

PEER ASSESSING THOUGHT GROUPS AND FOCUS WORDS IN SPEAKING

Peer Assessing Thought Groups and Focus Words through Controlled Speaking Tasks

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### **Abstract**

Intelligibility plays a significant role in oral language production. Previous research has found that suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation are linked to intelligibility, but little attention has been given to their teaching in the current communicative language classroom. This action research study adopted peer assessment as a strategy to affect the oral production of “thought groups” and “focus words” of nine A2-B1 English L2 learners at a Colombian language institute. *Thought groups* and *focus words* are part of the “prosody pyramid” which enhances word and sentence stress in the English language. *Thought groups* are sets of words that convey meaning, *focus words* are those words which should be emphasized to convey meaning. A mixed-method approach was used, and data were collected from checklists, peer assessment logs, questionnaires, teacher’s journals, and a focus group. Results were two-folded, while participants became skillful at identifying *thought groups* and *focus words* when listening, their accuracy to orally produce them decreased. Additionally, findings showed that participants’ perceptions regarding pronunciation and peer assessment were affected positively. Peer assessment showed to be a strategy that helped participants become more independent from the teacher’s assistance. Further research would enrich the discussion about the role of peer assessment in suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation, as well as in the teaching of the prosody pyramid.

*Key words:* peer assessment, prosody pyramid, thought groups, focus words, stressed syllable, peak vowel, intelligibility

### **Resumen**

La inteligibilidad juega un papel importante en la producción oral de un idioma. Estudios anteriores han descubierto que los aspectos suprasegmentales de la pronunciación están ligados a la inteligibilidad, pero se ha prestado poca importancia a la enseñanza de dichos aspectos en el actual contexto comunicativo de enseñanza. Este estudio de investigación-acción adoptó la

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coevaluación como estrategia para impactar la producción oral de “grupos de pensamiento” y “palabras focales” de nueve aprendices de Inglés con nivel A2-B1 en un instituto de idiomas en Colombia. Los grupos de pensamiento y palabras focales son parte de la “pirámide prosódica” que desarrolla aspectos de acentuación en palabras y oraciones en el idioma inglés, los grupos de pensamiento son juegos de palabras que conllevan significado, las palabras focales son aquellas palabras que deben ser enfatizadas para expresar significado. El enfoque de método mixto fue utilizado y la información fue recolectada de listas de chequeo, formatos de coevaluación, cuestionarios, diarios del profesor y un grupo focal. Los resultados fueron duales, mientras los participantes ganaron habilidades para identificar grupos de pensamiento y palabras focales al escuchar, su precisión al producirlos desmejoró. Adicionalmente, los resultados mostraron que las percepciones de los participantes acerca de la pronunciación y la coevaluación fueron afectadas positivamente. Se demostró que la coevaluación ayudó a los participantes a ser más independientes de la ayuda del profesor. Investigaciones futuras enriquecerían la discusión sobre el papel de la coevaluación en aspectos suprasegmentales de la pronunciación, así como en la enseñanza de la pirámide prosódica.

*Palabras claves:* coevaluación, pirámide prosódica, grupos de ideas, palabras acentuadas, sílabas acentuadas, vocales acentuadas, inteligibilidad.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction to the study

Spanish-speakers learning English as a foreign language face difficulties related to the receptive skills, listening and reading, as well as the productive ones, writing and speaking. Nowadays, communicative language teaching methodology (CLT) has emphasized the role speaking has in communication (Richards, 2006). Speaking is considered to be a challenging skill for learners (Thornbury, 2005). To be able to communicate orally, not only do students need to learn vocabulary and grammar, but they also need to be intelligible (Jenkins, 2006). This means that they need to manage patterns of prosody: segmental, and suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation. *Segmentals* refer to phonemes, while *suprasegmentals* relate to larger chunks of speech where intonation, stress, and rhythm take place.

Different pronunciation teaching materials promote teaching suprasegmentals as a way to improve intelligibility; however, there is little empirical support for those claims (Hahn, 2004). It is precisely suprasegmentals that this study explores. The present study sought to add empirical support to the literature of suprasegmentals through the use of peer assessment of different speaking tasks focusing specifically on stress by using the concepts embedded in the prosody pyramid (Gilbert, 2008). Peer assessment is a strategy that has been shown to be effective, promoting students' reflection and interaction, which are components of the CLT and help students become autonomous (Richards, 2006).

Teachers should seek to promote students' intelligibility (Hahn, 2004); therefore, pronunciation should be taught both because it is a means to strengthen speaking skills and because English pronunciation is challenging for learners to manage in a foreign language learning environment. Unfortunately, the teaching of pronunciation in many English classrooms



is given the least attention (Gilakjani, Ahmadi, & Ahmadi, 2011). According to Gilbert (2008), teaching pronunciation has been neglected because of different reasons. One of those is that teachers cannot give proper attention to pronunciation in class due to time constraints. Hence, pronunciation is relegated to simple drilling and error-correction of specific sounds or words. Another reason why teaching pronunciation is usually neglected is that although some teachers may have the time to devote to pronunciation, they do not know how to teach it, but only carry out error correction. Particularly in Colombia, many teachers of English do not even have a B2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (Sánchez Jabba, 2013). This fact creates in those teachers an affective barrier towards teaching pronunciation which they cannot teach by example; thus, the use of peer assessment has the potential to become a useful strategy for teachers in the classroom.

## **1.2 Rationale for the study**

Speech intelligibility is a key factor in communication in the current globalized world where there is no one standard form of English but rather a variety of Englishes (Ghobain, 2016; Jenkins, 2007). This does not mean that every pronunciation variation is accepted, but that there are key aspects of pronunciations that non-native speakers (NNS) need to respect for them to be intelligible or understood (Hahn, 2004). One key aspect of intelligibility is emphasizing the most important words in the message that the speaker gives (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 2010; Gilbert, 2001). From observing and reflecting on the needs analysis that is explained in the subsequent section, the need to incorporate more pronunciation work in the classroom emerged. The results of the needs analysis led the researchers to consider peer assessment as a strategy to help students improve their intelligibility.

## **1.2.1 Rationale for the problem of the study**

### ***1.2.1.1 Needs analysis and problem statement***

The present study was conducted with nine A2-B1 English level students at a language institute in Bogotá, Colombia (see 3.2.2). The researchers noticed that speaking was the skill that generated the most anxiety in students. Even though the learners had been studying at this language institute for about nine months, they sometimes struggled to express their ideas spontaneously. It was observed that students paid more attention to the appropriate use of sentence structure and grammar rules rather than pronunciation-related aspects.

The researchers started checking the lesson planning and the course syllabi and filling a journal where it was possible to realize that pronunciation instruction in the classroom only took place through error correction techniques. The fact that pronunciation was not being explicitly taught, yet it was included in the evaluation criteria that determined whether students passed or failed a course, called the researchers' attention.

Two instruments were used by the researchers after the aforementioned insights were found. First, ten students were asked to record a one-minute answer to a question. The analysis of those recordings showed that even though when there were different problems in terms of coherence, vocabulary, and grammar; students were able to communicate. However, what affected students' messages the most was pronunciation. Not only did they mispronounce some words, but they also spoke without using the natural rhythm of English. They did not emphasize important words and they made pauses breaking the meaning of their ideas. The needs analysis showed that students had some issues with coherence, vocabulary, and grammar, as well as with pronunciation, but the pronunciation was the only one of these that was not already being addressed in the classroom, despite being evaluated in different stages of the course. This fact led

the researchers to conclude that students struggled with their oral production because of a lack of awareness regarding suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation.

Second, a survey was conducted to capture data on learners' perceptions of peer assessment and pronunciation (see 6.7 Appendix A:). Regarding peer assessment, most of the students showed a general understanding of what this technique is about and how it works; however, some of them confused it with other assessment types, showing that they did not know what peer assessment entails. They expressed that they did not usually correct their peers' pronunciation because either they were not sure about pronunciation, or because they were not asked to peer correct in class. It was also found that students expressed willingness towards learning how to peer correct. These results led the researchers to adopt peer assessment as a strategy to help students work on their pronunciation.

Regarding pronunciation, it was found that all students considered pronunciation was very important to communicate effectively, some of them claimed that pronunciation in English is difficult because there are sounds in English that do not exist in Spanish. Also, most students acknowledged that they had been taught pronunciation in the classroom; however, when asked about how that instruction had taken place, they said it had been through repetition, error correction, and by using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), strategies that mostly address segmental aspects of pronunciation. Finally, when asked about strategies they used to practice pronunciation, most students said they listened to music or watched TV in English which can help with suprasegmental aspects. Therefore, it could be concluded that students perceived suprasegmentals as important aspects to be taken into account when communicating, but that they had been taught pronunciation in traditional ways involving only segmental aspects.

### **1.2.1.2 Justification of the problem's significance**

Today, CLT not only plays a dominant role in English classrooms (Richards, 2006) but also highlights the importance of intelligibility for communication in a world in which there are many varieties of Englishes (Ghobain, 2016). According to Hahn (2004):

Clearly, many nonproficient NNSs from many linguistic backgrounds have difficulty mastering the primary stress system in English. They exhibit two major problems: misplacing primary stress (often stressing given information instead of new) and stressing all words in an utterance more or less equally, without one prominent stress. (p. 204)

Moreover, “teaching speech from the perspective of suprasegmental seems indispensable within the communicative approach to teaching ESL” (Gilakjani et al., 2011, p. 80). Thus, raising students’ awareness about basic English pronunciation patterns and studying how to help NNS develop their speech intelligibility could help learners improve their confidence with speaking skills, thereby also helping them to be better understood and able to communicate effectively not only inside but outside the classroom. This study focused on developing students’ intelligibility through the emphasis of a focus word inside a thought group (see 2.2.1). Such an objective may seem simple, but in fact, acquiring the awareness to make pauses between *thought groups* and to emphasize *focus words* holds considerable challenges for learners. It requires both explicit instruction on pronunciation and students’ active commitment and involvement. Hence, for the present study, it was decided to use peer assessment to raise students’ awareness of their pronunciation weaknesses.

### **1.2.2 Rationale for the strategy selected to address the problem of the study**

The present study sought a strategy that could help students improve their pronunciation, specifically their production of *thought groups* and *focus words*, by emphasizing certain

principles of the communicative English classroom, such as cooperation. Peer assessment was selected as a suitable strategy for this purpose because it has been shown to promote learner-centered environments in which students actively cooperate with each other (Brown, 2004; Falchikov & Goldfinch, 2000), different from self-assessment where cooperation among learners does not take a paramount role. Hence, the present study sought to analyze how the use of peer assessment of speaking tasks affected students' production of *thought groups* and *focus words*. These speaking tasks consisted of controlled practice exercises designed by the researchers that included both voice recordings and live speaking activities. These were useful for the researchers and the participants of the study for different reasons: first, voice recordings allowed the researchers to be able to systematically keep track of students' production, which helped the data analysis stage of the study (see 5.2). Second, live speaking activities were useful for the development of the peer assessment strategy. Students were provided with the opportunity to give feedback to each other by reflecting and identifying their strengths and weaknesses, and they created action plans for improvement. This process helped students to foster metacognitive, as well as social skills (Topping, 2009) which seemed to be needed since the needs analysis showed that students were not used to helping each other unless asked by the teacher.

### **1.3 Research question and objective**

The research objective for this study was to analyze how peer assessment of speaking tasks could benefit students' production of *thought groups* and *focus words*. The question that guided the research was: *How does peer assessment of speaking tasks influence the production of thought groups and focus words of A2-B1 CEFR level L2 English learners?*

## 1.4 Conclusion

Chapter 1 examines the reasons why the researchers of the current study investigated how peer assessment can be used for students to work on their production of *thought groups* and *focus words*, and it establishes the goals and the question to be answered throughout this project. Regarding the reasons, nowadays, there is not a single form of standard English; therefore, intelligibility should be the central criterion for pronunciation assessment (Jenkins, 2000, 2007; McKay, 2006; Seidlhofer, 2011). Language teachers should devote more class time to pronunciation instruction (Hahn, 2004), but they should know if students' problem with pronunciation refers to specific sounds or if the problem has to do with prosody. Gilbert (2001) acknowledges the importance of teaching learners suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation towards building intelligibility that should be the principal criterion in pronunciation assessment (McKay, 2006). Thus, the goal of the current study was to focus on *thought groups* and *focus words*, and to use peer assessment as a strategy to enhance cooperation among learners (Topping, 2009).

Next, in Chapter 2, an explanation of the most relevant theoretical constructs such as pronunciation, intelligibility, *thought groups*, *focus words*, and peer assessment is provided along with a review of numerous studies that have explored such concepts. This review concludes that while there has been an increasing interest in studying how speaking skills are influenced by having learners record themselves and assess their production, a few studies have explored how peer assessment affects English learners' production of sentence stress, an important characteristic for intelligibility; therefore, the current study contributes to the theoretical grounding on this issue.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

NNS intelligibility has become a fundamental aim for communicative English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL) classroom (Morley, 1991), where collaborative learning and autonomy are encouraged. Intelligibility is connected to prosodic aspects of speaking (Hahn, 2004). Prosody is the “combination of both rhythm and melody” (Gilbert, 2008, p. 2). It is related not only to individual phonetic sounds, but also to larger chunks of speech as stress, rhythm, and intonation that help speakers convey meaning beyond the use of grammar structures and vocabulary. Therefore, it is paramount to have students identify, practice, and evaluate how they pause after *thought groups* and emphasize *focus words* in sentences to be able to be understood and communicate effectively.

Peer assessment of students’ speaking tasks is a suitable strategy that can help students improve their pronunciation and collaborate with each other which is an important trait of the communicative English classroom. Consequently, a theoretical review is provided below to clarify what this study understands by *thought groups*, *focus words*, and peer assessment and to show that, although numerous studies have focused on affecting learners’ oral production through the implementation of assessment techniques of voice recordings, little research has been conducted on how peer assessment affects *thought groups* and *focus words*.

The subsequent sections of this chapter are organized around the two main constructs for the current study: pronunciation and peer assessment. First, a theoretical framework is provided for each construct; then, the state of the art is presented. Each section goes from general to specific and relationships with the current study are discussed.

## 2.2 Theoretical framework

### 2.2.1 Pronunciation and the prosody pyramid

Traditionally, the teaching of pronunciation has been either neglected or oriented towards imitating native speakers (NS) (Elliott, 1997). Morley (1991) provides a historical review of pronunciation teaching, showing that, during the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s, along with grammatical accuracy, the correct pronunciation was paramount for English language teaching due to the flourishing of the audiolingual method that used articulatory explanations, imitations, drills, and correction. She indicates that throughout the late 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s there was a divergent approach to language teaching; as a result, less time for explicit pronunciation teaching was given, getting to the point that many programs even dropped pronunciation instruction. Finally, she explores how in the mid-1980s and 1990s there was a new interest in including pronunciation in the curriculum for English teaching. She concludes that this new interest is the result of the conception that intelligible pronunciation is a fundamental feature of communicative competence (Morley, 1991). This is why, in recent decades, teaching specialists have been rethinking purposes and goals for pronunciation teaching. This reorientation has been the result of the discussions of world Englishes and the acceptance that it is very difficult for NNS to become native-like accented speakers (Jenkins, 2000; Murphy, 2014). Thus, the focus for teaching pronunciation has turned towards intelligibility through the teaching of suprasegmentals (Hahn, 2004) that are “vocal effects that extend over more than one sound” (Gilakjani et al., 2011, p. 76), for example, stress, rhythm, and intonation.

Abercrombie (1963) coined the term *intelligible* to refer to pronunciation that can be understood with little or no conscious effort by the listener. In this regard, Smith, and Nelson (1985) conceptualize three elements: *intelligibility*, *comprehensibility*, and *interpretability*. They



define intelligibility as the ability of the listener to identify words or utterances; comprehensibility as the listener's ability to understand the meaning of the word or utterance in its given context; and interpretability as the ability of the listener to understand the speaker's intentions behind the word or utterance (p. 334). These definitions pertain to the listener's role but can be transferred to the speaker's role. Therefore, intelligibility is understood by this study as the ability of the speaker to produce understandable sets of words or utterances that form a coherent message that carries the speaker's intention.

To achieve intelligibility, as understood by this report, it is necessary to go beyond simple repetition, imitation, and error correction in the classroom. It is required for pronunciation to be taught and explored by understanding and practicing suprasegmentals because, even when a word may be mispronounced, there are clues in the linguistic context and in the situation to compensate meaning (Tench, 1981). In other words, learners can get away with phonetic mistakes as long as they can convey meaning by providing coherent sentences and employing other features of pronunciation.

At the same time, even when a speaker pronounces perfectly intelligible sounds, native speakers can have problems understanding a person's message because of the wrong use of intonation or stress patterns (Nida, 1957). In the case of Spanish-speaking Latin American students, achieving intelligibility can be challenging because English is a stress-timed language, different from Spanish which is a syllable-timed language. A stress-timed language is that when the stressed or emphasized syllables are said at regular intervals, while unstressed syllables are shortened producing rhythm. A syllable-timed language is a language in which syllables take approximately equal amounts of time to be pronounced.

This distinction is important for teachers to plan appropriate pronunciation exercises (Gilakjani et al., 2011) because learners whose mother tongue is a syllable-timed language, such as Spanish, often have problems recognizing and producing features of English such as stress among others. Teachers need to make decisions about what aspect of pronunciation they should teach. Such aspects necessary for intelligibility are core vowels, core consonants, syllables, linking words in *thought groups*, word stress, and emphasis (Gilbert, 2001). Thus, suprasegmentals are inevitably connected with intelligibility and it is worth teaching students those aspects of pronunciation in the classroom for them to communicate successfully. This study focused its attention on stress, specifically *thought groups* and *focus words*. Stress is defined by Crystal (2008) as “the degree of force used in producing a syllable” (p. 435).

Gilbert (2008) presents the *prosody pyramid* (see Figure 1. The prosody pyramid) in which suprasegmentals, especially stress, are emphasized. The base of the pyramid is the *thought group*, which is a chunk of speech or a group of connected words, like a phrase, a clause, or a sentence, inside a longer sentence. Then, inside the thought group, there is a *focus word*, which is the most important word. Next, within the focus word, there is a *stressed syllable*, which is the syllable that has the main stress and that needs to be pronounced clearly. Finally, within the stressed syllable, there is a *peak vowel* that is the specific sound that must be longer and pronounced with a change of pitch. According to Gilbert (2014), understanding the prosody pyramid has a practical effect for English learners because, if they have a communication breakdown with native speakers of English, “any effort to repeat the sentence, carefully trying to fix every individual sound, is likely to make the communication breakdown even worse. Speaking more loudly won’t help either” (p. 130). However, in such a situation, with an

understanding of the prosody pyramid, the learners can decide what the most important word in the message is and give it emphasis by improving the clarity of the peak vowel.

This model, based on the prosody pyramid, was adopted by the researchers because it is consistent with Smith and Nelson's (1985) aforementioned conceptualization of intelligibility. Emphasizing or stressing *focus words* inside *thought groups* is referred to as *sentence stress* in the present study; thus, *sentence stress* is not being understood here as stress on every single content word in a sentence (Chomsky & Hale, 1968) but rather as stress on a focus word or the most important word within a thought group.



Figure 1. The prosody pyramid (Gilbert, 2012, p. 44).

### 2.2.2 Peer assessment

Although language teaching methodology has become more communicative, "testing remains within the traditional paradigm, consisting of discrete items, lower-order thinking and a focus on form rather than meaning" (Jacobs & Farrell, 2003, p. 25). Testing is often misunderstood and confused with the assessment. Tests are formal administrative procedures that take place within strict time limitations when learners' responses of a specific domain are

measured and evaluated, whilst assessing is an ongoing process that does not only measure responses (Brown, 2004). Richards (2006) uses the term *alternative* assessment to say that “new forms of assessment are needed to replace traditional multiple-choice and other items that test lower-order skills” (p. 25). Differentiating traditional from the alternative assessment is important in this study because the objective was not only to help students get better results in tests but for learners to raise awareness of their use of sentence stress as a way to convey meaning, making intelligibility the central criterion for assessment (McKay, 2006).

There are different forms of assessment: informal, formal, formative, and summative. Informal assessment is incidental or unplanned while formal is systematically planned. In this sense, “all tests are formal assessments, but not all formal assessment is testing” (Brown, 2004, p. 6). The formative assessment seeks to build students’ competencies and skills and requires a process through which feedback is provided; thus, informal assessment is often formative. Summative assessment, on the other hand, attempts to measure the knowledge that a student has acquired, so formal assessment is usually summative. This study used informal and formative assessments. Peer feedback was given while learning was actually happening, which helped students plan their own learning, identify their own strengths and weaknesses, create action plans for improvement, and develop metacognitive and social skills transferable for life (Topping, 2009).

Peer assessment “is the process of having the members of a group judge the extent to which each of their fellow group members has exhibited specific traits, behaviors, or achievements” (Kane & Lawler, 1978, p. 555) and requires students to judge peers’ work against assessment criteria (Jones & Alcock, 2013). It was the most appropriate strategy for this study due to its connection with CLT principles such as cooperative learning, grounding in

philosophies of active learning, and relationship with social constructionism (Falchikov & Goldfinch, 2000). According to Brown (2004), peer assessment enhances learner-centered environments and collaborative education and helps students see the benefit of teaching each other something. He establishes four principles for peer assessment. Firstly, he urges teachers to tell students about the purpose of the assessment. Teachers must make students aware of their weaknesses so that they see the need to improve. Secondly, teachers should define the tasks clearly and they must ensure that students know what they are supposed to do. Thirdly, impartial evaluation has to be encouraged. Teachers need to provide students with clear criteria to avoid subjectivity while students need to commit to being honest and provide each other with objective opinions. Finally, beneficial washback needs to be ensured, this means that there needs to be follow up tasks, making the process ongoing (p. 277). The aforementioned guidelines help peer assessment have reliability and validity. According to Kane and Lawler (1978), reliability relates to internal consistency, which is the amount of agreement among assessors. Thus, an assessment of a product is reliable when assessed by different persons with similar measures. Kane and Lawler conceive of validity as referring to statements of clear criteria in advance of the assessment process. Clear and detailed criteria ensure that teachers and students have a common understanding of what is to be assessed, leading to valid assessment outcomes (Jones & Alcock, 2013). The researchers were cautious when carrying out the pedagogical implementation to provide students with training on how to do peer assessment and clear criteria so that assessment outcomes were reliable and valid (see 4.3).

## 2.3 State of the art

### 2.3.1 Previous research on pronunciation and sentence stress

Speaking skills and pronunciation has been a topic of considerable interest in numerous recent studies (Bautista, 2019; Calderon Quintero & Nieto, 2017; Hahn, 2004; Mancera Arévalo, 2014; Montilla Piamba, Ospina Hoyos, & Pineda Bautista, 2016; Peñuela, 2015; Rui, 2015; Silfiani, Arifin, & Rejeki, 2017; Ulfa, 2017; Wilches, 2014). Hahn (2004) observed how NNSs of English frequently violate stress patterns, which can affect their intelligibility and the way they are perceived by NSs, and concluded that suprasegmentals should be taught in the English classroom so that learners can enhance their intelligibility. Rui (2015) found that pronunciation is most affected by mistakes in intonation, rhythm, and—especially—sentence stress, which are the same aspects dealt with by Gilbert’s prosody pyramid (2008). Ulfa (2017) explicitly used the prosody pyramid as a teaching tool, finding it useful support when teaching pronunciation, but does not explain clearly how the prosody pyramid was taught to students. Silfiani et al. (2017) also examined how Gilbert’s prosody pyramid (2008) could be used explicitly as a teaching tool to affect students’ pronunciation, but their findings were focused on segmental aspects, specifically on words that contained consonant sounds /f/ /p/ /b/ /h/; the only finding related to suprasegmental aspects was that “students started to break down long sentences by themselves” (p. 7).

In Colombia, Wilches (2014) found that learners’ using voice tools recognized that the success of using audio recordings depended on the clarity of instructions and persistence in implementing them. Thus, the present study conceived self-awareness and opportunities for exchanging information as key elements in the effective use of voice tools. Similarly, Mancera Arévalo (2014) approached the effects that using self-recording has on pronunciation, finding

that having students record themselves was effective to foster autonomy and motivation. These results suggest a need for further work on the use of metacognitive strategies such as self-reflection. Also, Montilla Piamba et al. (2016) found that the use of audio blogs lowered learners' anxiety levels and that it helped students raise awareness of their mistakes so that they could show improvements in fluency. Calderon Quintero and Nieto (2017) implemented self-assessment to enhance spoken fluency through audio-video recordings, emphasizing the role self-assessment played on learners' motivation since it led participants to self-criticism and self-monitoring. They conclude that self-assessment has the potential to enhance self-confidence and self-direction, favoring students' motivation to speak in English in the EFL classroom. These findings are valuable, as they could contribute to promoting more student-centered classrooms and fostering students' autonomy.

Peñuela (2015) used metacognitive learning strategies: goal setting, overviewing, and self-evaluating to affect students' intelligibility in terms of stress and intonation, different from the studies mentioned above, Peñuela's did not only use recordings, but also oral presentations and in-class conversations among students. The current study adopted Peñuela's model not only to analyze recordings but also speaking tasks performed in class. Bautista (2019) noted that her students considered English pronunciation difficult, that they had a lack of confidence related to stress placement and rhythm, especially when reading aloud, and those who performed poorly in pronunciation also had difficulties with listening comprehension. She reviewed the literature and came to three main conclusions: first, the approach to teaching pronunciation must change from teaching segmentals to emphasizing the role of suprasegmentals. Second, pronunciation should be taught in beginner classes to avoid fossilization. Third, communicative competence could be

achieved by raising students' awareness of segmental and suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation.

All in all, there has been an increasing amount of research that supports the notion that teaching suprasegmentals should be the core of teaching pronunciation more generally. Studies conducted outside Colombia have focused on suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation and intelligibility, with some work that suggests the prosody pyramid could be a useful teaching tool (Hahn, 2004; Rui, 2015; Silfiani et al., 2017; Ulfa, 2017), but none of those studies have offered clear conclusions on how the prosody pyramid should be taught. Meanwhile, studies conducted in Colombia have either focused on the use of recordings to affect learners' segmentals and more general aspects of pronunciation or they have used strategies other than peer assessment to focus on students' intelligibility (Bautista, 2019; Calderon Quintero & Nieto, 2017; Mancera Arévalo, 2014; Montilla Piamba et al., 2016; Peñuela, 2015; Wilches, 2014). Therefore, the current study combined the use of speaking tasks to affect the production of *thought groups* and *focus words* specifically with peer assessment as a strategy to support those speaking tasks.

### **2.3.2 Previous research on self and peer assessment to address pronunciation issues**

As numerous studies have examined the use of peer assessment, “there is substantial evidence that peer assessment can result in improvements in the effectiveness and quality of learning, which is at least as good as gains from teacher assessment, especially in relation to writing” (Topping, 2009, p. 22). However, for the present study, only studies that regarded the assessment of speaking were considered (Caicedo Alvarez, 2016; Gomez, 2014; Leander Spies, 2012; Ojeda, 2011; Tarighat & Khodabakhsh, 2016).



Leander Spies (2012) used peer feedback of oral communicative tasks to affect lexical variety in speaking. It was found that participants gained autonomy through the use of peer feedback as they no longer depended entirely on the instructor. Gomez (2014) studied the impact of peer- and self-assessment on the use of grammar forms in spontaneous speaking production. It was concluded that these strategies impacted the participants' oral competence positively as they became more aware of their use of perfect tenses and were able to identify mistakes, provide feedback, and set action plans for improvement. Tarighat and Khodabakhsh (2016) used a social network application (WhatsApp) to conduct participants' peer assessment of general speaking competence. Their findings showed that students perceived the tool as motivating while it also raised awareness regarding speaking and collaboration. As the purpose of the present study was to enhance more collaborative practices among students, peer assessment was selected as a suitable strategy to support improvements to participants' awareness of *thought groups* and *focus words*.

Few studies have considered the role that peer assessment plays in learning pronunciation (Caicedo Alvarez, 2016; Ojeda, 2011). Ojeda (2011) offers considerable insights regarding using assessment techniques, peer assessment included, to influence students' speaking production awareness. However, Ojeda focuses only on segmental aspects of pronunciation, specifically the endings of regular verbs in the past. Caicedo Alvarez (2016) studied the effects of peer correction and peer assessment on students' spoken fluency which relates more to suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation but is still a broader area than the one the current study regards. Neither of these studies addressed the effects of peer assessment on sentence stress.

All in all, none of the reviewed studies implemented peer assessment as a strategy to affect suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation, particularly the elements of the prosody

pyramid. However, as a result of the previous theoretical framework and state of the art, it was determined that the use of peer assessment with speaking tasks should be an appropriate approach to improving oral competences, helping raise student's awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses while also enhancing collaborative work. Moreover, intelligibility is directly connected with suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation, strengthening the notion that they are worth teaching explicitly. Hence, the purpose of using peer assessment was to provide students with the tools needed to become more critical about their own language use, as well as to collaborate more effectively with each other and improve their intelligibility.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

The present chapter discusses how recent literature has suggested that the teaching of pronunciation should shift from a focus on segmentals to a focus on suprasegmentals to enhance intelligibility. It has also emphasized the paramount role that formative assessment can play in supporting students' development of the language being learned. It has been argued that peer assessment aids in the construction of formative assessment while enhancing collaboration among learners, which is relevant within a CLT framework. It has also been shown that there has been insufficient research focused specifically on the three key elements combined in the present study: peer assessment *thought groups*, and *focus words*.

In Chapter 3, a description of the context and participants of the study is provided along with an explanation of the methodology followed during the study. Furthermore, the instruments used by the researchers to collect both quantitative and qualitative data are discussed.

## Chapter 3: Research Design

### 3.1 Introduction

The existing research on pronunciation teaching illustrates the importance of providing students with tools that help them be intelligible and shows how suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation play an important role in intelligibility. Consequently, the present study adopted the prosody pyramid (Gilbert, 2008) as the theoretical construct that informed the pedagogical design used to teach participants the importance of *thought groups* and *focus words* and implemented peer assessment of speaking tasks as the strategy to help students improve their intelligibility. The purpose of this chapter is to account for the components, actors, and steps involved in the development of this study.

To analyze the impact and effectiveness of using peer assessment, different data collection instruments were used (see Table 1). The study used checklists to analyze data from recordings made by participants at the beginning and at the end of the implementation to capture data that would allow assessment of both the accuracy of participants' *thought groups* and *focus words* and the relative efficacy of the peer assessment strategy. A set of peer assessment logs (PALs) were designed to help students analyze their peers' production of sounds and the prosody pyramid aspects. Questionnaires were implemented to collect data on students' perceptions regarding pronunciation and their beliefs, feelings, and thoughts about their ability to peer assess. Teachers' journals were filled accounting for both participants' linguistic competence and peer assessment. One focus group was conducted in the final stage of the implementation to obtain participants' perceptions of pronunciation and their opinions about the use of peer assessment. These instruments were all piloted and adjusted accordingly. The data gathered through the

aforementioned instruments were both qualitative and quantitative; therefore, to analyze data, the principles for grounded theory were followed (Corbin & Strauss, 2014).

### **3.2 Context**

This action research project was carried out in a language institute in Bogotá, Colombia. The language institute offers eighteen English levels for adults that receive classes from Monday through Friday for two hours each day, twenty-six two-hour a week English levels for youngsters on Saturday, skills development courses directed to students who have acquired a B2 English level, blended courses combining face to face and online classes, and test preparation courses. This project was conducted with a group of adult students who had class daily. The curriculum focuses on communication while developing the four language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing).

#### **3.2.1 Type of study**

The present action research study used a mixed-methods approach to examine the influence that the use of peer assessment of speaking tasks had on the production of *thought groups* and *focus words* of students with A2-B1 CERF level L2 English learners. Action research was used as it provides educators with the opportunity to carry out systematic procedures in which they can reflect, gather information, and search for solutions to everyday, real problems they face inside the classroom through direct observation (Creswell, 2012; Ferrance, 2000; Mills, 2011). The study used a mixed-methods approach that is the “type of research in which a researcher combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches for purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration” (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007, p. 123). Collecting diverse types of data provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative data alone (Creswell, 2014). This study was

conducted with a particular group and in a specific context in which the participants experienced difficulties with intelligibility, and the researchers determined that peer assessment would be an effective means of helping participants improve in this area.

### **3.2.2 Participants**

The group of participants in the present study consisted of 9 students, aged 17-40 years old, from the institute's adult daily program. Out of the 9 students, 5 were women and 4 were men. They were all in the tenth and eleventh of the eighteen English levels offered by the institution, and their English language communication was characterized by relatively simple grammatical structures and vocabulary, as well as a slow pace when speaking, characteristic of the A2-B1 CEFR level (Council of Europe, 2001). Regarding their affective needs, given the fact that the range of ages, their interests, educational, and cultural backgrounds were dissimilar, teaching them strategies that would help them collaborate, such as peer assessment, seemed appropriate. In terms of the participants' cognitive needs, none of them had any particular learning disability; this group was active and participative, most participants were studying English principally because it was part of their personal or professional goals.

### **3.2.3 Researcher's role**

During the present action research study, the researchers were in charge of facilitating students' learning and leading them in the acquisition of peer assessment strategies, while simultaneously gathering and analyzing data on their performance. Thus, the researchers were part of the research, acting as both teachers and researchers. As these roles involve the teachers monitoring the effects of their own teaching and adjusting their instruction accordingly (Mills, 2011), they "can influence the research findings" (Biggam, 2011, p. 84).

### **3.2.4 Ethical considerations**

Research must be done ethically and responsibly (Burns, 2010); therefore, this study was conducted under three ethical principles: informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, and protection from harm (Norton, 2009). To guarantee compliance with the aforementioned principles, two types of permissions were considered. Firstly, the researchers made sure that students were aware of the existence and development of the project, as well as its goals and data collection instruments. A consent letter (see Appendix B:) was provided to students to ask them whether they agreed to participate in the project or not. Also through this letter, students were informed that their names and personal information were to be protected and to remain anonymous throughout the study, that they could withdraw the project in case they wanted, and that their participation or lack of it would not affect their performance in class. Additionally, an institutional consent letter (see Appendix C:) was also provided to the institution coordinator to receive approval for the development of the research project.

### **3.3 Data collection instruments**

The research question (see 1.3) implied the need to gather data on both how peer assessment influences the accuracy of students' production of *thought groups* and *focus words*, as well as how the implementation process influenced participants' awareness and perceptions of pronunciation and peer assessment. To collect the required data, five instruments were designed to collect data strategically throughout the four stages of the implementation of the project, guaranteeing that a more detailed story could be told about the effects on participants' accuracy, perceptions, and recognition of pronunciation and peer assessment (see 4 in 5.2.2).

### 3.3.1 Descriptions and justifications

#### 3.3.1.1 *Artifacts*

Artifacts are sources of information produced by the participants of a study that help researchers understand what happens in the classroom (Mills, 2011). The current study used two kinds of artifacts: checklists and peer assessment logs.

##### 3.3.1.1.1 *Checklists*

Checklists were designed for the researchers to analyze voice messages that were recorded by students (see Appendix D:). Two recordings were: the first recording took place at the beginning of the implementation of the project and the second in the end. Students used the application WhatsApp to share their recordings. WhatsApp was selected because it was easy to use, little or no training was required for the participants to learn how to use it, all of the participants could have access to the application on their smartphones, and because the application allowed participants to capture speech in real-time without the necessity of going to a language lab.

For each recording, students were given a short text; they needed to record themselves reading the texts aloud without any prior preparation. The texts had different characteristics. First, the two texts were different since the purpose was that students had time to understand the message in the texts, but not to prepare how to read them aloud. Second, the texts were appropriate to the participants' level; hence, students could easily make sense out of them and understand the messages in the texts. Third, they did not contain punctuation marks because, on many occasions, punctuation marks delimit *thought groups*, and students had to make pauses and emphasize *focus words* when they considered it necessary without receiving any clues.

The purpose of the checklists was for the researchers to analyze students' accuracy with *thought groups* and *focus words*. The checklists consisted of the texts that the students had to read. There was a box above each of the *focus words* for the researchers to check if participants had emphasized the words, and there were slash symbols where each *thought group* started and finished, this helped the researchers identify if students had paused in the right moments. The checklists also included a rubric with the criteria to be analyzed and five descriptors that provided quantitative data. The rubric helped the researchers compare the information collected in the recordings and account for the changes students had on the production of *focus words* and *thought groups*.

#### 3.3.1.1.1 Peer assessment logs

The peer assessment logs (PALs) consisted of the speaking tasks performed throughout the implementation of the project accompanied by a chart where participants wrote comments to each other. PALs were designed to help the students assess their classmates' oral production and to check on the specific pronunciation points explored in each lesson (see Appendix E:). The objective of this instrument was to have students analyze their classmates' oral production and to provide them with recommendations to improve the pronunciation aspects studied.

Eight PALs were applied throughout the implementation stage (see Table 2

. The first three logs, implemented in the second stage of the implementation, focused on segmental aspects of pronunciation, because participants needed to understand those aspects before moving to suprasegmentals, and because they needed to learn how to provide peers with feedback. The fourth log focused on the "topmost" elements of the prosody pyramid: *peak vowels* and *stressed syllables*. The next four logs explored *focus words* and *thought groups*.



The logs' formats followed the same layout and assessment principles. Following Brown's (2004) suggestions, the teacher told students the purpose of the assessment logs was for them to become aware of their weaknesses so that they could improve, students knew what they were supposed to do, an impartial evaluation was encouraged, and clear criteria were provided to avoid subjectivity. Assessment criteria varied depending on the pronunciation matter covered in each lesson. They were useful for data collection, not only to revise students' progress on pronunciation but also to check on how participants conducted peer assessment, how analytical they were, and how their comments about each other's performance reflected awareness on both pronunciation and peer assessment.

### **3.3.1.2**     *Questionnaires*

Questions are the base of different data collection instruments; in fact, they are "the primary data collection tool of the social sciences" (Ruane, 2005, p. 123). Thus, the types of questions that are used for research should make participants feel comfortable and should be posed in a non-intrusive way (Moore & Dooly, 2017). Questionnaires are used to collect large amounts of data in a short time (Mills, 2011). Questionnaires can be defined as "a quantitative instrument and can be analyzed statistically. However, when the numbers are insufficient to conduct a significant statistical analysis, analysis can be conducted qualitatively" (Rosenstein, 2014, p. 316).

Three questionnaires were used in the three first stages of the implementation (see 4.3.2). These instruments' objectives were to collect information about the students' beliefs, feelings, and thoughts towards their ability to peer assess, to identify students' knowledge and perceptions regarding pronunciation, and to collect contrasting data to identify how the participants' awareness about pronunciation had changed from the beginning to the middle of the

implementation (see Appendix F:). A quantitative analysis of the questionnaires was performed; however, it was more useful to analyze the three questionnaires qualitatively, since different open-ended questions were included where participants provided researchers with insightful answers that led to the answer to the research question.

### **3.3.1.3 *Teacher's journals***

In journals, researchers can record their thoughts, assessments, and perceptions of their implementation and their students' behavior (Brown, 2004). Richards (2006) observes that journals are written responses to teaching situations that allow for later reflection. Four teacher's journals were implemented during the research process. The objective of this instrument was to identify how participants responded to the application of the pronunciation aspects studied. They also aimed at helping the researchers collect data on how students implemented the peer assessment strategy. To gather information, the researchers took notes on the students' reactions, comments, and questions in the four sessions the instrument was implemented. Later those notes were digitized in a Word document. This instrument was selected to collect the researchers' perceptions of the participants' reactions and attitudes in class. Apart from helping the researchers reflect on the practices carried out in the classroom related to the implementation of peer assessment and the teaching of *thought groups* and *focus words*, the teacher's journals helped the researchers identify the participants' engagement and commitment to the class activities and to evaluate the participants' linguistic competence (see Appendix G:).

### **3.3.1.4 *Focus group***

Focus groups are a type of interview where different participants are asked the same questions at the same time. Data are gathered through tape recordings, transcripts of those recordings, and the moderator's notes from the discussion that are later organized and better

narrated (Mack, Woodsong, McQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). This kind of interview was selected instead of questionnaires or in-depth interviews because it was a good technique to gather a large amount of information over a short period. One focus group was conducted at the end of the pedagogical implementation. The objective of this instrument was to check students' perceptions regarding their pronunciation process, their opinions about the use of peer assessment, and their opinion about their participation in the research project (see Appendix H:). For the focus group, the researchers and participants met during one hour of class. Participants were asked ten questions in total and they took turns to take part in the discussion using their native language (Spanish); some emergent questions that were connected to the aim of the instrument arose from the discussion. The focus group was recorded and later transcribed and analyzed by the researchers. For a visual and systematic account of the instruments, see Table 1.

Table 1

*Data Collection Instruments*

Instrument	Data gathered	Type of data
Checklists (see Appendix D:)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants' accuracy in the production of <i>thought groups</i> and <i>focus words</i>.</li> <li>• Efficacy of peer assessment.</li> </ul>	Quantitative
Peer assessment logs (see Appendix E:)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants' accuracy in the production of sounds and prosody pyramid aspects.</li> <li>• Participants' progress on how they conduct peer assessment.</li> </ul>	Qualitative
Questionnaires (see Appendix F:)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants' beliefs about pronunciation and peer assessment.</li> </ul>	Quantitative / Qualitative
Teachers' journals (see Appendix G:)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Researchers' views on participants' linguistic competence.</li> <li>• Researchers' views on how participants conduct peer assessment.</li> </ul>	Qualitative
Focus group (see Appendix H:)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants' perceptions of their progress on pronunciation and their use of peer assessment.</li> </ul>	Qualitative

**3.3.2 Validation and piloting**

Validation and piloting are procedures that help researchers to accurately gather data needed to answer a research question. One method used to provide evidence that an instrument is

valid is to consult expert opinion (Perry, 2005). Therefore, the instruments used in this study were validated by teachers who were teaching the same English level as the researchers and by the institute's coordinator. They read about the purpose of the instruments and the instruments themselves and provided the researchers with feedback. That feedback was useful as it was possible to adjust the instruments for them to measure what they were intended to measure. Also, the questionnaires were tested before they were administered (Perry, 2005) in a group of people similar to the population of the study. The results of the piloting stage provided the researchers with valuable information that helped reshape the questions to be clearly understood by the participants.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

This chapter discusses the design for the current action research study with a group of A2-B1 level students learning English for personal and professional purposes. The researchers were in charge of the pedagogical implementation, as well as the data collection and analysis. Appropriate ethical measures were taken, including the provision of informed consent and guarantees of privacy, confidentiality, and protection from harm. A total of five data collection instruments were selected, not only to collect the information needed to answer the research question but also because researchers wanted to have a complete vision of the efficacy of the strategy and the changes that took place from the beginning to the end of the implementation of the project (see Table 4 in 5.2.2). Checklists were used to evaluate participants' accuracy in terms of *thought groups* and *focus words* at the beginning and the end of the study. PALs accounted for the eight controlled speaking tasks participants carried out in the classroom; they informed the researchers about students' perceptions of their peers' mistakes and the kind of comments students provided to each other, which ultimately helped enrich the analysis of the

findings (see Chapter 5: ). Questionnaires were used during the first three stages of the implementation to gather feedback from the participants and to see how their perceptions changed throughout the implementation of the project. Teacher's journals were used to capture information about the teacher's vision and perceptions of what was happening in the classroom, as well as how effective the use of peer assessment seemed to be. The focus group was conducted in the fourth stage of the project to follow up on the series of questionnaires and to gather more insights about participants' perceptions of both pronunciation and peer assessment. The instruments were designed to provide the researchers with both qualitative and quantitative data, giving the study a mixed-methods approach.

Chapter 4 explains how the pedagogical intervention was planned and implemented in alignment with the theoretical constructs of the study: pronunciation and peer assessment. It also explains how the current study aligns with the philosophy the language institute has and its visions of language, learning, and curriculum which this research study agrees with. Firstly, language is conceived as a social construct that includes receptive and productive skills. Secondly, learning is considered to be an ability that implies autonomy. Thirdly, the curriculum is understood as the organization of content that has to be presented to students.

## Chapter 4: Pedagogical Intervention and Implementation

### 4.1 Introduction

The pedagogical design conducted throughout this study was based on the prosody pyramid (Gilbert, 2008) and was implemented under the principles of peer assessment (Brown, 2004). To study how peer assessment influences the production of thought groups, participant artifacts, three questionnaires, eight PALs, four teacher's journals, and a focus group were used as data collection instruments (see 3.3). Additionally, all appropriate ethical measures to guarantee participants' privacy and protection from harm were taken (see 3.2.4).

The present chapter describes the researchers' understandings of language, learning, and curriculum. This research envisions language as a social construct that combines receptive and productive skills to ensure communication. Learning is seen as the ability to acquire and manage knowledge implying the use of strategies and autonomy. The curriculum is perceived as the organization of content students need to be exposed to during a course. This chapter also explains how the pedagogical implementation was carried out showing the four stages applied to achieve the research objective. Firstly, the students reflected on the importance of pronunciation. Secondly, students were trained on the use of IPA and on the articulation of difficult phonemes, as well as on the concept of linking sounds. Thirdly, students developed exercises to explore the prosody pyramid elements: peak vowel, stressed syllable, focus word, and *thought groups*. Finally, participants reflected on their understandings of pronunciation and how they perceived peer assessment.

## **4.2 Visions of language, learning, and curriculum**

### **4.2.1 Vision of language**

Language can be understood as an integrated communication entity that entails four main skills: writing, reading, listening and speaking. Communicating with the language requires knowledge about the linguistic systems of grammar, lexis, phonology, and discourse. To master a language, learners must understand how the aforementioned language skills and systems work. The institution where this study was implemented (see 3.2) seeks to provide students with all the necessary tools to communicate and understand the English language appropriately. This study focused on oral production because of two main reasons. On the one hand, it is one of the most important skills a person needs to master to be a proficient user of a language (Brown, 2007). On the other hand, language is a social entity that can be learned and developed through social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978), which is one of the principles at the institution where this research was implemented.

Interaction among peers is strongly promoted by the institution, every lesson includes an activity called a “communicative event”, which is the opportunity for students to use their oral skills to express their ideas, make presentations, or interview their peers about a certain topic. Before the communicative event takes place, there must be controlled activities to prepare students. The implementation of this project took advantage of those controlled practice activities, making them the speaking tasks through which students were exposed to the prosody pyramid and in which they were able to interact with each other in the peer assessment exercises (see Appendix E).



#### **4.2.2 Vision of learning**

By using peer assessment to influence participants' pronunciation, the present study aligned itself with three main aspects of the participating institution's philosophy: autonomy, metacognition, and learning strategies. This study understands learning as a lifelong process (Taylor, 2009), implying that, not only must students learn the target language, they also need to develop other skills to be successful learners. One of the skills students need to master is autonomy, understood as the capability to govern or control one's affairs (Scharle & Szabo, 2000). Autonomy is a key element in the learning process since it helps students become more aware of the actions they need to take to achieve a goal. Holec (1981) defines autonomous learning as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (p. 3).

This research project also considers the concept of metacognition, which can be understood as each individual's understanding of their learning capabilities, strategies, and weaknesses (Dinsmore, Alexander, & Loughlin, 2008). Metacognitive skills help learners analyze their learning processes, identify their weaknesses and strengths, and make action plans to learn more efficiently. Metacognition helps students become more aware of their communicative competences with the target language and boosts critical thinking. Qualitative assessment is the core of the grading system used at the institution (see 3.2) where self-assessment, peer assessment, and teacher assessment must be used in at least one class activity. Learning strategies also play a crucial role. According to Oxford (1990), these strategies are defined as actions taken by students to facilitate learning, they enhance the learning process, and help learners identify their learning styles or preferences.

### 4.2.3 Vision of curriculum

The curriculum can be understood as a plan of topics and activities to be implemented during a course (Richards, 2013). The curriculum on which this research project was based can be classified as a linear and modular curriculum (Núñez y Bodegas, 2007). It can be categorized as linear because the institutional curriculum is based on the use of textbooks. As a result, the goals that students must meet and the main activities they must perform are designed in accordance with the scope and sequencing of the textbooks used. This curriculum can also be considered modular since the topics and information that students address are presented in modules or units.

Another characteristic of the curriculum is that it is a project-based curriculum. The institution (see 3.2) aims at guiding students in the performance of different project-based tasks using the English language. Additionally, the institution adopts some principles from both the task-based learning approach and the communicative approach. Therefore, the activities included in the curriculum place learners at the center of instruction. The discovery approach plays an important role in the institution's curriculum since it helps students understand aspects of grammar and vocabulary, as well as develop their analytical skills and autonomy. The characteristics of the curriculum facilitated the research process because the lesson plans could be easily designed without altering any of the main ideas specified in the institutional syllabus. Also, the first stage of the implementation (see Table 2) dealt with the discovery approach, since the purpose was for students to figure out the difference between segmentals and suprasegmentals and for them to understand the importance of suprasegmentals for intelligibility.

### 4.3 Instructional design

#### 4.3.1 Lesson planning

The lesson plans designed for this study were based on the class model or class structure that the institution implements (see Appendix I:). This model requires five elements in each class: presentation, analysis, consolidation, application, and evaluation (Taylor, 2009). These elements are intertwined with the communicative approach; therefore, each of these class elements should provide students with opportunities to practice their speaking skills.

Eight lesson plans were designed and implemented in total. In the first two lessons, students reviewed the IPA. In the third lesson, students studied the concept of word stress. In the fourth lesson, students studied the concept of linking sounds. In the fifth and sixth lessons, students studied *focus words*, and in the final two lessons, students studied the concept *thought groups*. The main activities implemented for this project were based on PALs (see 3.3.1.1.1) that were used to guide students through each element of the pronunciation prosody pyramid (see 2.2.1); therefore, all the lessons included peer evaluation.

#### 4.3.2 Implementation

The instructional design framework on which this study was based was implemented over 24 hours of classes, which was the total amount of time for which the participating language institute allowed the researchers to carry out the project. Those 24 hours were divided into four stages (see Table 2). In the first stage, awareness of the importance of pronunciation for clear communication was raised. Additionally, participants were asked to answer a questionnaire that had the purpose of identifying their perceptions of pronunciation and peer assessment (see Appendix F.1). This implementation stage took place during the first two lessons (four hours) of the implementation process.

The second stage of the project implementation lasted for three lessons (six hours). During the third and fourth lessons of the implementation (see Appendix E.1 and Appendix E.2), students worked on analyzing vowel and consonant sounds, and on the use of IPA. Students were given lists of words, they identified the IPA, said the words aloud while working in pairs to conduct peer assessment. In the fifth lesson (see Appendix E.3), students were exposed to the basic rules for linking sounds. Students had to identify the linking sounds in a short text, they recorded themselves reading the text, and peer-assessed those recordings. This stage served two purposes. First, it helped participants gain a deeper understanding of the IPA and linking sounds so that they learned the importance of the /ə/ phoneme and how it can make English seem fast. Second, this stage helped students become familiar with peer assessment and gain confidence when providing feedback to each other. At the end of this stage, students were asked to complete a questionnaire on stress (see Appendix F.2). The objective of this questionnaire was to identify the participants' perceptions of stress. Furthermore, the survey contributed to identifying how participants understood word stress in their mother tongue and how easy or difficult it was for them to identify stressed words in listening exercises and to produce stressed words in English speaking activities.

In the third stage, participants were presented with the components of the prosody pyramid: *peak vowel*, *stressed syllable*, *focus word*, and *thought groups*. In the sixth lesson (see Appendix E.4), students worked on the concepts and production of peak vowels and stressed syllables. In the seventh and eighth lessons (see Appendix E.5 and Appendix E.6) students worked on identifying and producing *focus words*. In the ninth and tenth lessons (see Appendix E.7 and E.8), students explored the concepts of *focus words* and *thought groups*. The aim here was to improve their awareness of how native English speakers express meaning by lengthening

and emphasizing certain words in their speech. The researchers exemplified these concepts by using audio recording; participants received the transcripts of those recordings. They were expected to listen and identify the pauses and *focus words* the speakers made in the recordings. This stage sought to make students more aware of the prosody pyramid's principal components, as well as to consolidate their peer assessment practices. To finalize this stage, the mid-term questionnaire (see Appendix F.3) was used to gather students' perceptions of the implementation of the project and to help refine the questions for the focus group.

The final stage of the instructional design was intended to collect data on the participants' perceptions of the effects of the implementation. The researchers held a focus group in which participants were asked about the core concepts of the project: *focus words thought groups*, and peer assessment.

Table 2

*Implementation Chart*

	Stage	Hours	Lessons	Objectives
First	Raising awareness & Initial perceptions	4	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To raise awareness of the importance of pronunciation for communication.</li> </ul>
Second	Training on segmentals and linking sounds	6	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To identify the most difficult sounds for students to produce.</li> <li>To make students familiar with linking sounds.</li> </ul>
Third	Prosody pyramid exposure and practice	10	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To have students understand and practice the elements of the prosody pyramid: peak vowel, stressed syllable, <i>focus words</i>, <i>though groups</i>.</li> </ul>
Fourth	Final perceptions	4	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To gather students' beliefs about peer assessment and pronunciation.</li> </ul>

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

This chapter explains how the pedagogical implementation was designed using the principles of the prosody pyramid and peer assessment. The lesson plans and activities implemented throughout the pedagogical intervention were carefully designed taking into account the institutions' visions of language which implies social interaction to develop communication skills; learning, that requires strategies to foster autonomy; and curriculum, which is based on modules presented linearly. Also, the implementation included four stages aimed at guiding participants to understand the prosody pyramid aspects and to attempt to make use of such elements in speaking activities. Finally, this implementation provided students with the necessary tools to conduct peer assessment of their speaking productions.

## Chapter 5: Results and Data Analysis

### 5.1 Introduction

The objective of this research study was to analyze the effect of using peer assessment of speaking tasks on the participants' production of *thought groups* and *focus words*. To comply with that objective, four stages were implemented (see Table 2). Firstly, awareness regarding the importance of pronunciation for communication was raised. Secondly, participants were trained on segmental aspects of pronunciation and linking sounds. Thirdly, participants were presented with the elements of the prosody pyramid: *peak vowel stressed syllable*, *focus word*, *thought group*. Finally, perceptions regarding pronunciation and peer assessment were gathered. Throughout the four stages, qualitative and quantitative information needed to address the research question was gathered using five instruments: *questionnaires*, *PALs*, *teacher journals*, and one *focus group* gathered qualitative data, while *checklists* were used analyze the voice recordings, thus serving to provide quantitative data (see Table 3). Therefore, the study used a mixed-methods approach (see 3.2.1), as collecting diverse types of data provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than does reliance on only quantitative or qualitative data (Creswell, 2014). The five data collection instruments helped the researchers collect information on participants' perceptions of peer assessment and pronunciation, their ability to recognize pronunciation patterns when listening, and the participants' actual oral production in terms of *thought groups* and *focus words* (see 4).

This chapter explains how data were analyzed and presents the answer to the research question. Four findings are compiled in the discussion of categories: firstly, participants' perceptions regarding pronunciation were positively affected. Secondly, participants gained more insights about peer assessment. Thirdly, participants became more skillful at identifying how

accurately their peers produced *thought groups* and *focus words*. Finally, participants' accuracy of their production of *thought groups* and *focus words* decreased. The discussion is embedded inside the explanation of the findings.

## **5.2 Data management procedures**

Data gathered from each instrument were compiled separately in a spreadsheet matrix to facilitate the data analysis process. Corbin and Strauss (2014) argue that matrixes are appropriate information management mechanisms since they serve as a bridge between all the data analysis stages. Data were analyzed under the principles of the grounded theory method, which implies coding and triangulating information to narrow down categories by using a selective approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Grounded theory can be defined as the information analysis process that permits researchers to generate hypotheses from data (Creswell, 2014). Participants' names were changed for codes to follow ethical considerations (see 3.2.4). During the data analysis, the researchers conducted comparisons among instruments to support their interpretations. At the beginning of the data analysis process, some conclusions were drawn, such conclusions were compared throughout the whole process of data interpretation. This cross-analysis was conducted as it permits a study to guarantee solid arguments (Creswell, 2014). Table 3 below accounts for the instruments used in each of the stages of the implementation of the project along with the kind of data each of those represented for the triangulation process.



Table 3

*Data Management Chart*

Stage	Aim	Instrument	Data
First	To gather students' beliefs about peer assessment and pronunciation.	Questionnaire 1: Perceptions (see Appendix F.1).	Qualitative
	To gather students' production accuracy on the production of <i>thought groups</i> and <i>focus words</i> .	Recording 1 / Checklist 1 (see Appendix D.1).	Quantitative
Second	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To know students' performance regarding sounds and linking sounds.</li> <li>To gather students' beliefs and knowledge about stress.</li> </ul>	PALs 1, 2 & 4 (see Appendix E.1, E.2 & E.4). Teacher's journals 1 & 2 Questionnaire 2: Stress (see Appendix F.2).	Qualitative
Third	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To know students' performance regarding the elements of the prosody pyramid: peak vowel, stressed syllable, <i>focus words</i>, though groups.</li> <li>To gather students' perceptions about the effectiveness of the project.</li> </ul>	PALs 3, 5, 6, 7 & 8 (see Appendix E.3, E.5, E.6, E.7 & E.8). Teacher's journals 3 & 4. Questionnaire 3: Mid-term (see Appendix F.3).	Qualitative
Fourth	To gather students' production accuracy on the production of <i>thought groups</i> and <i>focus words</i> .	Recording 2 / Checklist 2 (see Appendix D.2).	Quantitative
	To gather students' beliefs about peer assessment and pronunciation.	Focus group (see Appendix H:).	Qualitative

### **5.2.1 Validation**

To ensure the validity of the data analysis process, the information stored in the matrix was carefully triangulated. Initially, the main phenomena were identified from the questionnaires and the PALs. Later, similar and new data were found in the teacher's journals and the focus group. By the end of the analysis process, the researchers examined the participants' voice recordings. The insights collected were analyzed under the method of constant comparisons. According to Corbin and Strauss (2014), the constant comparisons approach leads researchers to identify the dimensions or characteristics of codes, as well as to establish similarities and differences between them. The researchers interacted actively with the data to carry out a throughout analysis and to procure purity in the analysis conclusions.

### **5.2.2 Data analysis methodology**

Three grounded theory stages were conducted: open, axial, and selective coding. This procedure led the researchers to obtain information about important phenomena which was coded to carry out a triangulation process by applying comparisons and to identify the core category that answered the research question. In the open coding stage, the researchers started to explore the data and highlighted the opinions, behaviors, reactions, and events captured in the PALs, questionnaires, teacher's journals, and the focus group. Based on the first analysis, the researchers could identify units of information. In the axial coding stage, the units of information identified separately in each instrument were compared to find repetitive codes and relations between them. Some preliminary codes were discarded since they did not provide relevant information for the study, either because the participants did not give complete or logical answers, or because they did not deal with the research objective. The codes were narrowed down, and this process allowed the creation of categories. In the selective coding stage, the

researchers grouped the categories in an information map (see 4). Then, they were analyzed to find the main category which provided the answer to the research question.

Table 4

*An initial map of categories.*

Instrument	Beginning (stage 1)	Middle (stage 2&3)	End (stage 4)
Checklists	Pronunciation accuracy		Pronunciation accuracy
Peer assessment logs		Peer assessment perceptions	
		Pronunciation recognition	
		Pronunciation accuracy	
Questionnaires	Peer assessment perceptions	Peer assessment perceptions	
		Pronunciation accuracy	
	Pronunciation perceptions	Pronunciation perceptions	
		Pronunciation recognition	
Teacher's journals		Peer assessment perceptions	
		Pronunciation accuracy	
		Pronunciation recognition	
Focus group			Peer assessment perceptions
			Pronunciation perceptions
			Pronunciation accuracy

### 5.3 Categories

#### 5.3.1 Overall category mapping

Information regarding the use of peer assessment of speaking tasks on pronunciation aspects was gathered throughout the different stages of the implementation (see 4.3.2). Both qualitative and quantitative data were organized in a Microsoft Excel matrix for analysis. Creswell (1998) describes the analysis process as a spiral where the researcher engages the data, reflects, makes notes, reengages the data, organizes, codes, reduces the data, looks for relationships and themes, makes checks on the credibility of the emerging system, and eventually draws conclusions.

Data were collected through the application of two audio recordings and their corresponding analysis through checklists (see Appendix D:), eight PALs (see Appendix E:), three questionnaires (see Appendix F:), four teacher's journals (see Appendix G:), and one focus group (see Appendix H:). To manage the amount of data gathered, data were transcribed in a digital spreadsheet document, which allowed the researchers to organize the information and start its analysis. Once that organization process was done, the researchers started highlighting information that called their attention regarding the objective of the study and coding the information. Coding refers to tagging or labeling principal themes or concepts that emerge from the data and correspond to the research question posed (Burns, 2010). While coding the data gathered by each of the instruments, some answers were eliminated as they did not represent any relevant insights. When all the information was coded, a combination of codes arose and they were reduced (see 4). Later, themes emerging from the different instruments were compared looking for similarities and differences, which helped the researchers get to the findings of the study and to answer the research question.

The described triangulation process resulted in two categories, one of which is the core category, and four subcategories (see

Figure 2. Map of categories). On the one hand, there was a positive effect on participants' affective domain. It was found that the implementation of the research project modified participants' perceptions regarding both pronunciation and peer assessment, aspects that constitute the subcategories. On the other hand, there were effects related to the linguistic function dealt with in this research. It was noted that peer assessing speaking tasks positively influenced participants' understanding of pronunciation concepts and prosody pyramid aspects, but it also produced a negative effect on participants' production of two of the prosody pyramid elements: *thought groups* and *focus words*.

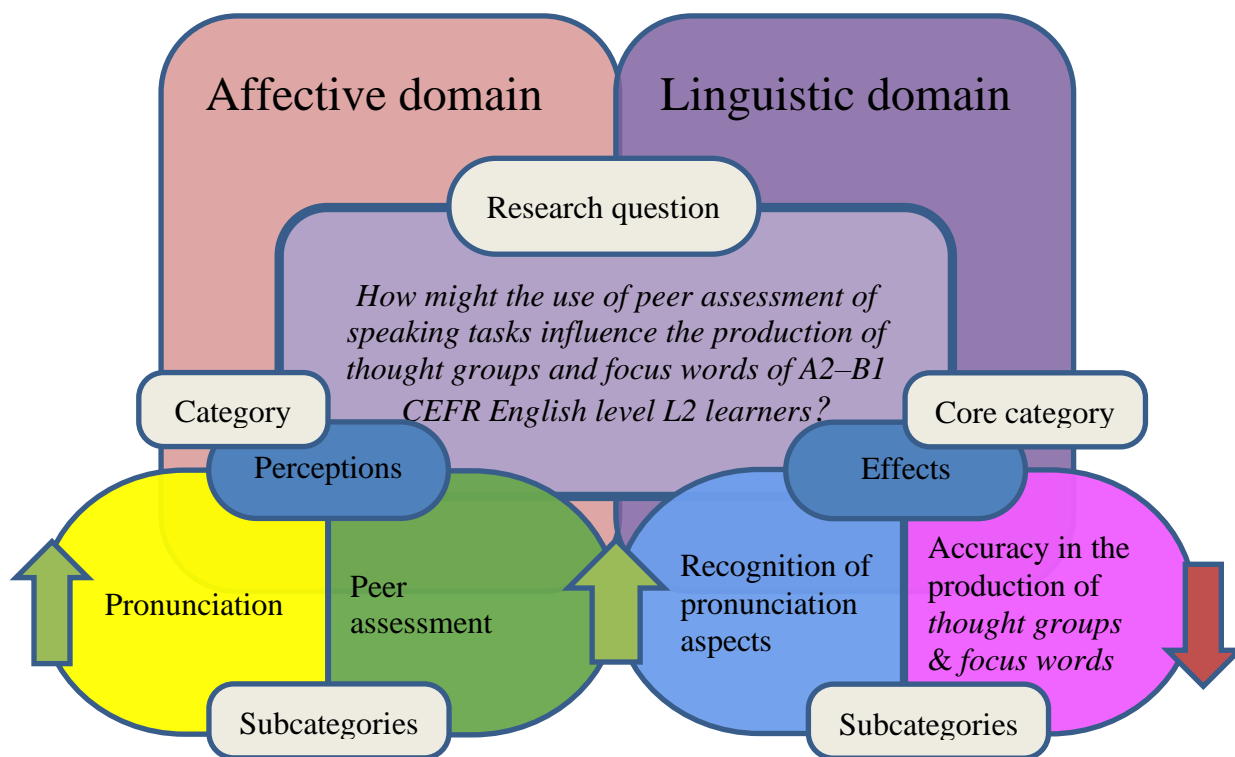


Figure 2. Map of categories

### 5.3.2 Discussion of categories

The aforementioned analysis procedures led the researchers to find that the implementation process enhanced the perceptions students had regarding peer assessment and pronunciation, and to answer the research question. Peer assessment of different speaking tasks made participants expose effects on how they recognize pronunciation and prosody pyramid aspects when listening, as well as on their ability to produce such aspects when reading texts. Subsequent subsections of this chapter present the data analysis. First, the instruments from which data were collected are discussed. Then, findings are explained and supported.

#### 5.3.2.1 *Improved perceptions of pronunciation*

Participants' ideas regarding how they perceived pronunciation, what they thought they knew, and how they felt about their pronunciation accuracy were gathered throughout the implementation process with the first and second questionnaires (see Appendix F.1 and F.2) and the focus group (see Appendix H:). Undoubtedly, the implementation of the research project had a positive impact on students' perceptions of pronunciation.

At the beginning of the implementation, in the first questionnaire (see Appendix F.1), students were asked different questions related to their beliefs about pronunciation and stress. It was found that all the participants of this study considered that even though pronunciation was an important feature of the language, they felt it was difficult. Participant 1 said: *tengo errores de pronunciación desde pequeña y es difícil desaprender para aprender la forma correcta en la que se debe pronunciar* ["I have had pronunciation mistakes ever since I was a child, and it is difficult to unlearn to learn the correct way to pronounce a word"]. Additionally, as anticipated by Gilbert (2001, 2008), they had mainly been exposed to the teaching of segmental aspects through strategies like repetition, error correction, and the use of IPA. For instance, when asked

about how pronunciation had been taught by teachers, participant 3 said: *Pidiéndome que diga las palabras en voz alta y luego me corrigen si dije alguna de manera errónea. También, pidiéndome que las escriba con el diccionario de pronunciación* [“By asking me to say the words aloud; then, teachers correct if I make mistakes. Also, by asking me to write the words with the IPA].

In the second questionnaire (see Appendix F.2), participants’ answers revealed that although they had some knowledge regarding stress in their mother tongue, they did not know how stress works in English. Participant 8 admitted that when listening, he did not pay attention to emphasized words, which is in agreement with the notion that suprasegmental teaching is usually neglected (Elliott, 1997). When asked about the function of stress in English, the majority of the participants expressed ideas such as *darle fuerza e importancia a una palabra* [“to emphasize and give importance to a word”], which is how this study understands stress (see 2.2.1). However, students did not understand the importance of stress in real-life communication in English and they had not been trained to identify and use stress in English. When asked how they knew a word in English must be stressed, participants 2 and 3 said *no sé* [“I do not know”] and *no sabía qué decir* [“I do not know what to say”], respectively.

By the end of the implementation, it was evident how participants gained knowledge regarding more specific aspects of pronunciation such as the elements of the prosody pyramid. For example, in the focus group, when asked about their perceptions regarding their level of pronunciation accuracy, most participants said they felt that they had improved, participant 7 specifically said: *Ya cuando uno sabe cómo se pronuncia una palabra y la escucha mal, suele identificarla mucho más fácil* [“When you know how to pronounce a word and then you hear it being mispronounced, you can identify it easily”]. Additionally, it was found that participants

still considered pronunciation to be difficult, but they acknowledged that their training on pronunciation before the implementation of this research project had been limited to segmentals. Thus, the training on pronunciation during the implementation helped them better grasp ideas about suprasegmentals. In the focus group, when asked if they had made progress with suprasegmentals, participant 6 said: *En cuanto a pronunciación, es que uno habla más con el tono, el acento, como más nativo. Eso es importante porque uno siente la diferencia entre una persona que habla sin el estrés, cómo el énfasis, el acento y una persona que lo habla natural* [“About pronunciation, you speak more with a tone or stress, more native-like. That is important because you can identify the difference between a person who speaks with no stress, like the emphasis or the stress, and a person who speaks English naturally”]. These examples suggest a better understanding of the suprasegmental aspects of the prosody pyramid.

### **5.3.2.2 *Enhanced perceptions of peer assessment***

Regarding peer assessment, perceptions were gathered through the first questionnaire, the teacher’s journals, the PALs, and the focus group. Participants’ perceptions of peer assessment also experienced variations, though these changes were less evident than those concerning pronunciation; nevertheless, it was evident that the implementation of this study provided students with more insights about the use of peer assessment.

At the beginning of the implementation, participants showed an understanding of what peer assessment means; they knew that conducting peer assessment involves two learners providing feedback to each other (Jones & Alcock, 2013). However, answers regarding when peer assessment was conducted in class varied, showing a degree of confusion; for example, three participants thought they did peer assessment in all the class activities, two said they did peer assessment only when they were certain a partner had made a mistake, one said he had



never done peer assessment in class, another one said he only did it when prompted by the teacher, and only two participants referred to pair work as the time when they performed peer assessment. It was possible to appreciate the lack of experience some students had with peer assessment. When asked how often they assessed their classmates' pronunciation in class, participant 3 said, *en casi ningùn momento; es más un ejercicio interno que realizo cuando un compañero habla* ["I hardly ever assess my classmates' pronunciation; it is just an internal (mental) exercise I do when a classmate speaks"]. Also, students were asked about how they would feel by evaluating each other. At this point, some participants had a negative perception of the assessment strategy. They asserted that they would not feel comfortable and that their comments could be misinterpreted by their peers. The participants also expressed that they could be hurt by their classmates' comments or feedback and that they did not have the proficiency to evaluate their classmates. When asked about how they would feel evaluating their classmates, participant 1 said, *es difícil evaluar a una persona cuando tú no estás seguro si está correcto o no* ["It is difficult to evaluate a person when you are not sure if your classmates are right or wrong"]. All in all, participants showed they were used to being assessed by the teacher rather than by a peer.

During the second stage of the implementation (see Table 3), in teacher's journal 2, the teacher wrote: "They gave back the recording and the peer assessment forms, and they explained to their classmates how their pronunciation was. However, most students didn't feel comfortable with giving feedback because this activity seemed to be more difficult than the one they had done the session before." This emphasizes that the students initially struggled with providing feedback as they were not ready to provide others with accurate corrections. Later, they became more accustomed to it and showed more interest in listening and evaluating their peers by

providing more productive feedback and action plans, which encouraged them to improve their metacognitive and social skills (Topping, 2009). This was also perceived in the PALs. At first, participants provided each other with general strategies to improve pronunciation; for example, in peer assessment log 1 (see Appendix E.1), participant 2 commented to participant 1 “My partner can improve his pronunciation listening to music, watch series or movies, and trying to repeat the words”. Then, in peer assessment log 5, participant 5 commented to participant 1 “Try to make a longer sound in the word that you want to focus”, this sample comment shows that students gained the ability to provide each other with more assertive feedback and more specific strategies to improve the target aspect of pronunciation.

At the end of the implementation process, participants acknowledged that peer assessment could be at times difficult but also useful, since it helped them clarify and understand concepts, it encouraged them to investigate and look for strategies, it was less intrusive than teacher assessment, and it led them to greater autonomy (Everhard, 2015). For example, in the focus group, participant 5 said: *Entonces ya no es necesario que el profesor corrija, sino que los compañero. Sí conocen el término, saben pronunciarlo y son ellos mismos los que corrigen a los demás* [“So, it is not necessary for the teacher to correct; instead, my classmates can correct me. If they know a word, they know how to pronounce it, they are the ones who correct other classmates”]. Participants even reflected on the possible benefits of implementing peer assessment regularly. They said that if peer assessment on pronunciation were implemented more frequently, it could help them gain appropriate knowledge, good listening skills, improve their learning environment and relationships among participants. For example, participant 4 described peer assessment as positive because *es como un consejo entre amigos* [“it is like advice from a friend”]. Similarly, in the focus group, participant 5 said: *La verdad es un buen*

*ejercicio para identificar errores tanto de ellos como propios y pues ayuda mucho a toda la parte de pronunciación y de fluidez* (“Honestly, it [peer assessment] is a good exercise to identify your classmates’ and your own errors and this helps the aspect of pronunciation and fluency”). Other studies (Gomez, 2014; Leander Spies, 2012; Tarighat & Khodabakhsh, 2016) have reached similar conclusions, findings that learners understand peer assessment as useful since they do not depend on the instructor, as more comprehensible because students share a common language level, and as developing learners’ awareness of correct language use.

### **5.3.2.3 Increased recognition of pronunciation aspects**

The analysis of the second and third questionnaires, the PALs, and the teacher’s journals revealed that the implementation of the research project positively affected participants’ linguistic domain in terms of their receptive skills. Participants went from not being familiar with pronunciation aspects to being able to identify their peers’ accuracy when making pauses to separate *thought groups* and stressing *focus words*.

During the second stage of the implementation (see Table 3), the teacher’s journal revealed that participants showed difficulty to understand and interpret IPA symbols. The teacher wrote in the teacher’s journal 2, “They just wanted to give up and get to know the answers. They didn’t know how to identify the correct symbols for each word”. This insight validated the decision to include a training stage in the implementation so that participants could become more familiar with phonemes. Before the third stage of the implementation (see Table 3), questionnaire 2 was implemented (see Appendix F.2). Although this questionnaire measured participants’ ideas about stress before being exposed to the prosody pyramid, according to the data collected in the aforementioned questionnaire, it was evident that none of them knew how to identify *stressed syllables* or *focus words* when listening. For example, participant 6 said:

*Cuando es una persona nativa, es muy difícil poder diferenciar la acentuación porque hablan muy rápido o cortan las palabras* [“When you listen to a native speaker, it is very difficult to distinguish the stress because they speak fast or they cut off the words”]. In fact, participants connected this issue to their own problems with listening skills.

At the end of the third stage of the implementation, questionnaire 3 was applied. It showed that 7 participants had made efforts to identify and correct their classmates and their own mistakes. Using peer assessment led students to improve their self-awareness and metacognition, they could not only identify their peers’ mistakes and provide them with feedback and some strategies to improve, but they also gained an understanding of how they could improve. For example in questionnaire 3, participant 9 said: *Me gusta que me corrijan y siempre estoy receptiva a sus observaciones. Si quedo con dudas, busco el IPA de esa palabra* (“I like to be corrected by my classmates and I am open to their comments. If I still have doubts, I look for the IPA [representation] of that word.”). This effort was important for students for two reasons: firstly, participants started to become able to identify *thought groups* and *focus words*. Secondly, they started to improve their own pronunciation; for example, participant 1 said: *Ahora pienso más en el acento de las palabras para poder lograr que los oyentes entiendan el sentido de la oración o de la palabra en sí* (“Now I think more about stress to make listeners understand the meaning of sentences and words”).

By the end of the third stage of the implementation, peer assessment log 8 showed how students were able to identify *thought groups* and *focus words* when listening, and when peers were emphasizing words different to those that should be emphasized. As an example, participant 8 said to participant 2: “I guess he works good but, in some cases, I noted some stress in different words. To improve maybe listen more”. Students showed an understanding of the

concepts of *focus words* and *thought groups*; for instance, in peer assessment log 7, participant 2 told participant 6: “You could identify the moments to stop when listening, but when you speak you don’t make the necessary pauses”, and in peer assessment log 8, participant 7 said to participant 3: “You said the words with the correct pauses and, in the majority, you put the stress in the words. You should improve if you continue to practice [sic] and remember to put the stress in words with the main idea”.

Additionally, the participants developed an awareness of the importance of *thought groups* and *focus words* for communication. Participants understood how *focus words* may affect their communicative intention and they started to monitor their ideas to emphasize the right *focus words*. In the focus group, participant 7 said: *Entonces cuando ya uno empieza a conocerlas, ya sabe que tiene qué, porque es donde quiere hacer énfasis, en la parte de lo que quiere dar a conocer* (“So, when you get to know them [*focus words*], you know where you want to emphasize, in the part (idea) that you want to convey”). In conclusion, peer assessment helped participants consolidate understanding and recognition of pronunciation aspects such as *thought groups* and *focus words*, especially when listening to their peers. Participants also started to understand the importance of suprasegmentals in communication.

#### **5.3.2.4 Decreased accuracy of the production of thought groups and focus words**

This final category emerged from the analysis of the checklists, the PALs, the second questionnaire, the teacher’s journals, and the focus group. It was found that participants’ accuracy when orally producing *thought groups* and *focus words* decreased. Our analysis suggests that this decrease occurred for three main reasons: a varied number of *thought groups* and *focus words*, participants’ awareness, and the number of implemented speaking tasks.

Firstly, there was a different quantity of *thought groups* and *focus words* measured in the first and second checklists (see Appendix D:). An analysis of this instrument revealed that students' accuracy when making pauses after each *thought group* decreased slightly between the first and second recordings (see Figure 3), but that there was a larger decrease in their accuracy in producing *focus words* between the first and second recordings (see Figure 4).

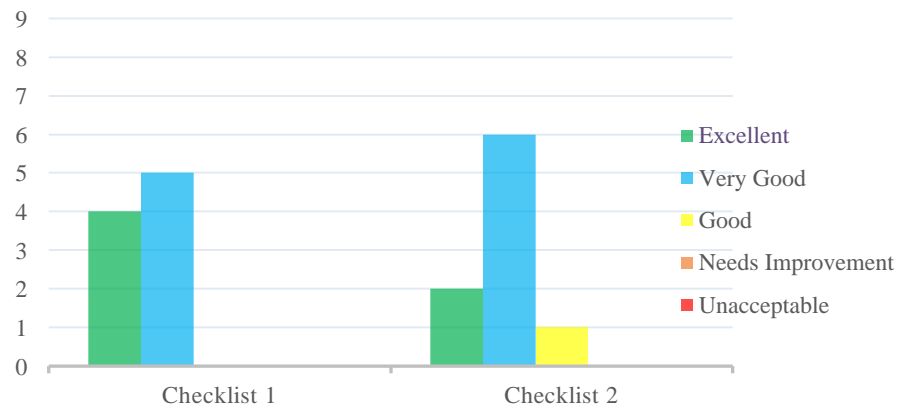


Figure 3. Checklists' thought groups

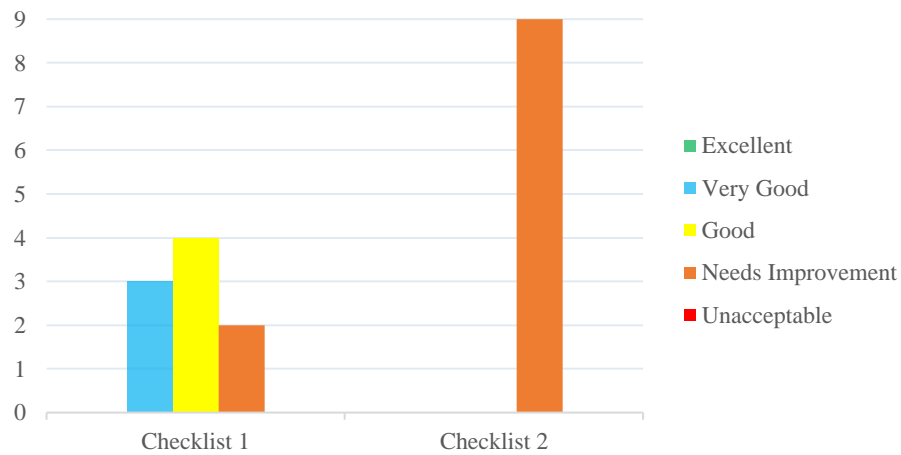


Figure 4. Checklists' focus words

Although the texts that were selected for students to record at the beginning and end of the implementation shared the same difficulty level, they differed in the number of *thought groups* and *focus words*. Regarding *thought groups*, the first text included twenty-two and the

second twenty. Regarding *focus words*, the first text had twenty-four, but the second thirty-seven. This situation represented a challenge for participants who might have otherwise shown an increase in their level of production if the selected texts had included the same number of *thought groups* and *focus words*.

Similarly, the analysis of the PALs 5, 6, 7 and 8 (see Appendices E.5, E.6, E.7, and E.8), which were used for the speaking tasks that addressed *focus words* and *thought groups*, revealed a slight decrease in the accuracy of the participants' production of *thought groups* (see Figure 5) and a more notable decrease in the production of *focus words* (see Figure 6). This decrease could have been the result of the varied number of *thought groups* and *focus words* included in the PALs. Regarding *thought groups*, PAL7 had seventeen and PAL8 twenty. Regarding *focus words*, PAL5 contained eight, PAL6 four, while PAL8 contained twenty). Once again, the larger the number of *thought groups* and *focus words*, the more challenging and the bigger the risk for participants to make mistakes.

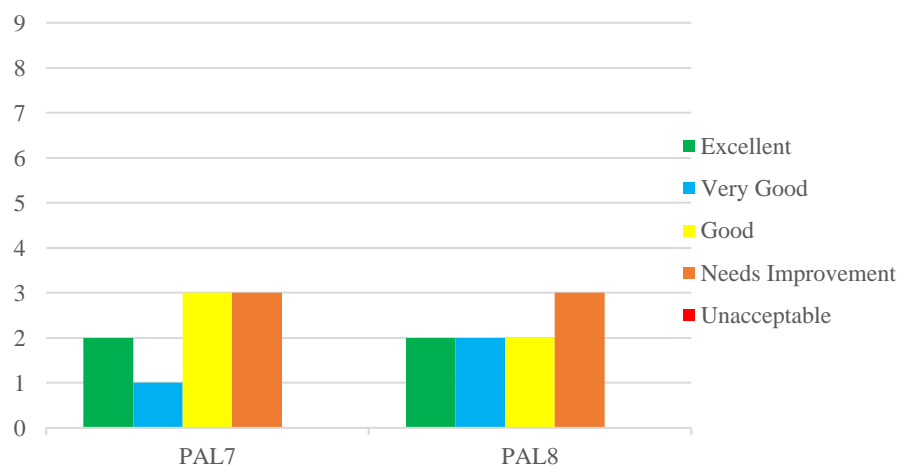


Figure 5. PALs' thought groups

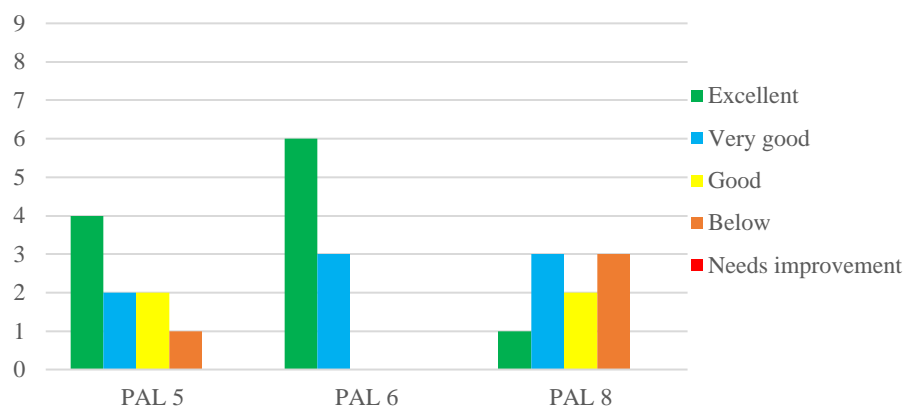


Figure 6. PALs' focus words

Secondly, we found that because peer assessment helped participants become more aware of their own mistakes in pronunciation, this led them to feel nervous and frustrated, and thereby to a reduction in their accuracy level. Before conducting the third stage of the implementation, when the prosody pyramid aspects were explained and practiced, four participants showed some knowledge regarding what is needed to stress syllables. For example, in questionnaire 2, participant 6 said *poniéndole fuerza a una de las sílabas de las palabras* (“by emphasizing one syllable in a word”); however, in the teacher’s journal 2, the teacher wrote “Later, they finished doing the matching between the words and the pronunciation symbols, but they were not entirely satisfied with their performance. They seemed to feel frustrated.” This shows that participants felt dissatisfaction with their pronunciation.

Even though students understood the concepts of *thought groups* and that they became aware of their own mistakes, not being able to produce them accurately seems to have increased their frustration. For example, in the focus group participant 5 said: *Yo creería que es como el último paso de todo el proceso. O sea ya cuando uno tiene muy bien identificado el Linking, la pronunciación y todo. Pues ya llega a esa parte y es cuando ya puede empezar a identificar bien cómo es la acentuación en todas las frases y en las palabras pero es muy complicado cuando*



*uno habla* (“I think it is the last step of the whole process. I mean, when you understand linking, the pronunciation, and so on, you can start to identify how the stress in sentences and words work, but it is difficult to apply when you speak.”). Although it may be commonly believed that knowing more about a topic improves performance, contrary to this understanding, we found that learning more about the theory and practice of the prosody pyramid actually decreased the participants’ accuracy when producing *thought groups* and *focus words*—at least within the time available for the present study.

Thirdly, participants’ accuracy when producing *thought groups* and *focus words* may have been reduced in the current study because few activities were planned to tackle those specific aspects of the prosody pyramid. Since the participating language institute only allowed researchers to implement the project over 24 hours of class time, and because four stages needed to be included, 10 hours were devoted to exploring the prosody pyramid (see Table 2

). Two speaking tasks dealt with *focus words* (see Appendices E.5 and E.6); one of these had to do with *thought groups* (see Appendix E.7), and the other combined *thought groups* and *focus words* (see Appendix E.8). Hence, hypothetically, there might have been a positive impact on participants’ accuracy of the production of *thought groups* and *focus words* if more time had been permitted for the implementation of the study.

### 5.3.3 Core category

As explained in the preceding discussion, there were two main categories, one regarding participants’ affective domain, the other regarding the effects of peer assessment on participants’ linguistic domain. The core category of this study is the one regarding the linguistic domain. Peer assessment of speaking tasks negatively influenced the production of *thought groups* and *focus words* of A2-B1 CEFR English level L2 learners. There was an inversely proportional

relationship between receptivity and productivity of *focus words* and *thought groups*. Thus, at least over the time available for the study, the approaches used turned out to be a double-edged sword: students improved their abilities to recognize the relevant pronunciation features when listening, but their ability to produce those same features in their own speech did not show an improvement.

#### 5.4 Conclusion

The present study found both positive and negative effects of its chosen approach. On the one hand, there were positive effects on the participants' perceptions of pronunciation and peer assessment. Regarding pronunciation, there was an evident progression of participants' knowledge since they recognized aspects other than segmentals. Participants broadened their understandings of accurate pronunciation. Initially, they had thought pronunciation was only related to sounds and the use of the IPA; later, they understood how *thought groups* and *focus words* could help them sound more natural and intelligible. Regarding peer assessment, students acknowledged the value of this strategy since they felt comfortable with evaluating and being evaluated by their classmates. It helped them develop the necessary knowledge to provide their peers with feedback, and it helped them develop metacognition. This project also had a positive impact on the way participants understood and were able to identify prosody pyramid aspects when listening and assessing each other. On the other hand, this study found that the accuracy of participants' production of *thought groups* and *focus words* was negatively affected. This was seen mainly in data collected from the checklists and the PALs, which showed a slight decrease in the participants' accuracy when making pauses after *thought groups* and a larger decrease in their accuracy when producing *focus words*.

## Chapter 6: Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

### 6.1 Introduction

This study examined how peer assessment of speaking tasks affected participants' production of *thought groups* and *focus words*. The assessment strategy helped participants change their perceptions of pronunciation and peer assessment, but it was also shown that the accuracy of their oral performance in terms of *thought groups* and *focus words* did not improve. Thus, although the current research project did not improve the participants' quality of production, it nevertheless improved their awareness of aspects of pronunciation that are too seldom studied but that extremely important for intelligible spoken communication. This chapter shows how the results of the current study are unique since there is no evidence of previous studies that examine the effect of peer assessment on prosody pyramid aspects such as *thought groups* and *focus words*. Also, these results differ from previous similar studies since there was not an evident improvement in the accuracy of participants' oral production. The chapter also recommends applying the prosody pyramid from the bottom to the top (*thought groups*, *focus words*, stressed syllable, and peak vowel), which is the opposite of how it was implemented in the current study (peak vowel, stressed syllable, focus word, thought group). Finally, this chapter acknowledges that the implementation might have needed a longer period to affect participants' production positively.

### 6.2 Comparison of results with previous studies' results

The results of the present study are compared with those of other studies conducted to address speaking and pronunciation difficulties in ESL students (see 2.3). Some research carried out in both the Colombian educational context and overseas relates to the implementation of

alternative assessment techniques to impact pronunciation. Other work has addressed the prosody pyramid suprasegmental elements.

Regarding alternative assessment, Caicedo Alvarez (2016) studied how the implementation of self and peer assessment could determine the development of spoken fluency. One similar aspect between Caicedo's and the current project is that the implementation of peer assessment helped students to reduce their anxiety and to increase confidence. Students identified the importance of the assessment tool, they got accustomed to it, and they learned how to implement it. Caicedo Alvarez found that students felt less anxiety and nervousness when they interacted and were assessed by their peers. In the present study, participants claimed that knowing that they were going to be assessed by peers helped them feel at ease in the speaking tasks. However, a big difference is that, in the case of Caicedo Alvarez's research, the implementation ended up increasing students' motivation and enhancing their spoken fluency, while in the present study, there was evidence of a decrease in participants' production of *focus words* and *thought groups*.

Regarding suprasegmentals, Peñuela (2015) conducted a study to determine how the implementation of metacognitive strategies affect awareness of stress and intonation. The study was conducted with advanced students following action research principles. One similar component between these two studies is the implementation of alternative assessment techniques, self-assessment in the study conducted by Peñuela and peer assessment in the case of the present study. In both projects, students developed an awareness of the suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation. Students understood what stress and intonation imply in Peñuela's study. In the current study, participants learned the concepts of *thought groups* and *focus words*. However, the two projects led to different results related to oral production. In the cited project,

most students improved their speaking performance due to the awareness of suprasegmentals they gained. In the present study, participants consolidated the concepts of the prosody pyramid, but they did not improve their oral production regarding *thought groups* and *focus words*.

Concerning the prosody pyramid, Silfiani (2017) addressed pronunciation difficulties evidenced by 31 seventh graders in Sungai Pinyuh, Indonesia. He highlighted the importance of developing intelligible pronunciation and they proposed Gilbert's prosody pyramid (2008) to tackle the linguistic problem. He used a pre and post speaking test in an experimental study. Unlike the present study, the prosody pyramid was used to help participants improve the pronunciation of consonant sounds whilst this study aimed at helping learners manage *focus words* and *thought groups*. Similarly, both studies found no progress in general speaking skills.

Thus, although various studies have examined alternative assessment techniques and suprasegmentals, and a few have considered the use of the prosody pyramid as a teaching tool, there remains a need for further research on how peer assessment could support teaching and learning through the lens of the prosody pyramid.

### **6.3 Significance of the results**

The implementation of the present study was pertinent for the context where it was conducted because the speaking tasks designed by the researchers along with the peer assessment strategy aligned to the institution's vision of language, learning, and curricula (see 4.2). The speaking tasks consisted of controlled practice exercises which served as the final communicative events in each lesson. The discovery approach was used to help students better understand the prosody pyramid so that participants were active learners, responsible for their own and their peers' learning through the use of peer assessment. These approaches could be

applied to other educational contexts that share similar principles. Additionally, the results obtained impacted positively participants' perceptions of pronunciation and peer assessment.

Regarding language, the present study sought to analyze the influence of peer assessment on the production of *thought groups* and *focus words*. This project implementation is appropriate because it was carried out under the communicative model, which implies that students learn the language in real-life contexts and for real-life purposes. By the end, students could reach a deeper understanding of pronunciation segmentals and suprasegmentals; especially, *thought groups* and *focus words*, which are important aspects of intelligibility in real-life communication.

Another reason why the results of this study are important is that the population was positively impacted by the implementation of the peer assessment technique. This study concluded that students felt confident when providing and being provided with peer feedback. The perception they had about this evaluation technique changed positively which helped learners adopt a more critical and responsible posture in their learning process, promoted a collaborative learning environment, and enhanced learners' autonomy, which is a challenge that adult learners usually face. The implementation of the peer assessment tool helped them identify strategies to boost their learning and to help their classmates improve. In other words, the participants ended up being more analytical and autonomous learners without depending only on the teacher's feedback.

Finally, the research and pedagogical methodology implemented in the project can be applied in other English teaching contexts that aim at enhancing communication and intelligibility. Therefore, teachers interested in boosting learners' speaking skills in their classrooms can follow this research project design, activities, and instruments.

#### **6.4 Pedagogical challenges and recommendations**

Some difficulties took place during the implementation process of this study. Firstly, linking the content that was supposed to be covered, according to the institutional syllabus, with the pronunciation activities designed was a demanding task. The researchers had to discard some content that was part of the institutional syllabus to have enough time to implement the designed activities in class. To tackle this difficulty, it is recommended to enlarge the second and third stages of the implementation. Secondly, it was difficult to train students in the peer assessment technique. Although participants were eager to work on peer assessment since they felt it was useful for their process, participants struggled to provide useful comments on their classmates' performance at the beginning of the implementation. Even though the second stage of the implementation included training on segmentals and linking sounds, participants could have benefited from additional training sessions. These could have given participants more confidence when providing their peers with feedback. It is advised not to disregard the teacher's assessment, as it could be used as a model for participants to provide each other with more constructive feedback.

#### **6.5 Research limitations on the present study**

This study had two important limitations. The first limiting aspect was time. The language institute granted researchers with permission to implement the project during twenty-four hours of class; therefore, the third stage of the implementation (see Table 2), which was the most important for answering the research question, took only ten hours. Five PALs were completed by participants during that stage. As a result, it was evinced that even though participants were able to identify and show understanding of the prosody pyramid aspects, the accuracy of the production of *thought groups* and *focus words* was not positively influenced.

This led the researchers to acknowledge the fact that more time should have been devoted to that specific stage of the implementation. Perhaps, by providing participants with more opportunities to practice the prosody pyramid aspects, their accuracy would have improved.

Another relevant limitation was the usage of Gilbert's prosody pyramid. The pyramid has four elements (see 2.2.1) which were presented from top to bottom during the third stage of the implementation, limiting the time devoted for students to be trained on *focus words* and *thought groups*. The order prosody elements were presented might have delayed students' consolidation and accurate use of the suprasegmental elements. The pyramid should have been implemented from bottom to top.

## 6.6 Further research

The implementation of this research project led to a positive impact on participants' perceptions about pronunciation and peer assessment, as well as to an increased understanding of pronunciation aspects; however, students' oral production regarding *thought groups* and *focus words* were not affected positively. This panorama suggests conducting additional research on the phenomena studied under different conditions.

If this project was to be replicated, it should be implemented over a longer period, especially to be able to carry out more PALs in the second and third stages. Participants should practice *thought groups* and *focus words* before *stressed syllables* and *peak vowels*. A similar or equal number of *thought groups* and *focus words* should be included in both the checklists and the PALs to be able to measure the influence of peer assessment on participants' accuracy in a more reliable manner.

Additionally, further research on the implementation of the prosody pyramid should be conducted with other populations. This study was implemented with adult students (see 3.2.2)



who had already fossilized errors regarding pronunciation. It would be interesting to explore how younger learners would assimilate the concepts and produce pauses and *focus words*. Similarly, it would be appropriate to implement this study with lower-level students who could benefit more from learning the concepts to avoid fossilization and to understand how the rhythm of English is different from their L1, leading them to sound more natural.

## 6.7 Conclusion

Overall, the current and previous studies have acknowledged the usefulness of implementing peer assessment in the language classroom to foster social skills, autonomy, and confidence. Peer assessment was demonstrated to ameliorate participants' knowledge of the concepts of *thought groups* and *focus words*. It also shows how the results of this study differ from previous research on oral proficiency, as the participants in the present study did not exhibit advancement. Although the results of this study revealed a reduction in the accuracy of participants' production of *focus words* and *thought groups*, it is believed that such accuracy would increase by applying some changes in the implementation of the project regarding the time of exposure, the order of the elements of the prosody pyramid, and proficiency level of participants. If students were provided with more time and opportunities to grasp, comprehend, and practice the elements of the prosody pyramid, learners' accuracy on the production of such elements would most likely increase. Also, the current study presented the prosody pyramid from top to bottom; participants worked first on understanding *peak vowels* and *stressed syllables* and then on *focus words* and *thought groups*. If this order had been flipped, and students had been introduced first to *thought groups* and *focus words*, and then to *stressed syllables* and *peak vowels*, it would have supported participants' comprehension and mastery of the concept of *thought groups* which is the most challenging concept inside the prosody pyramid.

Finally, based on the findings of the study and because learning the aural aspects of a language is more feasible at an early age, it is suggested to carry out this project with younger or lower-level learners who have not fossilized pronunciation errors yet and for whom it could be easier to grasp and consolidate the prosody pyramid concepts. Therefore, beginner students might understand the importance of suprasegmentals and eventually use them more naturally, adapting to the rhythm of English, which is different from that of a syllabled-time language such as Spanish. The present study aimed at filling the gap in the literature by conducting peer assessment to affect participants' production of *thought groups* and *focus words*.

Although the results of this study showed a decrease in participants' accuracy on *thought groups* and *focus words* when speaking, this study also showed relevant insights regarding pronunciation. Firstly, intelligibility is directly connected with the suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation. Secondly, the teaching of the prosody pyramid is effective at raising learners' awareness of the importance of emphasizing certain words when speaking to convey meaning and express themselves more effectively. Therefore, the prosody pyramid should continue to be studied as it represents valuable usages for syllable-timed language learners of a stressed-time second language.

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### Appendix A: Needs Analysis Survey

Querido estudiante,

De antemano agradecemos su colaboración al responder éste cuestionario, el cual será utilizado solamente con fines investigativos. Por favor, responda las preguntas marcando la opción que más se ajuste a su caso y justificando sus respuestas cuando sea necesario. El propósito de éste cuestionario es hacer un análisis de sus necesidades en cuanto al aprendizaje del Inglés. Estas preguntas no serán evaluadas. Su información personal será tratada con confidencialidad.

Nombre completo

1. En su opinión, ¿en qué consiste la coevaluación?
2. ¿Usted corrige a sus compañeros en clase?
3. ¿En qué momentos de la clase corrige a sus compañeros?
4. ¿Le gustaría aprender cómo evaluar y corregir a sus compañeros?

Conteste la pregunta 5, usando la siguiente escala de 1 a 5, donde 1 es No importante y 5 es Muy importante.

5. ¿Qué tan importante cree usted que es la pronunciación en inglés?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

¿Por qué?

Conteste la pregunta 6, usando la siguiente escala de 1 a 5, donde 1 es No difícil y 5 es Muy difícil.

6. Para usted, ¿qué tan difícil es la pronunciación del inglés?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

¿Por qué?



7. ¿Alguna vez le han enseñado pronunciación en inglés?

Si \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

8. Si su respuesta fue “sí”, ¿Cómo le han enseñado pronunciación?

9. ¿Utiliza usted alguna estrategia para mejorar su pronunciación del inglés? ¿Cuál(es)?

**Appendix B: Participants' Consent Letter**

Bogotá, 2019

Comunicación importante – Consentimiento informado.

Apreciados estudiantes,

Por medio de la presente queremos informarles que nosotros, Dany Marentes y Martha Roa, adelantamos actualmente nuestros estudios de Maestría en enseñanza de la lengua Inglesa con énfasis en ambientes de aprendizaje autónomo en la Universidad de La Sabana. Como parte de dichos estudios, estamos adelantando un proyecto de investigación que busca mejorar el nivel de la producción oral de los participantes, específicamente la pronunciación, utilizando estrategias colaborativas. Para llevar a cabo dicho proyecto, requerimos contar con su participación.

La información personal de aquellos estudiantes que voluntariamente decidan participar en el Proyecto será confidencial, toda la información obtenida será utilizada únicamente para los fines establecidos por los docentes investigadores. Los participantes podrán retirarse del Proyecto en caso de así desearlo y su participación y permanencia o falta de ella no afectará de ningún modo su desarrollo en clase ni sus notas.

Cordialmente,

*Dany Alexander Marentes*

*Martha Roa*

### Appendix C: Institutional Consent Letter

Bogotá. 2019-1

Adult Program Coordination

As part of our Master's program studies at the Universidad de La Sabana, we are preparing to start the implementation of an action research project. This project is a requirement of the program and it is designed to help improve our practice as educators. Our research topic is students' pronunciation, specifically their use of stress, through peer assessment. The purpose of this study, apart from measuring the impact of peer assessment on stress, is to contribute to improving the English level of our students. Since the research we are proposing will involve different data collection techniques with students, we are seeking your approval to carry out this action research project during the current semester. The data collection will be held during study hours. We will keep all the data we collect completely confidential, and we will not use any student's name. We are sure that we have taken the necessary steps to guarantee that our research will be done in ways that meet ethical standards. We have attached the consent letter that we will give to the students. Please, sign below and return a copy of this letter to us indicating whether or not you give us permission to conduct this action research project.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*NOMI ALEXANDER MORENTES* *Martha Roca*

Coordinator's typed name	
Coordinator's signature	Permission granted: Yes__ No __  Date

**Appendix D: Checklists**

**D.1 Checklist 1**

Well / for **example** / when **I** was growing up / the **family** dinner hour / was the **one** time in the day / when the **family** sat down **together** / and it was a **special** time / **Today** that's changed / In **many** families / there is **no** dinner hour / Kids eat **snacks** / or fast **food** all day / moms are out in the workforce and don't have **time** to make a proper meal / and there are so many **activities** / that it seems like no one has **time** / In **my** day / children were more **respectful** and **quiet** at the table / we **spoke** when we were **spoken** to / we didn't put our **elbows** on the table / and we dressed **nicely** / No one came to the dinner table in **shorts** / or jeans the way they **do** today /

Criteria	Excellent	Very good	Good	Needs Improvement	Unacceptable
Thought groups	The student made 18-22 pauses in the appropriate moment.	The student made 13-17 pauses in the appropriate moment.	The student made 9-16 pauses in the appropriate moment.	The student made 5-8 pauses in the appropriate moment.	The student made 0-4 pauses in the appropriate moment.
Focus words	The student emphasized 19-24 words appropriately.	The student emphasized 15-18 words appropriately.	The student emphasized 10-14 words appropriately.	The student emphasized 5-9 words appropriately.	The student emphasized 0-4 words appropriately.

**D.2 Checklist 2**

Why do **Some** students make more pronunciation progress than **Others**? / Do they just have a special **talent** for language **learning**? / Natural ability is **important**, / but there are **other** factors **too**. / **One** factor is the mother **tongue**. / In **general**, / it takes **less** time to learn the pronunciation of a language that is **similar** to one's **own**. / **Another** key factor is **motivation**. / If students have a strong **need** to speak English **clearly**, / they will usually make more **progress**. / **Closely** related to **motivation** / is **attitude**. / Students who **identify** with a culture / are more willing to **sound** like the speakers **from** that culture. / A **fourth** factor is **practice** outside of the **classroom**. / Students who have **conversations** with English speakers in everyday **situations** / improve their pronunciation more **quickly**. / **Based** on these **points**, / what can students **do** to facilitate their own **progress**?

Criteria	Excellent	Very good	Good	Needs Improvement	Unacceptable
Thought groups	The student made 16-20 pauses in the appropriate moment.	The student made 12-15 pauses in the appropriate moment.	The student made 8-11 pauses in the appropriate moment.	The student made 4-7 pauses in the appropriate moment.	The student made 0-3 pauses in the appropriate moment.
Focus words	The student emphasized 30-37 words appropriately.	The student emphasized 23-29 words appropriately.	The student emphasized 15-22 words appropriately.	The student emphasized 8-14 words appropriately.	The student emphasized 0-7 words appropriately.

### Appendix E: Peer Assessment Logs

#### E.1 Sounds

1. Record the following words:
2. Exchange your recordings with a classmate.
3. Listen to your classmate and evaluate his-her pronunciation using the IPA. Check the correct words and cross out the incorrect ones.

	<b>WORD</b>	<b>CHECK ✓ CROSS OUT ✗</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Thanks</b>		
<b>2</b>	<b>Education</b>		
<b>3</b>	<b>Vision</b>		
<b>4</b>	<b>Category</b>		
<b>5</b>	<b>Transparent</b>		
<b>6</b>	<b>Component</b>		
<b>7</b>	<b>Thoughtful</b>		
<b>8</b>	<b>Though</b>		
<b>9</b>	<b>Something</b>		
<b>10</b>	<b>Customer</b>		
<b>11</b>	<b>Castle</b>		
<b>12</b>	<b>Middle</b>		
<b>13</b>	<b>Predator</b>		
<b>14</b>	<b>Determined</b>		
<b>15</b>	<b>Talked</b>		

Peer-assessment 1

Evaluator's name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Correct words \_\_\_\_\_/15

Which sounds could your classmate improve?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What could your partner do to obtain better results?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**E.2 Sounds**

1. Match the words with the IPA symbols.
2. Exchange your paper with a classmate and compare their answers with the answer key.
3. Listen to your classmate say each word and evaluate their pronunciation.

	WORD		IPA	ANSWERS	PRONUNCIATION
1	cut	A	bɜːrd		
2	cat	B	dɒʊ		
3	ship	C	θɪŋk		
4	sheep	D	tri		
5	chip	E	kæt		
6	cheap	F	ðɒʊ		
7	tree	G	vɒʊt		
8	three	H	bɜːrθ		
9	think	I	ʃɪp		
10	sink	J	sɪŋk		
11	dough	K	ʃɪp		
12	though	L	θri		
13	vote	M	kʌt		
14	boat	N	bɪr		
15	bear	O	bɒʊt		
16	beer	P	ʃɪp		
17	birth	Q	ʃɪp		
18	bird	R	bɜːr		



Peer-assessment 2	Evaluator's name: _____
# Correct words _____/18	
Which sounds could your classmate improve?	
_____	
-	
_____	
-	
What could your partner do to obtain better results?	

**E.3 Linking sounds**

1. Identify linking sounds.
2. Record yourself reading the text.
3. Exchange your paper with a classmate and compare it with the answer key.
4. Exchange your recording with a classmate. Listen to your classmate and provide him-her with feedback on positive and negative aspects.

Prioritize your work

We all love to start work on things close to our hearts. However, these may not be the most urgent and important in our list of tasks to do. Have a list of tasks to do according to their strategic importance to your company. When you prioritize your work, you are more productive and that increases your chances of career success.

Peer-assessment 3  
# Correct links \_\_\_\_\_/37

Evaluator's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Once you have listened to your classmate, write your comments.

Positive aspects.

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Aspects to improve.

---

**E.4 Peak vowel and stressed syllable**

1. Highlight the stressed syllable in the following words.
2. Exchange your paper with a classmate. Listen and check your classmates' answers.
3. Listen to your classmate say each word and evaluate his-her pronunciation.

	WORD	LISTEN and CHECK ✓ or CROSS OUT ✗	PRONUNCIATION
1	career		
2	yourself		
3	a survey		
4	an object		
5	to object		
6	landlord		
7	economy		
8	economical		
9	response		
10	responsibility		
11	to separate		
12	separated		
13	office		
14	official		

Peer-assessment 4                      Evaluator's name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Correct words \_\_\_\_\_/14

Which words could your classmate improve?

---

---

What could your classmate do to obtain better results?

---

**E.5 Focus word**

1. With a classmate, record your voice reading the questions and answers 1-4 in the chart.
2. Exchange your recording with other classmates and evaluate the Focus Word.

	<b>Questions</b>	<b>- ✕</b>	<b>Answers</b>	<b>- ✕</b>
	Who will cycle to the restaurant tonight?		Jack will cycle to the restaurant tonight.	
	How will Jack go to the restaurant tonight?		Jack will cycle to the restaurant tonight.	
	Where will Jack cycle to tonight?		Jack will cycle to the restaurant tonight.	
	When will Jack cycle to the restaurant?		Jack will cycle to the restaurant tonight.	

Peer-assessment 5 Evaluators' names: \_\_\_\_\_

# Correct focus words \_\_\_\_\_/8

Once you have listened to your classmate, write your comments.

Positive aspects.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Aspects to improve.

\_\_\_\_\_

**E.6 Focus word**

1. Look at the questions and answers 1-4 in the chart.
2. Based on each answer, how would you say each question?
3. Record the question for each answer.
4. Exchange your recording with a classmate and evaluate the Focus Word.

	Questions	- ✕	Answers
	Were you in the bank on Friday?		No, I was there on Saturday
	Were you in the bank on Friday?		No, I was at school.
	Were you in the bank on Friday?		No, my sister was.
	Were you in the bank on Friday?		No, I was near the bank

Peer-assessment 6

Evaluator's name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Correct focus words \_\_\_\_\_/4

Once you have listened to your classmate, write your comments.

Positive aspects.

---

---

Aspects to improve.

---

**E.7 Thought groups**

1. Scan the QR code below.
2. Listen to the video as you read the text below.
3. Make a Slash (/) where you identify the speaker separates his Thought Groups
4. Exchange your paper with a classmate. Look at the answer key and count the number of correct Thought Groups.
5. Record yourself reading the text.
6. Exchange your recording with a classmate.
7. Listen to your classmate and comment on how he or she separates the Thought Groups.



A few years ago I felt like I was stuck in a rut so I decided to follow in the footsteps of the great American philosopher Morgan Spurlock and try something new for thirty days the idea is actually pretty simple think about something you've always wanted to add to your life and try it for the next thirty days it turns out thirty days is just about the right amount of time to add a new habit or subtract a habit like watching the news from your life



Peer-assessment 7	Evaluator's name: _____
# Correct _____/17	
Once you have listened to your classmate, write your comments.	
Positive aspects.	
_____	
_____	
Aspects to improve.	

**E.8 Thought groups and Focus words**

1. Listen to the recording as you read the text below.
2. Make a Slash ( / ) where you identify the speaker separates his Thought Groups
3. Underline the Focus Words
4. Exchange your paper with a classmate. Look at the answer key and count the number of correct Thought Groups and Focus Words
5. Record yourself reading the text.
6. Exchange your recording with a classmate.
7. Listen to your classmate and comment on how he or she separates the Thought Groups and emphasizes the Focus Words

The SUN was Golden / the sea was blue and it was a perfect day for Bethany Hamilton to hit the waves the 13- year-old had been surfing since she was eight friends and family considered her someone who was born to surf as Bethany swam through the crystal-clear water something gripped her arm a creature scary and strong tried to pull her under she had come face-to-face with every surfer's nightmare a shark attack

The **SUN** was Golden, / the **SEA** was blue, / and it was a **PERfect** day / for **BEthany** Hamilton / to **HIT** the waves. / The **13-** year-old / had been **SURfing** / since she was **Eight**. / Friends and **FAmily** / **conSIDered** her / someone who was **BORN** to surf. / As **BEthany** swam / through the crystal-clear **WAter**, / **SOMething** gripped her arm. / A creature **SCArY** / and **STRONG** / tried to **PULL** her under. / She had come **FAce**-to-face / with **Every** surfer's nightmare: / a **SHARK** attack.

Peer-assessment 8

Evaluator's name:

---

# Correct pauses: \_\_\_\_/20

# Correct stressed words: \_\_\_\_/20

Once you have listened to your classmate, write your comments.

Positive aspects.

---

---

## Appendix F: Questionnaires

### F.1 Perceptions

Querido estudiante,

De antemano agradecemos su colaboración al responder éste cuestionario, el cual será utilizado solamente con fines investigativos. Por favor, responda las preguntas marcando la opción que más se ajuste a su caso y justificando sus respuestas cuando sea necesario. El propósito de éste cuestionario es conocer sus percepciones acerca del uso de coevaluación y pronunciación en inglés. Éstas preguntas no serán evaluadas. Su información personal será tratada con confidencialidad como fue especificado en la carta de consentimiento de la presente investigación.

Nombre completo.

1. ¿Qué metodos utilizan en su clase de inglés para evaluar su desempeño?
2. En su opinión, ¿en qué consiste la coevaluación?
3. ¿En qué momentos de la clase usted evalúa o corrige la pronunciación de sus compañeros?

Conteste la pregunta 4, usando la siguiente escala de 1 a 5, donde 1 es No importante y 5 es Muy importante.

4. ¿Qué tan importante cree usted que es la pronunciación en inglés?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

¿Por qué?

Conteste la pregunta 5, usando la siguiente escala de 1 a 5, donde 1 es No difícil y 5 es Muy difícil.

5. Para usted, ¿qué tan difícil es la pronunciación del inglés?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

¿Por qué?

6. ¿Alguna vez le han enseñado pronunciación en inglés?

Si \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

7. Si su respuesta fue "si", ¿Cómo le han enseñado pronunciación?

8. ¿De qué forma considera que la coevaluación puede afectar o beneficiar su desempeño en cuanto a su pronunciación? ¿Por qué?

Conteste las pregunta 9 y 10, usando la siguiente escala de 1 a 5, donde 1 es Muy incómodo y 5 es Muy cómodo.

9. ¿Cómo se sentiría al ser evaluado por un compañero?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

¿Por qué?

10. ¿Cómo se sentiría al evaluar a un compañero?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

¿Por qué?

11. ¿Cómo considera su pronunciación en inglés?

Deficiente \_\_\_\_ Regular \_\_\_\_ Buena \_\_\_\_ Sobresaliente \_\_\_\_ Excelente \_\_\_\_

12. Si su anterior respuesta no fue "excelente", ¿qué dificultades considera que tiene en la pronunciación del inglés? ¿Por qué?

13. ¿Utiliza usted alguna estrategia para mejorar su pronunciación del inglés? ¿Cuál(es)?

**F.2 Stress**

Querido estudiante,

De antemano agradecemos su colaboración al responder éste cuestionario, el cual será utilizado solamente con fines investigativos. Por favor, responda las preguntas marcando la opción que más se ajuste a su caso y justificando sus respuestas cuando sea necesario. Esta encuesta intenta indagar acerca del conocimiento que usted tiene sobre acentuación de palabras en su idioma nativo y en inglés. Éstas preguntas no serán evaluadas. Su información personal será tratada con confidencialidad como fue especificado en la carta de consentimiento de la presente investigación.

Nombre Completo.

1. Para usted, ¿Qué es acentuación?
2. ¿Usted acentúa palabras en español?
3. Cuando usted lee en español, ¿Qué le indica que debe acentuar una palabra?
4. Cuando usted lee en inglés, ¿Qué le indica que debe acentuar una palabra?

Conteste las preguntas 5 y 6, usando la siguiente escala de 1 a 5, donde 1 es Muy difícil y 5 es No difícil.

5. Cuando escucha a alguien hablar en inglés, ¿Qué tan fácil es para usted identificar una palabra acentuada?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

¿Por qué?

6. Cuando habla inglés, ¿Qué tan fácil es para usted acentuar palabras en una oración?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

¿Por qué?

7. ¿Cómo acentúa palabras en inglés?
8. ¿Cuál es la función de la acentuación?

**F.3 Mid-term**

Estimado estudiante,

De antemano agradecemos su colaboración al responder éste cuestionario, el cual será utilizado solamente con fines investigativos. Por favor, responda las preguntas marcando la opción que más se ajuste a su caso y justificando sus respuestas cuando sea necesario. A continuación encontrará algunas preguntas acerca de su pronunciación y su proceso de co-evaluación. Procure responder con sinceridad y en detalle. Éstas preguntas no serán evaluadas. Su información personal será tratada con confidencialidad como fue especificado en la carta de consentimiento de la presente investigación.

Nombre Completo

Conteste las preguntas 1 a 4, usando la siguiente escala de 1 a 5, donde 1 es Nada y 5 es Mucho.

1. Mi conocimiento en cuanto a las reglas de pronunciación en inglés ha mejorado.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

2. Me he esforzado en identificar y corregir los errores de pronunciación de mis compañeros.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

3. Me he esforzado en identificar y corregir mis propios errores en pronunciación.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---



4. Mi pronunciación está empezando a mejorar.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

5. ¿En qué maneras siento que mi pronunciación ha mejorado?
6. ¿En qué aspectos de pronunciación me gustaría mejorar antes de terminar el curso?
7. ¿En qué maneras siento que los comentarios de mis compañeros me han ayudado a mejorar mi pronunciación?
8. ¿Qué puedo hacer para darle comentarios más constructivos a mis compañeros?

**Appendix G: Teacher's Journals**

JOURNAL	
SESSION	
DATE	
TIME:	
GROUP:	
PRONUNCIATION OBJECTIVE:	
PRONUNCIATION FOCUS	
DESCRIPTIONS OF ACTIVITIES IN CLASS:	

CLASS ACTIVITIES AND STUDENTS' REACTIONS	
PEER ASSESSMENT:	
GENERAL COMMENTS	

### Appendix H: Focus Group

Queridos estudiantes,

De antemano agradezco su colaboración al participar de este grupo focal. El propósito de esta entrevista es conocer sus opiniones acerca del proceso de coevaluación hecho durante las semanas de implementación de este proyecto, así como sus percepciones en cuanto a los beneficios (si los hubo) a su pronunciación del inglés. Sus respuestas no serán evaluadas. Su información personal será tratada con confidencialidad como fue especificado en la carta de consentimiento de la presente investigación. La entrevista será grabada para su posterior análisis.

1. ¿Cuál es su percepción en cuanto al uso de la coevaluación?
2. ¿Cómo se sintieron evaluando a sus compañeros?
3. ¿Cómo se sintieron al ser evaluados por sus compañeros?
4. ¿Para ustedes que fue fácil de evaluar a sus compañeros?
5. ¿Qué fue lo más difícil de evaluar a sus compañeros?
6. ¿Creen que evaluarse entre sí o entre ustedes tuvo algún beneficio?
7. ¿Ustedes volverían a utilizar alguna de esas estrategias para su proceso de aprendizaje?
8. ¿Cómo se sienten ustedes en cuanto a estos aspectos al uso de Focus words y Thought groups?
9. ¿Qué pueden hacer para mejorar su pronunciación, fluidez, estrés o acentuación en las oraciones y los Thought Groups?

**Appendix I: Lesson Plan Model**

Institution	xxx	
Course	Skills 5	
Number of students	9	
Date	July 18, 2019	
Room	105	
Level	A2-B1	
Average age	28	
Main objective	Students will learn how to identify stressed syllables by using the IPA symbols	
Stage	Aim	Activities
Warm-up	To elicit students' knowledge of "word stress" and challenge them to identify the appropriate stress of words.	The teacher asks participants how they identify the syllable stress of words in English. Then the students receive a list of words and they must record them on the cellphone. The words selected are challenging for students since they are similar to their corresponding words in Spanish (participants' native language)
Input	To introduce the concept "stressed syllable"	The teacher explains how to interpret the pronunciation symbols to identify the appropriate stressed syllable.
Pre-practice	To consolidate understanding of the IPA symbols. To consolidate the appropriate pronunciation of words	Students use their dictionary to look up the words in the list they had received before. They are to find the pronunciation symbols for all the words and to copy them next to each lexical item. Once they have found the pronunciation symbols for each word, they have to

		practice pronouncing the words based on how they interpret the pronunciation symbols.
Consolidation	To help students clarify the pronunciation of words.	The teacher models the pronunciation of each word by repeating the words and by getting students to listen to their pronunciation from a recording.
Production	To apply an understanding of the IPA symbols.	The students will record their voices by reading the words aloud and some sentences that include the words they practiced previously.
Evaluation	To provide peer assessment on the students' pronunciation.	The students will exchange their recordings with a classmate. They will listen to their classmates' recordings. They will check if the pronunciation of each word is appropriate and they will give their classmates feedback.