# Podcasting as a way to improve teacher trainees' ability to make proper sentence stress.

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This research report is the result of my own work and includes nothing that was done in collaboration with others.

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## Abstract

This paper reports on an action research project carried out with twenty-six teacher trainees from Universidad del Tolima, in order to identify the effect of using Podcasting as a tool to improve the way they stress sentences. The project intended to connect the concepts of Andragogy, podcasting, intelligibility, and sentences stress. The data were collected by means of a pre- and post test, surveys, artifacts, logs and journals. Data analysis revealed that even though the improvement was not so significant, students perceived the project very positively since they found podcasting a very useful tool for them to self-assess their performance and to enrich their future praxis as teachers.


Key words: andragogy, sentence stress, podcasting, self-assessment.

PODCASTING TO IMPROVE SENTECE STRESS


Resumen

El presente es un reporte de un proyecto de investigación acción que se llevo a cabo con 26 estudiantes del programa de Licenciatura en Inglés de la Universidad del Tolima, con el fin de identificar el efecto de usar archivos de audio digitales (podcasts) como herramienta para mejorar los acentos de frase en ingles.

El proyecto conectó los conceptos de andragogía, podcasting, inteligibilidad y acentos de frase. Los datos fueron recolectados usando dos encuestas, (una al principio y otra al final de la implementación), archivos de audio y diarios elaborados por los estudiantes. Dichos datos revelaron que aun cuando el avance a nivel de acentos en frases en inglés no resultó ser tan significativo, los estudiantes percibieron las actividades de manera muy positiva y manifestaron que el trabajo con los archivos de audio les había sido muy útil al auto-evaluar su pronunciación y al enriquecer su repertorio de herramientas pedagógicas para su docencia.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The rapidly changing social conditions of contemporary society have brought new ways of conceiving educational environments and education itself. According to Jarvis (2004) many organizations have adopted the concept of long life learning and have even brought it into the political field, taking as a basis a scheme in which every citizen has the right to learn and teach because everyone has the potential to become a teacher since knowledge is not only acquired in schools, but also through experience.

In our country, public institutions have started giving adults the opportunity to enlist in higher education, as a way to foster long life education. This policy entails "the development of coherent strategies to provide education and training opportunities for all individuals during their entire life" (Tight, 2002, p. 39). After finishing school, students in Colombia have to present an exam in which they are asked about their skills in math, science, social studies etc. Once they have their scores, they are able to enroll in higher education. Adults now have the chance to enlist in evening programs which allow them to access higher education, no matter the year they presented the exam. They have now the possibility of presenting the exam again so that they can study in a university.

A state university in Tolima Colombia has a lot of adult worker learners who are now attending the evening programs it offers: Business Administration, Accountancy, and B.A in English among others. This latter program has gained a lot of adult learners who want to become English teachers, due to the fact that they can earn the degree while working full time. Having those special learners in the B.A program has also brought teachers the great challenge of helping those learners gain the skills they need for effective communication in

English while dealing also with the lack of time they have, due to their work and home responsibilities.

Key ideas are behind the task of helping those learners who have enrolled higher educational programs under the tenet of lifelong learning. On this regard, Kiley & Robert (2000)have stated the following aspects:

- student-centered learning.

- a focus on learning so as to equip students with the attitudes and skills to learn for themselves both in formal education and long after they have graduated.

- recognizing that learning occurs in a wide variety of contexts both in the university's academic and non-academic settings, and beyond, in the community, the workplace and the family (i.e. "lifewide learning").

The present report is the result of a Research project titled “Podcasting as a way to improve teacher trainees’ ability to make proper sentence stress” which was a reflective study developed with 26 volunteer students between 18 and 40 years old, who had the opportunity to learn and practice on the prosodic features of English by working with audio editing software and podcasting as key tools in their pronunciation subject in the B.A.

This project responded to a real necessity of a group of adult students who found out they were having problems in their oral performance, and who manifested their interest in improving their pronunciation since they would be models for their future students.

These adult learners tended to use Spanish speech patterns or styles when speaking. They used incorrect rhythm patterns and furthermore, they exhibited difficulty in identifying, understanding the importance of, and being able to produce aspects of connected speech like linking, as well as sentence stress and rhythm. As a result, lack of accuracy in suprasegmentals hindered intelligibility. They might improved their competence by listening to themselves and self-assess the way they pronounced. In the development of this proposal, authoring tools offered key devices for teachers to use.

Authoring tools are "expressly designed for creating e-learning. Such tools simplify the process of implementing instructional strategies, creating menus and navigation schemes, and authoring pages—without extensive technical knowledge"( Horton and Horton, 2003, p. 278). For novice virtual-learning students, these later words are really comforting since they state that it is not necessary to be an expert to start such processes.

As stated above, authoring tools provide a broad range of possibilities for students and teachers to explore new insights in learning and teaching practices and in order to ensure success in the process, authoring tools must:

- have social and engaging implications.
- facilitate online communication.
- be easy to use. (accessible to tutor and students)

One of the most common used authoring tools is podcasting. It provides a perfect way to let students experiment and record their productive oral skills. This authoring tool not only allows students to download audio files that have been already created, but gives them

the opportunity to create or record their own voices and uploads their podcasts. According to Godwin-Jones (2005), the interest on audio devices among students has dramatically increased in the recent past years: "part of what accounts for the sudden interest in podcasting is the fact that so many consumers have purchased MP3 players, especially the Apple iPod (from which podcasting gets its name), which integrates seamlessly with Apple's music software, iTunes, allowing for easy syncing of iPods with a Windows or Macintosh computer" (p.10). This tool can be used by teachers to set authentic contexts for students to communicate within levels of accuracy and intelligibility of EFL beginning-learner pronunciation production.

If learners can improve the way they pronounce by means of listening to others and listening to themselves in an audio file (podcast), this could definitely impact their speaking skill and even their self-esteem. According to Morley (as cited in Florez, 1998, p.1) "limited pronunciation skills can undermine learners' self-confidence, restrict social interactions, and negatively influence estimations of a speaker's credibility and abilities …" Therefore, the achievements when improving pronunciation go beyond the linguistic field. Students who lack solid linguistic background, which affects their specific self-esteem —as termed by Brown (2007)—would benefit from this project.

To sum up, the pedagogical motivation for this project lies on the design and the implementation of a technology-enhanced course using some Web 2.0 resources which may foster learner-centered instruction and self-directed learning practices that fit well their learning styles as adult learners.

In addition, the project was a good opportunity for exploring the relationship between Action Research and teaching in a challenging environment like working with adult people, which means working with their specific needs and desires, different for the ones the researcher used to work with.

**Topic Background**

There is a consideration that has been presented in the arena of foreign language teaching along many years. It has to do with the teaching of Formal English pronunciation (FPT) abbreviated like this by Hitotuzi (2004). According to Avery and Ehrlich, (2008) this issue has been viewed from two opposing points of view: one that claims that the main aim of TP (teaching pronunciation) is to foster students to get rid of their native accents, so that they may acquire a English-native-speaker-like pronunciation, and another one which states that TP is not worth the time and effort when learners are not young, "due to a decreasing ability among learners to develop native-like pronunciation..." (Hitotuzi, 2004, p. xiii). This latter assumption brings about another issue when reflecting upon teaching pronunciation: the age, an undeniable affecting factor.

Many researchers have shed light on this topic, supporting their views upon the term *critical period*, which is defined as the stage in which a learner is more or less likely to success when learning a language: the younger the better. On this regard, several studies have been carried out to determine the way in which adult learners acquire accurate pronunciation (Marinova-Todd, Marshall, & Snow, 2000; Brown, 2007).

Manitova et al. (200) have pointed out that having the assumption that age is an inhibiting factor to acquire an accurate pronunciation or even, a native-like accent, is a misconception. Other factors like motivation and confident environments are key features

when developing pronunciation skills. In addition, the results in other research projects on this matter indicate that in spite of all the contradictions that may arise— as the studies have yielded conflicting results (Kenworthy, 1992)—adult learners might benefit from some approaches that can help them to perform successfully.

**Research question**

The Research question addressed in this project was: What is the effect of using and creating podcasts to improve teacher trainees' ability to use correct sentences stress?
These two sub-questions also emerged:

- How do the use and the creation of podcasts improve teacher trainees' ability to stress sentences correctly?
- How can podcasting enable students to self-assess and self-monitor their performance regarding sentence stress?

**Objectives**

Based on the questions above, the project was developed to accomplish the following research objectives:

- To implement the creation and use of podcasts in the teaching of pronunciation, and establish if, how and to what extent, the usage of this tool may increase teacher trainees' ability to use correct sentence stress.

- To find out whether the creation of a podcast can enable students to self-assess and self-monitor their performance when making sentence stress.

- To identify the changes (if any) in their suprasegmetal features of pronunciation when they use podcasts.

This report presents a reflective study valuable for students and teachers. Students, teacher trainees, will have the chance to try technology as a tool to improve their speaking skills not only in the current subject they study, an introduction to phonetics, but also in their entire career. On the other hand, teachers will also get new ideas and try new ways to teach a skill which is commonly neglected, since some trainers find it a not enjoyable task or maybe a difficult subject to teach due to a lack of experience leading teaching and learning phonetics.

The contents of this document include the introductory chapter above which displays the rationale of the study, its research questions and its objectives. The second chapter is a literature review about the constructs upon the theoretical framework of the project is based: Andragogy, podcasting, sentence stress. Chapter number three summarizes the Research design by giving details of the type of study, the educational context, the participants, the specific instruments and the Action Research procedures taken to outline the data collection procedure. The fourth chapter is a description of the pedagogical intervention that this action research study embraced. Chapter number five presents the data analysis process by using Content Analysis Theory which was the methodology chosen for the project. It includes the findings, insights and interpretations done after the pedagogical intervention. The last chapter has information about the practical teaching implications, the constraints found during the research development, the conclusions and some recommendations for a further research study.

## Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

### Teaching pronunciation goals within ELF framework

It has been said that the main purpose of the teaching of English Pronunciation in second and foreign language instruction is to ensure mutual understandability among speakers, which is the pursuit of intelligibility —"being understood by a listener at a given time in a given situation" (Kenworthy, 1987, p. 13.)—, rather than native-like pronunciation (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 1996; Kenworthy, 1987.). This assumption has brought teachers and instructors the possibility of relying on the communicative approach for the teaching of pronunciation, in which the new dimensions in instruction brought by this approach allowed them to start focusing in the primary purpose of language: communication.

Along with this tendency, the approaching of the concept of English as Lingua Franca (ELF), has also brought ideas that are really connected with the ones stated above: "The target model of English, within the ELF framework, is not a native speaker but a fluent bilingual speaker, who retains a national identity in terms of accent, and who also has the special skills required to negotiate understanding with another non-native speaker" (Graddol, 2006. p. 87).

This new current focus on communication rather than mandatory accuracy has helped all learners and specially those whose limited pronunciation skills have undermined their self-confidence and thus, have "restricted social interactions, and negatively influenced estimations of a speaker's credibility" (Florez, 1998). Under the tenets of this approach, learners are asked to use the language for communication. Thus, training relies on helping learners to master those features which more affect their intelligibility and in this way, increase their ability to communicate.

**Adult Learners: special needs**

The sample population in this study consisted of 26 adult teacher trainees. For this reason, andragogy, a key concept that sheds light on how adults learn, is a relevant construct in this study.

This concept, introduced first in 1833 by Alexander Kapp and then widely developed in the United States by Malcolm Knowles, claims that adults learn differently than young people and that their reasons for learning are also very different. Knowles (1984) has cited the five crucial assumptions about the characteristics of adult learners that are different from the assumptions about very young learners.

As a person matures:

1. His self concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directed human being.
2. He accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning.
3. His readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of his social roles.
4. His time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly his orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centeredness to one of problem centeredness.
5. Motivation to learn is internal (Knowles, 1984, p.12).

The previous features have given place to specific approaches to teaching in which the particular conditions of the adult learner are taking into account at the moment of planning instruction. Jarvis (2004) has pointed out in regards to the fact that adults bring to the learning situation their own self-confidence:

- Teachers need to be empathetic and sensitive to the humanity of the learner at all times and, when appropriate, always anticipate a successful learning outcome.
- Teachers should help students to be aware of the relevance of what they are learning; subject matter will be 'applied' rather than pure: learning will be individualized where possible.
- Teachers should encourage self-assessment rather than teacher-assessment (p. 145).

The elements cited above clearly give place to what Levine (2001) later stated. For him, adults also have specific characteristics that need to be taken into account when planning and designing instruction. Levine has noted that "the single most important concern for the teacher of adults is a thorough understanding of the learner" (p.1). The teaching methodology of andragogy honours adult learners so that their readiness to learn, energy, experience, independence and, motivation are taken into account by teachers in order to make the most of them. Andragogical elements in adult instruction such as personalizing instruction, relating to experience and assessing student needs, lead teachers to a better understanding of working with adults.

With the aim of allowing adult learners to access higher education, the local university in Tolima Colombia has launched several programs. The B.A in English is an evening program which has given students who work the possibility to access higher education in courses with flexible schedules. Most of the learners who attend this program are over the age of 25 and seek a degree by enrolling in the institution after being out of school for several years. They also juggle the responsibilities of working as housewives, secretaries, primary teachers, shop assistants, mail carriers etc, and moreover parenting while attending the university. Even though this latter facts have hindered they performance in the program — they manifest not having enough time to study and go deeper in the content they have to deal with and thus, their grades are also affected— their inner motivation to learn along with the fact that they are motivated from within themselves are factors that may allow the use of technology in promoting self-directed language learning in adults.

As to using technology to enhance adult learning, one of the approaches developed by Ginsburg (1998), encompasses the use of web tools as a complement to instruction. For her, one way to ingrate technology into adult learning, is by making "available opportunities for learners to use computers to practice skills addressed in class or extend learning" (p.39). Under this approach, learners can take advantage of free softwares that may target weak skills. After having selected the right software to work with, that very resource "can provide learners with a great variety of experiences that are not limited by classroom walls or by the knowledge or experiences of the teacher" (p.40).

**Podcasting**

"I perceive the computer to be the most potent tool for adult learning to appear in modern history" (Knowles, 1983 as cited in Swanson, n.d.)

The advent of the Web 2.0 software tools has provided teachers with tools that definitely facilitate and enhanced language learning. In this regard, Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu (2011) claims that "many language teachers have begun to employ technology as an aid to English pronunciation" (25) and the ever-growing use of podcasting is a case in point.

This emerging tool, termed by some authors as a disruptive technology, (Godwin-Jones, 2005), has become very popular and useful in recent years, bringing new ways for practicing oral and listening skills and thus benefiting authentic communication.

According to Constantine (2007), "a podcast is the name of a digital recording of a radio broadcast or similar program". These audio file are now published on the internet as MP3 files. "Interested listeners are able to download these MP3 files onto their personal computer or personal MP3 player of any type. The files can be listened to at the convenience of the listener. Learners can listen over and over to any material that is of interest to them. To be useful in a school setting a teacher would need internet access, a computer that can play audio files or an MP3 player".

The exponential growth of the popularity of podcasting is partly due to the expansion of mobile technologies like the devices cited above .iPods and MP3 have made a sort of democratization of these recorded audio files possible. More and more students are in the way of getting one or two of these digital devices.

Even though these gadgets are not just for listening to audio files, "the proliferation of mobile media gadgets has helped fuel the demand for digital content that can be both time-

shifted and place-shifted for listening and viewing on-the-go“ (Madden, 2009). In a more recent report, Pew (2006) study has also noted that “as gadgets with digital audio capability proliferate, podcast downloading continuous to increase” (Madden, 2009). This undeniable fact is now being evident in our local context. Many of our students, no matter their socio-economic backgrounds, have purchased an MP3, and iPod or at least, a mobile. They are always devoting time to check the state-of-the-art regarding interesting downloads. Thus, these tools not only offer a wide range of different experiences of radio listening, but provide students the opportunity to record themselves and thus, enhance self-directed practices and learning. According to Diem (2005) “with the growing interest in podcasting, it’s possible that soon students will be able to find a variety of podcast lessons based on such topics as English grammar, vocabulary, and TOEFL. Perhaps what is most exciting is students can create their own podcasts as well” (p.47).

The fact that students can create their own podcast has inspired several authors to start researching and reflecting upon the meaningful and engaging possibilities to language learning and teaching podcasting can foster (Diem, 2005, McCarty, 2005 and Stanley, 2006, Fox, 2008, Constantine, 2007).

McCartney (2005) for instance, has stated that “for language learners specifically, podcasts provide a unique repository of authentic oral language materials, an aspect of language teaching which has often been neglected in the past in favor of text-based activities”(p. 3).

Diem (2005) and Stanley (2005) have pointed that podcasting entails an alternative source of aural reinforcement and input to learners.

In a recent study, Apple (2007) carried out a research project which aimed to find out how beneficial the use and creation of podcasts in the EFL classroom could be. The analysis of the data showed the following benefits:

- Students were actively engaged in the creation of the audio files.
- They raised awareness of their language use either by listening to themselves or by listening to each other.
- Their autonomy and motivation when using English also increased.

Constantine, (2007) addressed the topic by enumerating the possible advantages of incorporating podcasting in EFL. Her main conclusions were:

- Podcasts supply fresh ideas and motivation.
- Podcasts provide free relevant and transferable contents.
- Listening techniques derived from their use can help students gain confidence in hearing and understanding of new language.

In another study, Chang, Huang and Hsieh (2007), reported the findings of the research project in which they aim to investigate the applicability and effectiveness of podcasts as a tool for EFL students. In this paper, the authors shed light on how students perceived the use of podcasting. They found that learners used podcasting to fulfill the goal of learning English as a foreign language: "When EFL students can effectively learn English by using podcast smoothly instead of physically going to the classrooms and attending EFL activities such as face-to-face conversation drills, they may feel that podcast indeed possesses relative advantage than other technologies" (p.4).

Research specific to the use of podcasting to enrich the teaching of pronunciation, is an issue that belongs to the ever-growing field of Computer Assisted Language Learning that remains a young area (Ducate & Lomicka, 2009). With regards to studies related to the teaching of pronunciation using Web 2.0 tools, and specifically using podcasts, Lord (2008) carried out a collaborative podcasting project in which the participants from a phonetics class and the "goal of the project was to use collaborative communities to help students develop more positive attitudes toward the importance of pronunciation" (p.375). According to the analysis made by the researcher, the participant enjoyed taking part in the project and also became more conscious of their pronunciation since they worked and learned about the phonological features of their speech. As stated by the researcher, participants "also indicated that what they learned in class and practiced through the podcast exercise were lessons they were now able to generalize to their daily use of Spanish (383).

Ducate and Lomicka (2009) carried out a project in which they aimed to study the effects of using podcasts to improve pronunciation in German and French courses. They also wanted to know if students' attitudes towards pronunciation had changed after the intervention. Audio files made by students were analyzed and the researchers found out that even though the improvement in pronunciation was not remarkable, they benefited from doing the tasks and receiving feedback. Furthermore, the creation of podcasts enhanced students' creativity when they were given the opportunity to create non-scripted audio files.

The studies mentioned above have explored the potential of using podcasting as a very useful teaching approach for learning. The general findings made by these researchers provide arguments to support the hypothesis of the possible benefits of using of creating podcasts in a pronunciation course for teacher trainees.

**Sentence stress**

Chela-Florez's (1993, as cited in Celce-Murcia et. al., 1996) study indicated that acquiring appropriate English rhythm is one of the most difficult skills to master, and thus, a big challenge to pronunciation teachers. Therefore, when addressing the teaching of pronunciation, it is important to bear in mind and identify those phonological and phonetic features that can affect intelligibility. In regard to this, Jenkins (2000, as cited in Moedjito, 2008) stated that there are core features of pronunciation that are crucial to intelligible pronunciation:

(1) consonant inventory with the provisos such as some substitutions of /θ/ and /ð/ and rhotic 'r'; (2) additional phonetic requirements such as aspiration of word-initial voiceless stops /p/, /t/, and /k/, and shortening of vowel sounds before fortis consonants and maintaining the length before lenis consonants; (3) consonants clusters with consideration of omission and addition; (4) vowel sounds; and (5) production and placement of nuclear stress. (p.2)

The latter —nuclear stress—is an aspect that has to do with suprasegmental features of pronunciation and occurs when that particular word is highlighted in the sentence. Nuclear stress, also known as sentence stress is a key factor in order to establish appropriate rhythm in spoken English. Having word stress as a basis, sentence stress has to do with "the various stressed elements of each sentence" (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 1996, p.151). Regarding this topic, Crystal (2008) states that "the main function of stress is to provide a means of distinguishing degrees of emphasis or contrast in sentences" (p. 450). Combination of word and sentence stress, along with elements of connected speech like linkage of sounds,

assimilation, dissimilation, and deletion, create the rhythm of English language (Celce-Murcia et. al, 1996).

Rhythm has to do with the special patterns that all languages in the world have. In the case of English, these patterns occur according to the number of stresses in a sentence and not in regard to the number of syllables on the sentence; Thus, duration of a sentence "is more dependent upon the number of stresses than the number of syllables" (Kelly, 2000, p. 70). That is why English is a stress-time language: it "has the stressed syllables in speech at more or less equal intervals. This happens however many unstressed syllables occur between the stressed syllables – if there are a lot of syllables they have to be compressed" (Hancock, 1995, p. 6).

This procedure of reducing the unstressed syllables can be done by emphasising the meaning-carrying words and thus, de-emphasizing the words that just stand as grammatical linkers. Therefore, it is necessary to identify which words are to be stressed and which ones are to be unstressed. The terms, content words and functions words stand for this purpose.

Content words like nouns, main adverbs, adjectives, question words and, demonstratives,—"those words that express independent meaning" (Avery & Ehrlich, 2008, p. 75) — are usually stressed. Extra emphasis is given to these sorts of words, by:

- Making the vowel in the stressed syllable extra long and very clear.
- Adding a pitch change to the stressed syllable. (Gilbert, 2005, p. 45)

In contrast, articles, prepositions, auxiliaries, pronouns, conjunctions and relative pronouns, are function words since they express grammatical relationships. These words are to be de-emphasized in order to contrast with the focus words. There are two main ways to de-emphasise the function words. (1) By means of contraction: "the process or result of phonologically reducing a linguistic form so that it comes to be attached to an adjacent linguistic form, or fusing a sequence of forms so that they appear as a single form. The first kind of contracted form (or contraction) can be illustrated by I've from I have, haven't from have not" (Crystal, 2008, p. 111). (2) By means of reduction: "some structure words in English are de-emphasised by reducing the vowel in the structure word to schwa" (Gilbert, 2005, p. 54).

Those patterns of emphasizing and de-emphasizing words, entail learners' command of suprasegmentals features. When non-native speakers failed to do it" they can be perceive as abrupt, or even rude; and if the stress and rythm patterns are too nonnativelike, the speakers who produce them may not be understood at all "(Celce-Murica et. al.,1996, p.131).

**Spanish vs. English: the matter of timing**

There is a consideration that is vital when addressing pronunciation and it has to do with the intervals in which stresses occur within connected speech (Kenworthy, 2000). English is a language in which those intervals occur regularly and "the duration of an utterance is more dependent upon de number of stresses than the number of syllables" (p. 70). Consequently, the length of an utterance depends on the number of stressed syllables that are found in that utterance, and not on the actual number of syllables in it. In English, "stressed

syllables tend to carry pitch change and to be pronounce more distinctly, while unstressed syllables are reduced and often pronounced with a neutral vowel…"(Coe, 2001, p. 95).

In contrast, languages like French and Spanish do not encompass the same features in regards to rhythm. Unlike English, Spanish is a syllable-timed language. This means that "all syllables take about the same length of time to pronounce (p. 95)" and the time needed to say utterance will depend on the number of syllables and not in the number of stresses (Avery & Ehrlich, 2008).

Participants in this study are Spanish speakers and when speaking English, they tend to transfer their way to stress sentences to English. The resulting common pronunciation is even sentence rhythm, "without the typical prominences of English, making understanding difficult for English listeners" (Coe, p. 91). Consequently, acoustic clues that convey meaning and structure—resulting from emphasizing stressed syllables in focus words— are not evident and thus, "English listeners find it difficult to understand because they cannot so easily decode the structure" (p.95). Moreover, the narrowed pitch range used by Spanish speakers may make them sound bored or monotonous.

Since meaning is not only delivered and understood by words themselves, the use of stress in speech becomes a vital feature in pronunciation. The raising of awareness on sentence stress might help learners to master this feature which is one of the most difficult to master for Spanish speakers.

## Chapter: 3 Research design

This chapter presents the design of the research study, the type of study conducted along with the context; a description of the setting, the instruments used to gather the data, and a description of the students who participated in this research.

The chart number 1 illustrates the main features of the research design.

### Type of Study

The type of study followed was action research. In this sort of studies, the researchers carry out an inquiry in the sake of reflecting upon their practices and then take informed decisions to solve possible problems. This kind of research also aims at observing classroom processes and it "specifically refers to a disciplined inquiry done by a teacher with the intent that the research will inform and change his or her practices in the future. This research is carried out within the context of the teacher's environment—that is, with the students and at the school in which the teacher works—on questions that deal with educational matters at hand" **(**Ferrance, 2000, p.1**)**.

This type of research was chosen because it focuses on a single issue in the classroom, seeking solutions for a problem that can be addressed on an individual basis. For Burns (1999), action research is undertaken within small-scale and localized settings, evaluating and reflecting upon the possible changes than can be made upon completion of certain procedures and after collecting valid and reliable data.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Type of study** | **Action Research:**<br>**Individual teacher research. (Ferrance, 2000).** |
| **Researcher's role** | Teacher carries out the action research by implementing a group activity in a certain time. After completion of action, the researcher analyzes the findings and reports on future development . |
| **Context** | Universidad del Tolima |
| **Participants** | 26 teacher trainees. |
| **Data collection Instruments** | • Final survey<br>• artifacts and journals<br>• pre and post tests |
| **Resources** | • Human resources: teacher, students.<br>• Technological resources: Internet connectivity, podcasts, headphones, computers.<br>• Materials: visual aids, handouts, lesson plans, course book : Gilbert, J. (2005). Clear Speech. Pronunciation and listening comprehension in North American English. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.<br>• Students' Podomatic accounts.<br>• Free open software: Audacity. |

Chart 1: Research design

**Teacher's role**

Since this study was carried out under the principles of individual action research, the teacher performs as a single researcher who is in charge of analyzing a specific task, implementing group activities within an English class with the aim of improving learning. Participants were asked to do a set of activities designed by the teacher which aimed at giving input on suprasegmentals and furthermore, providing guidance as to train learners on how to use the IC tools along the implementation. Once learners got enough training, the teacher acted as a facilitator guiding extra work along the implementation and offering guidance when some technology related problems arose.

This study was planned with the aim of observing the possible effects of using and creating podcasts to improve pronunciation in B.A students at the Universidad del Tolima, and also see what the students' attitudes towards the usage of this tool were.

**Context**

The implementation was undertaken at the Universidad del Tolima, which is a public institution that offers, among other kind of academic courses, undergraduate evening programs for adults who work and want to earn a bachelor's degree. The faculty of education specifically, allows adults to enroll in a bachelor's degree programmes in different teaching areas: math, science, social studies etc.

**Participants**

The participants in this study consisted of 26 students learning English, enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts in English Language Teaching at Universidad del Tolima, and registered in an evening program.

The students were enrolled in pre-intermediate level language classes (second semester) and their ages ranged between 18 and 40 years. Most of the students were working adults whose jobs required them to work full time during the day. Participation in the project was voluntary and it was completed over a 5-week period within a pronunciation course scheduled for 16 weeks.

They had already taken one course of English (120 hours in 6 months). At this level they were dealing with a review of present simple and past simple tense. It was assumed that they were then able to manipulate basic language forms and had developed limited receptive skills. They needed to develop better listening comprehension and oral skills along with a solid understanding of the phonetic and phonological system. In addition, given the fact that they were teacher trainees who intended to be models, the acquisition of a very intelligible pronunciation, was a must.

Among the group, one student, a man, was more than 35. He is 49. He was sometimes shy and feels he is left behind. In this special case, the building of solid confidence could really help him to improve his performance.

**Data collection Instruments**

The data collection instruments used for this research project were basically the students' artefacts, a pre- and a post-test, logs, a final questionnaire and students' journals.

**Artefacts**

A very valid tool to analyze data on subjects' achievement is their work itself (Sagor, 2000). For him, students' works or artefacts are instruments which allow the researcher to

take into account students' achievement as means of gathering data to be reviewed and analyzed.

The creation of on-line audio files constituted an instrument for gathering primary data in this study. After a short period of training, participants learnt the basic skills needed to record and edit basic audio. Audacity (a free, open source, audio editing program) was the software the students used in the creation of the artefacts.

The students created 2 digital artefacts (podcasts). As a pre-stage procedure, they created and initial digital artefact that was taken into account to test teacher the trainees' ability in the production of the following suprasegmental pronunciation features:

- Linkage of words
- Emphasizing content words
- Deemphasizing structure words
- Identifying thought groups

After having been exposed to explicit training on sentence stress, and having listened to podcasts to identify the features mentioned above, the students created a second post-stage podcast that was also analyzed in order to see to what extent they improved the way they made sentence stress.

**Tests**

As stated in Sagor (2000), test results can tell the researcher "what individual students know and don't know how to do" (p.104). An **elicited imitation test** (Selinger & Shohamy 2004), in which students are presented a reading stimulus and are also expected to

read it aloud, was taken as "a procedure used to collect data on subjects' ability or knowledge" (Sagor, 2000, p. 176), regarding sentence stress.

The students read a piece of news before the intervention. This procedure collected data on teacher trainees' ability to identify thought groups, link sounds, emphasize content words and de-emphasize structure words. Once the students had created this first digital artifact, I analyzed it and assessed it taking into account the special criteria stated in the appendix 3.

As a post-stage data collection sample, the students created a new podcast, reading the same text they had used for the first one. This artefact was analyzed for a post-test after the training to evaluate their improvement in sentence stress. Both pre and post tests were rated by the researcher.

**Questionnaires**

This form of data collection allows the researcher to gather information about not easily-observed phenomena such as attitudes, motivation, and concepts about the intervention (Selinger & Shohamy, 2004). In this study two online questionnaires were used (See Appendix 4). The first one dealt with students' background and experience with technology such as mp3 devices. This initial questionnaire was completed by the students before the implementation.

The second online survey (the one that is a basis of the study) included 23 items which aimed at colleting feedback to find out the impact of using and creating podcasts on students' learning. The students completed this survey at the end of the intervention. The survey was designed in order to know students' feelings and estimations about the software

that was used (Audacity) and about their exposure to it, as well as their general opinion on the work with podcast: listening to and creating them.

**Students' Journals**

Feedback responses about students training and learning experiences constitute a form of gaining "introspected written data" (Burns, 1999). This data collection tool allows the researcher to monitor students learning. When writing journals, participants are asked to reflect upon the instances where they were exposed to new experiences and then comment on how relevant those experiences were for them (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006).

In this study, students wrote reflective reports about training classes, including thoughts about their improvement after receiving input sessions as well as their feelings while doing the activities. They wrote four journals altogether, one after each of the 4 training sessions (See Appendix 5).

**Logs**

Logs are documents that record information on what students do and when they do it (Sagor, 2000, p. 103). I used these instruments with the purpose of collecting data on students' podcast and Audacity use. They were asked to record the time they spend in listening and creating podcasts. This while-stage tool showed particular information on students' involvement such as which students needed to listen to the podcasts the most, and the relationship between the time consumed listening to the podcasts and the improvement in stressing sentences properly.

Information collected from students' logs was taken into account to summarize the data obtained to find out, for example, the commonest number of minutes per day students

used in listening to podcast (See appendix 5). The data gathered from the logs was analyzed descriptively to find measures of central tendency such as media, mean and mode. The mode for instance, showed the most frequently occurring score regarding the minutes students spend in using the software.

**The data collection procedure**

The instruments cited above were used to collect data along the implementation and were applied in the way described below.

Before the implementation itself was carried out, the initial survey was applied and piloted so that the teacher could get acquainted with the students' background. It also collected information about the students' experience with technology.

Once the learner training started, the students wrote reflective reports about their experience when attending training classes on suprasegmentals as well as the lessons about how to use the audio editor to create podcasts, mentioning aspects like their improvement, confidence to speak, and strategies used to acquire skills and knowledge among others. In addition, the first artifact was also created.

At the end of the implementation, the teacher administered the final questionnaire and the students wrote a final journal. In the questionnaire, students were asked about their experience when creating and reviewing podcasts. In the journal, they wrote a final reflection upon their perceptions and feelings regarding the whole project. Finally, a final test was administered with the aim of gathering information about whether the students had improved the target skill after completion of all the tasks designed to that purpose.

In order to ensure that the data collected along the project accurately gauge what I am trying to measure (Mills, 2007) I confirmed the effectiveness of the information gathered by doing a triangulation process. This process, defined by Sagor (2000) as "the use of multiple independent data sources to corroborate findings (p. 19), was carried out to examine data from different points of view so that the possibility of getting credible findings be maximized (Brown & Rodgers, 2002)

Depending upon what aspect of the research process it focuses on, the process of triangulation may be multiple: its relationships with the community –i.e. researchers, researchees, observers, outsiders, etc., its effectiveness to deal with the problem which gave birth to the research project, the techniques and tools used, the amount of increased knowledge obtained, the possible subsequent action born to the implementation of the research project and the inclusion of peer reviewers. In this study, triangulation was carried out on the basis of the techniques and tools used to gather data, comparing quantitative and qualitative data and the methods used in doing so.

## Chapter 4: Pedagogical Intervention

The project was born with the aim of bringing teacher trainees, the opportunity to use web 2.0 tools as a way to enhance practice on pronunciation matters. Participants were enrolled in a program in which they are supposed to work independently for 5 or 6 hours in each of the subjects of the B.A program. They were constantly complaining about the fact that they did not have tools to work autonomously in the completion of that work. This last issue

along the fact that they were exhibiting some problems regarding the correct use of suprasegmentals in English inspired the researcher to set three implementation stages in which the research problem could be successfully addressed. Those stages are specifically described below.

**Before the implementation**

The project was carried out within an English pronunciation course which is in turn part of the second semester of the B.A in English program. Students and researcher knew well each other because they had already worked together in first semester since the students had taken their first English course with the teacher researcher. After this time, the researcher had also identified the research problem to study on —suprasegmentals of English pronunciation. The first step was to present in a letter, the project proposal to the head of the department in order to get permission for conducting the action research project and collecting data from students. Once the approval to undertake the study was gotten, a subsequent letter was presented to the students having them sign an informed consent form (Mertler, 2009) which described what the aim of the study was and also what the activities were about and the length of those activities (see appendixes 1 and 2).

After having the permissions, the students completed the initial questionnaire in which they were asked about their experience with technology and also some basic information on their backgrounds.

**While stage**

The research project was carried out within a course which has been designed to help teacher trainees to speak clearly and effectively by means of analyzing segmental and suprasegmental features of English pronunciation while using digital audio files.

At the end of the implementation, which took 5 weeks, students were supposed to be able to:

- Indentify and discriminate vowel stress and vowel clarity.
- Discriminate and produce word stress in polysyllable words.
- Identify and produce basic elements of connected speech such as content words and linkage of sounds in authentic texts (news).
- Emphasize content words when reading aloud.
- Create a podcast using Audacity and upload it to Podomatic.
- Peer-review partners' podcasts.

In order to ensure participants engagement and involvement in the tasks and lessons, the researcher planned different types of activities in which adult learning styles were addressed. They were given focused support and instruction on suprasegmentals. According to Yates and Zielinski (2009), "we cannot assume that adults will be able to learn an intelligible pronunciation easily without explicit teaching"(17). Aural learners were given plenty of opportunities to be exposed to listening exercises in which they had to identify patterns of intonation when looking for thought groups. When dealing with word stress, the teacher broke up words into syllables, having students work on visuals that stood for the stress patterns for each of the words. Visual representations for separating thought groups and linking words together were also used. Logical and visual participants then benefited from doing so. In regards to physical and social styles, clapping, tapping and other body

movements were used to show rhythm and stress not only for words but for sentences. Conducting movements and hand motions were also included to demonstrate the shape of English intonation tones. Evidences of the execution of the tasks mentioned above can be clearly seen lesson in the lesson plan at the end of this report.

Teacher trainees were exposed to 6 sessions, two hours each. In the first one, the students used their own bodies to exemplify how vowels had different kinds of quality (reduced, stressed, and unstressed). In addition, they were introduced to the vowel sound schwa, key phoneme in vowel reduction. They were given certain words and then in groups they acted out stress patterns. Finally the students labeled syllables in words by writing a number under each syllable in this way:

Number 1 for stressed syllable.

Number 2 for unstressed syllables.

Number 3 for reduced syllable.

As an activity to be done before the next session, they were asked to watch tutorials on YouTube on how to record themselves and edit audio files, using Audacity. Since adults are self-directed in what they do, they would take advantage of working autonomously in some of the tasks of the lessons.

In session number two, students learnt how to create an account in Podomatic.com, a website in which they would later distribute and listen to their partners' podcasts. Since they had already gotten acquainted with how to use Audacity (YouTube tutorials) they received special training on how to use the tools available in this software to enrich their recordings.

They were asked to record themselves reading aloud a piece of news about piracy in Somalia (see appendix 6) and subsequently upload their files to the Podomatic accounts they had just created.

As for session three, the students played two games to work on stress patterns:

1. A racing game (see appendix 7) in order to practice stress patters in adjectives.
2. A path-finding puzzle for stress in two-syllable verbs (see appendix 8).

They also worked independently at Pronunciation Animations (2009). This website aims to highlight the main stress patterns for words in English.

Before the 4th session, the students were asked to work autonomously in the completion of several tasks depicted in a learning object (see appendix 9) in which they were first introduced to a podcast episode. Once back to the classroom, the teacher led a wrap up session in which she gave feedback on the assignment the students had done in the learning object 1.

Then, as a second part of this 4th session, some tasks from the course book were done. Even though the book thoroughly explained sentence stress by setting listening discrimination exercises and explicit explanations, it relayed mainly on visual representations of the item, supplying tables, charts, and pictures. Thus, students whose learning styles were aural, verbal and kinesthetic should have found the topic difficult to address and understand and this fact might have not motivated them to engage in the lesson. Regarding this fact, Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin (1996), make the point that activities and techniques in teaching pronunciation "must take into account variation in learning style by appealing to multiple learner modes (e.g. visual, auditory, kinesthetic (p. 316)." In addition, they have also

stated that, “for many students, especially those from syllable-timed language backgrounds, [Spanish in this case] simply hearing which elements in a sentence receive stress may be difficult initially” (p.154). Therefore the inclusion of other activities was necessary to cover all learning styles in participants.

On the other hand, the tasks displayed in the course book regarding sentence stress focused on isolated utterances, and even though one of them offered a short dialogue, they did not give examples in an authentic context so that students could be aware of the reason why sentence focus (Gilbert, 2005) is an important communicative function in any interaction between speaker and listener. Authentic texts definitely set an appropriate background for students to get acquainted with a real situation and meaningful context in which intonation conveys key information.

According to Celce-Murcia, et al. (1996), anecdotes, rhymes, jokes and the like, are authentic materials to be used for trainers when teaching pronunciation: “because of their clear rhythmic pattern, nursery rhymes […] can provide an effective initial listen-and-repeat practice activity… (p. 155)”. The nursery rhyme “There was an old lady” (appendix 1 in the lesson plan for this session), was used at the beginning of the lesson as a warm up. It helped the students to easily grasp a rhythmic pattern. They snapped the fingers when singing the rhyme and I had them emphasize the strong beats in each stanza. These tasks introduced the topic of the lesson and raised awareness on it as well, confirming the statement by Celce Murcia et al. (1999) in the sense that rhymes are an “excellent source of material for illustrating the segmental and suprasegmental features of English” (Celce-Murcia, et al. 1996, p.299).

It was also necessary to include authentic materials that would provide students with a real context where sentence stress is used to highlight important information. According Oguz & Bahar (2008), authentic materials like news "have a high interest value because of their relevance to the real world keeping the students informed about what is happening in the world they live" (p.331). Authentic materials offer significance since they offer language users the possibility of getting closer to the culture the target language embraces.

After identifying the content words in the rhyme, and raising awareness on sentence stress, I used a podcast and its script from an on-line piece of news about piracy in Somalia (see appendix 11). Since students already knew what parts of speech might be content words (nouns, adjectives, main verbs etc.) they identified the content words in the first paragraph of the news, by highlighting them with a pen. Then, they listened to the podcast and checked their work. They were able to emphasize the content words in each sentence of the news. The language level the news exhibited was challenging for the students, since it used complicated utterances and new vocabulary for them to practice.

The fifth lesson was devoted to make the students get acquainted with a basic concept in connected speech and thus in sentence stress: linkage of sounds. They went through the unit of their course book which deals with this concept and, in class, they explored some useful websites which explained the main ideas on this issue in detail.

Once the students received explicit explanations on suprasegmental features of English pronunciation—they dealt with basic concepts like linkage of sounds, content words and thought groups— they were asked to work autonomously on a second learning object (see appendix 12). In this sixth session, which was mainly a virtual lesson, students had one week

to create their second podcast. They used a podcast episode read by a native speaker about a piece of news, one of the lots of podcasts that are available on BBC Learning English: Words in the news (2009).

They printed the script of the podcast, downloaded the audio file and listened to it very carefully in order to identify and mark the following:

- Thought groups: they used slant lines ( / ) to separate groups of words that belong together and that can be a short sentence of part of a longer sentence.
- Content words: they used a highlighter pen to mark the words that carry the most information in a sentence and that are said longer and higher in pitch than the rest of the words.
- Linking: where does the speaker join words to each other?

They used audacity to record themselves reading the news aloud. They exported the file and then uploaded it to their Podomatic accounts. Using a rubric (see appendix 10) they peer-review their partners' podcasts and evaluated it using the criteria described in the rubric. This second artifact, their second podcasts, was used to do the post-test, mentioned in the data collection tools. The students worked autonomously in the completion of the two learning objects.

After having implemented the pedagogical strategy along the 5 weeks, there were some general reflections:

The learning objectives for the lessons were partially achieved. Students were actively engaged in the learning tasks (rhymes, Pictionary, learning objects etc.) and several activities were implemented in order to address diverse learning styles in students.

Their dominant aural and linguistic style enabled them to perform properly according to what had been planned. Using the rhyme at the beginning of session four definitely helped the students to focus on the topic and to raise awareness on it. Since they had been exposed to this kind of cumulative rhymes in their past when they were children, they found the exercise funny and interesting to follow. They did a very good job trying to master the rhythmic pattern of the lesson. Due to the easy-to-follow measure of the song, they could identify the content words in each stanza. Their aural and linguistic style enabled them to perform properly according to what had been planned.

One of the students who were asked to come to the board and classify the strong words in one of the stanzas found it difficult to do this task. He hesitated when picking the words. Nonetheless, the rest of the class helped him to identify them and he could finally complete the task.

Even though this previous activity led the students to a better understanding of how patterns of sentence stress worked for the news, and I had also planned a pre-task activity that aimed to elicit the news' topic, the vocabulary in the text made the task difficult to follow.

The piece of news dealt with vocabulary that was totally new for them ("muscular interventions", "despite", "deterred" etc.). I should have planned a pre-teaching activity in which the students could have gotten acquainted with the unknown words covered in the news. The news was ideal for building vocabulary. Increasing speaking vocabulary is

definitely a very important aspect in learners' mastery of the target language. According to Saville-Troike, (as cited in Richards, 1995), the acquisition of vocabulary is a key aspect of "oral English proficiency for academic achievement".

Even though this latter difficulty hindered somehow students' performance, once they knew the meaning of new words, they were able to recognize, highlight, and properly emphasize the content words in the news when reading it aloud.

The next chapter describes how the research was conducted, its results and the generalizations resulting from the analysis of data.

## Chapter 5: Data analysis and findings

In this chapter, I present the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from the students' journals, artifacts, questionnaires, logs and tests.

Among the several techniques developed from qualitative approaches that can be used to analyzed data, Content Analysis Method was chosen to interpret the information obtained out of the intervention. The particular steps to follow what this method embraces when analyzing data, where the ones that better suited the features of the present study. Under the tenets of Content analysis, the researcher goes through all the available documents assigning codes, to specific features and commonalities that arise among the texts. The instruments used to gather data in this study, fit well with what content analysis enable the researcher to do. According to Dawson (2006) "this type of analysis can be used for open-

ended questions which have been added to questionnaires in large quantitative surveys, thus enabling the researcher to quantify the answers" (Mind over Matter content analysis, para. 3).

Several reasons made the researcher to finally choose this approach to analyze data:

- Communications from data can be condensed into fewer content related categories. For Burns (1999), this approach "is concerned with analyzing the meanings of the structures and expressions contained in a message or communication. Messages or communications can be included in written documents (…). Content analysis is commonly used with written forms of data to uncover incidences of certain words, phrases or key themes" (p. 167).

- It allows to researcher to make "replicable and valid inferences from data to their context, with the purpose of providing knowledge, new insights, a representation of facts and a practical guide to action (Krippendorff , 1980 as cited in Elo and Kyngas, 2008, p. 108).

- Journals and open-ended questions in the final questionnaire, collected data on students' perceptions on the implementation process. Since those students' messages were obtained from different tools, content analysis was the method the researcher chose to analyze, because it allows to work with several types of instruments when assembling data.
- The repeated ideas that emerged from data can be better categorized in themes and content resemblance when using this method.
- The final questionnaire and results from tests and logs gave a collection of specific data in quantifiable form. This numeric data can be analyzed by using content

> analysis because, according to the Calgary Board of Education (2010) " using this method the researcher systematically works through each transcript assigning codes, which may be numbers or words, to specific characteristics within the text" (p. 2).

After having defined a suitable method to analyze data from this action research study, the process of assembling that data started. According to Mills (2007) researchers should not rely on any single source of data, interview, observation, or instrument. Therefore, triangulation process was also carried out by looking at the students responses from different perspectives combining a set of data collection tools —students' journals, artifacts, questionnaires and tests—. For Sagor (2000) triangulation is "the use of multiple independent data sources to corroborate findings" (p. 19). In this regard Burns (1999) points that when checking validity in data it is important "to gather multiple perspectives on the situation being studied" (p. 163). Therefore the triangulation process was done by using students' perceptions on the activities that were implemented which were collected by means of journals. The final questionnaire and students' results on elicited imitation in the tests gave the researcher data to measure students' involvement and performance.

Once all data forms were completed, the researcher started by reading and analyzing the results from a final question of the final questionnaire, in which the students gave their points of view about the different stages and parts of the process. This task was done in order to know the impact of the implementation in their learning process. Then, the researcher focused on the numbers and percentages from that online questionnaire to read and reflect on the data from a quantitative point of view.

Additionally, data obtained from logs and tests provided data that could be better analyzed by describing it in order to establish a cause and effect explanation between the variables that may arise, correlating such variables. The quantifiable results that were obtained from these tools were analyzed by using two types of quantitative analysis. According to Norton (2009) quantitative analysis of data within a pedagogical action research study is suitable as long as the method is "one that produces any information that is quantifiable" (p.131). As for this study, the quantifiable results had to do with time spent by students when using podcasts, the scores in tests and the percentages in questionnaires.

Two approaches were used to analyze the numeric data in the project: statistics for description and inferential statistics (Norton, 2009).

The descriptive approach in analyzing data was used when reading the results from the tests which aimed to gather students' scores in the pre and post intervention stage. The mean, which is a measure of central tendency, was used to obtain a clear summary of that data.

As for inferential statistics, Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient was used. This coefficient uses actual numerical values and "works on ranking each of the two variables rather than their actual values" (Norton, 2009, p. 143). This tool allowed the researcher to make predictions "such as looking to see if a teaching intervention improves student learning" (p. 140). The variables that were measured had to do with the time students used in working with podcasts as long as the scores they obtained in the post test. Moreover, the researcher read and analyzed the messages from journals in order to organize the information about the impressions students had on the process.

All the techniques cited above were used in order to establish whether students' ability to stress sentences properly improved or not. The process allowed the researcher to reflect upon the usefulness of the information gathered to answer the initial research question. The broad patterns (Burns, 1999) below emerged out of that process:

- The usefulness of using podcasts in lifelong learning.
- The usefulness of using podcasting to have fun while learning.
- The level of engagement in working with podcasts.
- The use of audio files as a learning strategy.
- The importance of computer-mediated communication and technology tools to improve language learning.
- The role of computer-mediated communication and technology to tackle future challenges as teachers.
- English pronunciation improvement.
- Levels of self-confidence when student listen to themselves in digital audio files.
- Levels of language awareness when the students listen to themselves in digital audio files.
- Processes of self-assessment when students listen to themselves in digital audio files.
- Importance for students of having native-like pronunciation.
- Discovery learning when dealing with digital audio files.

Once the researcher had a gist of the results obtained from the instruments, she examined the final reflection messages from the open-ended question in the final

questionnaire. The relevant texts and recurrent ideas that showed distinct thoughts and feelings related to the research concerns were selected (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 44) and put altogether in a document. According to Burns (1999), "coding is a process of attempting to reduce the large amount of data that may be collected to more manageable categories of concepts, themes or types" (p. 157). Ideas from the journals were also analyzed and categorized and put together with the one from the questionnaires.

Once the researcher had a master list of ideas from the journals and from the questionnaire, she color-coded them in order to organize them according to what they expressed so that she could have common items in them. All the texts were read again and the ideas that seemed to be not related to the research concerns were deleted. Then, with the relevant text accurately selected, the ideas in common themes that emerged from them were grouped. The following set of common themes emerged:

1. Self-confidence
2. Self-assessment
3. Professional development
4. Language awareness

The themes mentioned above respond well to the research question that I had set at the beginning, since that question aimed to identify the effects of using and creating podcasts as a way to improve sentence stress in teacher trainees. The themes show that in the process not only language-related categories emerged, but others aspect of learning were incidentally addressed.

Chart number 2 shows the categories that emerged from analyzing data which responded to the main question: What is the effect of using and creating podcasts to improve teacher trainees' ability to use correct sentence stress?

| **Research question** | **Emergent categories in students' feedback** |
|---|---|
| | • Reported interest in alternative ways of |

| | |
|---|---|
| • What is the effect of using and creating podcasts to improve teacher trainees' ability to use correct sentence stress? | assessment: Autonomy enhancement.<br>• Reported increase in students interest in adopting technology driven teaching approaches.<br>• Reported increase in awareness of suprasegmental features of English.<br>• Reported increase in self-confidence and motivation |

Chart 2: Categories that emerged from students' feedback.

**Category 1: Reported interest in alternative ways of assessment.**

The first category deals with students' reported interest in alternative ways of assessment. When the students first recorded their voices in the completion of the pre-test, they expressed in their journals to be surprised and pleased at the fact they could hear themselves and noticed their own pronunciation strengths and weaknesses. The extracts below show how once they were able to listen to their first podcast they found that activity very useful as a way of monitoring their own pronunciation.

Students' journals N º 3

Students 11, 15, 18, 22 and 26.

> **S11**"los podcasts me ayudaron muchísimo a mejorar mi pronunciación, a identificar mis fallas al hablar, pude corregir mis errores y practicar para ir mejorando".

> **S15 "**el ejercicio de escucharme también tuvo gran significación para mi, me ayudo a darme cuenta de los errores que tenia"

> **S18** "esta nueva herramienta de utilizar podcast fue buena porque realmente aprendes a corregir tus errores y lo mejor es cada vez que tienes la oportunidad de poder escuchar de nuevo, lo haces cada vez mejor pues te quieres ver progresando".

> **S22** "tuvimos la oportunidad de grabar y escuchar nuestra voz, y a la vez corregir todas aquellas fallas en la pronunciación, pues podemos grabar cuantas veces sea necesario para finalmente obtener la mejor pronunciación que podamos dar".

> **S26** "es una herramienta muy útil, que nos permite escuchar a los demás pero lo más importante, es que podemos escucharnos a nosotros mismos, así podemos aprender de la fluidez de otros, de los errores y reparar nuestros errores".

According to Brown (2004) when looking closer at the acquisition of any language skill, the importance and benefit of self-assessment rapidly arise. He highlights the advantages of allowing students to monitor their performance whether working with peers or doing it by themselves. Here are some of the benefits theses alternative types of assessments offer students:

- direct involvement of students in their own destiny,
- the encouragement of autonomy, and
- increased motivation because of their self-involvement (p.270)

In the open-ended of the final questionnaire, 19 students highlighted how while working with podcasting along all the process, they had come to identify their own pronunciation weaknesses and strengths and thus, had become aware of their level in this particular skill. In regards to peer- assessment, they pointed out that some interesting ideas:

Final questionnaire. Students 8, 11, , 18, and 27.

> **S8 "**La utilización de herramientas como el programa audacity son de gran utilidad para escuchar mi speaking, identificar el nivel de fluency en el que me encuentro, ejercitar mi pronunciación y comparar con el audio original (en el caso de los podcast) y con los audios de los textos para identificar mis carencias y tratar de superarlas".

**S11** "En el podcast tuve la oportunidad de escucharme y darme cuenta de muchos errores que tenia y asi mismo pude comparar con mis compañeras como estoy yo y como están ellas y darme cuenta cual es nuestro nivel y también que mis compañeras me corrigieran cosas que de pronto yo no me había dado cuenta y viceversa porque también medimos nuestra capacidad para calificar".

**S18 "**es interesante escuchar las distintas personas que se graban porque uno dice yo también deseo tener la misma fluencia verbal de este, o la entonación de aquel y entonces son metas que te propones para mejorar y alcanzar un poco su nivel".

**S27** "La otra razón fue porque jamás había utilizado este método, entonces no sabía muy bien como hacerlo, afortunadamente encontré otras personas que me guiaron y logre grabarlo satisfactoriamente".

Self and peer-assessment are alternative and formative types of assessment which evaluate students "in the process of forming their competencies and skills with the goal of helping them to continue that growth process" (Brown, 2004, p.6). The excerpts above evidenced that the students perceived very positively the fact that they could self-assess the way they pronounce. Gower, Phillips and Walters (1995), have stated that teachers should always give students the chance to correct themselves and they might learn how to do it if they are given the opportunity to learn how to do it. They also highlight the importance of including student-student correction and this will bring the advantage of "make the learning more co-operative generally" (p. 167).

Figure 1 also shows how students enjoyed recording their voices when creating podcasts, a fact that helped a lot at the moment of self-monitoring their performance. 76 % of participants expressed that creating digital audio files using their voices proved to be very beneficial for their learning.

In podcast use logs, findings suggest that in general, students used podcasting not only to do the tasks that have been set by the teacher —create scripted podcast, peer-review partners' work etc. — but they extended the possibilities of this tool, and use it to explore and then self-monitor their oral production:

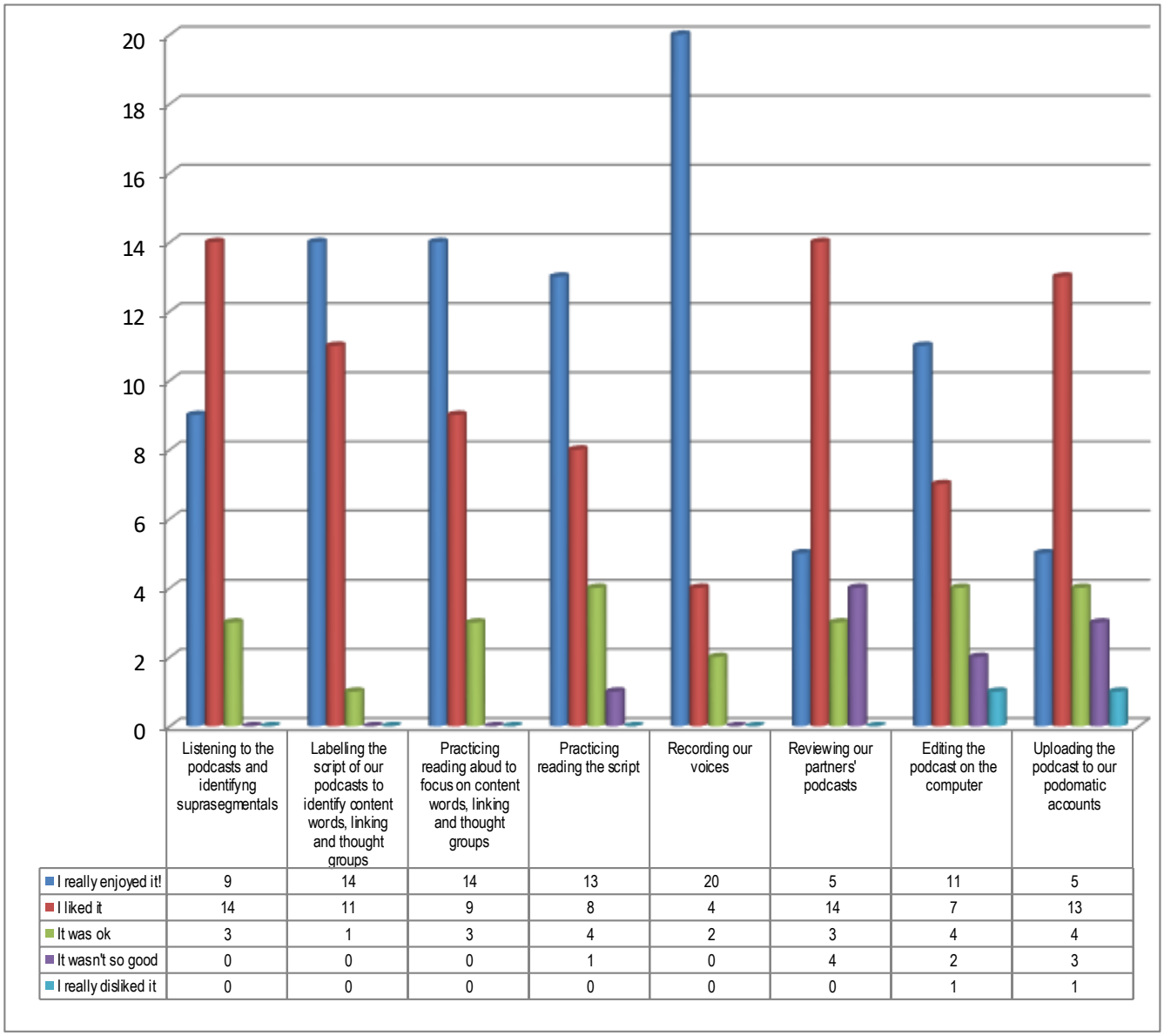
Podcast use logs. Students 7,8 and 9.

> **S7:** "quería escucharme como hablaba y entonces me grabe dándole una clase de ingles a mi hermano".

> **S8:** "I was recording my voice while reading short stories to realize how my pronunciation is, so that I can improve it"
>
> "I identified mistakes and recorded myself till I and my partner read the report as better as we could."

> **S9**: "I download some lyrics of songs I like. Then, I recorded my voice on Audacity adding audio to my records, for doing a mixture like karaoke. Then I listened to compare with the original audio"

**What do you think about using podcasts for this class?**




| | Listening to the podcasts and identifyng suprasegmentals | Labelling the script of our podcasts to identify content words, linking and thought groups | Practicing reading aloud to focus on content words, linking and thought groups | Practicing reading the script | Recording our voices | Reviewing our partners' podcasts | Editing the podcast on the computer | Uploading the podcast to our podomatic accounts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I really enjoyed it! | 9 | 14 | 14 | 13 | 20 | 5 | 11 | 5 |
| I liked it | 14 | 11 | 9 | 8 | 4 | 14 | 7 | 13 |
| It was ok | 3 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 |
| It wasn't so good | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| I really disliked it | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |

Figure 1: Students' opinion about using podcasts in pronunciation class.

### 1.2. Autonomy enhancement

Assessment is a core aspect when developing learning autonomy and that capacity is retained outside the classrooms. That is where the autonomous practices are developed. In the following excerpts, students revealed a certain degree of autonomy development. Reflections on journal number 5 evidenced the students' feelings on their development as autonomous learners:

> **S19** "me brindo nuevas formas de aprender, de hacer estudio; pues allí realice muchas actividades extra clase, que me permitieron aprender y profundizar muchas cosas sobre una cultura, un idioma que es nuevo para algunos de nosotros".

> **S25** "Creo que una ventaja de trabajar con Podcats es que nos hace críticos de nuestro propio trabajo y nuestro propio desempeño en lo relacionado a la pronunciación del ingles, puesto que, cada quien puede repetir el trabajo tantas veces quiera hasta quedar satisfecho, es divertido y agradable tener una herramienta que permita autoevaluar nuestras habilidades para adquirir unas nuevas o enriquecerlas".

When they reviewed their performance by listening to them and giving opinions on their own work, autonomous practices emerged. In this sense, Looney (2008) has pointed out that, in order to foster autonomous learning, some researchers have "emphasized the importance of helping learners to "own" the assessment and learning process and to develop the confidence to use their own judgment regarding the quality of their work, and for identifying gaps in their learning. These skills are also important as learners engage in nonformal and informal learning. (p. 16)".

The final questionnaire also reveals the students willingness to set goals beyond the instruction received in classroom.

> **S4 "**y por ultimo me senti mejor cuando adquiri la responsabilidad de crear el plan de estudio para mi auto estudio…fue bueno conocer todas las paginas ya que nos sirven tambien de aquí en adelante para mejorar nuestro nivel".

Most of the participants in this research study were adult students whose particular features as learners shape the way they grasp knowledge. For Imel (1994), as adult learners, they:

- tend to be self-directed
- have a rich reservoir of experience that can serve as a resource for learning
- are frequently affected by your need to know or do something
- tend to have a life-, task-, or problem-centered orientation to learning as opposed to a subject-matter orientation
- are generally motivated to learn from within (internally/intrinsically) as opposed to being obligated, or subject to, external or extrinsic forces

The features mentioned above definitely influenced the way they perceived the project, because their self direction to do things allowed them to go beyond what had been planned in the classroom, and made them want to set their own goals for improving their pronunciation and overcome the actual problems they found after self and peer monitoring their performance.

Final questionnaire: Students 1, 2 and 13

**S1** "esto requiere una disciplina será para mi auto-aprendizaje una excelente herramienta que, puede exigirme un mejor nivel".

**S2** "logre descubrir varias de las aplicaciones, experimentando con el programa, es bastante fácil de utilizar y sumamente útil. Voy a seguir utilizando este tipo tecnologías para ejercitar mis habilidades".

**S13** "Es de tener en cuenta también que el verdadero protagonista de esta maravillosa herramienta es uno mismo puesto que de nuestro trabajo, dedicación y esfuerzo depende los resultados. Gracias a sus múltiples opciones podemos realizarlo una y otra vez hasta conseguir el resultado requerido o hasta estar totalmente seguros que lo hicimos con los parámetros necesarios y validos para nuestro perfeccionamiento fonético.".

Results from logs also showed students tendency to self-monitor their speech by looking for other alternatives to learn:

Podcast use logs. Students 15,

**S15**: "I listened a podcast in youtube because I wanted listened other people and learned of they and of their mistakes"

**S16**: "I was recording my voice. I was practicing the dialogue for the English class called "visiting and old friend" ."

**S** : "To practice the dialogue for the oral English exam"

**Category 2: Reported increase in students interest in adopting technology driven teaching approaches.**

Participants in this study are enrolled in a B. A. program, in which they are trained to become English teachers. Thus, gaining an understanding of the principles and practice of language teaching along with skill in the use of teaching techniques and classroom management are key components in students' professional development. The fact of being updated in teaching techniques, was an important issue in this research study. Data from students journals' showed they found working with podcasting a very interesting activity they definitely wanted to try once they had the opportunity to start teaching. The following excerpts indicate how relevant using podcasting was in students, in relation to their professional development:

Students journals N º 4. Students 12, 19 and 23.

**S12** "… reitero que la actividad se hace indispensable para quienes estamos en proceso de aprendizaje de un segundo idioma y aún más para quienes queremos ser docentes; es una actividad que nos llevamos para realizar con nuestros futuros estudiantes, pues es nuestro deber como futuros docentes compartir lo que aprendemos, y así contribuir al cumplimiento de nuestra función social".

**S19** "Igualmente, el haber utilizado la internet como medio para acceder a nuevas estrategias de aprendizaje fue muy significativo para mi, pues nunca lo había hecho

con tanta frecuencia, y menos para el estudio de un idioma. Esto me permitió conocer miles de lugares de los cuales aprender de forma muy constructiva, pues son herramientas que nos van a servir en nuestra carrera, y además, es necesario usarlas; pues cada día, el mundo avanza, y nosotros los docentes debemos estar a la vanguardia en el uso de estas nuevas formas de aprendizaje".

**S23** "Esto sería muy interesante para nuestros estudiantes porque el mundo está invadido por el desarrollo tecnológico y ahora los estudiantes le gustan las clases interactivas y más aun grabándose y escucharse su voz y aprender a pronunciar y encontrar cosas interesantes que tiene este programa".

In addition, 16 participants mentioned in their journals the usefulness of working with podcasting as a very useful teaching tool. In their final questionnaires, students' reflections showed a deep interest in developing technology-enhanced teaching strategies in their futures praxis as teachers. See the excerpts below:

**S2** "Me parece súper importante que, como maestros utilicemos metodologías que conlleven al uso de nuevas tecnologías, porque debemos tener presente que estamos en un mundo de cambios y evolución constante".

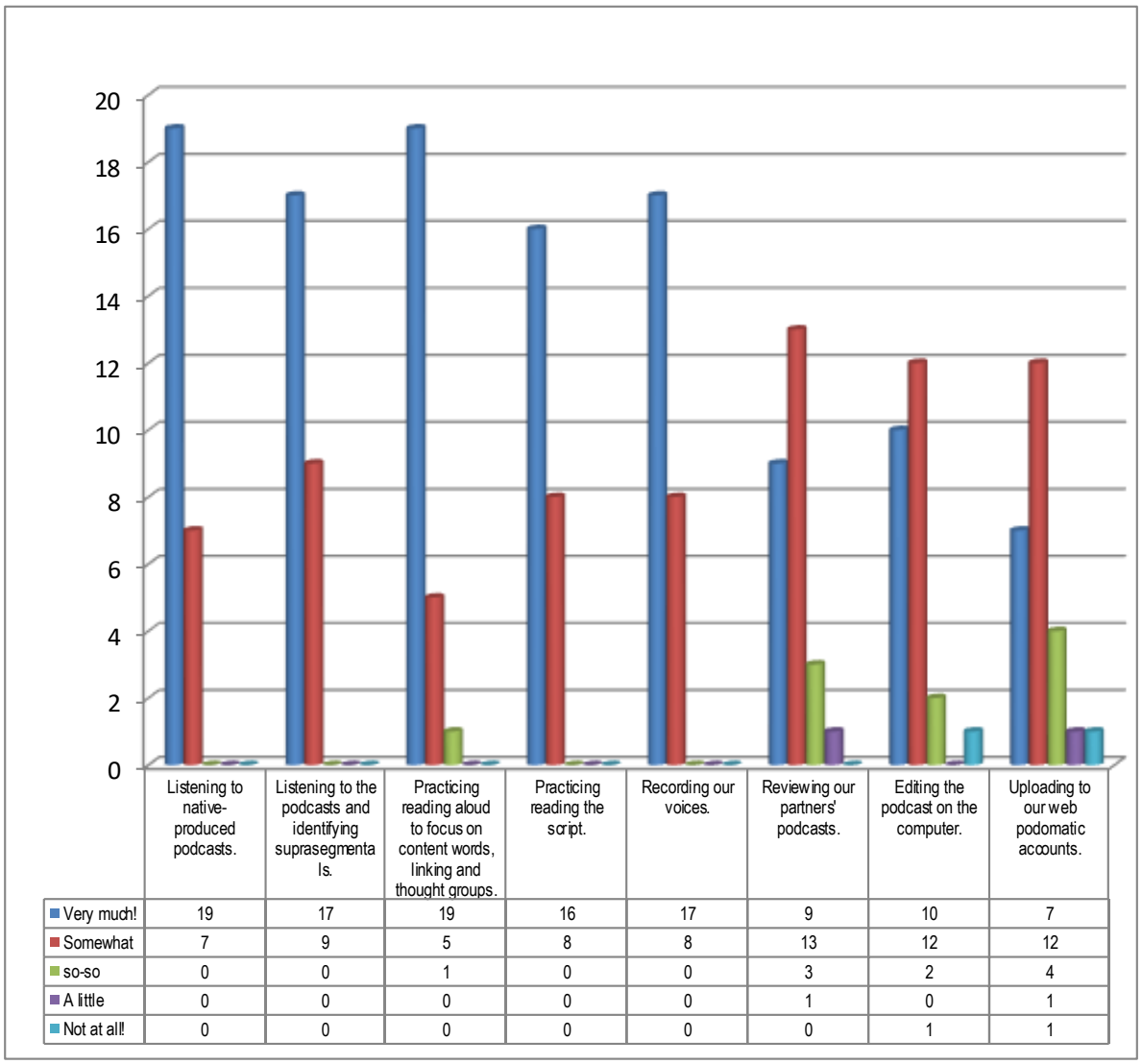
**S6** "le agradezco a la profesora, por mostrarnos diferentes ayudas en el campo de la pronunciación, los cuales nos sirven ahora, y nos servirán en nuestra práctica docente en el futuro, y muchas gracias".

> **S21** "Me parece que el uso de nuevas tecnologías para la práctica, mejoramiento y aprendizaje del ingles es muy eficaz, mas tratándose de jóvenes que ya están inmersos en el mundo de los computadores, el internet y que en términos generales disfrutan de cualquier actividad que realicen por este medio".

The excerpts above show students' willingness to keep working with podcasting as an enhancer and motivator for their future students. Harris and Park (2008) have pointed out that "the educational sector has paid particular attention to the potential of technology to facilitate improvement in the quality of teaching, to enable effective teaching and to improve the learning experience" (p. 549).

**Category 3: Reported increase in awareness of suprasegmental features of English**

Figure 1 shows the students' reaction to working with podcasting. This final questionnaire asked students about their feelings towards the different activities that were done in the implementation such as listening to the podcasts to identify suprasegmentals. 20 out of 26 participants found listening to themselves an activity that they really liked. Figure 2 shows how they perceived the work with podcasting in regards to their possible improvement in pronunciation. 19 participants found practicing reading aloud focusing on suprasegmentals, an activity that helped them very much in improving their pronunciation, along with the fact of listening to native-produce podcasts.




| | Listening to native-produced podcasts. | Listening to the podcasts and identifying suprasegmentals. | Practicing reading aloud to focus on content words, linking and thought groups. | Practicing reading the script. | Recording our voices. | Reviewing our partners' podcasts. | Editing the podcast on the computer. | Uploading to our web podomatic accounts. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Very much! | 19 | 17 | 19 | 16 | 17 | 9 | 10 | 7 |
| Somewhat | 7 | 9 | 5 | 8 | 8 | 13 | 12 | 12 |
| so-so | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| A little | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Not at all! | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |

Figure 2: Students' perception on the usefulness of podcasting in improving pronunciation.

Regarding tests scores, they were calculated for each participant according to the values stated in the table used for this purpose (see appendix 3). As a whole, the students showed improvement in their pronunciation as indicated in chart 4.

| **Participant** | **Score on the test** | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Pre- test** | **Post- test** | **Change** |
| **1** | 30 | 80 | 50 |
| **2** | 40 | 60 | 20 |
| **3** | 20 | 50 | 30 |
| **4** | 30 | 60 | 30 |
| **6** | 40 | 60 | 20 |
| **8** | 60 | 90 | 30 |
| **9** | 60 | 80 | 20 |
| **11** | 40 | 70 | 30 |
| **12** | 40 | 70 | 30 |
| **13** | 40 | 60 | 20 |
| **14** | 40 | 70 | 30 |
| **15** | 30 | 60 | 30 |
| **16** | 50 | 70 | 20 |
| **17** | 40 | 60 | 20 |
| **18** | 20 | 50 | 30 |
| **19** | 50 | 80 | 30 |
| **20** | 30 | 60 | 30 |
| **21** | 50 | 90 | 40 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **22** | 40 | 70 | 30 |
| **23** | 40 | 50 | 10 |
| **24** | 20 | 40 | 20 |
| **25** | 60 | 80 | 20 |
| **26** | 30 | 50 | 20 |
| **Mean** | 39 | 65 | |

Chart 4: Pre and post test scores. (Information for participants 5,7 and 10 is not included. They did not take the final test.)

Parcipants scores revealed that the great majority of them had certain levels of improvement in their pronunciation, some of them with greater differences than others: (#1 and # 23).

**Mean difference**

When analyzing information from the tests, the following parameters were found:

| Parameters | pre- test | post- test |
|---|---|---|
| Mean | 39,13043478 | 65,65217391 |
| Variance | 144,6640316 | 180,2371542 |

In order to do the test for the difference between the two means, the following hypotheses were posed:

Null hypothesis: $Ho: \mu_1 = \mu_2$

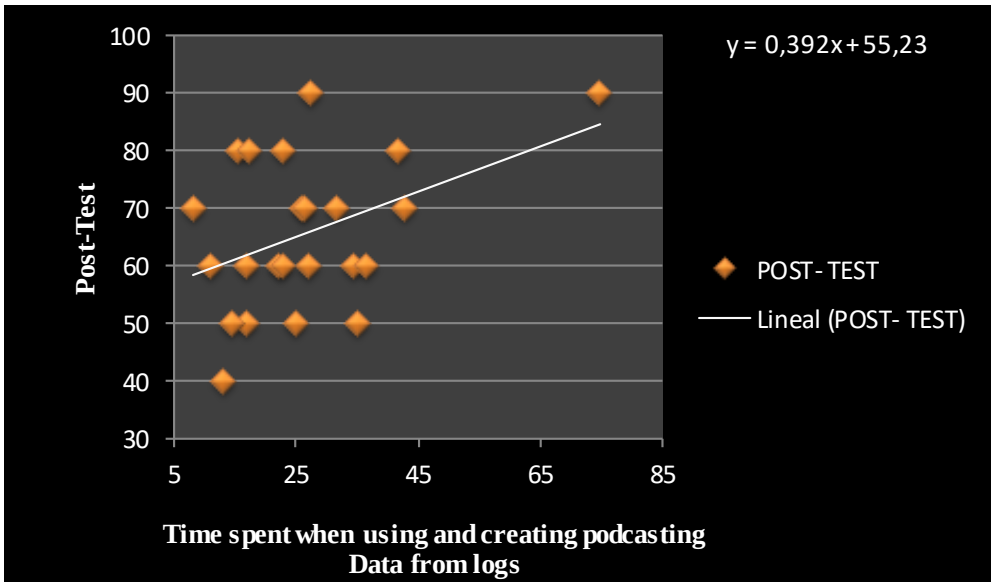
Alternative hypothesis: $Ha: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$

| t test for Two Sample Assuming Equal Variances | |
|---|---|
| Pooled variance | 162,4505929 |
| Hypothesis Test for Difference of Means | 0 |
| Degrees of freedom | 44 |
| t-statistic | 7,056514996 |
| P(T<=t) two tails | **0,0000000094** |
| Critical value of t (two-tailed) | 2,015367547 |

Chart 5: t test for Two Sample Assuming Equal Variances

The results of the t test for comparison of means show that with a confidence level of 95%, this P value (P = 0.0000000094) is obtained. Thus, the null hypothesis of equal means is rejected and it is concluded that significant differences do exist between the mean in the pre-test and the mean in the post-test.

On the other hand, as for the description of data in order to cause a cause-effect explanation, a scattergram for values of the correlation coefficient is displayed below. This figure clearly showed a fairly positive correlation between the two variables.




$$r = 0.413$$

| Pearson's Correlation | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Post-test | Interventaion |
| Post-test | 1 | |
| Intervention | 0,413817923 | 1 |

Chart 6. Pearson's correlation data.

As stated by Norton (2009) Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) is a measure of the strength of the association between the two variables and it is used when investigating the relationship between two quantitative, continuous variables.

The graph above was produced by Microsoft Excel (charting function) which calculated the correlation coefficient from the data in logs as well as in the post test. The graph shows a trend indicating an increase in scores in the post-test where there was more time dedicated to use audio digital files. Having a Pearson's coefficient of r= 0,413817923 it can be concluded that it does exist a positive correlation between the time students spent when working with podcasting and the scores they obtained after completion of the post-test. This fact suggests that the positive value for the correlation — r=0,413817923— implies a positive association between the variables.

The results showed above were also supported in students' reflections written in their journals.

Students journals. Students 4, 17 and 20.

**S4** "lo importante que es tener en cuenta la parte suprasegmental, y mas los linking que son los que les dan el mayor entendimiento a la lengua inglesa para que se escuche como un nativo".

> **S12** "El proceso de identificar las content word, los linking y la separación de los thought groups, permite, en primer lugar, realizar una muy buena comprensión de lectura y por consiguiente la lectura sonará muy bien; en segundo lugar, al hacer el listening, estamos acostumbrando el odio, al escuchar en repetidas ocaciones una grabación en la voz de un nativo; y en tercer lugar, al hacer el ejercicio de repetir muchas veces una frase utilizando linking, nos permite memorizar oraciones completas para que nuestro vocabulario también crezca".

In the final questionnaire, the students also mentioned they had seen the improvement in their performance after having experienced the steps in the implementation:

> **S17** "note un cambio súper grandísimo al comienzo cuando la profe Janet nos hizo grabar un podcast, y al final de este curso nos hizo grabar el mismo, fue mucho el cambio, porque ya podía manejar stress, entonación, linking".

> **S20** "El ejercicio de escucharme y de volverme a escuchar me ayudó a mejorar en el habla y pronunciación, al inicio me sentí rara cuando me escuché por primera vez, pero después de seguir practicando sentí la diferencia en la pronunciación y en el hablar". The excerpts above shed light on students' awareness of suprasegmental features.

After raising awareness of some key issues in English pronunciation like linking, thought groups and focus words in sentences by listening to native-produced podcasts and then working individually in listening and recording to themselves creating their own files, the students felt they had improved their performance in regards to the sentence stress. On

reading and talking aloud in private pronunciation practices, Dickerson (1989, as cited in Ingels, 2010) has highlighted the significance of providing learners with opportunities to increase their awareness on the importance of listening to themselves in the target language "monitoring performance for specific features, comparing performance with models stored in memory, making changes in production to match the models, and practicing changes out loud" (p. 69). This practice, termed by Dickerson (1989) as covert rehearsal, is defined as the "time when language learners focus on form, practice in private, engage in self-searching, self-monitor and self-correct their speech in areas of importance to them"(Sardegna, 2008). The results in chart 2 suggest that participants found covert rehearsal practices a very useful tool at the moment of working with podcasting; 73 % of participants said that practicing reading aloud to focus on suprasegmental features of pronunciation, had been a task that has helped very much to improve their pronunciation.

**Category 4: Reported increase in self-confidence and motivation.**

Students' comments on their performance revealed that when they finished the process they felt that they believed more in themselves and in their abilities to learn and practice the language. Among the 26 participants in the study, 14 did mention how they had felt an increase in their positive attitudes to achieve the goal of reading aloud more confidently. At the beginning, some of them reported that they had found it difficult to perform well when reading the piece of news aloud. Nonetheless, once the implementation ended, they found the goal easy to achieve.

The following extracts from students' journal number 3 exemplify the feelings mentioned above:

> **S6** me pareció súper aterrador, sin saber lo valioso y gratificante que seria para mejorar mi nivel.

> **S13** I felt shame to listen myself, but when I heard my mistakes, then I saw that I had to make it over and over again, until improve it and of this way I would feel very good with my project.

> **S17** "Con este método vemos reflejada nuestra propia voz, haciendo que se pierda el miedo a escucharnos a nosotros mismos y de esta manera se vea mayor productividad tanto en la pronunciación como en la conversación"

> **S18** "Este recurso de podcast en fonética fue excelente para mi cada vez que me grababa mi voz queriendo tener el nivel de un reportero era genial por que te esfuerzas

de una manera inolvidable. Me alegro realmente hacer esto y ver mi progreso este recurso fue muy bueno ayuda mucho realmente".

When learners' self-confidence is addressed in learning, success in outcome is driven also by motivation. Participants were actively engaged along the process and they manifested being pleased by the fact of having new information technologies available to them to support and enhance learning. According to Dörnyei (2001) "in order for students to be able to focus on learning with vigour and determination, they need to have a healthy self-respect and need to believe in themselves as learners" (p.86)". Self-confidence and motivation resulted in students' involvement in the creation of audio files. This fact was supported in students' responses to the final questionnaire:

**S15** "y en fin todo el trabajo de escucha fue muy valioso porque en estos momentos siento que he mejorado demasiado"

**S12 "a**prender como hacer enfasis a las palabras que mas deben sobresalir en un texto o conversacion fue muy importante pues ya no yhablare el ingles de una forma comun o como la vieja forma de ingles de colegio sino que ya me siento mucho mejor, con un mejor nivel".

**S4 "**los podcast fueron una buena forma de mejorar mi ingles en la parte de escuchar y de hablar porque ya se deja a un lado la timidez y se adquiere mayor fluidez"

To summarize, podcasting work as an authoring tool to support the learning of suprasegmentals in teacher trainees, turned out to enhance self-monitoring and autonomy,

arouse students' interest in adopting technology driven teaching approaches for their future practice, and increased self-confidence and motivation in their attitudes towards learning.

## Chapter 6: Conclusions, pedagogical implications, limitations and further research

### Conclusions

Evidence of positive feelings about improvement in autonomous practices, awareness of suprasegmental features of English, self-confidence and motivation, along with reported increase in students' interest in adopting technology driven teaching approaches, constitute the main findings of this study as these categories were seen in students' responses. Taken together, findings suggest a role for computer assisted language learning, —and more specifically podcasting— in promoting autonomous and engaging strategies for adults to learn.

Their reflections upon their experience along the process showed that the four aspects mentioned above played a significant role in the way they performed and felt when carrying out the activities along the implementation. The results out of this implementation were used to see if the intervention improved students' ability in stressing sentences properly and to obtain information about other effects the that implementation had.

Students could take the lessons beyond the classrooms and the implementation also motivated the students to put their best foot forward. They were be able to listen to themselves, hear their own mistakes and go ahead setting specific learning goals to overcome their difficulties.

Even though some students felt uncomfortable when listening to themselves, the project was perceived very positively by the students and they appreciated the fact that they were exposed to this computer enhanced language experience.

The project provided the students with additional input and it extended their possibilities of interacting with the language outside the classroom.

Learners where self motivated to finally have an intrinsic reward of having worked hard and had a final outcome.

**Pedagogical Implications**

Far for being and old-fashioned technique whose basis are mainly rooted in pointless repetitions, covert rehearsal is a tool that, combined with the ever-growing possibilities of podcasting, can enhance pronunciation mastery. The possibility of engaging students in learning beyond the phonetic class in the rooms is now at teachers' disposal. The aspects that have just been mentioned should be taken into account not only by pronunciation teachers but by all those who want to enhance speaking accuracy and fluency in adult learners.

When adults are given the possibility of listening to themselves and self-monitor their performance, their features as learners arise, and then they start setting specific goals towards the mastery of what they find difficult to overcome. In this regard, Vitanova and Miller (2002) have pointed out that "as ESL professionals we should teach students how to learn pronunciation, not just how to produce sounds or patterns. In other words, learners should be able to analyze their strengths and weaknesses, and have the strategies to transform themselves into confident speakers of English".

Adult learners may find the learning of the intonation patterns in English a difficult, frightening and challenging process to face (Yates & Zielinski, 2009). But once they build awareness on the main aspects of it and are given possibilities of extra practice to get acquainted with those aspects, that very same awareness makes them to self-monitor their work. According to Yates and Zielinski (2009) in order for students to learn the pronunciation of English, adult learners need, among other conditions, awareness: "Because of the influence of their first language, adults may not realise the extent to which people find their pronunciation difficult to understand. They therefore need plenty of opportunity to listen to English, focus on reliable models and notice how their pronunciation might differ" (p.15).

Teachers then should take into account that far from being obstacles that may hinder the learning of English pronunciation, the characteristics of adult learners might benefit their process of mastering the target skill. For Fidishun (2002) the inclusion of technology-driven techniques when teaching adults, enhance more relevant learning environment for adults to learn:

> While adult learners may respond to external motivators, internal priorities are more important. Incentives such as increased job satisfaction, self-esteem and quality of life are important in giving adults a reason to learn. If any of these can be related as part of technology-based instruction adults will respond more positively. Activities that build students' self-esteem, or sense of accomplishment through, for example, the completion of goals or modules that can be checked off in a sequence, may help motivate completion of a longer lesson. In addition, student's input into the development of lessons or in the prioritization of topics covered can help students to take ownership of the learning process (Mind over Technology and the Assumptions of Andragogy, para. 6).

**Limitations of the study**

The main aim in any educational action research is "to generate and test new knowledge about educational practices and theory that will inform new developments in the field" (Whitehead & McNiff 2006. p.77). These processes of generating and testing new knowledge call for researchers with serious ethical foundations with "high moral awareness throughout, and an agreed framework of conduct (p.77)".

According to what the researchers cited above have claimed, I considered it pertinent to take some ethical considerations into account when starting my project. Regarding to permission, the head chair of the program and the director of the English-Spanish department was asked for consent to carry out the project. Currently, the Universidad del Tolima is fostering and supporting "semilleros", which are small teams that are planning and developing small-scale investigations with students of 5th and 6th semester. Given the fact that the institution was promoting the creation of these teams, the university was interested in approving my project, since this may contribute to the process of fostering and developing processes of research in the institution.

I consider most of the students felt pleased to be part of the research. They were outgoing and vivacious. All of them wanted to be part of the project and I asked them for written permission in which it was said that their identities would not be revealed. Since students are adults, no permission from parents was needed.

On the subject of weaknesses or constraints in the present project, there are several aspects that somehow impeded the development of the process. First of all, I as researcher lacked of formal education in researching. I had very limited experience, if none, in research

on language, and consequently in research skills. By the time of my bachelor degree, there were no language tutors to support such projects. Therefore, all the final papers of that time were based on pedagogy, administration, or Latin American literature, and subsequently, there were written is Spanish: that condition did not allow me to develop solid basis on academic writing. Nonetheless, the input received along the masters has definitely helped at the moment of implementing this study, since the seminars and workshops have given me valuable and thoughtful input on researching issues.

On the other hand, lack of time in the students caused some problems. The B.A in Language Teaching is an evening program, and most of students have full time jobs during the day. They constantly complained about their difficulties in timing because even though they were always willing to work, their duties on jobs did not allow them to go deeper. Their attendance at the implementation sessions was rather irregular. This condition caused some drawbacks to the project, as some of the students did not complete all the activities.

Additionally, some learners exhibited very traditional learning habits that made them reluctant to new possibilities, approaches and interventions. They were used to be passive members of learning environments and at the moment of being asked to work in blended spaces (virtual and face to face) they declared they found this way of studying very challenging and overwhelming. This lack of learner training made me take some extra time in training learners on how to perform well in such environments.

There are also other aspects that can be taken into account as constraining issues that inhibited more successful processes:

- Lack of updated computers in the university for students to practice (some programs and software did not run properly).
- Poor infrastructure where to implement the intervention. Classrooms were very noisy and lacked adequate acoustic conditions that were really needed to develop processes of identifying and producing phonetic exercises.

**Further research**

This study is based on general evaluation and allows primarily for a general examination of suprasegmental improvement. Considerably more work will need to be done to determine how podcasting would enhance the mastery of segmental in Spanish speakers who are learning English.

Further studies may also seek to shed light on how the use of podcasting would help students in the mastery of suprasegmentals, but not when reading pieces of news aloud but when speaking at the moment of creating a non scripted-podcast.

Future research should also concentrate on the investigation of having a controlled group in which no web 2.0 tools are used and then compare to which extent students in the other group benefit from being exposed to such tools.

More broadly, research would be needed to determine how other kind of ICTs would improve pronunciation teaching and learning. This research work would help the educational community to expand their knowledge and reflection upon innovative practices with technology enhanced pronunciation teaching.

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# APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Consent letter addressed to the coordinator of the Program.

Appendix 2: Consent letter addressed to the voluntary participants

Appendix 3: Initial test.

Appendix 4: Sample of questionnaire

Appendix 5: Sample of journal and logs.

Appendix 6: Podcast script

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Appendix 10: Rubric for podcasting

Appendix 11: Lesson plan sample

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**Appendix 1 Letter addressed to the coordinator of the program.**

Ibagué, Jueves 11 de Junio de 2009

Profesor
Alexander Arciniegas
Director
Programa de Licenciatura en Ingles
Universidad del Tolima
Ibagué

Respetado director:

En este momento estoy realizando un proyecto de investigación para la Maestría en Enseñanza de Inglés en Ambientes de Aprendizaje Autónomo en la Universidad de la Sabana, el cual consiste en implementar *podcasts* en la enseñanza de la pronunciación inglesa.

El objetivo de este estudio es examinar la forma como los estudiantes desarrollan y mejoran los acentos de frase en ingles a través de ejercicios de escucha y creación de podcasts. Dicho proyecto debe implementarse en dos ciclos, cada uno de ellos con una duración promedio de cinco meses.

Por lo anterior, comedidamente solicito su consentimiento para realizar mi propuesta de investigación la cual implica la recolección y el análisis de resultados obtenidos luego de la implementación de diversas actividades dentro del curso de Principios de Fonética y Pronunciación Inglesa que actualmente oriento. Además solicito ante usted la asignación de dicho curso en los semestres B-2009 y A-2010, con el fin de realizar los dos ciclos dispuestos para el proyecto.

Por lo anterior, debo tener acceso a los proyectos realizados por los alumnos. A los participantes se les garantizaría el uso de nombres ficticios para mantener su identidad en el anonimato, así como estricta confidencialidad con la información que se recolecte. El proyecto no tendría incidencia alguna en las evaluaciones y notas parciales y/o finales del curso.

Agradezco Su atención y quedo atenta a Su respuesta.

Cordialmente,

PODCASTING TO IMPROVE SENTECE STRESS

Janeth Liliana Arciniegas Londoño
C.C. 28.549.524 de Ibagué (Tolima)

**Appendix 2 Letter addressed to deaf participants.**

Ibagué,

Señor(a)

Estudiante Curso de Pronunciación Inglesa
Programa de Licenciatura en Ingles
Universidad del Tolima
Ibague

Apreciado(a) Estudiante:

Actualmente estoy realizando una investigación titulada "Podcasting to make proper sentence stress", dirigida a estudiantes de la Licenciatura en inglés de la Universidad del Tolima, la cual intenta contribuir y enriquecer los procesos de aprendizaje de la lengua extranjera y al mismo tiempo reorientar las prácticas docentes en la enseñanza de la pronunciación inglesa.

Dicha investigación hace parte de mi trabajo de grado de la Maestría en Enseñanza del Ingles con énfasis en Ambiente de Aprendizaje Autónomo que actualmente curso en la Universidad de la Sabana.
Por lo anterior, comedidamente solicito su consentimiento y colaboración como participantes de mi propuesta de investigación, que se realizará durante el segundo semestre académico del presente año. Esto implica recolectar datos y analizar los resultados, por lo cual debo tener acceso a sus proyectos y filmar algunas clases con el fin de conocer y analizar los resultados obtenidos después de la implementación.
Igualmente, a los participantes se les garantizara el uso de nombres ficticios para mantener su identidad en el anonimato, así como estricta confidencialidad con la información que se recolecte. El proyecto no tendrá incidencia alguna en las evaluaciones y notas parciales y/o finales del curso.
Agradezco de antemano su valioso aporte para llevar a buen término mi investigación.

Atentamente,

Janeth Liliana Arciniegas Londoño
C.C. 28.549.524 de Ibagué (Tolima)

Acepto participar SI____ NO____

Nombre _____
Firma _____
Código _____
Programa _____

**Appendix 3**

TEST

| **Student's name: _____ Date:_____** | |
|---|---|
| **Assessing subject reading of a piece of news Pronunciation at the suprasegmental level** | |
| 100-90 | Virtually native-speaker stress-timing, rhythm, and placing of stress, intonation patterns and range of pitch within sentence; natural linking of phrases. |
| 80-70 | Stress-timing, rhythm, placing of stress, intonation, etc. sufficiently native-like as to make comprehension easy and listening pleasurable. |
| 60-50 | Stress-timing, rhythm, placing of stress, intonation, etc. sufficiently controlled. |
| 40-30 | Syllable-timing make comprehenstion occasionally difficult to understand. |
| 30-20 | Spanish speech patterns make the subject occasionally difficult to understand. |
| 20-10- | Foreign speech patterns severely impede comprehension. |
| 10-0 | Not intelligible, through faulty stress and intonation. |

*(Adapted from Hitotuzi, 2004).*

## Appendix 4

Initial questionaire

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=rNI3kGJYdXr9RB3fBzAY7Q_3d_3d

1. Please fill in the boxes.

Name:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

2. What are your goals for this course?

3. Do you have a computer at home?

Do you have a computer at home?

Yes No

4. Employment status (hours per week; tick one):

Full time 30+ hours

Part time -30 hours

10 hours

Not employed

5. Do you have other responsibilities e.g. caring for children/dependents? |

Yes no

If yes, please state:

Other (please specify)

6. Main place of study (tick one):

Home: using a computer connected to the Internet

Student residence: using a computer connected to the Internet

College/university/learning centre

Other (please state)

Other (please specify)

7. Do you have access to a computer connected to the Internet (tick all that apply):

At home

Student residence

At work

At university/college/learning centre

Other location (please state)

Other (please specify)

8. How often do you use a computer (tick one):

Every day

A few times a week

Less than once a week

Less than once a month

9. Are you able to use your personal technologies (cellphone, ipod, computer) at the place where you work:

yes

no.

If no, please briefly describe any difficulties you have encountered.

Other (please specify)

10. Do you own an iPod or portable mp3 player?

No

Yes (iPod)

Yes (Sony mp3 or mp4 player)

Yes (other mp3 or mp4 player)

Other (please specify)

PODCASTING TO IMPROVE SENTECE STRESS

Final Questionnaire

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=RTDj8GLcKFA7qNUhlRz16Q_3d_3d

1. Please fill in the boxes.

Name:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

2. Did you like the materials and resources used in English Pronunciation class? Please check one answer for each row.

| | Yes, I loved it | Yes | Ok | Not much | Not really | Not at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| British course book | | | | | | |
| American course book | | | | | | |
| Listening to podcasts | | | | | | |
| Making podcasts | | | | | | |
| Listening to your partners' podcasts | | | | | | |

3. What did you think about making podcasts for this class?

| | Yes, I loved it | Yes | Ok | Not much | Not really | Not at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Listening to the podcasts and identifying suprasegmentals. | | | | | | |
| Labeling the script of our podcast to identify content words, linking and thought groups. | | | | | | |
| Practicing reading aloud to focus on content words, linking and thought groups. | | | | | | |
| Practicing reading the script. | | | | | | |
| Recording our voices. | | | | | | |
| Reviewing our partners' podcasts. | | | | | | |

PODCASTING TO IMPROVE SENTECE STRESS

Editing the podcast on the computer.

Uploading the podcast to our podomatic accounts.

4. Do you think podcasts helped you to improve your English Pronunciation?

Very much! Somewhat So-so A little Not at all!

Listening to native-produced podcasts.

Listening to the podcasts and identifying suprasegmentals.

Writing the script for our podcast.

Practicing reading aloud to focus on content words, linking and thought groups.

Practicing reading the script.

Recording our voices.

Reviewing our partners' podcasts.

Editing the podcast on the computer.

Uploading to our web Podomatic accounts

**Appendix 5**

**Sample of students' journal**

Students' perceptions about training were gathered by asking them the following questions:

What did you find useful in today's lesson? Why?

What did you find most frustrating in today's lesson? Why?

**Sample of students' journal**

Students' Name: _____

| **DATE** | **Time spent working with audio digital files.**<br><br>**(from 00.00 to 00.00AM or PM)** | **PURPOSE (Explain)** |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Appendix 6

Podcast script

BBC Learning English
Words in the News
15th April 2009
*Somali pirates strike again*

bbclearningenglish.com

*A US flagged merchant ship is heading for Kenya under an American naval escort after a failed effort by Somali pirates to hijack the ship. The incident follows recent rescue attempts by both the French and the Americans against Somali pirates. Rob Watson reports:*

The piracy problem looks like it's **here to stay** despite the recent **muscular interventions** by the French and American navies. Whether this latest **attempted hijacking** was the promised revenge for the killing of three Somali pirates by the US navy isn't clear. But it does suggest at the very least that the pirates **haven't been deterred**.

So why does the problem **persist**? Put simply **maritime security analysts** say piracy will continue as long as the financial rewards for a successful hijacking remain so great and Somalia remains so lawless. Certainly the international effort **to thwart** the problem is relatively limited. At any one time there are only fifteen to eighteen international warships in the area **to police an expanse of sea** covering more than a million square kilometres. Although it has been suggested that raids could **be mounted** on the pirates' home towns, it seems unlikely there'll be any major increase in the military effort unless there's a spectacular hijacking attack involving the deaths of many crew members.

The reluctance to mount **a major international naval operation** in the area may also be

(Taking from, BBC. (2009) *BBC Learning English: Words in the news: Somali pirates strike again*. Retrieved on April 24, 2009 from http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/language/wordsinthenews/2009/04/090415_witn_pirates_page.shtml )

Appendix 7
Game 1

# Stress dice

**A Point:** stress patterns in adjectives
**Minimum level:** intermediate
**Game type:** a racing game with board and dice for three or four players
**Approximate time:** 30 minutes

## Rules

1 Place your counters on the square marked *Start*. The object of the game is to move around the board from square to square to the square marked *Finish*. The first player to reach this square is the winner.

2 Players take turns to throw the dice and move.

3 Numbers on the dice correspond to stress patterns as follows:

To move, throw the dice and move to the first word you come to with the stress pattern indicated. (You can land on a square that already has a counter on it.)

4 If there is the tail of a worm in the square you have landed on, move your counter to its head.

5 If you land on a square marked *Miss a turn*, you miss your next turn.

6 If there are no more words with that stress pattern left before the finish, you can move to the finish.

## Preparation

Make a copy of the board and provide a dice for each group of three or four students in the class. Provide a counter for each student.

## Presentation

1 Write the following words with their stress patterns on the board:

| 1 ● | 2 ●● | 3 ●● | 4 ●●● | 5 ●●● | 6 ●●●● |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| fat | happy | ashamed | innocent | important | supermarket |

2 Ask students to think of other adjectives with the same stress patterns; write these words on the board under the appropriate stress pattern.
3 Read out some of the words from the game and ask students to say which stress pattern they correspond to.

## Conducting the game

1 Divide the class into groups of three or four and give each group a board, a dice and counters.
2 Explain and/or give out the rules.
3 During the game, move around the class helping students to resolve any disputes.
4 When students have finished, drill the pronunciation of the words.

## Key

| 1 ● | 2 ●● | 3 ●● | 4 ●●● | 5 ●●● | 6 ●●●● |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| fair | easy | correct | difficult | disgusting | supermarket |
| tall | boring | alive | interesting | confusing | architecture |
| long | ugly | unfair | beautiful | unhappy | fortunately |
| strong | fatter | alone | popular | unfriendly | ceremony |
| short | cloudy | unknown | serious | informal | fascinating |
| | | behind | sensitive | depressing | |

## Making your own versions

A blank version of the board is provided so that you can make your own version of the game using vocabulary from your course. You will need to make a list of five words each for three different stress patterns and six words each for three other stress patterns. Write these words on the board. Make sure that you distribute the words in random order so that the words with the same stress pattern are not all clustered together. Write a key with numbers 1-6 on the board to show which number on the dice corresponds to which stress pattern.

Taken from: Hancock, M. (1996). *Pronunciation Games*. Cambridge: CUP.

# A6 Stress dice

**Rules**

1 Place your counters on the square marked *Start*. The object of the game is to move around the board from square to square to the square marked *Finish*. The first player to reach this square is the winner.

2 Players take turns to throw the dice and move.

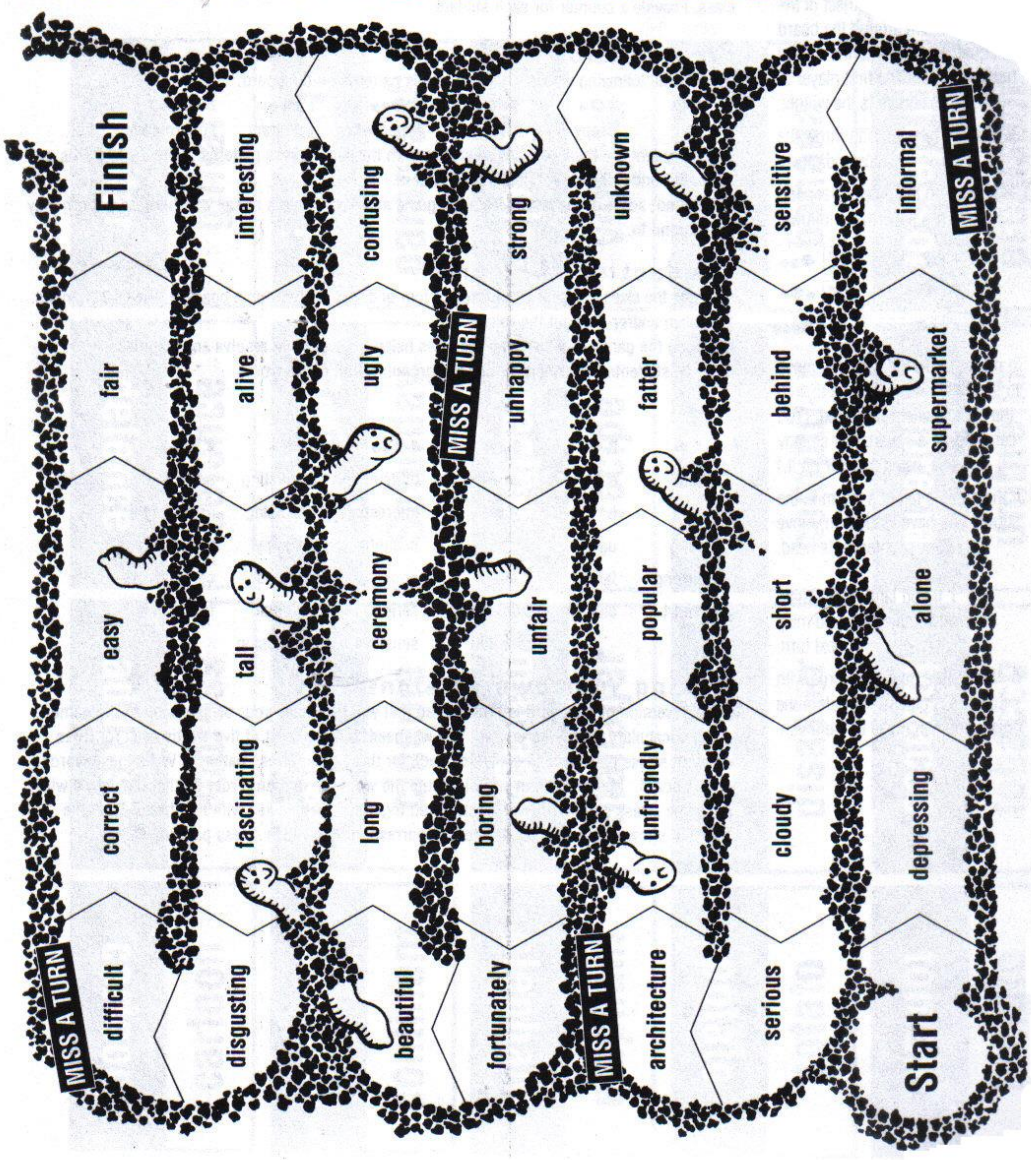
3 Numbers on the dice correspond to stress patterns as follows:

To move, throw the dice and move to the first word you come to with the stress pattern indicated. (You can land on a square that already has a counter on it.)

4 If there is the tail of a worm in the square you have landed on, move your counter to its head.

5 If you land on a square marked *Miss a turn*, you miss your next turn.

6 If there are no more words with that stress pattern left before the finish, you can move to the finish.






From **Pronunciation Games** by Mark Hancock © Cambridge University Press 1995 **PHOTOCOPIABLE**

Appendix 8

Game 2

# Stepping stones

**Point:** stress in two-syllable verbs
**Minimum level:** pre-intermediate
**Game type:** a path-finding puzzle for students working individually (or in pairs)
**Approximate time:** 15 minutes

## Preparation

Make a copy of the puzzle for each member of the class.

## Presentation

Write the following verbs on the board:

borrow finish open
allow arrive relax

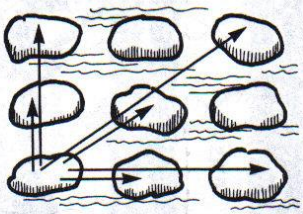
Elicit that the verbs in the first group have the stress on the first syllable and that the verbs in the second group have the stress on the second syllable. Point out that most two-syllable verbs have the stress on the second syllable.

## Conducting the game

**1** Give each student a puzzle. (The game could also be played in pairs.) Explain that the puzzle shows a river which must be crossed using the stepping stones. Point out that there is only one route across the river.

**2** Explain that students may only use a stepping stone if the verb on it has the stress on the first syllable.

**3** To cross the river, players are allowed to step from one stone to the next horizontally, vertically or diagonally. They may also step over a stone to the one beyond. The following diagram illustrates the moves that are allowed:



**4** To reach the far bank of the river, players may also step over a stone.

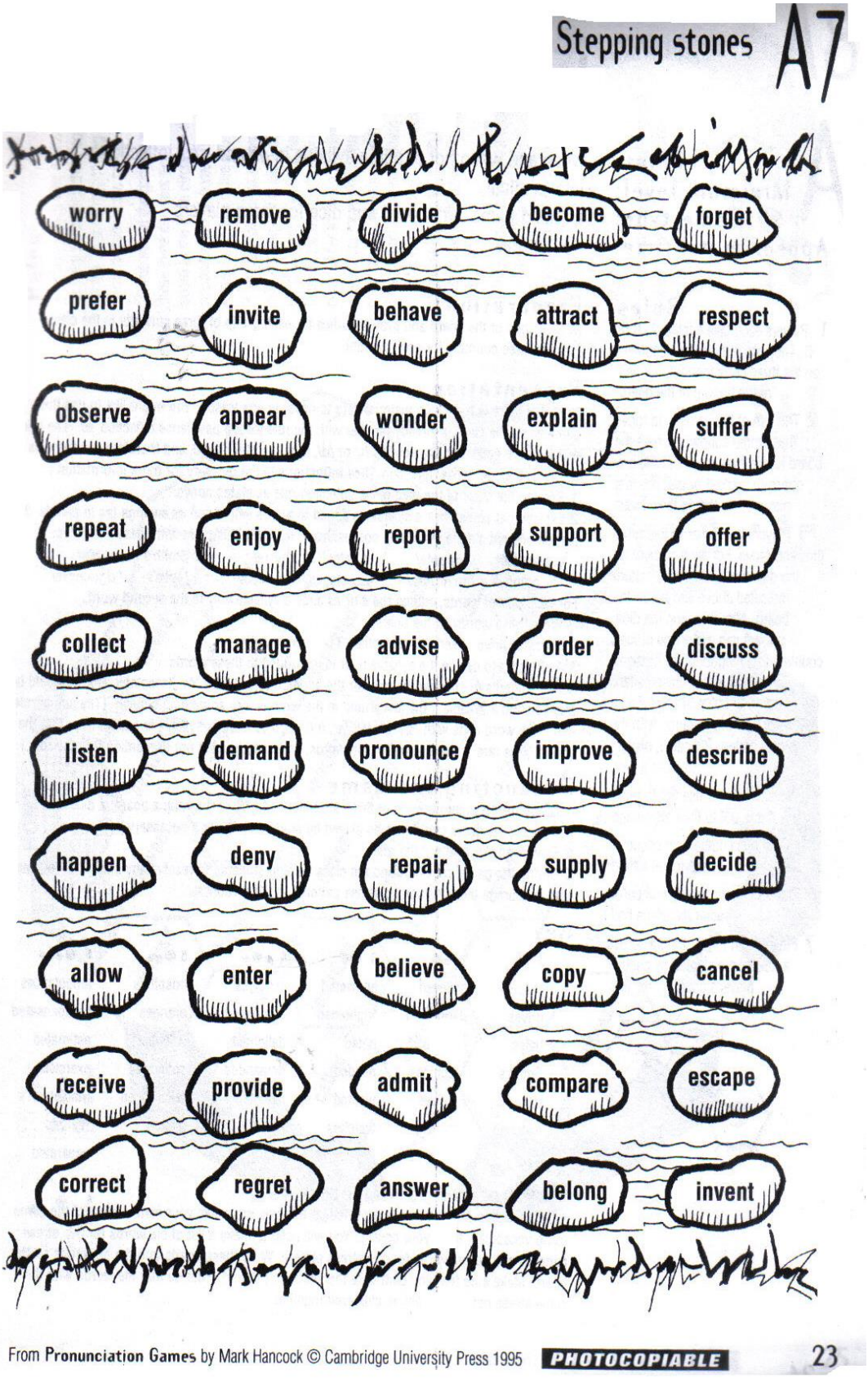
**5** When students have finished, check the route together. Point out that all the other verbs have the stress on the second syllable. Drill the pronunciation of the two groups of verbs.

## Key

These are the stones you need to use to cross the river:

answer - cancel - copy - enter - happen - listen - manage - order - offer - suffer - wonder - worry

Taken from: Hancock, M. (1996). *Pronunciation Games*. Cambridge: CUP.




Taken from: Hancock, M. (1996). *Pronunciation Games*. Cambridge: CUP.

Appendix 9

Learning Object 1

**UNIVERSIDAD DEL TOLIMA**
**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**
**B.A IN ENGLISH**

**SUBJECT:** English Pronunciation and Phonetic Principles.
**TOPIC:** Sentence stress. (Part 1)

**LESSON OBJECTIVES:**

- To identify content words.
- To emphasize content words when reading aloud.

For this week's activities you need to do the following:

1. Click on the picture below to watch a video.

2. Listen to the podcast called sentence stress in http://pronufans.podomatic.com/ (You can find and read the script at the end of this document)

3. Watch the video http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wbs5aoqFtVQ for further explanations about sentence stress.

PODCASTING TO IMPROVE SENTECE STRESS

**Procedure**

**BEFORE THE LESSON**

1. Go to http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/language/newsaboutbritain/2009/05/090519_nab_susan_boyle.shtml, and read and listen to this piece of news about Susan Boyle.

2. Copy the text you find at http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/britain/090519_nab_susan_boyle.pdf and paste it in word document.

3. In the word document you have now, identify and mark the content words in the first two paragraphs of the text. For this activity all of you will use the same system of notation for marking stress in a sentence. You will do it by using the tool "color del resaltado del texto" you find in the " inicio" tab. Use yellow to mark the content words, that is to say, the words that are easier to hear and given extra emphasis.

4. Email your document to your classmates.

5. Read your fellow's text and see the differences between his/her work and yours. Arrange a meeting with your partner on Skype, and discuss the choices you did in the text regarding the content words you highlight. Then, come up with one new document for you two and bring it to the class.

Print this final document and bring it to our next class

**NOTE:** If you have any questions, please email me.

See you around

Best regards,

Janet.

**References**

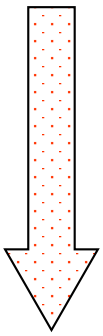
BritainsSoTalented. (2009).*Susan Boyle - Singer - Britain's Got Talent 200.* [video]. Retrieved May 26, 2009 from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9lpoIWv8QZY

Jennifer (Producer). (March, 31de 2008) Lesson 8a - STRESS PATTERNS - English Pronunciation [Teaching video]. Retrieved 2007, May 26, from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wbs5aoqFtVQ

Susan Boyle: unlikely superstar?.(2009). Retrieved May 26, 2009 from BBC learning English: Website: http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/language/newsaboutbritain/2009/05/090519_nab_susan_boyle.shtml

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

#20: The American English Pronunciation Rhythm Rule and Sentence Stress (n.d). Retrieved May 26, 2009, from American English Pronunciation: Website: http://www.pronuncian.com/materials/podcasts/Episode_20.aspx



Scroll down to see the script of the podcast
http://pronufans.podomatic.com/

***PODCAST SCRITP-SENTENCE STRESS***
http://pronufans.podomatic.com/

***By Janet Arciniegas***
***Universidad del Tolima***

Hi every one. This is Janet from the Universidad del Tolima.

Did you enjoy Susan Boyles' performance? Just as Simon says, it was simply brilliant, wasn't it?

This 40-year-old woman called Susan Boyle shocked Great Britain last month in the "Britain's got talent 2009 content.

She is now one of the queens of the web. On you tube she's been viewed more than 60 million times. And to think that "Less than a few weeks ago Susan Boyle was **a virtual unknown**."

PODCASTING TO IMPROVE SENTECE STRESS

Listen again to this sentence about Susan, and notice that are some words on it that are easier to hear that the others.

Less than a few weeks ago Susan Boyle was **a virtual unknown**.

As you noticed, the words, ***less, weeks Susan*** and ***unknown*** were easier to hear because they have been given extra emphasis.

In English, extra emphasis is added to a word:

by making the vowel in the stressed syllable extra long and very clear

by adding a pitch change to the stressed syllable. This means making the pitch of your voice rise and fall on the stressed syllable.

Listen to the sentence again, a notice how just the words ***less, weeks, Susan*** and ***unknown*** are emphasized.

Less than a few weeks ago Susan Boyle was **a virtual unknown**.

In previous lessons we have talked about word stress. We saw that in English, we do not say each syllable with the same force or strength. In one word, we accentuate ONE syllable and we do that by making that syllable longer, louder, and higher than the others.

However, English rhythm is based not only on word stress but also on sentence stress.

Let's take the next step in this week's e-tivity and go into sentence stress in depth.
See you around!!!!!

Appendix 10 Rubric for podcasting

| CATEGORY | Exemplary | Proficient | Partially Proficient | Incomplete | | FINAL GRADE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Introduction**<br><br>5 % of the total grade | **5**<br>☐ Tells who is speaking, date the podcast was produced, and where the speaker is located. | **4**<br>☐ Tells most of the following: who is speaking, date of the podcast, and location of speaker. | **3**<br>☐ Alludes to who is speaking, date of the podcast, and location of speaker. | **2**<br>☐ Speaker is not identified. No production date or location of the speaker is provided. | | |
| **Delivery**<br><br>15 % of the total grade | **5**<br>☐ Well rehearsed, smooth delivery in a conversational style. | **4**<br>☐ Rehearsed, smooth delivery. | **3**<br>☐ Appears unrehearsed with uneven delivery. | **2**<br>☐ Delivery is hesitant, and choppy and sounds like the presenter is reading. | | |
| | **5**<br>☐ Highly effective enunciation and presenter's speech is clear and intelligible, not distant and muddled. Expression and rhythm keep the audience listening. | **4**<br>☐ Enunciation, expression, pacing are effective throughout the podcast. | **3**<br>☐ Enunciation, expression, rhythm are sometimes distracting during the podcast. | **2**<br>☐ Enunciation of spoken word is distant and muddled and not clear. Expression and rhythm are distracting throughout the podcast. | | |
| **Graphic and Music Enhancement**<br><br>5 % of the total grade | **5**<br>☐ The graphics/artwork used creates a unique and effective presentation and enhance what is being said in the podcast and follow the rules for quality graphic design. | **4**<br>☐ The graphics/artwork relates to the audio and reinforces content and demonstrates functionality. | **3**<br>☐ The graphics/artwork sometimes enhances the quality and understanding of the presentation. | **2**<br>☐ The graphics are unrelated to the podcast. Artwork is inappropriate to podcast. | | |
| **Introduction** | **5** | **4** | **3** | **2** | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ☐ Music enhances the mood, quality, and understanding of the presentation. | ☐ Music provides supportive background to the podcast. | ☐ Music provides somewhat distracting background to the podcast | ☐ Music is distracting to presentation. | | |
| **Technical production**<br><br>10 % of the total grade | **5** | **4** | **3** | **2** | | |
| | ☐ Presentation is recorded in a quiet environment without background noise and distractions. | ☐ Presentation is recorded in a quiet environment with minimal background noise and distractions. | ☐ Presentation is recorded in a semi-quiet environment with some background noise and distractions. | ☐ Presentation is recorded in a noisy environment with constant background noise and distractions. | | |
| | **5** | **4** | **3** | **2** | | |
| | ☐ Volume of voice, music, and effects enhance the presentation. | ☐ Volume is acceptable. | ☐ Volume is occasionally inconsistent. | ☐ Volume changes are highly distracting. | | |
| **Content words**<br>20 % of the total grade | **5** | **4** | **3** | **2** | | |
| | ☐ All of the focus words are well in identified and are said longer, louder and higher than the others. | ☐ Most of the focus words are well in identified and are said longer, louder and higher than the others. | ☐ Some of the focus words are well in identified and are said longer, louder and higher than the others. | ☐ A few of the focus words are well in identified and are pronounced. | | |
| **Linking** | **5** | **4** | **3** | **2** | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 % of the total grade | ☐ Nearly all linkages of sounds are well identified and pronounced. | ☐ Some of linkages of sounds are well identified and pronounced. | ☐ Few linkages of sounds are identified and pronounced. | ☐ Just a few of linkages of sounds are identified and pronounced. | | |
| **Though groups**<br><br>25 % of the total grade | **5**<br>☐ All ideas are well separated into individual groups of words so that the meaning of utterances can be easily understood. | **4**<br>☐ Most of the ideas are well separated into individual groups of words so that the meaning of utterances can be easily understood. | **3**<br>☐ Some of the ideas are well separated into individual groups of words. Meaning of utterances can be somehow understood. | **2**<br>☐ Most of ideas are not well separated into groups. Meaning is not clear. | | |
| | | | | | **TOTAL** | |

Adapted from *Rubrics for Assessment.* (2008)**.** Retrieved November 10, 2009, from University of Wisconsin – Stout: Official Website: **http://www.uwstout.edu/soe/profdev/podcastrubric.html)**

Appendix 11

PODCASTING TO IMPROVE SENTECE STRESS

Lesson plan

**Aims:** By the end of the lesson students will be able to:

- identify content words.
- emphasize content words in sentences when reading aloud.

This will be done by:

- Singing out a rhyme to raise awareness of rhythm.
- Categorizing words according to the part of speech they belong to.
- Listening to a piece of news about Piracy and highlighting focus words(content words) on it.

**Assumed knowledge:**

- Students have dealt with the effect of stress on the rhythm of words.
- They know how English speakers use vowel clarity and vowel length to add stress in syllables.
- Students have gotten acquainted with basic jargon on pronunciation: pitch, stress, long vowels.

**Skills**

- Students can get the information when receiving instructions.
- Students can communicate general and specific ideas in English.

**Description of language item / skill**

**Placement of stress in sentences**

(Taken from: Avery & Ehrlich (2008). Teaching American English Pronunciation. *Oxford Handbooks for Language Teachers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.)

PODCASTING TO IMPROVE SENTECE STRESS

English words can be divided into two groups: *content words* and *function words*. Content words are those words that express independent meaning. Included in this group are:

1. Nouns
2. Main Verbs
3. Adverbs
4. Adjectives
5. Question Words (e.g. why, when, what)
6. Demonstratives (this, that, these, those).

Content words are usually stressed.

Function words are words that have little or no meaning in themselves, but which express grammatical relationships. Function words include:

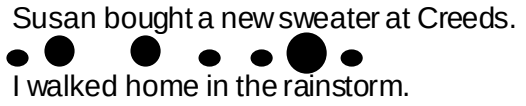
1. Articles (a, an, the)
2. Prepositions (e.g. at, to, of)
3. Auxiliaries (e.g. will, have and forms of the verb be)
4. Pronouns (e.g. her, him, it, them)
5. Conjunctions (e.g. and, or, as, that)
6. Relative pronouns (e.g. that, which, who)

Function words are usually unstressed, unless they are to be given special attention.

**Placement of main stress in sentences**

While all content words receive major word stress, one content word within a particular sentence will receive greater stress than all the others. We refer to this as the *major sentence stress*. In most cases the major sentence stress falls on the last content word within a sentence:

PODCASTING TO IMPROVE SENTECE STRESS




In each of these sentences, the stressed syllable of the final content word receives the major sentence stress. (p. 74)

***Materials :***

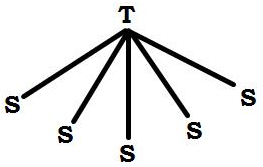
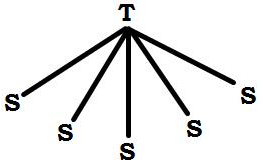
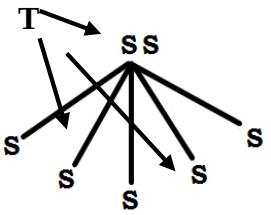
Course book
Audio CD
CD player.
Handouts.
Board
Markers

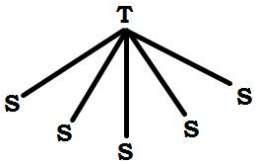
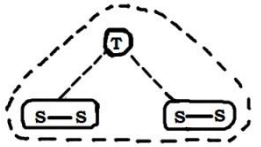
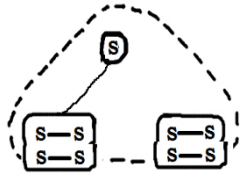
This lesson aims to help students how to create the rhythm of English, by raising awareness on how to emphasize content words in sentences. If they are aware of the distinction between content and function words, they will be able to give appropriate meaning to sentences.

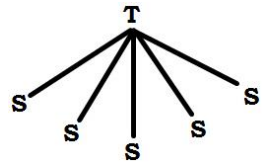
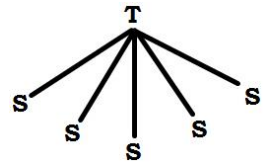
**Anticipated problems**

| **Anticipated problems** | **Planned solutions** |
|---|---|
| Some students would find difficult to recognized and make stress in words. | I would provide stress patterns that have been used before, in order to help them to remember the pronunciation of words. |
| Students would find difficult to categorize words according to the part of the speech they belong to. | I would elicit the main categories in English speech and I would also elicit examples of them so that students could refer to this table when necessary. |

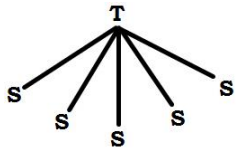
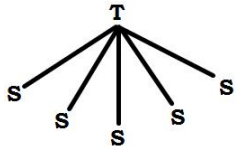
PODCASTING TO IMPROVE SENTECE STRESS

| Stage | Aim | Procedure<br>Teacher and student activity | Time and interaction |
|---|---|---|---|
| Warmer | Get students focused<br>Lower anxiety. | Teacher displays the lyrics of a nursery rhyme students have already known. Learners sing out the rhyme and teacher asks students to clap out the tempo on it. Then, T have students to clap just on the strong beat in each measure (4 beats in each bar).<br>(Appendix 1) | 5 min<br>  |
| Elicitation | Activate possible previous knowledge.<br>To raise awareness on sentence stress | T asks students to describe the 4 beats in each line, and say what was special in two of the beats.<br>After listening to them and eliciting possible descriptions, T says that just as in every stanza where there are two words that are said louder and higher that the others, in every sentence in English there are some words that are more important than others. | 5 min<br>  |
| Lead-In | Introduce the theme for the lesson. | Teacher draws a table on the board (Appendix 2) and asks one student to write in the first column, the words in which the strong beats are sung while the rest of the class sing out the last verse of the rhyme.<br><br>Then, another student writes in the second column the weak words in the stanzas.<br><br>Teacher helps students identifying the words (if necessary). | 6 min<br>  |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Once students have finished classifying the words, teacher elicits the parts of the speech the words belong to: (e.g. nouns, articles, verbs etc.) | |
| Listening | Check understanding and practice | Students listen to exercise B, on page 44 of their course book (See Appendix 3). They listen and repeat the sentences in the exercise and read the explanation the book provides in items 2 and 3, as well as the texts about sentence focus, and the music of English, on items C and D and E. | 8 min   |
| Pair work | Check understanding and practice | Then, in pairs, students fill in the blanks in exercise F. Teacher monitors students work .Once all of them have finished, teacher checks answers. | 4 min   |
| Eliciting "Pictionary" | Play "Pictionary" in order to introduce the news' topic. | Teacher splits students in two groups. One student per group draws a picture according to a word teacher shows him/her. The rest of the group has to guess the word in 1 minute. The same procedure is followed until five words have been guessed (sea, ships, steal, hijacker, money).<br>Then, Teacher elicits the topic that is common to the words: pirates. | 6 min   |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Listening | Check understanding and practice.<br>Introduce the reading's topic. | Teacher displays a poster with the first sentence of a piece of news related to piracy(See appendix 4). T asks one student to come to the board, predict the focus words and circle them. | 5 min<br>  |
| | | Then all students listen to a reporter who says the sentence and peer-review their partner's work.<br><br>Teacher does a choral drilling of the sentence. | 4 min<br>  |
| Individual work | Check understanding and practice. | Teacher deals out the whole piece of news about Somali Pirates (See Appendix 4). Students predict again the words speaker is going to focus in the next two sentences. | 5 min<br> |
| Pair work | Check understanding and practice. | In pairs, students compare their work. | 3 min<br> |

PODCASTING TO IMPROVE SENTECE STRESS

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Listening | Check answers. | Teacher plays the audio of the sentences. Students check their work and compare it with the audio provided. | 4 min   |
| Final choral repetition. | Practice | Once they have identified the content words in the sentences, students read the first paragraph aloud emphasizing the content words. | 5 min   |
| Homework | Further practice | At home, students predict the content words in the rest of the news.<br><br>Then, students listen to the audio of the news, (available on the web) compare, and check their choices.<br><br>In addition, students read along with the audio until they are able to do it fluently.<br><br>They will have to read aloud the news in the next lesson, emphasizing the content words. | |

APPENDIX 1

There was an Old Lady song

There was an old lady who swallowed a fly
I don't know why she swallowed a fly - perhaps she'll die!
There was an old lady who swallowed a spider,
That wriggled and jiggled and tickled inside her;

She swallowed the spider to catch the fly;
But I don't know why she swallowed a fly - Perhaps she'll die!

There was an old lady who swallowed a bird;
How absurd to swallow a bird.
She swallowed the bird to catch the spider,
That wriggled and jiggled and tickled inside her
She swallowed the spider to catch the fly;
But I don't know why she swallowed a fly - Perhaps she'll die!

There was an old lady who swallowed a cat;
Imagine that she swallowed a cat!
She swallowed the cat to catch the bird,
She swallowed the bird to catch the spider,
That wriggled and jiggled and tickled inside her
She swallowed the spider to catch the fly;
But I don't know why she swallowed a fly - Perhaps she'll die!

There was an old lady that swallowed a dog;
What a hog she swallowed a dog
She swallowed the dog to catch the cat,
She swallowed the cat to catch the bird,
She swallowed the bird to catch the spider,
That wriggled and jiggled and tickled inside her;
She swallowed the spider to catch the fly;
But I don't know why she swallowed a fly - Perhaps she'll die!

There was an old lady who swallowed a goat
She's opened her throat and swallowed the goat
She swallowed the goat to catch the dog,
She swallowed the dog to catch the cat,
She swallowed the cat to catch the bird,
She swallowed the bird to catch the spider,
That wriggled and jiggled and tickled inside her;
She swallowed the spider to catch the fly;
But I don't know why she swallowed a fly - Perhaps she'll die!

There was an old lady who swallowed a cow
I don't know how she swallowed a cow;

She swallowed the cow to catch the goat
She swallowed the goat to catch the dog
She swallowed the dog to catch the cat,
She swallowed the cat to catch the bird,
She swallowed the bird to catch the spider,
That wriggled and jiggled and tickled inside her;
She swallowed the spider to catch the fly;
But I don't know why she swallowed a fly - Perhaps she'll die!

There was an old lady who swallowed a horse...
She's dead, of course!

Adapted from:

There was an old lady song (n.d). Retrieved April 10, 2009, from Nursery rhymes-lyrics and origins: Website: http://www.rhymes.org.uk/there_was_an_old_lady.htm.

APPENDIX 2

| Strong words | Weak words |
|---|---|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

There was an old lady who swallowed a goat
She's opened her throat and swallowed the goat
She swallowed the goat to catch the dog,
She swallowed the dog to catch the cat,
She swallowed the cat to catch the bird,
She swallowed the bird to catch the spider,
That wriggled and jiggled and tickled inside her;

( Words in red match with the strong beats in the rhyme and black ones match with the weak beats)

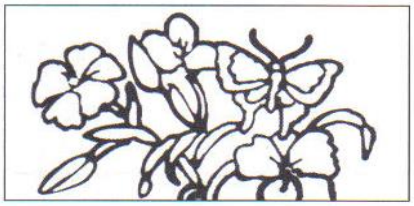
APPENDIX 3

(Taken from: Gilbert, J. (2007). *Clear speech: Pronunciation and listening comprehension in North American English*. Cambridge: CUP.

# 6 Sentence focus: Emphasizing content words

## A Emphasis in sentences

Compare the two pictures below. In the picture on the left, the butterfly is hard to see because it is the same color as the things around it. The butterfly on the right is lighter than everything else around it. This contrast between light and dark emphasizes the butterfly and makes it easy to notice.



In a similar way, English speakers use contrast to emphasize the words they want their hearer to notice.

If you learn to use contrast to emphasize important words, you will:

- Be understood better.
- Hear better.

## B Emphasizing a word

**1** Listen to these sentences and notice how the underlined words are easier to hear than the other words.

1. We'll be arriving tomorrow.
2. You look great.
3. She lives in Toronto now.
4. Is the baby walking yet?
5. Follow that car!

**2** The underlined words in these sentences are easier to hear because they have been given extra emphasis. In English, extra emphasis is added to a word by:

- Making the vowel in the stressed syllable extra long and very clear.
- Adding a ***pitch change*** to the stressed syllable. This means making the pitch of your voice rise or fall on the stressed syllable.

**3** Listen to the sentences again. Notice how each underlined word is emphasized.

## C Sentence focus

In each short sentence or clause there is a ***focus word.*** The focus word is the most important word. English speakers help listeners notice the focus word by giving it the most emphasis.

"Car" is the focus word in the following sentence. It must be emphasized so that the hearer can notice it easily.

**Follow that car!**

Listen and notice how the stressed syllable of the focus word is extra long and clear and has a pitch change.

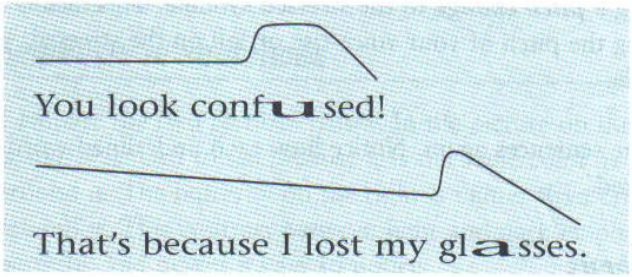
Follow that car!

Do you mean the blue one?

> ***Focus Rule 1***
>
> The stressed syllable of a focus word is extra long, extra clear, and has a pitch change.

## D Music of English

1 Listen to these sentences and notice how the focus words are emphasized. The stressed syllable of each focus word has a change in pitch and a long, clear vowel.




2 Listen again. Practice saying the sentences until you can say them smoothly and easily.

## E Focus and content words

*Content words* are words that carry the most information in a sentence. Nouns, main verbs, adverbs, adjectives, and question words are content words. Here are some examples from each category.

| Nouns | Main verbs | Adverbs | Adjectives | Question words |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| cat | run | suddenly | fresh | who |
| bus | read | carefully | green | what |
| glasses | eat | slowly | confused | how |

*Focus Rule 2*

The focus word in a sentence is usually a content word.

## F Thinking of content words

Work in small groups. How many content words can you think of for each category?

| Nouns | Main verbs | Adverbs | Adjectives | Question words |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... |

APPENDIX 4

# BBC Learning English
# Words in the News
# 15th April 2009
## *Somali pirates strike again*

bbclearningenglish.com

*A US flagged merchant ship is heading for Kenya under an American naval escort after a failed effort by Somali pirates to hijack the ship. The incident follows recent rescue attempts by both the French and the Americans against Somali pirates. Rob Watson reports:*

The piracy problem looks like it's **here to stay** despite the recent **muscular interventions** by the French and American navies. Whether this latest **attempted hijacking** was the promised revenge for the killing of three Somali pirates by the US navy isn't clear. But it does suggest at the very least that the pirates **haven't been deterred**.

So why does the problem **persist**? Put simply **maritime security analysts** say piracy will continue as long as the financial rewards for a successful hijacking remain so great and Somalia remains so lawless. Certainly the international effort **to thwart** the problem is relatively limited. At any one time there are only fifteen to eighteen international warships in the area **to police an expanse of sea** covering more than a million square kilometres. Although it has been suggested that raids could **be mounted** on the pirates' home towns, it seems unlikely there'll be any major increase in the military effort unless there's a spectacular hijacking attack involving the deaths of many crew members.

The reluctance to mount **a major international naval operation** in the area may also be down to the relatively small scale of the problem. Last year, according to figures from the International Maritime Bureau, nearly twenty three thousand ships passed through the Gulf of Aden. Only ninety two were hijacked.

Rob Watson, BBC News

(Taken from, BBC. (2009) *BBC Learning English: Words in the news: Somali pirates strike again.* Retrieved on April 24, 2009 from http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/language/wordsinthenews/2009/04/090415_witn_pirates_page.shtml

**REFERENCES (for lesson plan)**

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Kelly, G. (20001) *How to teach pronunciation*. Harlow: Longman.

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Appendix 12
Learning object 2

# UNIVERSIDAD DEL TOLIMA
# FACULTY OF EDUCATION
# B.A IN ENGLISH

**SUBJECT:** English Pronunciation and Phonetic Principles.
**TOPIC:** Sentence stress. **(Part 2)**

**LESSON OBJECTIVES:**

- To identify basic elements of connected speech such as content words and linkage of sounds in authentic texts (news).
- To emphasize content words when reading aloud.

Reading aloud can help you to develop your reading skills as well as your speaking and pronunciation skills. This can be especially useful if you record yourself and listen☺.

## FIRST PART:
## DUE DATE WEDNESDAY SEMPTEMBER 30TH 2009 MIDNIGHT

1. Go to

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/language/wordsinthenews/2009/04/090415_witn_pirates_page.shtml

and print the text, download its audio and listen to it very carefully in order to identify and mark the following:

- **Thought groups:** use slant lines ( / ) to separate groups of words that belong together and that can be a short sentence of part of a longer sentence.

- **Content words:** use a highlighter pen to mark the words that carry the most information in a sentence and that are said longer and higher than the rest of the words.
- **Liking:** where does the speaker join words to each other?:E.g.: roll over

  - ✓ consonant > vowel:
    Where does the speaker link words ending with a consonant sound to words beginning with a vowel sound?
  - ✓ vowel > vowel
    Where do the speaker link words ending with a vowel sound to words beginning with a vowel sound?

2. Once you have identified the elements above, start reading the text aloud until you are able to do it simultaneously (if possible) with the speaker. Remember that the elements that have been identified above will help to do it successfully.

3. After practicing, use audacity to record yourselves reading aloud the news (you might want to try it 3 or even 4 times to get it right). Take turns to read the paragraphs or the sentences in the news so that the two of you can read the same average of sentences. Use all the possibilities Audacity has in order to enrich your podcast (background music and image). Before uploading, self-assess your podcast by reading the rubric you will find at the end of this document.

4. Once you have the final version of your podcast, upload it to the Podomatic pair-account you created in last session. Label your podcast as follows:

**Names-News title**.

E.g.: Janet Arciniegas-Juan Contreras-Somali pirates strike again.

# SECOND PART

**DUE DATE WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 3th 2009 MIDNIGHT.**

## Peer Review:

1. Look at the table below to find the pair of students you will give feedback to. Once you have identified your target group, send them an email in which you let them know the address where they can listen to your podcast.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| RONDON MARTINEZ MAURICIO ANDRES | ⟷ | AGUIRRE SANCHEZ CAROL LISETH |
| LOPEZ OLIVERA SILVIO FABIAN<br>ARBELAEZ FLOREZ HAROLD GIOVANNY | ⟷ | CELEMIN ALEXA<br>CABEZAS ROZO RUBEN DAVID |
| GARCIA CORREA ADRIANA LUCERO<br>REYES JESSICA LORENA | ⟷ | MORA CONTRERAS YIRLEY YURANI<br>ROMERO TRUJILLO EIBER FABIAN |
| GARZON SAEN ANA MARIA<br>BARRERA GODOY ANDREA FERNANDA | ⟷ | ROMERO ENRIQUE<br>JIMENEZ TIQUE YAMEL |
| CRUZ JESSICA<br>MENESES DANIELA | ⟷ | ARBELAEZ SUAREZ ALEXANDRA<br>ESGUERRA DIAZ JEISSON FABIAN |
| MEDINA MONTOYA JUAN PABLO<br>VARGAS DORA LUZ | ⟷ | MELENDEZ OSPINA DANIEL<br>SERRANO SANTA FABIAN MAURICIO |
| VARON BOBADILLA ANGELICA MARIA<br>CASTELLANOS HERRERA JOHAN | ⟷ | MARULANDA JENNIFER ANDREA<br>GOMEZ GONZALEZ MEIKER ANDRES |

2. Once you have your partners' Podomatic account, listen to their podcast, copy the rubric below and paste it in a word document. After listening to your partners' podcast, take into account each item in the rubric to evaluate your partners' product. Fill in the rubric and email your partners and teacher attaching the rubric with the total of points they had according to your criteria.

If you have any question, please email me.
Best regards,

Janet.

**References**

BBC Learning English: Words in the news. (2009). Retrieved June 10, 2009, from BBC: Website: http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/language/wordsinthenews/index.shtml

Youtube.com (2009). Tutorial Movie Maker. Retrieved June 10, 2009 from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZXK68NS7gU&hl=es