first option and some the second option (Appendix A.3.1.4). The last item, concerning stress, most of

them identified the stressed syllable (Appendix A.3.1.5), except in the word *interesting*. These findings demonstrated the necessity to devote time to pronunciation teaching in order to develop learners' phonological awareness.

1.2.2   Justification of problem's significance

English pronunciation presents many problems for foreign learners since the language does not have a direct relationship between spelling and pronunciation (Harmer, 2007; Kelly, 2000; Ur, 1991). For this reason, Spanish learners articulate the new sounds of the foreign language by using the most similar L1 phonemes to replace them (Ur, 1991). And learners will not be aware the differences between the two phonological systems if they do not have practice or receive pronunciation training. Therefore, these learners could face problems that might impact communication.

One of the most remarkable problems in the first stages, when someone is learning a language, is interference or negative transfer. This problem might influence the development of Spanish speakers' learning because learners will recall previous knowledge to facilitate the second language learning process (Brown, 2007). Hence, difficulties like this one cannot be overcome without pronunciation training because the phonological system of the target language (English) differs from the Spanish phonological system (L1) and it is important that learners are aware of this fact.

Another problem that is inherent to the pronunciation learning is mispronunciation, which is due to the lack of knowledge and practice. Mispronunciation refers to the difficulty to pronounce accurately, it can affect language development if mistakes are not corrected on time, because if they are internalized, they can be fossilized. Therefore, there will be less risk of fossilization if pronunciation is taught from an early age, according to the critical period

hypothesis proposed by Krashen in 1975. In general, the significance of pronunciation teaching

is based on the possible problems that teachers and learners have to face (e.g. mispronunciation,

inaccuracy, lack of phonological awareness, fossilization, frustration and so forth) when

pronunciation is seen as an inherent aspect developed in the activities that teachers usually carry

out to enhance reading or speaking competences.

Consequently, these problems could affect the students' long-term goals in their

professional life since in most of Colombian universities a certain level of English is an

academic admission requirement to obtain a professional degree. Thus, when learners finish high

school, it is necessary that they have gained knowledge in order to be competent English

speakers by the time they get to higher education (Harmer, 2007). Furthermore, if students want

to study in another country it is necessary to demonstrate proficiency in the foreign language

taking an international exam such as TOEFL or IELTS. Through these tests, among others,

speakers' oral competences are evaluated in terms of the ability of communicating a message

effectively. If the learner does not have correct pronunciation, the intelligibility of the message

might be affected. As a consequence, he might lose work or educational opportunities to which

people with a good level of English can have access easily (Ministerio de Educación Nacional

[MEN], 2006). Likewise, if an opportunity for a job is offered in another country and the learner

doesn't have the knowledge nor the abilities to face the challenge of interacting by producing the

sounds properly, he will have to reject it. In general terms, pronunciation problems can affect the

learners' oral skill, making it hard to be understood by others.

1.2.3   Strategy selected to address the problem

Communicating effectively requires the development of oral skills, among them

pronunciation, that plays a crucial role in language learning. In order to improve this subskill, it

is necessary to tackle those difficulties that can impede students to produce intelligible speech.

Therefore, the strategy proposed to address the problem is the implementation of pronunciation

instruction and learning objects in a blended course during ten sessions of the English class, a

combination of a face-to-face component and a virtual component. The first component

considers the advantages of the explicit instruction to foster pronunciation skills in the teaching

of fricative phonemes (f, v, θ, δ, s, z, ʃ, ʒ and h). Some of these benefits are pointed out by Atli

and Bergil (2012); Couper (2003); Derwing and Rossiter (2003); Kendrick (1997); Kissling

(2015), Morley (1991); Riveros and Orjuela (2015); Saito (2011) and Tlazalo and Bazurto

(2014). Thus, in the aforementioned phonemes, the most difficult sounds (according to the need

analysis) that do not have correspondence between phoneme and grapheme were included.

The second component, the virtual part entails some advantages of using technology in

language teaching such as increasing motivation, developing autonomy, saving time and working

on a particular skill (Sharma & Barret, 2007). All these favorable aspects help the teacher to

satisfy learners' pronunciation needs and give learners the opportunity to take an active role in

their learning process. Therefore, the role of learning objects (LOs) was to support pronunciation

teaching by reinforcing the input of sounds, providing additional practice and feedback for the

activities proposed, as well as evidencing the students' progress through recording oral

production of sounds.

1.3   Research question(s) and objective(s)

Accordingly, this study's driving research question was *what happens to pronunciation of*

fricative consonants when pronunciation instruction and learning objects are used to address

recognition and production of A1 EFL learners in a public school? And its respective objective

was *to analyze the influence of pronunciation instruction and learning objects on EFL learners' recognition and production of fricative sounds in a public school*.

1.4   Conclusion

English phonological system is not predictable because it does not have a one-to-one relation between the graphemes and the phonemes. This variation causes many difficulties to Spanish speakers if continuous and constant training on perceiving and producing the English phonemes is not carried out. Some of these difficulties are mispronunciation, miscommunication, distorted speech, misunderstanding, fossilization, lack of self- confidence and frustration. Thus, according to students' needs, this study aimed at improving learners' recognition and production of fricative sounds through a blended course. In order to accomplish this objective, the research strategy was carried out in two parts: explicit pronunciation instruction in the classroom and virtual practice using LOs in English class to give learners tools for acquiring pronunciation habits.

Before explaining how the strategy was carried out, it would be suitable to gain knowledge on previous research conducted in the pronunciation field. Hence, in the next chapter the reader will find the constructs that build the theoretical framework of the present inquiry and the main research studies that support and contribute to the current state of the subject matter.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework & State of the Art

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the needs analysis revealed the main problems that learners face and the necessity to work on the learners' pronunciation. Thereby, the research question, the objective of this study and the strategy to address the problem were presented. After reviewing the rationale, the revision of the main constructs: pronunciation, pronunciation instruction, blended learning, and learning objects, and the previous studies will give insights about the way this issue has been explored in current literature. Specifically, those studies whose findings have supported this study and have contributed to gain knowledge about teaching pronunciation, and those that have implemented the different strategies and have evaluated its impact in the development of pronunciation.

2.2 Theoretical framework

2.2.1 Pronunciation

The study of pronunciation is divided in two fields: phonetics and phonology. The former analyzes how speech organs produce sounds and the latter studies the interpretation and systematization of sounds of a language (Kelly, 2000). English system is made up by twelve vowels and twenty four consonants classified in bilabial (b,p,m,w), labio-dental (f,v), dental (θ,δ), alveolar (t,d,s,z,n,l), palatal (ʧ,ʤ,ʃ,ʒ,r,j), velar (k,g,ŋ) and glottal (h) according to the place of articulation; and plosive (p,b,t,d,k,g), affricate (ʧ,ʤ), fricative (f,v,θ,δ,s,z,ʃ,ʒ,h), nasal (m,n,ŋ), lateral (l) and approximant (w,r,y) according the manner of articulation (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Goodwin & Griner, 2010). Although this study is focused on fricative consonants, pronunciation not only entails segmentals (i.e. consonants and vowels), but also implies suprasegmental features, namely intonation, stress and rhythm.

English teachers consider pronunciation a challenging aspect because it is not just a production matter, it involves many abilities to recognize the main features of sounds and produce them in context. According to Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994) "pronunciation is the production of significant sound (sic) in two senses: the first is the production and reception of sounds of speech and the second one referring to acts of speaking" (p. 3). This definition emphasizes two aspects: production and communication by specifying the focus of pronunciation and the field where sounds are used. That is to say we do not use sounds at random without thinking, we use them for expressing ideas that have a communicative purpose. On the other hand, Fraser (2006) alleged that "pronunciation is a form of behavior, which, like all behavior, is driven by concepts of speech (i.e. ideas in our heads about what sort of sounds can be words, and what sort of smaller sounds can be made up of)" (p. 84). In other words, the sound becomes a mental representation (i.e. concept) that determines the speaker's speech acts. This definition focuses on the cognitive aspect while the previous one emphasizes the pragmatic aspect. Furthermore, Taylor (as cited in Couper, 2009, p. 46) affirmed that "pronunciation is a cognitive phenomenon which is grounded in the human ability to produce, perceive and, above all, to categorize sounds, and to form mental representations of sounds." This definition is pretty similar to Fraser's since the origin of the sounds lies on cognition and this implies giving more importance to categorizing sounds and to generating ideas, rather than the influence that these have on speech acts. In all these definitions it is clear how pronunciation involves perception, and production abilities, that is why the present study aims at analyzing these skills as an essential part of the foreign language pronunciation development. Apart from the fact that sounds compose the phonological system of a language, Kelly (2000) referred to this variety of sounds as phonemes that have a specific function: determine the acoustic realization of words in a

language. In this way, the mastering of the phonological system implies knowing how to produce

the phonemes and establish differences among the individual features that characterize each one

and this task is difficult without the suitable instruction. Consequently, most teachers assume that

"teaching pronunciation requires specialist knowledge of phonetics or phonology" (Fraser, 2006,

p. 80) and consider pronunciation as one of the most difficult abilities to develop because they

have to deal with aspects of a student's native language that might interfere with the

pronunciation of a second language (Kelly, 2000) when they are trying to teach an unknown

system of sounds.

2.2.2   Pronunciation instruction

Teaching a foreign language involves the process of adapting the speech organs to

produce the new sounds and sharpen the hearing sense to recognize the special features that

characterize them. This process is referred by Kissling (2015) as phonetics instruction, by

Riveros and Orjuela (2015) as phonological training, by Tlazalo and Basurto (2014) as

pronunciation instruction and by Morley (1991) as pronunciation teaching. Pronunciation

instruction has been implemented from two different perspectives. An intuitive-imitative

perspective that is based on learners' ability to emulate the target sounds without any kind of

explicit instruction, otherwise, providing enough and efficient input of the target language. And

an analytic-linguistic perspective that aims to draw learners' attention on sounds and rhythms of

FL, through the explicit practice using different kind of techniques and tools (Celce-Murcia et

al., 2010). The previous perspective is exemplified in the pedagogical intervention of this study

in which the main stage is explicit instruction to call students' attention to the manner of

realization of sounds, followed by a discrimination exercise to highlight differences between two

sounds and at the end of each session the oral practice to evaluate the production of phonemes. In order to teach pronunciation some of the models that have arisen are:

The speech learning model proposed by James Flege in 1995 establishes a direct relation between perception and production. Thus, learners must identify the features that characterize the new sounds and differ from their native language. During this process the speaker forms new phonological categories until he is able to produce the target sounds. The key point in this model is to understand the level of dissimilarity between the native language and the second language with the objective to foresee if the new categories could or could not be formed (Flege, 2005). Thus, this study follows Flege's model by providing pronunciation instruction to get better participants' articulation of sounds. This technique helps learners to realize the most remarkable distinctions of the fricative consonants.

In the cognitive approach followed by Helen Fraser (2006), pronunciation is a cognitive skill in which the concepts play a crucial role. These concepts are the mental representations that influence our perception and determine our behavior of speech. The teacher is a guide, he provides opportunities for practice and he gives immediate feedback in order to have learners reflect upon their performance. The principles of this approach are to help students to consider pronunciation as communication, to highlight the role of contrasting, helping students understand the concepts that are important to new language, and last to analyze the strategies and resources used in pronunciation development (Fraser, 2006). The idea that deserves more attention is that teachers should facilitate the construction of the mental concepts which are the basis of perceiving phonological features and gaining understanding of how the new sounds are articulated. Nevertheless, it is not possible to monitor the process of concept formation at all, the

only way to evidence if the mental representations are accurate is through learners' oral behavior (i.e. performance).

The communicative approach aims to help learners develop intelligible pronunciation through the implementation of these strategies referred by Celce-Murcia et al. (2010):

Listen and imitate: a technique taken from the direct method in which teachers model some examples and learners repeat them.

Phonetic training: it refers to the phonetics practice using descriptions, articulatory diagrams and a phonetic alphabet.

Minimal pair drills: a technique in which two sounds are compared and practiced in order to be aware of the differences between them.

Contextualized minimal pairs: in this technique the teacher sets a communicative context where the practice is developed.

The main advantage of this approach is that learners not only model the examples provided, but also internalize them and practice the new knowledge in a communicative situation. Besides, the speaker's phonological performance can be evaluated by the hearer who determines if the message was conveyed effectively. The only disadvantage is that the development of pronunciation skills requires a lot of time and training in order to avoid frustration since many difficulties on the realization of sounds could come up at the beginning of learning process.

2.2.3   Blended learning (BL)

There are several definitions of blended learning and all of them coincide that BL involves a combination of two kinds of methodologies. For instance, Graham (2005) stated that the components of this combination are face to face instruction and computer mediated instruction. In this perspective the role of information and communication technology is

highlighted since this kind of medium allows learners to interact in real time (Graham, 2005) . A similar definition is presented by Dudeney and Hockly (2007) which involves the online component and face to face course delivery, the only difference is that the role of the online component is not as explicit as in the first definition . Likewise, Sharma and Barrett (2007) affirmed that BL refers to "a language course which combines face to face classroom component with an appropriate use of technology" (p. 7). In this definition the authors show a flexible position including the term "technology" because it implies a huge range of virtual means and tools, not only the computer, but also smart boards, cell phones and tablets. Also, they set the context when they said that the two aforementioned components are part of a language course, as the intervention of this study (see Section 4.3). Thus, this is the definition adopted by the researcher because it mentions the two components that were included in the pronunciation course, planned with the purpose of enhancing EFL learners' pronunciation skills concerning fricative consonants.

Therefore, blended learning is not a new trend, it is known in the business world because it was used by some companies in order to train employees, due to the facilities of saving time and costs (Sharma & Barret, 2007). According to Ash (2012) blended learning can be delivered in four ways:

Rotation model in which students of a specific course or subject rotate on a fixed schedule. This is the model that the present research study follows.

Flex model in which students have a flexible schedule, thus, they alternate learning modalities. The content and instruction are given by internet.

Self-blend in which students make the decision to take one or more online courses.

Enriched virtual in which students in each course offered by the school, have the two modalities of learning. The content and instruction are given on line.

On the other hand, Graham (2005) stated three categories of blended courses:

1. *Enabling blends:* This category is developed in a flexible way regarding access and convenience for the participants.

2. *Enhancing blends:* In this one, some changes are made to the pedagogy, but not big changes with respect to the teaching and learning methodology.

3. *Transforming blends:* There is a radical change of the pedagogy. In this category this study is classified since the methodology was modified to meet the learners' needs.

Furthermore, Pape (2010) pointed out that BL gives learners the possibility to demonstrate knowledge and foster autonomous learning, and self-directed learning skills. Also, this trend allows teaching and learning to transcend the classroom developing critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration and global awareness. Other aspects are mentioned by Graham (2005) such as improving pedagogy by bringing new tools and developing strategies (i.e. active learning, interactivity, peer to peer and learner centeredness). These advantages consider the reasons why the implementation of BL must be done in learning settings by using technological means to teach. Also, it increases access and flexibility because this modality offers learning experience at distance and for all kind of students, increases cost effectiveness since the investment is rewarding and generates long-term profits. Likewise, Marsh (2012) illustrated the main strengths of implementing BL in the process of learning as follows: it provides a more individualized learning experience, personalized learning assistance, a learning setting to practice the new language, a more relaxed environment, a flexible practice and open access from anywhere. Moreover, BL enhances learners' twenty first century skills, involves

students in learning, boosts independent and collaborative learning and adapts to different

learning styles. At last, Sharma and Barret (2007) provided a global perspective by referring to

the general advantages of using technology: first, the interactivity since teachers and students can

find a huge variety of activities that are presented in several ways. Second, it facilitates

communication because allows learners and teachers to interact from different places at the same

or different time. Third, it fosters autonomy since learners make decisions about their learning

process. Finally, it saves time due to the fact that teachers have access to all kind of activities that

can be reused in any time. Besides, it allows teachers to be updated with current news.

2.2.4 Learning objects (LOs)

Regarding technological tools to teach pronunciation, e-learning generates new

alternatives for reinforcing pronunciation instruction. One of these modern aids is learning

objects (LOs) defined by LTSC (Learning Technology Standards Committee) cited by Wiley

(2001) as "any entity, digital or non-digital, which can be used, re-used or referenced during

technology supported learning" (p. 4). This definition gives a general idea about the field in

which this resource is used, it is employed mainly in virtual education. However, it is not easy to

understand what a LO consists of. A more specific definition is stated by Watson (2010) "LOs

are a form of e-learning resource used across a range of subject areas, which are still being

realized in various formats by those involved in the field of learning object technology" (p. 42).

This definition expresses explicitly that LO is a pedagogical resource that can be implemented in

different areas by people who deal with learning process. In the same vein, Smith (2004) cited

Johnson's definition: "a learning object is any grouping of materials that is structured in a

meaningful way and it is tied to an educational objective" (p. 10) to explain its composition and

the purpose why it was created.

In the national context, the Ministry of National Education (2005) defines LO as "all material structured in a meaningful way that is associated to an educational purpose and corresponds to a digital resource that can be delivered and consulted on line". This definition is very similar to the previous one since it emphasizes on the way of organizing the materials and the function that a LO has: to achieve an educational aim. Likewise, Chiappe, Segovia and Rincón (2007) provided a more detailed definition: "a digital self-contained reusable entity with a clear learning aim, that contains at least three internal changing components: content, instructional activities and context elements" (p. 675) to clarify the key components that are an essential part of it. This definition is the most suitable for this study since it explains the main characteristics and the main components that the LOs designed for the implementation of the blended course have. Hence, this virtual tool was used to encourage learners to review and practice the pronunciation of the consonants seen in the face to face session.

Some of the characteristics mentioned by Wiley (2001) are: variety (many elements included), inclusion (some objects could be part of an object), reusable components (its components can be used individually in new learning environments), general function (the way of functioning is common) and inter/intra contextual reuse (different learning environments used in different areas and the number of times it is used in a same area). In contrast, Longmire (2000) and Latorre (2008) proposed other characteristics (as cited in Callejas, Hernández, & Pinzón, 2011): flexibility (the usage in several contexts due to the facility of being updated), personalization (the possibility of change in the sequence and content), modularity (the possibility to deliver the resource in modules), adaptability (the facility to be adapted to students' different learning styles), reusability (the ability to be used in different educational contexts with diverse purposes) and durability (validity of the information). Additionally, De la Torre and

Dominguez (2012), characterized learning objects by its heritage (the union of two LOs in order to obtain a new one), interoperability (free movement of content from a technological platform to another), educability (to generate learning), generativity (the ability to generate new content), functionality (the facility to be part of a repository), accessibility (the possibility to have access to LOs from a far place through the web) and scalability (the possibility to integrate simple elements into complex structures).

In other words, a LO not only includes information, but also images, graphics, recordings, videos, links etc., and it has an identification or metadata that registers the minimum necessary information to identify the resource (Callejas et al., 2011; Chiappe et al., 2007) . Moreover, it entails the properties to be designed for educational goals, to be reused by many people, to be adaptable for using in different contexts, to be personalized according to users' learning styles and to be updated in any time. Also, this resource allows students to monitor their own progress in the learning process.

2.3   State of the art

Teaching English pronunciation is a challenge for teachers who are not native speakers of the target language because the development of this sub-skill implies to study the basic aspects, previously mentioned, that are part of the sound system, and which are known by linguists as the segmental and the supra-segmental aspects of language (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 1996; Harmer, 2007; Kelly, 2000; Ur, 1991). Among the background information that focuses on pronunciation, most of the studies have shown positive results when face to face instruction is implemented in English classes. This might be included as a set of specific activities which are monitored and developed for a long and continuous period of time. Some of the most important findings are: the development of auditory perception and discriminative listening skills (Morley,

1991); the reduction of the interference of native language (Lu, 2002); the development of

confidence with regard to production or pronunciation of words and sentences in English

(Tlazalo & Basurto, 2014); the development of the phonological awareness (Riveros & Orjuela,

2015); the discrimination of target language allophones (Kissling, 2015); the development of

awareness about difficulties and the ability of monitor own pronunciation (Couper, 2003); the

formation of pronunciation concepts (Fraser, 2006); the identification of the differences between

one's own oral productions and proficient speakers' productions (Derwing & Munro, 2005); the

improvement of comprehensibility on the articulation of some segmentals (Saito, 2011); the

development of awareness of the sound structure and the increase of the ability to produce some

sounds (Atli & Bergil, 2012); the development of phonological awareness on deletion,

substitution, and blending skills (Saleh, 2016); the improvement of literacy skills (Le Roux,

Geertsema, Jordaan, & Prinsloo, 2017); the improvement of speech learning (Hamzah, Nashuha,

& Abdullah, 2017); among others.

In short, these research studies have validated the first component of the strategy (PI)

proposed in this study since their results demonstrated that explicit instruction has a favorable

influence in the development of pronunciation skills. Concerning commonalities between these

inquiries and the present one, the main commonality is the necessity to develop pronunciation

skills such as phonological awareness, discrimination, recognition, production and literacy, by

focusing on one aspect of language. Most of the aforementioned studies opted for segmental

features and concluded that enough practice and training help foreign students improve speech

learning. Another commonality is the necessity to deal with difficulties that learners face during

pronunciation learning, among them, L1 interference, lack of confidence, lack of motivation,

mispronunciation and unintelligibility. The recurrent idea is to find new strategies in order to reduce this kind of problems.

A variety of strategies have been implemented by teachers in different learning settings to help students enhance their pronunciation. One of these, the use of videos and drama techniques (Souto, 2013) demonstrated that learners can improve their pronunciation and their confidence. Another strategy implemented is the use of self-recordings (Mancera, 2014). The results of this study showed that the self-recordings helped learners identify their mistakes and overcome the difficulties they had in the pronunciation of the phonemes /s/, /w/ and /θ/. The next strategy is the use of songs (Cortés, 2012; Molina, 2011) and it was found that songs helped learners increase their motivation and realize the positions of the speech organs in the articulation of the phonemes /θ/, /ʃ/ and /v/. In the same way, blended learning is implemented as a strategy to develop English as a foreign language. The studies carried out by Bañados (2006), Martin de Lama (2013), Bataineh and Mayyas (2017) and Souzanzan and Bagheri (2017) demonstrated the effectiveness of an English blended program in the improvement of learners' language skills. In the same line, Wichadee (2017) referred a positive effect of using Edmodo for enhancing oral proficiency and motivation. Also, Cantor (2009) reported favorable results about the implementation of ALEX (virtual English program) using discussion boards, Salinas (2014) agreed with the benefits of this tool to improve the writing skill, interaction, collaborative work and autonomy. In a similar research experience Clavijo, Hine and Quintero (2008) explored virtual forums as a setting to foster interaction and the creation of communities of practice. While Ochoa and Roberto (2011) focused on the implications of designing, implementing and evaluating this model in teaching English, Mendieta (2012) illustrated about transition from face to face instruction to blended learning and discussed ways of coping with the management of the components. On the other

hand, Sánchez (2012) analyzed the impact of self- assessment strategies in a blended learning environment, showing that the participants developed awareness of the language learning process, identifying their weaknesses, monitoring their progress and setting goals. Finally, Ramírez (2014) designed, implemented and evaluated a blended course on communicative pronunciation, it demonstrated advance with respect to the improvement teachers' pronunciation of consonant sounds.

Similarly, to these studies, this research inquiry implemented face to face and virtual training to enhance learning. Hence, the effectiveness of the online component of the strategy is confirmed by the reported advances, in which this component was tested and proved since it brings benefits to students in the learning setting. The only difference is the tool implemented because in all of them the virtual component varies, for example Wichadee used Edmodo, Cantor and Salinas implemented discussion boards, Clavijo, Hine and Quintero used virtual forums and the remaining studies implemented an online platform.

Another current trend in pronunciation teaching is computer-assisted pronunciation training (CAPT), exemplified in Sidgi and Shaari's (2017) study, in which the effectiveness of automatic speech recognition (ASR) Eyespeak software was evidenced in students' pronunciation helping them identify the mispronounced words. Likewise, Maghrebi, Heydarpoor and Shalmani (2016) investigated the effect of Rosetta Stone software to provide pronunciation training. The results reported progress in learners' attention, perception and language learning comprehension. Another common alternative is the use of technological tools to facilitate teaching and learning pronunciation. For instance Mompean and Gonzalez (2016) inquired into the effectiveness of twitter and they found that this tool had a positive influence on learners' realization of target words. Furthermore, Wang (2017) evaluated the utilization of WeChat (i.e. a

social Chinese networking application) to enhance learners' pronunciation and the author

concluded that this tool helped create a self-directed environment, improve learning flexibility

and get better pronunciation learning. In addition, Taghinezhad, Khalifah, Nabizadeh and Shahab

(2015) examined the influence of audiobooks on the improvement of sound recognition and

production. Their findings revealed that this resource aided to enhance participants' sound

recognition ability, as the results presented in this study.

Nevertheless, only a few studies have implemented learning objects to foster language

learning. One of these is Watson's (2010) proposal for developing an effective learning design

for LOs. Also, Verdessi (2015) discussed the use of a blog as a LO to learn Spanish, and she

determined that the blog is a useful LO for educational aims. In the same way, Becerra, Noel and

Muñoz (2016) described a LO used to improve children´s skills who had a specific language

impairment. On the other hand, other studies have taken into account learning objects for

teaching purposes in diverse fields. For instance, Arango, Gaviria and Valencia (2014) analyzed

the usage of LOs in the teaching of differential calculus to enhance the assimilation of

knowledge; Vargas (2011) designed LOs as a supporting tool for teaching Newton's second law;

Churchill and Gordon (2009) exposed the problem of relating LOs to all kind of learning tasks,

thus the authors suggested suitable combinations that help to achieve more effective pedagogical

implementations; Lake, Lowe, Phillips, Cummings and Schibeci (2009) provided a model to

analyze the effectiveness and efficiency of LOs when they are used in educational context and

Chuen, Aris and Salleh (2009) designed an online prototype system to improve high order

thinking skills.

The studies mentioned above differ from this study in the way of designing LOs since most

of them propose a model. For example, Watson developed a LO template based on a pedagogic

approach to provide international students effective assistance on achieving learning aims. In Verdessi's study, the LO was designed on a blog, using Blogger to promote Spanish learning. Arango et al. used GeoGebra software to provide virtual pedagogical practice. However, Vargas designed an LO with Exe-Learning, the same software used to create the LOs of this inquiry. On the other hand, there is a common aspect between these research studies and the present one, the design of LOs always takes into account learners' needs to guarantee their effectiveness.

In the light of the previous research studies, the expectation with the implementation of PI and LOs in a blended course is to demonstrate that the combination of a traditional and a modern technique is effective in English learning. Also, this strategy can contribute to tackle A1 students' mispronunciation problems through the activities that give ideas to educators to teach pronunciation in a dynamic way.

2.4   Conclusion

Pronunciation is a sub-skill that focuses on the sounds that make up the phonological system of a language. In the first part, this literature review presented the concepts and models of pronunciation instruction and blended learning. In the second part, the state of the art highlighted the benefits of pronunciation instruction and blended learning based on the research conducted by scholars, whose findings have shown positive results when teachers carry out useful strategies (i.e. dramas, videos, self-recordings, songs, explicit instruction, LOs or blended learning) to help learners realize the differences between Spanish and English segmental and supra-segmental features. However, a noticeable gap in the literature is the absence of studies that implement LOs as a blended strategy to enhance learner's pronunciation which is the objective of the current study.

The following chapter will illustrate the reader in connection with the research design of the present inquiry. Its content specifies the type of study carried out, the context in which the pedagogical intervention was done, along with the instruments designed to record and collect the information provided during the blended course focused on pronunciation.

Chapter 3: Research Design

3.1   Introduction

The previous literature review emphasized the importance of pronunciation instruction, the focus of some the methods and the origin, and advantages of blended learning. It also presented some studies that have explored different strategies to gain understanding with respect to the implementation of pronunciation instruction and blended learning using online tools for different purposes. Hence, this inquiry proposes to enhance learners' pronunciation through a blended strategy (PI and LOs) and the impact of its implementation will be analyzed by gathering data using the following instruments: field notes, audio recordings and a questionnaire. Additionally, in this chapter the reader will find the type of research, the characterization of the context, the role of the participants and the ethical considerations that the researcher considered while implementing the study.

3.2   Type of study

This study was a small-scale exploratory qualitative action research study conducted in a public school. This reflective practice, as it is called by Burns (2010), aimed to explore and improve pronunciation teaching process. In this way, the teacher's role was that of a researcher and a participant because she identified a problematic situation and proposed an action plan. This plan followed the cyclical steps that made up action research: planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Burns, 2010; Richards & Lockhart, 1994). In the first step, the problem was identified, and the teacher designed an action plan. In the second step, the plan was carried out during a period of time. In the third step the effects of the action were observed, and the researcher collected the data. In the last step the teacher reflected, analyzed and described the

results of her qualitative inquiry supported by quantitative data to explain the changes generated by her intervention in the educational context.

3.3   Context

This study was carried out at a public school in the southeast of Bogota, with 29 ninth graders. The school's main goal is to ensure a better quality of life through providing an integral education. The institution offers four hours of English language instruction per week. Two of them are developed in a classroom and the other two in a computers' room. The syllabus of the English subject is focused on grammar. By each topic, the learning aim, the strategies and the evaluation are specified taking into account cognitive, social-affective and procedural achievements. In the language teaching process, the methodology is not specified, hence each teacher implements different strategies according to the students' level, needs, characteristics, interests and skills.

3.3.1   Participants

In this research study 29 ninth graders participated: 15 female and 14 male students, whose age ranged between 13 and 18 years old. Most of them belong to a low socioeconomic stratum and live near the school or in surrounding neighborhoods. Their English level is A1 since they use basic expressions and can answer simple questions about their personal information (Council of Europe, 2001). Regarding pronunciation, learners have not received instruction about the features of English phonemes, intonation or stress patterns, the practice in class is reduced to repetition before listening activities, watching a video or presenting an oral task. Consequently, as it was mentioned in the needs analysis, due to the interference of their native language, students found difficult to recognize the specific features of English sounds and to perceive differences among them.

In general terms, ninth graders make up a close group, characterized by their high level of motivation, their remarkable responsibility and their commitment when they want to accomplish a task. However, they are not good at memorizing, what it makes difficult to recall information, for example they usually forget words' pronunciation. In relation to attention span, it is necessary to include dynamic activities in which they can play an active role since their attention span is short, although they can do multiple tasks at the same time. Concerning logical thought, they can support their ideas using logical arguments and adopt a critical point of view with respect to a difficult situation. Nevertheless, their opinions can be influenced by personal problems that also affect their attention, self-control and self-confidence. In this way, when they have problems, they look for affection, it is evidenced in the teenagers' necessity to have an approval from their peers (Harmer, 2007) and their teachers.

3.3.2 Researcher's role

The teacher who was the researcher played two different roles during the development of this inquiry: as an investigator and as a participant. In the first role as an investigator the researcher found a problem in a school setting and proposed a solution, while she was participating within her own research (Burns, 2010). This process allowed the teacher to observe the class from an objective perspective, reflect upon her practice, identify learners 'difficulties and plan a strategy that could answer the research question. At the same time, the teacher decided which aspects of teaching she wished to explore and which procedure she preferred to use (Richards & Lockhart, 1994) in the implementation of the strategy, data collection procedures and analysis of the impact of the strategy on students' learning. In the second role as a participant, the teacher was involved in the pedagogical intervention, leading the research process and encouraging learners to overcome their difficulties through the new strategy.

3.3.3 Ethical considerations

These considerations are related to the correct and honest way to conduct a research, taking into account that participants are human beings that deserve respect. Therefore, in order to follow ethical requirements, Burns (2010) mentions two types of permissions to be implemented in action research: principal's authorization and participants' parental consent. In this study, the former, intended to get permission from the institution by means of a letter (Appendix B: Consent Letters), in which the principal was informed about the study and its implications in English learning process. The latter to inform about the pedagogical intervention and meet the requirements for students' participation, done through a consent form addressed to learners' parents (Page 88) because most of the participants were minors. With these consent letters the researcher not only informed about the research she conducted, but also, respected the right to decide on participating freely while guaranteeing the anonymity and confidentiality. This latter term understood as a way of protecting participants' right to privacy (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

3.4 Data collection instruments

In this section the reader can find the instruments selected for obtaining information about the influence of PI and LOs in participant's pronunciation skills. Thereby, through the different instruments, it was possible to analyze the students' response in regard to the pedagogical intervention in a blended pronunciation course.

3.4.1 Descriptions and justifications

3.4.1.1 *Field notes*

This instrument is used to describe objectively what it is occurring in the observed setting. Wallace (1998) pointed out that one of the advantages of using this kind of record in the

classroom is to register and recall the main information of the class and may promote efficiency since it serves to reflect upon a particular aspect of teaching and learning. In this study, field notes (Appendix C:) were used to gather information about the implementation of pronunciation instruction during face to face sessions and students' reactions, opinions or difficulties regarding the activities or exercises done to foster recognition and production. In an inquiry referenced in the previous chapter (p. 18), field notes were used for capturing students´ perceptions and registering most of the significant aspects of the class (Molina, 2011).

3.4.1.2 Audio recordings

Audio recordings is an instrument that serve to evidence oral interaction (Burns, 2010). In this way, this instrument has been used in some studies of pronunciation (Mancera, 2014; Molina, 2011; Souto, 2013), which demonstrated that it is a necessary tool to collect data and analyzing oral production improvements. For this reason, it was useful for following the students' process when they practiced fricative consonants by recording the production activities in the software Audacity. Also, recordings support the selected strategy, satisfying the need of collecting information to analyze the development of participants' production of sounds since they can be replayed and examined many times, and can capture many details that cannot easily be observed by other means (Richards & Lockhart, 1994). Accordingly, a record sheet was created (Appendix C:) in which the participants wrote down their strengths and difficulties, and a chart was used to evaluate the practice activities and evidence the learners' progress.

3.4.1.3 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are a useful tool to inquire about affective dimensions of teaching and learning, such as beliefs, attitudes, motivation and preferences (Richards & Lockhart, 1994). In this case, it was appropriate to bring EFL learners' perceptions, thoughts or reactions together

regarding the implementation of the strategy proposed: pronunciation instruction for face to face sessions and the use of the LOs in online sessions. According to Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2001) this instrument is one of the most used social research techniques that can be administered by different means. Thus, there are different types of questions; for this research study, the questions were open (Appendix C:). Nunan (1992) referred that "an open item is one in which the subject can decide what to say and how to say it" (p. 143). Therefore, the idea was to take advantage of this feature by allowing the participants to express their viewpoints freely.

3.4.1.4 Focus group

Focus group is a kind of interview in which interaction arises among participants, rather than the bidirectional talk between the interviewer and the interviewee (Cohen et al., 2007). The main advantage of this instrument is to offer "the opportunity to interview a number of people at the same time, and to use the interaction between a group as a source of further insight" (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2006, p. 172). In this way, the data is captured from the spontaneous discussion that can be focused on a specific topic. The focus group allowed the researcher to encourage the participants to express and discuss freely their knowledge on pronunciation, views and experiences in regard to what they learnt and the difficulties they faced during the blended course.

3.4.2 Validation and piloting

The validation of the instruments was done by some colleagues who reviewed them and provided some suggestions with respect to the activities for practicing pronunciation. Piloting was done during the training sessions. Hence, the sequence of the activities in the classroom and in the computers' room were implemented with ninth graders in order to analyze and cope with the possible problems that could arise during the development of the activities as well as the

functioning of technological tools that are part of the online component. The piloting gave the researcher the opportunity to test the instruments and make changes according to the failures found during its implementation.

3.5   Conclusion

In this chapter the main information about the type of study was given; also, the context where it was carried out, and the instruments to collect the data were described. This inquiry was categorized as a small-scale qualitative action research that followed the cyclical steps: planning, action, observation and reflection. The pedagogical intervention took place in a public school where the participants, ninth graders, whose level of English is A1, study. In order to conduct the research, there, the observer complied with ethical procedures for getting the permission and using the information collected. Subsequently, each instrument implemented for data collection was presented and its utility to this study. Finally, the process of validation and piloting was explained. In the next chapter, the design of the pedagogical intervention will be described in depth, as well as the phases and the sessions that implied its implementation.

Chapter 4: Pedagogical Intervention and Implementation

4.1   Introduction

The previous chapter aimed at giving a big picture of the context in which this study was carried out. The type of research was specified, and also the cycle that the inquiry process had to follow, the ethical requirements considered to respect the participants and the instruments that served to collect the data about the impact of a blended course on learners' pronunciation of fricative sounds. In this chapter, the reader will find the main pedagogical concepts (i.e. language, learning and curriculum) that are the support of the research. Additionally, information on the path followed by the participants during the intervention and the implementation in two phases is provided: learners' training and implementation of the face to face and virtual sessions.

4.2   Visions of language, learning, and curriculum

4.2.1   Vision of language

From the structuralist perspective language is seen, as a system of organized related elements for the transmission of meaning. Language has some specific features, such as human, arbitrary, universal, double articulated, rational, acquired, conventional and willingly. According to Tudor (2001) in this system all the components have a coherent organization and it is divided into subsystems: "the phonological system that deals with the patterns of sound, the semantic system that deals with the meaning of words and the syntactic system that deals with the rules of grammar" (p. 4). Hence, structuralists affirm that understanding is gained by being aware of the differences between two or more items. For instance, the speaker understands the pronunciation of the word fan /fæn/ by realizing the differences that exist between this one and van /vɑ:n/, when they are perceived and produced.

In the phonological system the minimal units are called phonemes. Thereby, the understanding of the sound system in a language depends on the position of the phonemes that can be at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of a word, and their relation with the other sounds (Tudor, 2001). In the pedagogical intervention, the understanding on the production of sounds came from the comparison between the voiced fricative and the voiceless sounds. Thus, during the implementation each session was focused on two sounds (one unvoiced and another voiced), for example, the first session learners were taught the pronunciation of /f/ and /v/ phonemes. Although they are pronounced in the same way: "when two vocal organs come close enough together for the movement of air to be heard between them" (Kelly, 2000, p. 50); the difference is noticed when the features of each phoneme are recognized in the pronunciation of different words.

4.2.2   Vision of learning

The vision of learning in this study is "acquiring or getting of knowledge of a subject or a skill by study, experience, or instruction" (Brown, 2007, p. 7). Thereby, learning process implies to facilitate students the construction of knowledge through PI, to provide them meaningful input and practice by using LOs and to engage them in the development of their phonological competence by implementing activities in which learners interact in groups or pairs to gain experience and improve their phonological performance.

The teacher's role is "one who fosters learner autonomy through the use of group work and pair work and by acting as more of a resource than a transmitter of knowledge" (Harmer, 2007, p. 108) since the teacher facilitates the development of the competence by providing learners opportunities to work in groups in the face to face sessions, and in pairs in the virtual sessions. The learners' role is active, as participants that are involved in their learning process,

managing time, making decisions and evaluating their own performance and their classmates as well.

4.2.3 Vision of curriculum

The term curriculum refers to "all the aspects of the planning, implementation and evaluation of an educational program" (Finney, 2002). In this project the curriculum is skill-based, that "is most useful when learners need to master specific types of language uses either exclusively or as part of broader competency" (Krahnke, 1987), that is, pronunciation. In general terms, the main goal is to provide explicit instruction in the sessions and give learners the opportunity to practice the knowledge acquired in relation to what they are able to do through the use of language.

The institutional curriculum is grammar-based. It was designed taking into account the national standards, the context and the students' level. In this document, the academic criteria are specified in the description of the topics, the learning aims, the evaluation method, the strategies, the sequence of activities and the resources. However, in the institutional curriculum pronunciation is not considered as a skill that deserves attention, nor the use of ICTs in English language learning. For this reason, the main idea is to include new strategies in the curriculum design that help teachers to develop pronunciation as a sequence of sessions that involve learners and start fostering autonomy through blended learning.

4.3 Instructional design

4.3.1 Lesson planning

The lesson planning was designed according to blended learning (see Chapter 2:): face to face sessions and online sessions. For face to face sessions (Appendix D:) the sequence was taken from the suggestions that Ur (1991) stated for improving pronunciation. Thus, the first

stage was a warm up activity in groups to introduce vocabulary that had the target sounds. The

second stage was the explicit instruction about the way of pronouncing the sounds. The third

stage was the discrimination exercise to train learners on recognition. The fourth stage was the

practice in which learners read, sing or repeat a short text that includes the sounds. And the final

stage was the feedback. The virtual sessions had six parts: the first part was the presentation that

gives a general idea about the content of the learning object (Figure 1). The second part was the

introductory activity: an exercise to identify the words that have the target sounds (Figure 2). The

third part was the input activity (Figure 3) where learners could watch a video about how to

pronounce the sounds. The fourth part was the practice (Figure 4) in which they could do some

exercises and record a text. And the fifth part (Figure 5) was the evaluation (i.e. a multiple-

choice questionnaire).
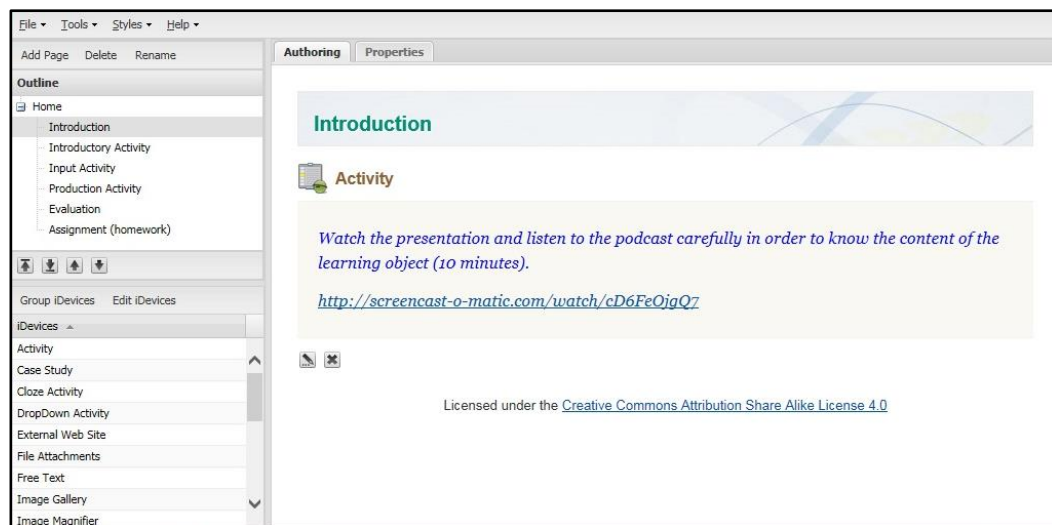
Figure 1. Introduction of the second session (/f/ and /v/ phonemes). This image illustrates
the first part of a learning object.
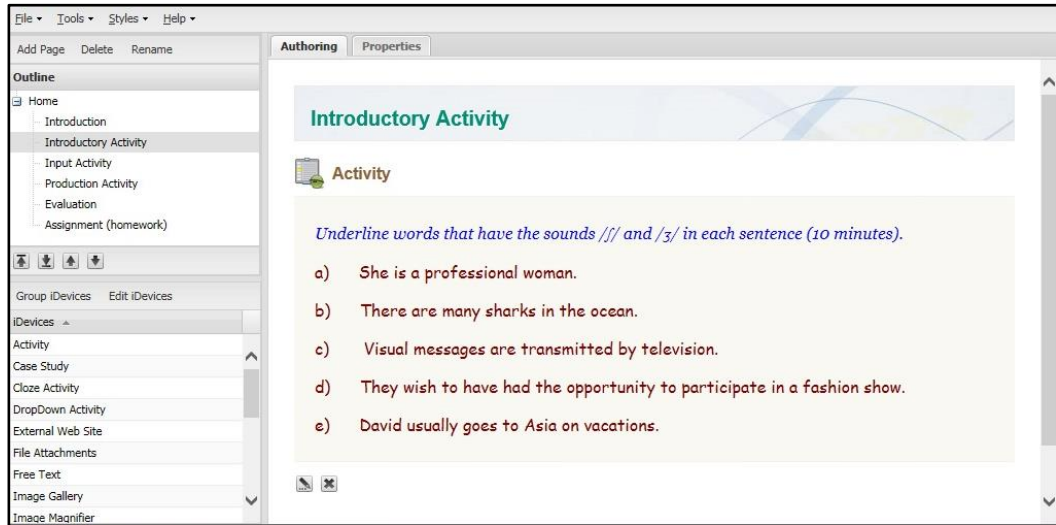
Figure 2. Introductory activity of the eighth session. This image illustrates the second part of a leaning object.
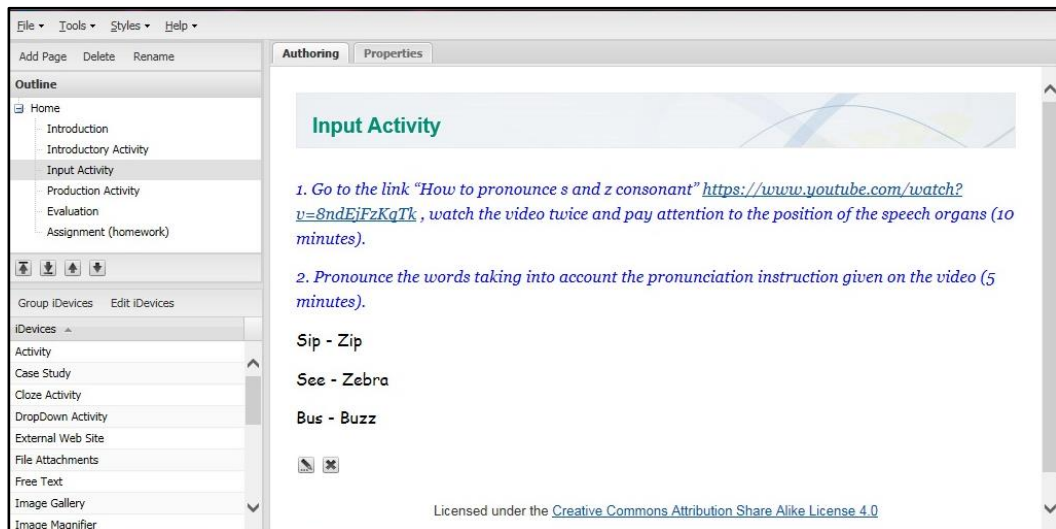
Figure 3. Input activity of the sixth session. This image illustrates the third part of a learning object.
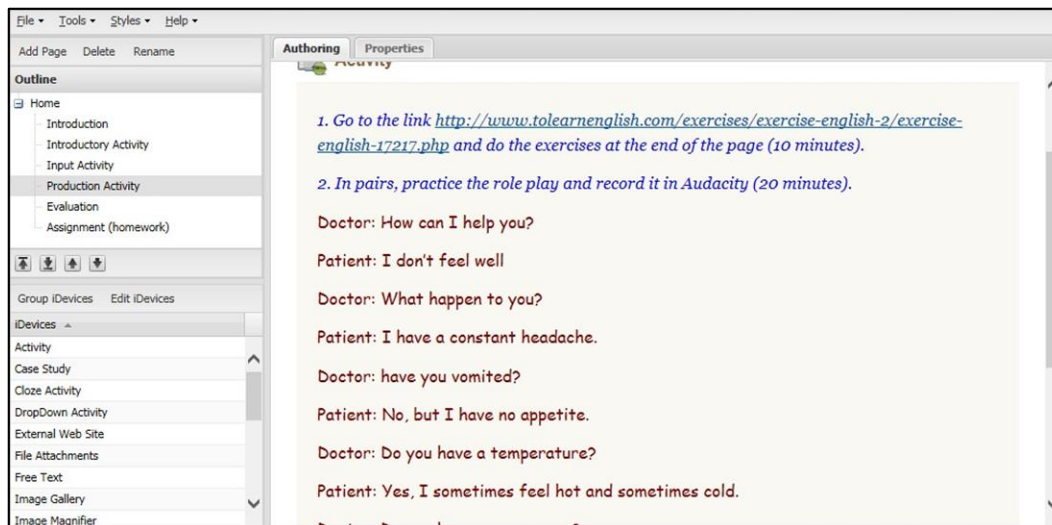
Figure 4. Production activity of the tenth session (/h/ phoneme). This figure illustrates the fourth part of a learning object.

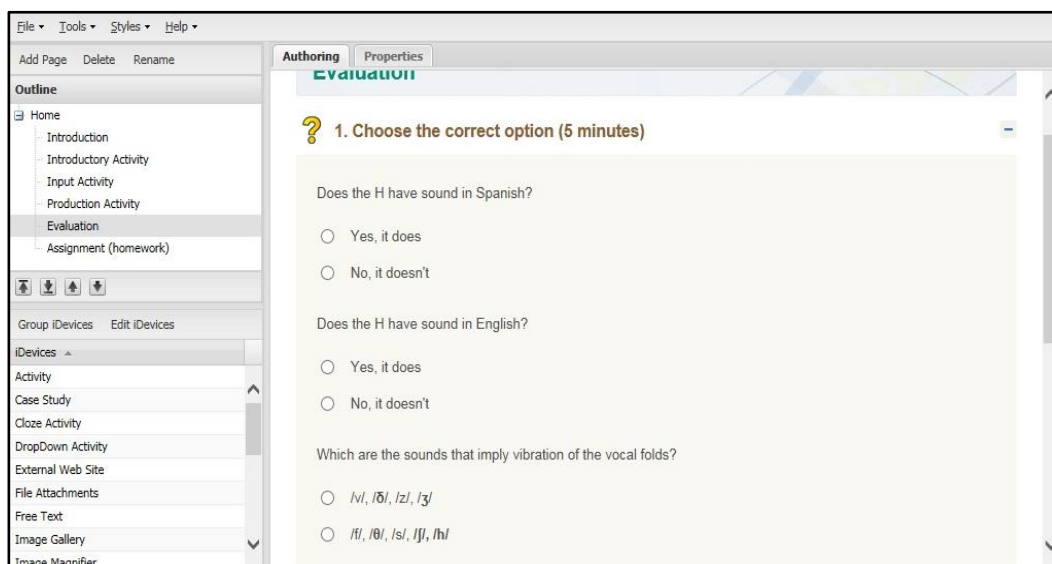*Figure 5.* Evaluation of the tenth session. This figure illustrates the fifth part of a learning object.

4.3.2   Implementation

The pedagogical intervention was carried out during the second semester of 2016, from

September 27th to November 10th, according to the timeline chart (Appendix E:). This

intervention was divided in two phases: the training phase and the implementation.

In the first phase, learners were trained on the identification of the organs of speech, the components of the phonological system (consonants and vowels) and the management of the learning objects. In the second phase, learners had two sessions per week: a face to face session in the classroom and a virtual session in the language laboratory, focused on two fricative sounds. In the face to face session learners received instruction about how to pronounce the two fricative sounds and the difference they have regarding the force of articulation, that is, if the sound is voiced or unvoiced (Kelly, 2000). Additionally, they did an exercise of discrimination to foster recognition and another practice exercise for producing the target sounds to foster production. In the online session, a virtual object was sent to learners' e-mails; in this tool they found links to different web sites to do exercises of repetition of the target sounds. As well as, the production activity that was a recording of a short text that attempted to evidence the learners' progress with respect to pronunciation of the taught sounds.

4.4   Conclusion

The pedagogical intervention allowed participants to raise awareness of English phonological system. On the one hand, the specific features of each fricative sound that enable the hearer to recognize it. On the other hand, the position of the articulators that enable the speaker to produce the sound accurately. Furthermore, the option of designing and using blended learning activities to teach pronunciation gave learners the opportunity to diminish the dependence on the teacher and increase self-confidence and autonomy through the development of virtual activities that become a challenge. The evidence of this research experience was registered in the data collection instruments; this information will be analyzed in order to report the impact of a PI and LOs as a blended course on EFL learners' recognition and production of fricative sounds in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Results and Data Analysis

5.1   Introduction

In the previous chapter, the concepts that support this research study were presented: the vision of language as a system, the process of learning mediated by instruction and the type of curriculum (i.e. skill-based). In the second part, the instructional design of the blended pronunciation course and the methodology implemented to carry it out were described step by step. This chapter deals with the procedures that help manage, organize and analyze the data collected during the development of the course. As a result of the coding process, two subcategories emerged to consolidate the core category, which answered the research question (see Section 1.3).Then, the discussion of categories allows the reader to evidence the effects of the implementation of the strategy, supported by excerpts of different instruments and the findings of similar studies that aim at fostering pronunciation.

5.2   Data management procedures

The data collected through the field notes, the audio recordings, the questionnaires and the focus group were compiled in a folder. As an early stage to organize the information, the field notes and the focus group were coded by hand. Likewise, the questionnaires were digitized, and the answers were coded, for open questions in MS Excel, and the answers for multiple-choice questions were registered in a tally sheet. Regarding the recordings, a rubric was used to assess participants' pronunciation of sounds in two categories: accurate or inaccurate. This procedure facilitated the organization and management of data from a sample of 19 participants, included as a result of a selection process, based on two criteria: attendance to the sessions and accomplishment of all the activities proposed.

5.2.1   Validation

Validation was done through the triangulation strategy that according to Creswell (2012) is "the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative research" (p. 259). Triangulation is used to find commonalities in data, the researcher establishes a comparison among different resources, situations and methods to notice if the same pattern emerges regularly (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In other words, the collected data from an instrument is contrasted with the others to find similarities in the way that participants react to the implementation of pronunciation instruction and learning objects into the teaching practice.

5.2.2   Data analysis methodology

Data analysis was carried out following the steps of grounded theory methodology. This type of theory is defined by Creswell (2013) as "a qualitative research design in which the inquirer generates a general explanation (a theory) of a process, an action, or an interaction shaped by the views of a large number of participants" (p. 83). Hence, the first step was to organize and prepare the data for analysis (i.e. listen to the recordings and transcribe the focus group interview), the second step was to read the data, the third step was to divide the information into segments and code them, the fourth step was to group codes into categories, the fifth step was to represent the narrative on a graphic, and finally to give meaning to the data (Creswell, 2009), what led to the answer of the research question.

During this analysis process, the strategy implemented was the sequential exploratory that has two phases: the analysis of qualitative data and the analysis of quantitative data (Creswell, 2009). Accordingly, the focus of the analysis was on the qualitative information that was

supported by the quantitative information in order to have a wider perspective for the interpretation of the findings.

5.3   Categories

The categories are "entities comprised of grouped codes" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 376), resulting from the organization and selection of the data. In other words, each category is the representation of a group of codes focused on the same topic. This process of data coding was done in three stages: open, axial and selective coding.

5.3.1   Overall category mapping

The open coding stage consisted in reading the information, dividing it into segments and naming each of them according to the subject. During the reading of the data collected, the researcher wrote a list of the most repeated themes. Then, these themes were organized as preliminary categories in a chart, in which each code was classified. Table 1 shows a sample of the codes emerged during this stage.

Table 1

Sample of initial coding

Recognition
Recognition of the target sounds
Recognition of words according to the sounds
Recognition of the target sound's feature
Recognition of the main speech organs
Recognition of words through the phonetic transcription
Recognition of the /s/ sound
Recognition of the /z/ sound

Recognition of the differences between /s/ and /z/

Recognition of the sound through the grapheme

Recognition of the differences between L1 and L2 pronunciation of a target sound

The axial coding stage refers to the procedure of integrating codes into a theme or category. Along this stage, it was necessary to discard the codes that appeared in just one instrument and did not connect anyway to the preliminary categories. A sample of the axial coding is provided in the table below.

Table 2

Sample of axial coding

Category	Codes
Production	Fluency on pronunciation of difficult words
	Learn to pronounce words
	Learn to pronounce better
	Learn to pronounce using different texts
	Learn to pronounce similar sounds
	Improve pronunciation
	Learn to pronounce consonants
	Improve English
	Repetition of pronunciation of words

The selective coding stage was done after regrouping codes and establishing relations among the categories determined to support the core category. According to Creswell (2013), in

this stage "the researcher assembles a story that describes the interrelationship of categories in a model" (p. 87), thus, the main objective of the researcher was to analyze, connect, understand and represent the storyline by using a mapping (*Figure 6*). This graphic illustrates the organization of the information obtained, the storyline reflected in the relation among categories and subcategories and the core category that was the outcome of the relation that exists between the final categories.
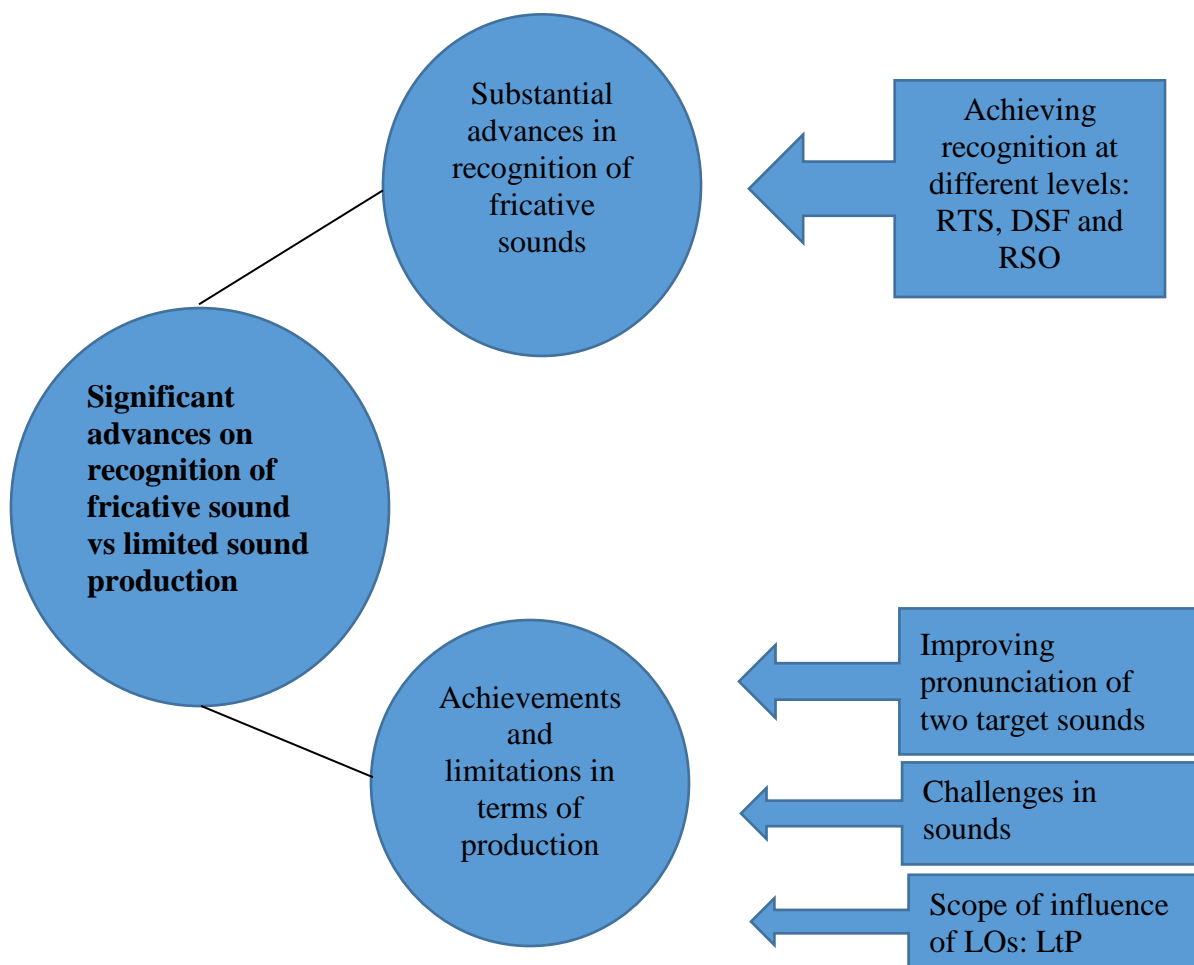
Figure 6. The mapping

5.3.2   Discussion of categories

At the end of the coding process, the main categories that integrated the most frequent codes were: substantial advances in recognition of fricative sounds and achievements and limitations in terms of production. In the former category, one subcategory subsumed: achieving recognition at different levels (recognition of the target sounds RTS, differentiation of sounds' features DSF and recognition of speech organs RSO). The latter category included three subcategories: improving pronunciation of two target sounds, challenges in sounds pronunciation (mispronunciation of the target sounds MTS) and scope of influence of LOs (learn to pronounce LtP).

5.3.2.1   Substantial advances in recognition of fricative sounds

Findings of the data analysis revealed that the strategy implemented (pronunciation instruction and learning objects) through a blended course improve learners' recognition of most of the fricative consonants. They could identify a good number of the target sounds using the phoneme, the imitation of the sound or examples of words, as it is evident in the following excerpts:

Table 3

Excerpts of three instruments to evidence students' recognition of some fricative consonants

Questionnaires	Focus Group	Field Notes
Ss were asked: Which sounds were the easiest to identify? Student 13 answered: "the easiest were /f/ y /v/ /s/ y /z/".	Ss were asked: Which sounds were taught in the pronunciation course? Student 18 answered: "la ja".	I asked them to look for words that have /θ/. One student says: "health", another says: "three", another says: "bathroom"…

In these examples, the answers of the students demonstrate that pronunciation instruction helped them to gain awareness of the sounds of English (Atli & Bergil, 2012) at different levels: the usage of the phonetic representation of sounds, the recognition of the phoneme /h/ by using an onomatopoeia and the recognition of the phoneme /θ/ through the grapheme th, in spite of the fact that does not exist correspondence between them in the target language.

Another fact that reflected the participants' improvement on recognition is that they could perceive differences with respect to the realization of the same phoneme in L1 and L2, as it is shown in the following excerpts:

Table 4

Students' recognition of differences of the sounds in L1 and L2

Field Notes	Focus Group
I asked them: which is the difference between the two sounds? A student answered:"in Spanish the letter zee is not the same as in English", another says: "and the letter S is softest" and another says: "the letter zee has more vibration".	How do you pronounce the letter V in Spanish and in English? Which is the difference? Student 18 answered: "in English it sounds like longer, like with a short vibration and in Spanish /be/"

This kind of comparisons between L1 and L2 phonological systems is highly recommended by Seidlhofer (2001) to teach phonetics since learners use their L1 system to understand the sounds of a new language. Consequently, findings revealed that the participants developed awareness by establishing differences between their native and the target language phonological systems.

Furthermore, learners gained understanding on the recognition of the main speech organs that are part of the human vocal tract due to the pronunciation instruction received in the face to

face sessions. It is evident in the following excerpts taken from the field notes and the

questionnaire:

Table 5

Students' recognition of speech organs

Field Notes	Questionnaire
The teacher asked: which organs do you use to pronounce these sounds /ʃ/ and /ʒ/? Students answered: "teeth, tongue, vocal cords and palate ."	The interviewer asked: Do you consider that explicit and virtual instruction help you improve the pronunciation of the fricative consonants? Why? S3 answered: "of course, now if somebody asks me something in English that has the letter zee, I know that it is with the teeth and the throat."

These samples confirm that systematic explanation and instruction (including information

about the structure and movement of parts of the mouth) improve learners' pronunciation (Ur,

1991). Since, in the first sample learners could identify the main organs that articulate the

sounds, and in the second sample, the student is aware of the organs involved in the realization

of the phoneme /z/.

Nevertheless, the analysis of the information gathered evidenced that most participants

found difficult to recognize /θ/ sound, as the excerpts below reflect:

Table 6

Students' difficulty to recognize /θ/ sound

Focus Group	Questionnaire
The interviewer asked: Which sound is it? And she showed the word "earth". One student replied "v", S5 said: "t", S4 said: "t", the interviewer pronounced it, S2 asked for repetition and the interviewer repeated it.	The question 3: Which sounds were the most difficult to identify? Why? The third part of the students mentioned /θ/ since they got confused.

In the first case, learners could not identify the phoneme through the word because in Spanish phonological system the h does not have sound and therefore, the only possibility to pronounce it was through the sound of the letter *T* /te/ in Spanish. In the second case, the confusion could be because of the fact that there is one grapheme (i.e. th) for two phonemes: /θ/ and /δ/, and to know when to pronounce one of them requires knowledge and practice.

Likewise, the information evidenced a difficulty to discriminate /vi:/ sound in some minimal pairs. Most of the participants got confused when they listened to similar words (e.g. fan – van), it could be due to the similar features of the phonemes. There are commonalities with respect to the manner and place of articulation in English: f and v are labio dental – fricatives (Kelly, 2000), the only distinctive characteristic is the vibration of the second one. For this reason, Spanish speakers cannot identify the difference between f and v easily. The following excerpts are a sample of this difficulty:

Table 7

Students' difficulty to recognize /vi:/ sound

Field Notes	Focus Group
Most of them cannot identify the sound pronounced, so they ask me to repeat it… In the next two pairs of words (lift-lived and half-have) they are confused… also with loft-loved.	The interviewer asks: which is the difference between these two words /seɪf/ and /seɪv/? Which is the voiced sound? S4 said: the first, and students pronounced the two words again.

5.3.2.2   *Achievements and limitations in terms of production*

The results indicated that there was a subtle advance on learners' production of two of the target sounds mainly: /ʃ/ and /h/. This was evidenced in the focus group when the researcher asked learners to read the statement "the vacations were fantastic" three interviewees pronounced

the sound /ʃ/ accurately: student 18 pronounced: /bakeʃən/, student 5 pronounced: /bakeʃ/

emphasizing the sound and student 4 pronounced: /bakeʃəns/. Similarly, in another statement the

sound /ʃ/ in the word "station" was pronounced correctly: student 5 pronounced: /esteɪʃon/ and

student 2 pronounced: /steɪʃon/ to point out the pronunciation of /s/ sound. In addition, the

analysis of the audio recordings showed that most of the students improved the pronunciation of

the target sound, illustrated in table 8:

Table 8

Analysis of students' articulation of /ʃ/ Sound

	/ʃ/ Sound	
Students	Number of accurate sounds	Number of inaccurate sounds
S1	4	1
S2	3	2
S3	3	2
S4	3	2
S5	2	3
S6	0	5
S7	3	0
S8	4	1
S9	4	1
S10	5	0
S11	5	0
S12	5	0
S13	5	0
S14	3	2
S15	5	0
S16	0	5
S17	4	1
S18	4	1
S19	3	2

Another advance in learner's production was the accurate pronunciation of phoneme /h/,

as it is demonstrated in the focus group when the interviewer asked them to give some examples

that had the aforementioned phoneme and student 9 replied: /help/, student 18 said: /hotel/,

student 4 mentioned: /haʊs/ and student 2 pronounced: /hospɪtal/. Likewise, the analysis of the

audio recordings pointed out that participants improved their pronunciation of the target sound,

as it is evidenced in table 9. It is necessary to clarify that some of the students recorded the role

play assuming only one role and the others changing roles.

Table 9

Analysis of students' articulation of /h/ sound

	/h/ Sound	
Students	Number of accurate sounds	Number of inaccurate sounds
S1	2	1
S2	3	0
S3	3	0
S4	6	0
S5	6	0
S6	6	0
S7	5	1
S8	3	0
S9	6	0
S10	4	0
S11	6	0
S12	3	0
S13	6	0
S14	6	0
S15	4	0
S16	5	1
S17	4	0
S18	6	0
S19	6	0

In contrast, findings denoted that mispronunciation is the most common participants'

difficulty. This kind of problem was identified mainly in the realization of three phonemes: /θ/,

/v/ and /ʒ/. The first phoneme was the most mentioned by learners in the questionnaire, when

they answered the question: which were the most difficult sounds to pronounce? Also, in the

focus group, three students mispronounced the target sound: S4 said: /somtin/, S9 said: /trusdei/

and S5 said: /tursdei/. Table 10 shows students' underperformance in the articulation of /θ/

sound:

Table 10

Analysis of students' articulation of /θ/ Sound

Students	/θ/ Sound	
	Number of accurate sounds	Number of inaccurate sounds
S1	0	3
S2	1	2
S3	1	2
S4	0	3
S5	0	3
S6	0	3
S7	0	3
S8	0	3
S9	0	3
S10	0	3
S11	2	1
S12	1	2
S13	1	2
S14	0	3
S15	0	3
S16	0	3
S17	0	3
S18	1	2
S19	1	2

To cope with the difficulty of pronouncing /θ/ Sound learners used Spanish phonemes to

replace it. Thus, during the analysis of the poem recorded, most of them tended to pronounce

/di:/ or /ti:/ instead of the target sound. For instance, the word "think" was pronounced as /dɪnk/

and the word "teeth" was articulated as /ti:t/.

The second phoneme /v/ was mispronounced by most of the participants as well. Hence,

in the focus group students read /bɛri/, students 18, 5 and 4 made the same mistake when they

articulated the word "vacations", instead of /vi:/ they articulated /bi:/ (as mentioned above in

5.3.2.2), and S9 said: /ebalueɪʃon/. In the same sense, in the questionnaire students' answers ranked the sound /vi:/ in the second place, as the most difficult sound to pronounce. Moreover, in the recordings the voicing of the phoneme was not perceived in most of the samples since participants pronounced /vi:/ sound as the L1 phoneme /bi:/, as Harmer (2007) remarked the participants can not differentiate them and they will not be able to produce two different sounds easily.

Table 11

Analysis of students' articulation of /vi:/ sound

	/vi:/ Sound	
Students	Number of accurate sounds	Number of inaccurate sounds
S1	0	1
S2	1	3
S3	1	2
S4	0	3
S5	0	5
S6	0	3
S7	0	4
S8	0	2
S9	0	5
S10	0	4
S11	0	5
S12	1	2
S13	1	3
S14	0	4
S15	0	3
S16	0	2
S17	0	1
S18	1	4
S19	1	4

The third sound that caused difficulty to participants was /ʒ/. This difficulty was evidenced in the focus group when the interviewer showed the word "visual" and students had to identify the sound, most of them mispronounced it: /bɪsʊal/. In another question, the researcher asked

about the difference between the words "ambition" and "vision", S4 said: /bɪʃɪon/. Similarly, in

the field notes (session 7), the teacher wrote her perception about learners' difficulties in the

practice exercise: "I realize that they have difficulties with /ʒ/, they get stuck when they are

pronouncing the sound or mispronounce it". Additionally, the analysis of the recordings revealed

that participants underperformed in the realization of this phoneme, as it is shown in the table 12:

Table 12

Analysis of students' articulation of /ʒ/ Sound

	/ʒ/ Sound	
Students	Number of accurate sounds	Number of inaccurate sounds
S1	0	2ʒ
S2	0	2ʒ
S3	0	2ʒ
S4	0	2ʒ
S5	1	1ʒ
S6	0	2ʒ
S7	0	1ʒ
S8	0	2ʒ
S9	0	2ʒ
S10	0	2ʒ
S11	0	2ʒ
S12	0	2ʒ
S13	0	2ʒ
S14	0	2ʒ
S15	0	2ʒ
S16	0	2ʒ
S17	0	2ʒ
S18	0	2ʒ
S19	0	2ʒ

The reported results focused primarily on the fricative sounds that could distort

communication. In the case of /f/ and /s/ phonemes participants did not have many difficulties

because they are part of Spanish phonological system and this aspect facilitates their realization.

However, learners could not pronounce accurately the phoneme /s/ in initial position (e.g. stays

and spot), they pronounced it by articulating a vowel before the *S* due to the fact that there are no words in their native language that begin with this type of syllable structure, in which the combination of two consonants (CC) or onset cluster occur.

The remaining fricative sounds are /zɛd/ and /δ/. According to the findings, all of the students mispronounced /zɛd/ sound in the words *has* and *does* because during the training sessions there was not time to explain the rules for plural morphemes (i.e. /s/, /z/ and /iz/) pronunciation. As a consequence, they pronounced /æs/ and /dʌs/ since they assumed that only words that included /zɛd/ sound had a voiced sound. Anyway, in the articulation of words such as *zig zag* only five students pronounced them accurately. In respect of /δ/ phoneme, most of the learners pronounced it as /di:/, the most similar sound in Spanish language, but this mistake did not affect the intelligibility of their speech.

Finally, concerning the influence of LOs on production, the results of the analysis suggested that this tool had a positive impact in helping students learn as Watson (2010) contended. In this sense, in the focus group the interviewer asked about participants' view with regard to LOs and S8 answered: "well, when you listen to it (a resource included in the LO), you try to imitate the sound in order to be able to pronounce it better." Likewise, to the question: What advantages or disadvantages does the implementation of LOs in the pronunciation learning? S8 answered: "it has many advantages because we can learn how the pronunciation of the word sounds is and likewise we correct ourselves and improve", S12 affirmed: "the advantages are a lot it helps us in many things like to pronounce better and with this we learn more" and S15 expressed "we learn a lot to pronounce words with the videos, with the directions given by the teacher."

5.3.3 Core category

After analyzing data and determining categories, the core category that answers the research question is: *significant advances on recognition of fricative sounds vs limited sound production*. This category demonstrates that PI and LOs had a positive influence and helped learners to foster their abilities. Hence, pronunciation is a subskill that entails more than the abilities to listen and reproduce the perceived sounds, it requires the development of abilities such as receptive skills and productive skills (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996; Flege, 2005; Kelly, 2000; Kissling, 2015; Seidlhofer, 2001). In the core category it is evidenced that PI and LOs played an essential role by providing learners the opportunities to develop awareness concerning the differences that exist between the target language and their native language phonological system. As a result, learners' recognition improved, and production stayed in the first stage of development since it requires more time and oral practice.

5.4 Conclusion

The results of this research study have demonstrated that the implementation of pronunciation instruction and learning objects in a blended course enhanced recognition especially, and benefited production to a certain extent. Based on the analysis of the data gathered, it was evident that students' recognition of sounds increased since they could identify most of the fricative consonants, as well as the main speech organs involved in the articulation of this kind of phonemes. Besides, participants improved the production of two phonemes /ʃ/ and /h/. Also, the findings pointed out their main difficulties, such as the difficulty on recognition and mispronunciation of /θ/ sound and inaccurate pronunciation of /ʒ/ and /vi:/. In general terms, findings reaffirm the positive influence of pronunciation instruction in the development of students' skills and offer insights into the support provided by LOs on EFL students' learning.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

6.1   Introduction

In the previous chapter, the procedures used by the researcher in order to manage, organize, analyze and validate the data collected were explained. One of the most important procedures described was coding and as a result, two categories (i.e. substantial advances on recognition of fricative sounds and achievements and limitations in terms of production) emerged to consolidate the core category named "significant advances on recognition of fricative sounds versus limited sound production." Based on the story line depicted in the mapping, the findings reported important improvements on recognition and not very many on production, as well as some difficulties that the participants had during the development of the blended course. In general terms, the strategy implemented: pronunciation instruction and LOs was effective mainly to enhance students' recognition of fricative phonemes.

The present chapter reports on how the results of this study are related to the ones presented by similar inquiries, the significance of the findings for the school, the national community and the global community. Moreover, the pedagogical challenges that educators face currently with some useful recommendations to improve pronunciation teaching. Finally, the limitations endured during the pedagogical intervention and the topics that could be investigated further to analyze different aspects of pronunciation.

6.2   Comparison of results with previous studies' results

Reviewing other studies' results, PI has been implemented as a technique to train EFL learners in order to master the phonological system of a foreign language. Thus their findings coincide with the present study in that explicit instruction helps students improve perception (Kissling, 2015; Morley, 1991) and realization of sounds (Derwing & Rossiter, 2003; Kendrick,

1997; Lu, 2002; Riveros & Orjuela, 2015; Tlazalo & Basurto, 2014), or both of them (Derwing, Munro, & Wiebe, 1998; Silveira, 2002).

Regarding similarities with the present study, Riveros and Orjuela (2015) implemented phonological training to analyze the realization of phoneme /h/, they found that participants improved the pronunciation of this sound. The differences are the inclusion of some vowels in the instructional phase and the main cause of mispronunciation, L1 interference. In Tlazalo and Basurto's study (2014) a big difference is noticed in the way of analyzing data, they made a comparison between students' pronunciation while reading a text and the recorded pronunciation of the same words in the Cambridge dictionary online. The analysis chart showed that students had problems in the realization of phonemes /θ/ and /v/, the same described previously (in Chapter 5:): learners pronounced /bi:/ instead of /vi:/ and pronounced /ti:/ or /di:/ instead of /θ/. In addition, the focus of Atli and Bergil's inquiry (2012) is a fricative sound (i.e. /θ/), the same that was identified as one of the most problematic in this study and the difference is that participants improved the articulation of /θ/ sound after a five-week period of pronunciation instruction. In the same line, Metruk's study identified that students mispronounced fricative sounds too. Unlike this study, this investigation only deals with the articulation difficulties presented by Slovak EFL university learners. The similar results indicated that the most difficult sounds to pronounce are dental fricatives (i.e. /θ/ and /δ/) and also remarked that pronunciation is a neglected area in English language teaching.

Similar to this study, Bañados (2006), Martin de Lama (2013) and Bataineh and Mayyas (2017) obtained good results in the development of learners' linguistic skills through the implementation of a blended English program. The only difference is that participants were from a higher educational level. In contrast to this study, Ramirez (2014) carried out a blended course,

whose focus was wider than the present study because it aimed at teaching theory, strategies and activities to be developed by educators using a communicative approach, and also to learn how to produce different pronunciation features. Two differences were evidenced: the first one is that the course took longer and the second one is that Ramirez' study obtained better results regarding participants' realization of consonant sounds.

Concerning LOs, Litzler, Laborda and Halbach (2012) presented a proposal to design, form and construct a learning object repository. Their objective was to provide learners additional practice, the same use that LOs of this study were implemented for. The difference is the type of study since it is a theoretical project that does not have implementation nor results. In the case study conducted by Watson (2010) the development of a toolkit of LOs with an explicit learning design was explained. The similarity with the present study is that users agreed that LOs help students learn (one of the conclusions of this study) and the difference is that LOs were designed to teach English for academic purposes.

In the same vein of this research inquiry, other studies that have proved the effectiveness of LOs to support learning are Alvarez and Marcon (2011) in health and nursing, Vargas (2011) in physics and Arango, Gaviria and Valencia (2014) in differential calculus. These research inquiries highlight the benefits of LOs as an online resource for assisting learning in science and mathematics fields.

6.3   Significance of the results

The significance of the findings obtained from this research study in a public school is the impact that the pronunciation blended course had in the participants' learning process since its implementation contributed to the development of students' linguistic competence as it is stated in the standards (Ministerio de Educación Nacional [MEN], 2006) for English language: "the

linguistic competence includes the knowledge and the lexical, phonological, syntactic, spelling

skills among others" (p. 11). In other words, learners improved one of the subskills that is

fundamental for speaking and this knowledge enhanced their awareness as competent speakers,

when they were able to recognize that English sounds cannot be pronounced in the same way as

Spanish sounds and they were able to implement strategies to cope with difficult sounds during

their realization.

For the national educational community, this study helps achieve the main objective of

the bilingual national plan: the improvement of the communicative competence in English as

foreign language (Ministerio de Educación Nacional [MEN], 2014). Also, it brings insights with

respect to the advantages of blended learning as one of the most useful alternatives that can be

used to deliver instruction in those places where students cannot afford expensive costs of a

course or do not have facilities to attend an institution regularly.

At an international level, this study shows how two of the 21st century skills can be

integrated into an English course. The first skill is collaboration evidenced when students learnt

from others and assumed responsibilities working in pairs or groups to accomplish a task

effectively. The second skill is media literacy that can be enabled through the use of LOs, which

included links to several Web sites or tools, thus learners were encouraged to navigate the Web

and manage different digital resources that foster language learning. Furthermore, the results

obtained confirm the benefits of pronunciation instruction as a strategy to help EFL teachers

tackle the challenges that the development of students' oral skills implies.

6.4   Pedagogical challenges and recommendations

In the previous chapter the findings demonstrated that the strategy implemented (PI and

LOs) in a blended course impacted positively EFL learners' pronunciation skills. However, it is

necessary to take into consideration some aspects that will help teachers, who use the same strategy, to improve their pedagogical practice.

Firstly, the development of pronunciation abilities: receptive and productive skills requires a lot of time to evidence salient results because the learning process entails providing learners meaningful input, instruction in terms of manner and place of articulation and exercises to raise awareness of the main sounds' features. For the accurate realization of the phonemes, EFL learners need a lot of practice and the use of different strategies that allow them to realize which organs are needed for the articulation of each sound. Therefore, it is recommended to devote more time, at least two months of the school year in order to obtain better results concerning production skills.

The second challenge is to monitor a follow up activity to provide additional practice outside the classroom. This additional practice was proposed as an assignment included in the learning objects, but participants did not accomplish it. Consequently, to overcome this difficulty, it is advisable to use a checklist or a rubric that teachers and learners should complete in order to develop the habit of evaluating and getting feedback to the oral productions. This feedback that might come from this activity will assist them to realize what they need to improve.

The third challenge is to design a complete sequence of activities to focus on a few sounds. Although the comparison between voiced and unvoiced phonemes was useful to evidence vibration or flow of air through the speech organs, it is recommended to have more time and practice for each sound in order to tackle problems that Spanish speakers face with new sounds. This aspect will allow learners to concentrate on achieving short-term goals. On the

other hand, teachers could include a review of the taught sounds at the middle and at the end of the course to reinforce and evaluate advances.

The last challenge for educators is to have specialized training before designing LOs. This task was very demanding because of the teacher's lack of knowledge and experience. If teachers are prepared for this challenge, they will design more elaborated LOs and will take advantage of all the tool's benefits, using them to support learning with the purpose of enriching their pedagogical practice.

6.5   Limitations of the present study

One of the limitations of the present study was the lack of training on technological resources. Lack of training was one of the main difficulties since some learners did not know how to save files in Audacity, a couple of them did not how to send a file and in the first sessions some others could not have access to their e-mail, thus it was necessary to create an e-mail account for the pronunciation course. This solution facilitated the download of the learning objects as well as the storage of the learners' recordings. Furthermore, at the beginning of the course learners found it difficult to follow the content order of the LO because in the second training session the LOs software did not function and students could not practice, they only received instruction based on images of each part of the tool.

Another limitation was the influence of external factors. In one session learners left the school earlier because there was not water and this situation affected the timeline of the course. For this reason, after ending the school year, learners came back to the school to attend the last session. Likewise, there was no electricity in the ninth session, as a consequence the last activity was modified, and learners had to use the torch of their mobiles in order to finish it, because the classroom was dark and it was very difficult to see.

The last limitation was teacher's lack of experience on research. This was evidenced in the implementation of the field notes because to record the information during the development of the session was very demanding, thus the face to face sessions had to be recorded in order to complete the data. Besides, in the implementation of the questionnaire, it was not possible to give specific instructions regarding the questions due to time constraint. As a result of this fact, learners got confused or misunderstood some questions and some of their answers were not useful for the analysis of the findings. On the other hand, the instructions provided in LOs (the production activity) were not specific and in the first session students recorded a different amount of words and the same situation occurred in the last session in which learners had to assume two roles and some of them assumed only one. Hence, it was not possible to analyze frequency in the recordings due to the variation of the amount of the recorded words.

6.6   Further research

After the implementation of pronunciation instruction and LOs to improve EFL learners' recognition and production of fricative consonants, the necessity to explore in depth the advantages of learning objects arose. In this sense, the analysis of data collected showed that they can support learning but did not present specific information regarding how the use of this tool might influence the development of pronunciation nor to what extent they are useful to foster receptive and productive skills.

Another suggestion would be to carry out a research study focused on the implementation of collaborative work to enhance pronunciation. This would be an interesting option that can shed light on how peers' help impacts the learning process in terms of the aforementioned subskill. One of the main reasons to recommend this topic is because in the pedagogical

intervention of this study most of the activities were in pairs or groups and the observations of peers were useful for participants to monitor, evaluate and reflect on the realization of sounds.

An additional recommendation would be to conduct research studies about the use of software such as Pronunciation Coach 2.0.0, CAN-8 virtual lab, Audacity or Dragon Naturally Speaking, which were designed to provide assistance to users who want to improve oral skills. These programs might give insights on the effect not only on the segmentals production, but also on the suprasegmentals in EFL learning.

6.7   Conclusion

This study was conducted to attend to ninth graders' pronunciation needs in a public school. Their main need was to gain knowledge on the realization of new sounds since they used their mother tongue phonological patterns to face difficulties in oral production. This interference is a common problem when EFL students start learning a new language. In this way, to find a solution, the present inquiry proposed a strategy: pronunciation instruction and LOs in a blended course focused on recognition and production of fricative sounds (the most problematic phonemes) to contribute to the achievement of the main teachers' objective: train competent speakers.

After the pedagogical implementation, analysis of data gathered demonstrated the level of the effectiveness of the strategy. Thus, the findings indicated that the impact was meaningful on participants' recognition, but was minor on production. Likewise, the influence of LOs was not as explicit as it was expected because the only advantage found was to learn pronunciation. That is why, further research on this topic is needed, as well as the influence of collaborative work and the use of different programs on the development of pronunciation. However, before starting a new inquiry, it would be important to bear in mind the limitations that could have hindered the

effective usage of a strategy such as the importance of training on the management of technological resources, external factors and lack of experience.

Finally, the pedagogical challenges for educators are many, among them: to devote enough time to the teaching of pronunciation in order to obtain significant results that can impact students' speaking skills. Also, to design activities to provide meaningful practice inside and outside the classroom. And last, to have specialized training, taking into account that we should offer the best options for learners if we want to give students tools that help them communicate effectively.

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Appendix A: Need Analysis Instruments

A.1   Students' questionnaire

CUESTIONARIO PARA ESTUDIANTES DE GRADO OCTAVO _____

El siguiente cuestionario tiene como propósito identificar las necesidades que tienen los estudiantes de grado octavo, en cuanto a la pronunciación del inglés como lengua extranjera. Por lo anterior, no tiene incidencia en la evaluación del proceso de aprendizaje, sino contribuye al mejoramiento de la práctica docente.

Para contestarlo es necesario aclarar la definición de instrucción fonética. **Instrucción fonética es la práctica educativa que se enfoca en la adquisición y producción de sonidos para pronunciar correctamente un idioma.**

1. ¿Cómo calificarías tu nivel de pronunciación?
    a) Pésimo   b) Malo   c)Regular   d) Muy bueno   e) Excelente
2. ¿Consideras que la instrucción fonética es importante para mejorar la pronunciación?
    a) Sí   b) No
    ¿Por qué?

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

3. ¿Crees que es necesario que en la clase de inglés haya un tiempo específico para la instrucción fonética?
    a) Sí   b) No
4. ¿En primaria las clases de inglés incluían actividades para enseñar a pronunciar?
    a) Sí   b) No
5. ¿Qué tipo de actividades?

    _____
    _____
    _____

6. ¿Qué tan frecuente se realizaban este tipo de actividades?
   a) En todas las clases   b) En algunas clases   c) En ninguna clase
7. Lee en voz alta los grupos de palabras y luego responde: ¿En cuál tuviste más dificultades para pronunciar?
   a) Short, ship, shark
   b) Think, thanks, thunder
   c) Church, chart, cheap
   d) Hair, hope, human
   e) Jail, jelly, job
   f) Water, who, wind
   g) Paper, prince, plum
   h) Vase, visit, volcano
8. ¿Qué dificultades tienes para pronunciar en inglés?

A.1.1 Graphics of Student's Questionnaire

A.1.1.1   Question 1: ¿cómo calificarías tu nivel de pronunciación?

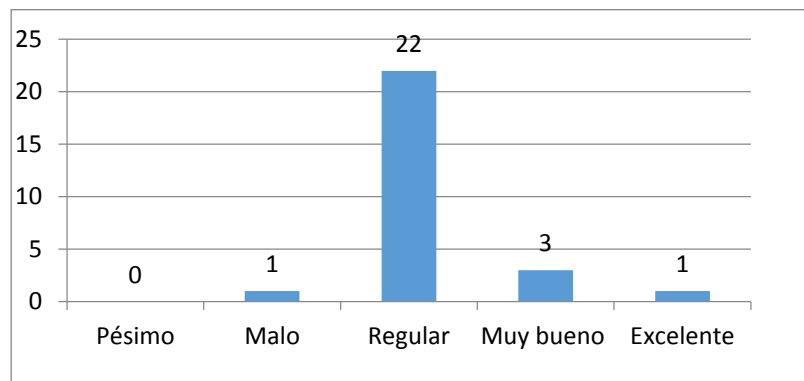|	801
Pésimo	0
Malo	1
Regular	22
Muy bueno	3
Excelente	1

Figure 1. Level of pronunciation. This figure illustrates the students' opinión regarding their level of

pronunciation.

A.1.1.2   Question 2: ¿Consideras que la instrucción fonética es importante para mejorar la pronunciación?
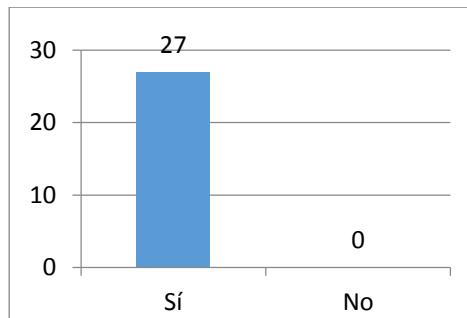
	801
Sí	27
No	0

Figure 2. Importance of phonetics instruction. This figure illustrates the learners' opinion concerning phonetics instruction.

¿Por qué?

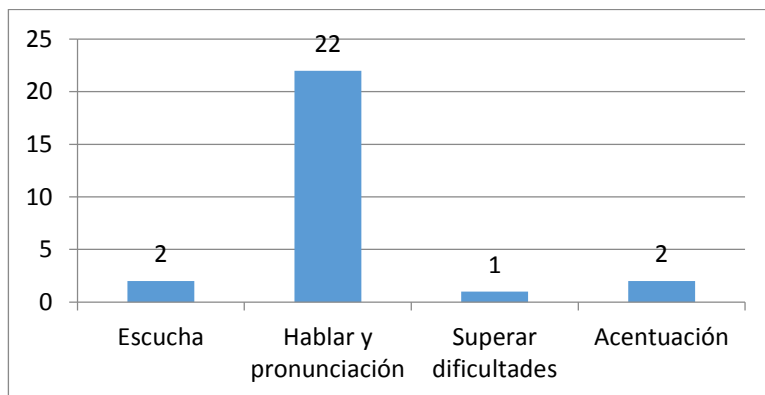|	801
Escucha	2
Hablar y pronunciación	22
Superar dificultades	1
Acentuación	2

Figure 3. Justification of phonetics instruction. This figure illustrates the main reasons given by learners.

A.1.1.3   Question 3: ¿Crees que es necesario que en la clase de inglés haya un tiempo específico para la instrucción fonética?

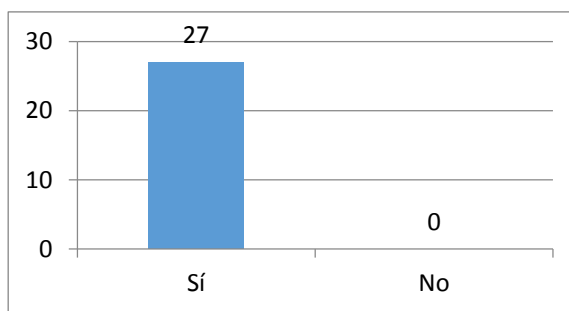|	801
Sí	27
No	0

Figure 4. The necessity of phonetics instruction. This figure illustrates that learners agree with phonetics instruction.

A.1.1.4   Question 7: ¿En cuáles tienes más dificultades para pronunciar?

	801
sh	4
th	10
ch	8
h	10
J	7
w	5
p	2
v	10

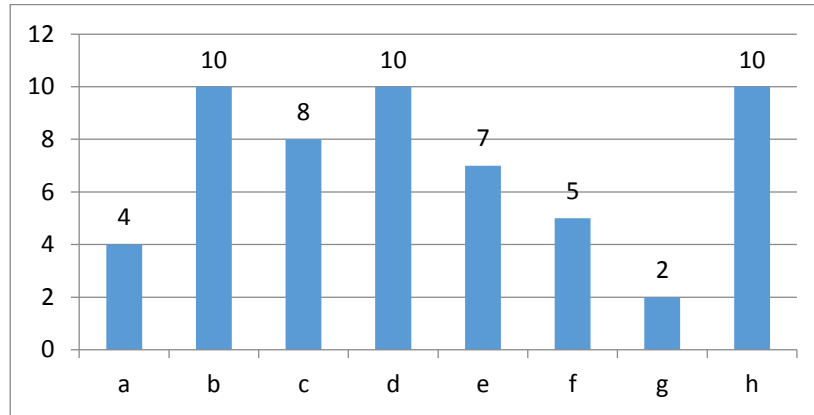Figure 5. The most difficult phonemes. This figure illustrates students' opinión regarding the most difficult

sounds.

A.1.1.5   *Question 8: ¿Qué dificultades tienes para pronunciar en inglés?*

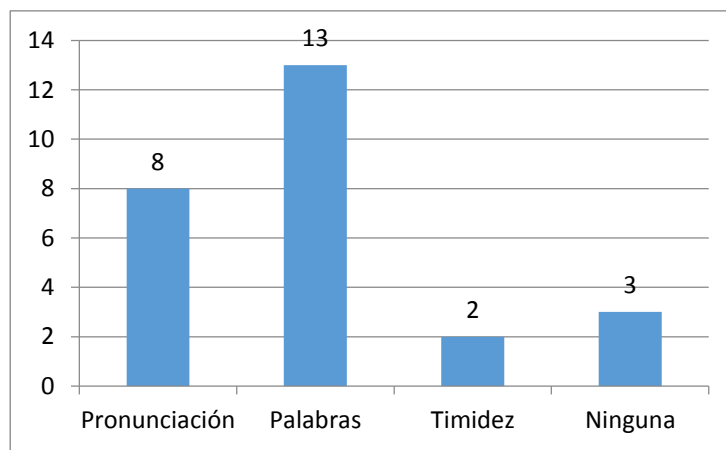|	801
Pronunciación	8
Palabras	13
Timidez	2
Ninguna	3

Figure 6. The most common problems with respect to pronunciation. This figure illustrates students'

opinion.

A.2   Teachers' Interview

ENTREVISTA PARA DOCENTES

1. ¿Cómo aprendió inglés?

2. ¿Por cuánto tiempo ha enseñado inglés?

3. ¿Cómo usted desarrolla la pronunciación del inglés en los estudiantes?

4. Teniendo en cuenta que Instrucción fonética es la práctica educativa que se enfoca en la adquisición y producción de sonidos para pronunciar correctamente un idioma. ¿La instrucción fonética está incluida en el programa de inglés de primaria? ¿Por qué?

5. ¿Para los estudiantes cuáles son los fonemas más difíciles de pronunciar?

6. ¿Cuáles son los menos difíciles de pronunciar?

7. ¿Crees que es necesario que en la clase de inglés haya un tiempo específico para la instrucción fonética? ¿por qué?

8. ¿Cuánto tiempo sería el adecuado?

A.3   Phonetics Test

Phonetics Test

1. Encierra en un círculo el sonido que escuches.
   - /ʃ/   /ʧ/
   - /θ/   /ð/
   - /ʤ/   /ʒ/
   - /v/   /b/
   - /h/   /j/
2. Escucha las parejas de palabras y escribe si son iguales o diferentes.
   - _____
   - _____
   - _____
   - _____
   - _____
3. En cada línea de palabras, subraya la palabra que tiene un sonido inicial diferente.
   - Sugar   sun   city   sock
   - Cut   kite   car   church
   - Theme   them   this   there
   - Virtual   voice   best   vacation
4. Por cada palabra selecciona la pronunciación correcta.

   - Think   /ðɪŋk/   /θɪŋk/
   - Chair   /ʧer/   /ʃer/
   - Help   /help/   /elp/
   - Vase   /beɪs/   /veɪs/
   - Jail   /ʒeɪl/   /ʤeɪl/
5. Escucha y subraya la sílaba donde se acentúa la palabra.
   - In-teres-ting
   - Ja-pa-nese
   - E-lec-tri-ci-ty

- Ho-tel
- En-vi-ron-ment

A.3.1 Graphics of the Phonetics Test

A.3.1.1 Which phoneme did you listen to?

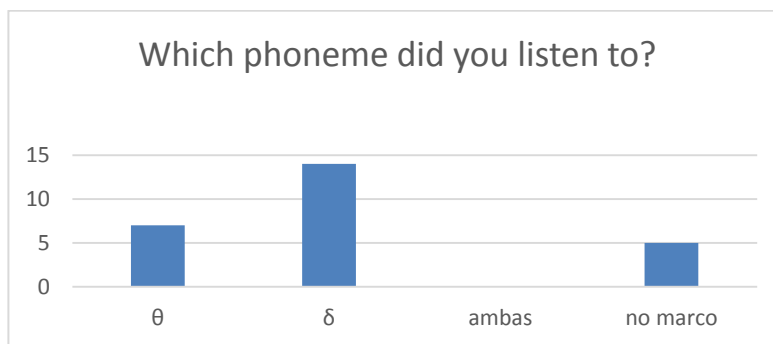|	1b
θ	7
ð	14
ambas	0
no marco	5

Figure 7. Discrimination of sounds. This figure illustrates that students did not recognize the phoneme /θ/.

A.3.1.2 Are these words the same or different?

	2b
igual	24
diferente	2
otro	0
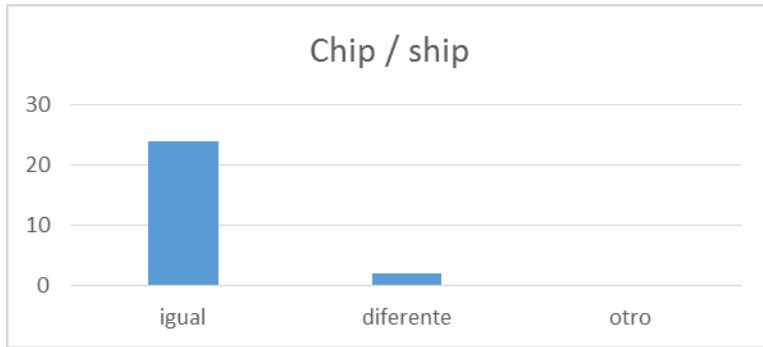
Figure 8. The same or different sound. This figure illustrates that most of the students did not identify any difference between the sound /tʃ/ and /ʃ/.

A.3.1.3 Which is the odd one?

3c	
Theme	0
Them	0
This	25
There	1
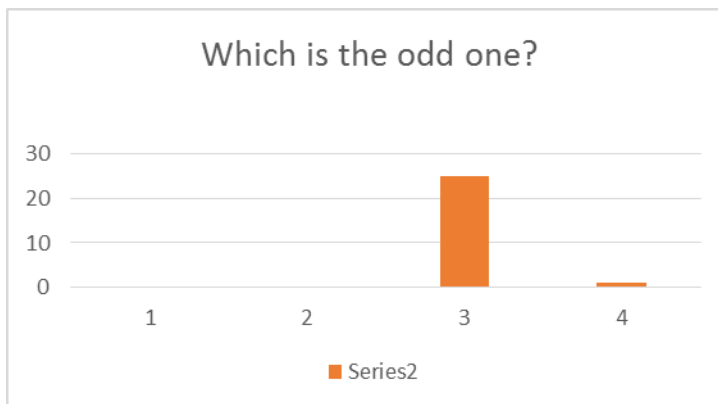
Figure 9. The odd one. This figure illustrates that students could not identify the word that had the different sound.

A.3.1.4 Which is the correct pronunciation?

4c	
no entendio	3
2	11
3	12

Figure 10. The correct phonetic transcription of the pronunciation. This figure illustrates that most of students did not recognize the sound /h/.

A.3.1.5   Where is the accent?

5d	
en	2
vi	15
ron	6
ment	3

Figure 11. The stressed syllable. This figure illustrates that most of students recognized the stressed syllable.

Appendix B: Consent Letters

Bogotá, agosto 29 de 2016

Licenciada
AMANDA DIAZ
Rectora
I.E.D. Fabio Lozano Simonelli
Bogotá D.C.

Reciba un cordial saludo.

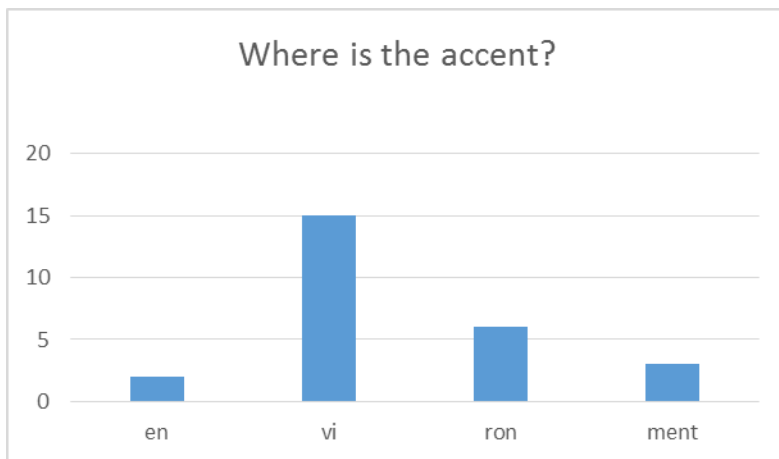Como es de su conocimiento, estoy llevando a cabo el programa de maestría "Didáctica del Inglés con Énfasis en Ambientes de Aprendizaje Autónomo", en la Universidad de La Sabana. El eje central de éste es la implementación de un proyecto de investigación que tenga como finalidad mejorar los procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera.

Por lo anterior, solicito su consentimiento y autorización para iniciar la implementación del proyecto "Blended Learning to Enhance EFL Learners' Pronunciation"; cuyo objetivo principal es desarrollar la conciencia fonológica (percepción y producción de sonidos) en los estudiantes de noveno para evidenciar la importancia de la correcta pronunciación del inglés. Durante su implementación los estudiantes realizarán un curso mixto (presencial, en clase y virtual, en el laboratorio); también se realizarán grabaciones y se aplicarán pruebas y encuestas.

Cabe aclarar, que la ejecución de este proyecto no afectará ni atrasará la planeación de las clases o actividades inherentes al plan de estudios, como tampoco tendrá incidencia alguna en el proceso de evaluación de la asignatura. Además, a los participantes se les garantiza estricta confidencialidad con la información que se obtenga y completa anonimidad.

Agradezco su colaboración.

XXX

Docente de inglés, JT

Bogotá, agosto 30 de 2016

Señores
Padres de Familia
I.E.D. Fabio Lozano Simonelli
Bogotá D.C.

Reciban un cordial saludo.

Por medio de este comunicado les informo que estoy llevando a cabo el programa de maestría "Didáctica del Inglés con Énfasis en Ambientes de Aprendizaje Autónomo", en la Universidad de la Sabana. El eje central de éste es la implementación de un proyecto de investigación que tenga como finalidad mejorar los procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera.

Por lo anterior, solicito su consentimiento y autorización para que su hijo (a) participe en la implementación del proyecto: "Blended Learning to Enhance EFL Learners' Pronunciation"; cuyo objetivo principal es ayudar a los estudiantes a mejorar la pronunciación del inglés mediante la instrucción o entrenamiento en el reconocimiento de los sonidos de la lengua inglesa. Durante este proceso los estudiantes realizarán un curso mixto (presencial, en clase y virtual, en el laboratorio); también se realizarán grabaciones y se aplicarán pruebas y encuestas con el fin de analizar el impacto del proyecto.

Cabe aclarar, que la ejecución de éste no afectará ni atrasará la planeación de las clases o actividades inherentes al plan de estudios, como tampoco tendrá incidencia alguna en el proceso de evaluación de la asignatura.

Además, a los participantes se les garantiza estricta confidencialidad con la información que se obtenga y completa anonimidad.

Agradezco su colaboración.

<mark>XXX</mark>
Docente de inglés, JT

Yo_____ con C.C _____de _____ como

acudiente del estudiante _____ de grado _____ lo (a)

autorizo para participar en el proyecto de inglés que se llevará a cabo durante el segundo semestre del año

2016.

_____

       Firma acudiente

Appendix C: Data Collection Instruments

FIELD NOTES		
DATE:	**SESSION:**	
SUBJECT:	**OBJECTIVE:**	
STAGES	**DESCRIPTION**	**ANALYSIS**
Warm up		
D. Exercise		
Explanation		
Practice		
Feedback		

RECORD SHEET OF PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

NAME:

DATE	SESSION	ACTIVITY	# OF RECORDINGS	STRENGTHS	DIFFICULTIES

QUESTIONNAIRE

El siguiente cuestionario tiene como propósito evidenciar el impacto que tuvo la implementación del proyecto de investigación "Blended learning to enhance EFL learners' pronunciación" en el proceso de aprendizaje de la pronunciación del inglés como lengua extranjera. Por lo anterior, no tiene incidencia en la evaluación del desempeño académico, sino contribuye al mejoramiento de la práctica docente.

Antes de responder, lee bien cada una de las preguntas y escribe tus respuestas de manera clara y coherente. Recuerda que la información será utilizada para analizar la metodología empleada y se garantiza estricta confidencialidad a los participantes.

Name: _____

1. ¿Qué aprendiste durante la realización del curso?

2. ¿Cuáles fueron los sonidos más fáciles de identificar?

3. ¿Cuáles fueron los sonidos más difíciles de identificar?

4. ¿Cuáles fueron los sonidos más fáciles de pronunciar?

5. ¿Cuáles fueron los sonidos más difíciles de pronunciar?

6. ¿Qué ventajas y/o desventajas tiene el uso de los objetos virtuales (son recursos digitales que tienen un objetivo de aprendizaje, contenidos, actividades de aprendizaje y elementos de contextualización) en el aprendizaje de la pronunciación?

7. ¿Qué ventajas y/o desventajas tiene el uso del software Audacity en el aprendizaje de la pronunciación?

8. ¿Consideras que la instrucción presencial y virtual te ayudó a mejorar la pronunciación de las consonantes fricativas (/f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/ and /h/)? ¿por qué?

9. ¿Cuál fue el impacto del curso de pronunciación en tu proceso de aprendizaje del inglés?

10. ¿Qué sugerencias tienes para mejorar el curso de pronunciación?

Gracias por tu colaboración y participación.

Appendix D: A simple of the lesson plans for f2f sessions

Session 1: Pronunciation of fricative sounds /f/ and /v/

Objective: The students will be able to read a rhyme recognizing the main features of /f/ and /v/ sounds.

1. **Warm up activity: Sound race (15 min). Ss ←→ Ss**
Aim: Recall previous knowledge.

The group will be divided into six groups. The target sound is written on the board, so each group has to write as many words as possible that include the sound. The winner will be the group that writes more words correctly. (Adapted from Kelly, 2000)

2. **Discrimination exercise (15 min). T ←→ Ss**
Aim: Identify differences between two similar sounds.

The students will listen to the audio and circle the word that is pronounced.

Number	A	B
1	Fan	Van
2	Phase	Vase
3	Safe	Save
4	Lift	Lived
5	Half	Have
6	Fine	Vine
7	Loft	Loved
8	Rife	Rive
9	Fain	Vain
10	Ferry	Very

3. **Explanation about speech organs position (20 min). T ←→ Ss**
Aim: Gain understanding about how to produce the target sounds.
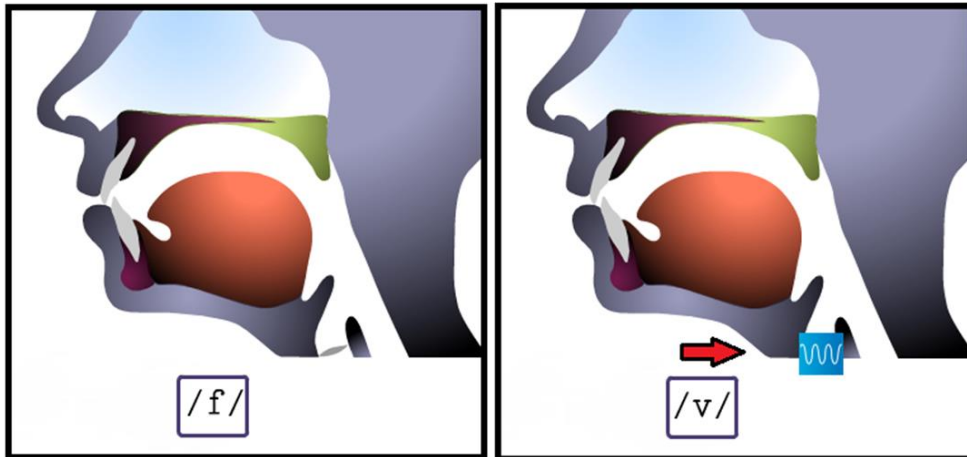
> The **lower lip** is raised in order for the **top teeth** to rest on it
> Watch that the vocal cords vibrate for / v /

Taken from http://api.ning.com/files/ZwH1tpJ959k3-

Iy*iwy51DuOUosAiss48v8hgjc4hEQabdzEM4eecGgLQyXNFbCqNMPzPYQTwQbaEj

According to Kelly (2000) the characteristics of fricative sounds are:

"Labio-dental sounds. The lower lip makes light contact with the upper teeth. The soft

palate is raised. /f/ is unvoiced and fortis. /v/ is voiced and lenis. /v/ is devoiced at the end

of a word" (p. 56).

Exercise: put your palm in front of your mouth. Pronounce /f/ sound and /v/ sound.

Answer:

What did you feel in your palm? What is the difference between the two sounds?

4. **Practice exercise (25 min). S ←→ S**
Aim: Practice the target sounds.

First of all, the teacher will lead repetitions in order to practice the words seen in the

discrimination exercise and some that students propose.

Second students will listen to the rhymes and they will practice them in pairs, taking turns.

Ferdinand Frog found a flip-flopping flea frolicking cheerfully.
"What's this that I see?
Frogs don't get fleas! This should never happen to me.
Flee little flea. Be away with thee."

Taken from

http://www.kidsgen.com/rhymes_and_poems/ferdinand_frog_and_the_flea.htm#PV93y4FOzum

ctuWE.99

Vicki V eats her vegetables

She picks violets for her vase.

For words that start with V

The people say, "Yippee!"

Words like vegetables, violets and vase

V V V V V V

Taken from http://www.dltk-teach.com/alphabuddies/songs/v/lettervsong.htm

Feedback (15 min). Ss ←→ Ss
Aim: Identify strengths and weaknesses in the pronunciation of the target sounds.

The teacher will ask some couples of students to say one of the rhymes and the other students will

give an opinion: so so, good or very good.

Appendix E: Timeline chart for implementation

Date and time	Session: Face to face or Online	Content	Expected Outcomes
September 26th-30th (2 hours)	**Training Session**	Warm up activity Explanation about the system of sounds and speech organs Practice exercise Feedback	The student will be able to identify the main speech organs involved in the articulation of sounds.
September 26th-30th (2 hours)	**Training Session**	Presentation of the content Introductory activity Input activity Production activity Evaluation Assignment	The student will be able to explore the learning object, as well as write and record an acrostic.
October 3rd-7th (2 hours)	1. **Fricative Sounds: /f/ and /v/**	Warm up activity Discrimination exercises Explanation about speech organs position Practice exercise: rhymes Feedback	The student will be able to read two rhymes recognizing the main features of the target sounds.
October 3rd-7th (2 hours)	2. **Fricative Sounds: /f/ and /v/**	Presentation of the content Introductory activity Input activity Production activity Evaluation	The student will be able to record a short message producing the target sounds.

		Assignment		
October 18th-21st (2 hours)	3. **Fricative Sounds: /θ/ and /ð/**	Warm up activity Discrimination exercises Explanation about speech organs position Practice exercise: dialogue Feedback	The students will be able to read a short dialogue recognizing the main features of the target sounds.	
October 18th-21st (2 hours)	4. **Fricative Sounds: /θ/ and /ð/**	Presentation of the content Introductory activity Input activity Production activity Evaluation Assignment	The student will be able to record a short poem producing the target sounds.	
October 24th-28th (2 hours)	5. **Fricative Sounds: /s/ and /z/**	Warm up activity Discrimination exercises Explanation about speech organs position Practice exercise: chants Feedback	The student will be able to sing a chant recognizing the main features of the target sounds.	
October 24th-28th (2 hours)	6. **Fricative Sounds: /s/ and /z/**	Presentation of the content Introductory activity Input activity Production activity Evaluation Assignment	The student will be able to record a riddle producing the target sounds.	

October 31ˢᵗ -November 4ᵗʰ (2 hours)	7. **Fricative Sounds: /ʃ/ and /ʒ/**	Warm up activity Discrimination exercises Explanation about speech organs position Practice exercise: tongue twisters Feedback	The student will be able to say tongue twisters recognizing the main features of the target sounds.
October 31ˢᵗ -November 4ᵗʰ (2 hours)	8. **Fricative Sounds: /ʃ/ and /ʒ/**	Presentation of the content Introductory activity Input activity Production activity Evaluation Assignment	The student will be able to record part of a song producing the target sounds.
November 8ᵗʰ-11ᵗʰ (2 hours)	9. **Fricative Sound: /h/**	Warm up activity Discrimination exercises Explanation about speech organs position Practice exercise: dictation Feedback	The student will be able to make a dictation recognizing the main features of the target sounds.
November 8ᵗʰ-11ᵗʰ (2 hours)	10. **Fricative Sound: /h/**	Presentation of the content Introductory activity Input activity Production activity Evaluation Assignment	The student will be able to record a short role play producing the target sounds.