

Running head: MULTISTAGE FRAME TECHNIQUE

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MULTISTAGE FRAME TECHNIQUE TO ENHANCE  
STUDENTS' PRONUNCIATION OF STANDARD AMERICAN ENGLISH VOWEL  
SOUNDS IN GROUP 10-1A AT CANAÁN HIGH SCHOOL

A Research Study

By

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**Implementation of the Multistage Frame Technique to Enhance Students'  
Pronunciation of Standard American English Vowel Sounds in Group10-1A at  
Canaán High School**

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**List of Abbreviations**

<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>Concept</b>
CA	Communicative Approach
CD	Compact Disc
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
DVD	Digital Versatile Disc
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
MEP	Ministerio de Educación Pública
O1	Pretest
O2	Posttest
PROMECE	Programa de Mejoramiento de la Calidad de la Educación

### Abstract

In order to fulfill the requirements of the globalized society, people must be able to demonstrate the domain of different fields. In this regard, speaking English intelligibly plays a very relevant role. Even though the English educational plan proposed by Costa Rica's Ministry of Public Education suggests the implementation of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which establishes that lessons should consist of opportunities to communicate in the target language, some elements of the language have not been explicitly included in the syllabus. One of these elements is pronunciation. The lack of training programs and specific material designed for pronunciation instruction has been a main obstacle for the inclusion of this subskill in public high schools. Based on this necessity is that the general objective of this quasi-experimental investigation was to determine to which extent the Multistage Frame Technique enhances the students' pronunciation of Standard American English vowel sounds in group 10-1A at Canaán High School in Rivas. This study was conducted with a sample population of 12 students whose ages ranged from 15 to 17 years old. Participants took a pretest, and after this, researchers implemented the Multistage Frame Technique, which is a pronunciation instruction method. After the treatment, the participants took a posttest. Results evidenced that this technique improved the students' level of performance, and that participants show difficulty with some specific Standard American English vowels.

*Key words:* pronunciation, communication, integration, authentic and nonauthentic material, multistage, deductive and inductive approach

**Chapter One**  
**Introduction**

The immersion in a globalized world has created the necessity for people to be highly qualified in different fields. New jobs and services have emerged from the integration of new technologies and the rapid increase of world population. Many new companies have taken the ground in the work market, and they offer people the chance to develop professionally. Nevertheless, in contrast to what happened some years ago, people who attempt to obtain a job are not graded solely based on their previous experience but on their learning and communicative skills. Most multinational companies look forward to hiring employees who are able not only to carry the tasks, which they are hired for, but also to keep updated with the latest market trends. People who want to successfully be part of the worldwide job market must be aware of the demanding context in which they will be immersed.

The process of globalization has made humans establish a common system of communication in order to maintain constant contact and effective relationships all around the globe. In this regard, English has become one of the most important languages to communicate and around one billion people speak English nowadays (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2013). Within the Costa Rican context, people are aware of this necessity, and several efforts are constantly made in order to provide language learners with tools to cope with a highly competitive work market. Even though many institutes which attempt to develop English learning programs offer their services, the Ministry of Public Education (MEP) is still the main institution in charge of developing educational programs in public elementary and secondary schools. Since English is not an official language in Costa Rica, it is necessary to provide learners with formal instruction to develop excellent communicative skills in the target language.

Learning English as a foreign language (EFL) poses challenges for novice learners; in fact, becoming acquainted with the new language elements is a complex process that requires apprentices to dedicate time and cognitive effort. Constant practice and exposure to meaningful and understandable input are two of the most important aspects in the process. However, in the context in which Costa Rican learners perform, there are limited chances to get involved in real interaction. This situation is what gives great importance to formal instruction received in classrooms. The methodologies implemented by instructors determine to a great extent the level of success their apprentices achieve at the end of the educational process in elementary and secondary school. These methodologies must be aimed at improving every element of the target language. However, out of all the language elements, pronunciation is perhaps one of the most difficult components of English to be learned. Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin (1996) established a set of elements that might result in interference. Among those elements, the authors highlighted the learner's native language, age, exposure to the target language, amount and type of prior pronunciation instruction, aptitude, attitude, and motivation. Piske, MacKay, and Flege (2001) made a similar analysis and found that pronunciation learning is affected by age of L2 learning, length on residence in an L2-speaking environment, gender, formal instruction, motivation, language learning aptitude, and amount of L1/L2 use. Taking into consideration all these aspects, it is necessary to design and implement classroom methodologies to nurture intelligible pronunciation skills.

## **The Problem and Its Importance**

Humans' innate capacity to develop a communicative system provides them with the necessary elements to establish communication with others. In order to carry out an effective exchange of information, speakers must be intelligible when attempting to express ideas. Intelligibility has been defined by Levis (2005) as the learner's need to be understandable. According to this principle, learners do not need native-like pronunciation or accent in order to transmit intelligible messages. It is mandatory to take into consideration that even though speakers have a natural capacity to develop a phonological system, such system varies from one language to another. This idea was supported by Fromkin, Rodman, and Hyams (2007) who argued that "when you know a language you know the sounds of that language, and you know how to combine those sounds into words" (p. 221). In the particular case of English, the way words are written varies considerably from the way they are pronounced. This issue might affect negatively Spanish-speaking learners of English whose phonotactic patterns are different from English.

However, learning a language does not necessarily mean to be able to speak as a native speaker would do. Selinker (1972) stated that only five percent of people learning English as a second language are able to use it in a native-like form. The remaining 95% of learners may attain a high language proficiency level, yet there are still factors that will interfere with their performance in the target language. Abrahamsson and Hyltenstam (2009) carried out a comparative study among second language learners of Swedish whose ages of onset of acquisition varied. The authors investigated learners' linguistic performance, representation, and processing in highly cognitive

demanding tasks. The purpose was to establish a comparison to native speakers.

Abrahamsson and Hyltenstam found that

a majority of the early learners but only a few of the late learners were perceived as mother-tongue speakers of Swedish and, second, that only a few of the early learners and none of the late learners exhibited actual, linguistic nativelikeness across the board when their performance was scrutinized in detail. (p. 193)

This lack of nativelikeness, however, does not mean that the speakers are not perceived as natives. Furthermore, the ones who are not perceived as natives are still intelligible enough to be able to communicate. Although most learners would not be able to develop a native-like accent, the inclusion of pronunciation in Costa Rican high school English classes is still necessary. Pronunciation instruction must serve as a tool to lead learners to reach intelligibility in their speech. Levis (2005) stated that in contexts in which nonnative speakers of English communicate in the target language, English is used as lingua franca. Thus, expressing intelligibly in English poses the need for students to receive pronunciation instruction. The formal inclusion of this linguistic aspect during the English classes within MEP context must be promoted in order to achieve positive results in the students' language proficiency level when concluding the public educational system.

The *Technical Education Syllabus: English for Communication* designed in Costa Rica by MEP intends to prepare high school students for their future incorporation into the labor market. MEP's main goal is to train young learners in the practical use of the language and give them the basic elements required to perform at an intermediate level



(Ministerio de Educación Pública, 2009). Nevertheless, at some point, this purpose seems not to have been achieved successfully. A study aimed at measuring the English proficiency level of those speakers whose native language is other than English conducted by *English First* in 2015 revealed that Costa Rica is ranked in position 43 out of 70 countries that were included in the research. According to this investigation, Costa Rica is number eight among 14 Latin American countries scrutinized. This study has become a world referent to measure a country's English ability which seems to be correlated with income, quality of life, ease to do business, and innovation. Reasons for these results may be closely related to the MEP's policies in regard to English instruction in the country. After conducting an exhaustive analysis of the *Technical Education syllabus for English for Communication*, a lack of integration of phonetic elements into the learning-teaching process was revealed. This syllabus focuses on the development of the students' capacity to communicate, but there is little emphasis on the teaching of phonological elements. Taking into consideration that the ability of speaking a foreign language implies both, the development of fluency as well as the acquisition of intelligible pronunciation students must be prepared not only to use the language to communicate but to show that they have a high proficiency level.

When establishing the importance of pronunciation instruction, it is crucial to be aware of MEP's perspective about English instruction within the Costa Rican context. In order to determine the role of this subskill in the EFL learning process, an interview with the Regional English Advisor in Pérez Zeledón Iván Mora (2014) (see Appendix 1) was of great help. He mentioned that MEP has been working strongly since 2008 through the decree "Costa Rica Multilingue" established by Former President Oscar Arias. The main

goal of this proposal is to have students graduate with a B2 linguistic level based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. However, efforts had been made since many years before the decree without the desired outcomes. In 1990, MEP trained teachers to work with the CLT methodology. Unfortunately, pronunciation teaching has not been developed by following an ordered sequence. This lack of structured instruction leads to a phenomenon pointed out by Levis (2005): “Teachers have intuitively decided which features have the greatest effect on clarity and which are learnable in a classroom setting” (p. 369). Planned pronunciation teaching might result in the improvement of the teachers’ performance. Baker (2014) found that “in-depth training in pronunciation pedagogy has a direct and positive impact on teachers’ knowledge base of techniques for use in the classroom” (p. 148). However, as Baker also argued “many L2 teachers have received only limited training in phonetics or pronunciation pedagogy” (p. 139). This is a problem since instructors are incapable of providing learners with adequate input and examples for them to practice. When asked about the activities that could be used when teaching pronunciation, Mr. Mora emphasized the need to provide students with constant input based on speaking and listening activities. An adequate error correction method and integration of skills are useful tools to model pronunciation. Although, Mr. Mora mentioned MEP’s aims and possible ways to reach them, it is important to mention the analysis of the *Technical Education Course: English for Communication* where pronunciation is only given a superficial role within language learning.

Based on these premises, there is an urgent need to provide high schoolers with explicit pronunciation instruction. That is why the Multistage Frame Technique is

suggested as a methodological treatment that aims at promoting intelligible pronunciation of English as a foreign language in group 10-1 A at Canaan High School in Rivas.

### **Theoretical and Practical Background**

Research on EFL pronunciation instruction has been a topic of discussion for many years among linguists. Derwing and Munro (2005) stated that “Although second language (L2) accent has long been a topic of discussion and speculation, only the last few decades have seen a systematic effort to investigate” (p. 380). However, these authors also analyzed the fact that research on pronunciation has not been given as much importance as research on other linguistic components such as grammar and vocabulary. In their study, Derwing and Munro highlighted the importance of developing intelligible pronunciation rather than native-like accent. Another study carried out by Thompson and Derwing (2015) revealed interesting outcomes. After analyzing 75 pronunciation studies, these researchers found a growing number of investigations; however, they found some important limitations, especially in regard to replicability. Thompson and Derwing also concluded the significant impact of explicit instruction because it guides the learners’ attention toward phonetic information. Furthermore, these authors determined the importance of the *Intelligibility Principle* as a way to ensure mutual comprehension among speakers.

In the Costa Rican context specifically, some research on English oral communication has been developed; for instance, Villalobos (2007) established a very important finding obtained by administering a survey to sixty-six English students at Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica. She established that “learners consider pronunciation

to be the second most important language area” (p. 101). This finding helped to understand the Costa Ricans’ perspective and the importance that should be given to this micro skill. Similarly, a study carried out by Méndez, Sandí, and Zúñiga (2013) analyzed the need of adequate material and activity design for the instruction of consonant sounds for the students of the Tourism major at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension. When questioning the students’ perception of the importance of the different linguistic skills and subskills, the instrument revealed that pronunciation is placed in the third position in order of importance only surpassed by speaking and listening. In addition, learners demonstrated their awareness regarding instruction of phonology by stating that it helps to increase their communication and oral expression and increases job opportunities. The conclusions made out of this research revealed the importance of varied and contextualized materials in order to increase interest and enhance the learning opportunities.

Another study developed by Jiménez, Palacios, and Brand (2013) determined the importance that correct pronunciation has when developing communicative skills. In addition, the authors proposed a methodology to enhance pronunciation through the usage of songs as a way to provide learners with authentic input. Results from the instruments administered showed that high school teachers tend to use phonetic transcriptions as their main tool to help enhance students’ pronunciation. This shows the preferences towards deductive teaching when dealing with this skill. The authors concluded that it is necessary to provide learners with practice “through authentic and appealing didactic resources” (p. 285). Other authors like Araya and Córdoba (2008) have identified the need to carry out English lessons as an integral process which

includes all the necessary elements so that learners develop effective communicative skills.

### **Objectives of the Project**

#### **General objective**

To determine to which extent the Multistage Frame Technique enhances the students' pronunciation of Standard American English vowel sounds in group 10-1A at Canaán High School in Rivas.

#### **Specific objectives**

To analyze the MEP principles and guidelines regarding the instruction of the pronunciation of vowel sounds in the English for Communication class in tenth grade.

To design a treatment with activities aimed at improving EFL learners' pronunciation of English vowel sounds.

To implement the Multistage Frame Technique with students in group 10-1A at Canaán High School.

To determine the effectiveness of the design implemented with the EFL learners.

### **Significance of the Study**

Learning a language implies the development of four linguistic skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and the sub skills in which they are divided (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, culture). All these elements should be integrated and developed gradually. However, there has been some controversy about the effectiveness of integrating these elements formally in Costa Rican high school EFL classrooms. Some researchers have argued that the reason why such integration has not been effective is the lack of skilled instructors. This establishes the need for counting

on trained teachers who are able to teach all the linguistic skills and subskills effectively. In a study aimed at exploring connections (beliefs, knowledge, perceptions, attitudes) and pedagogical practices, Baker (2014) found that those teachers with a higher level of linguistic pedagogical training appeared to use a much wider repertoire of techniques than teachers who had not been properly trained. This revealed that in order to teach a language, a professional must master all the linguistic and pedagogical elements in order to transmit the contents clearly so that learners are able to internalize them.

Nonetheless, some investigations have revealed that not all language instructors are skillful enough to reach the right integration of the target language elements in their lessons. Derwing and Munro (2005) referred to limited importance given to explicit pronunciation instruction as “pronunciation’s marginalized status;” as a consequence of this, they stated that “many ESL teachers have no formal preparation to teach pronunciation” (p. 389). In this same regard, Baker (2014) made reference to some studies that revealed reluctance to teach pronunciation due to the teachers’ lack of confidence and training in the field. This scenario sets the bases for investigation oriented to provide EFL teachers with tools to improve learners’ pronunciation.

The idea of this research originated from the intention of contributing to the process of EFL teaching. Theoretically speaking, most teachers in Costa Rica are well-trained to teach the different skills and subskills that English involves. However, there is lack of materials that can be used specifically for pronunciation instruction. This project suggests a framework in which teachers find a compilation of materials that seeks to integrate this subskill within regular EFL classrooms. The materials designed and adapted must be thoroughly chosen in order to facilitate working with them. In regard to

the learners, the material and the learning process should be appealing to their likes and needs. There should be some integration between meaningful classes and the objectives that both teachers and learners try to reach at the end of the process.

Future researchers will be benefited out of the outcomes obtained after this work is completed. Questions or unsolved inquiries would serve as stepping stones for those investigators who might be interested in the topic of study. Even more specifically, since this research project is based on vowel sounds only, doing some work on consonant sounds or supra segmental elements would be of great importance for all those people involved in language teaching and learning.

### **Limitations**

While carrying out any type of research, many problems may be faced. During this project, factors such as time, students' disposition and weather conditions could be major issues. The research project aims at formally including the instruction of pronunciation of English vowel sounds within a school term which lasts six months; hence, it is important to be aware that during a regular school year many lessons are not taught due to several curricular and extracurricular activities. Test periods, teacher meetings and holidays are the main reasons why lessons are not taught. To minimize the negative effects, this project schedule includes a long teaching process. Also, the teachers' flexibility to make up lessons may be negotiated. Students' disposition is another possible constraint because of their main role during the project. That is why the researchers consider important to increase the learners' motivation and interest during the treatment. The students must become aware of their important role when learning a second language. Also, the students that at the moment of developing the project are

taking extracurricular English courses will not be taken into account when analyzing the final results. Nevertheless, those students are treated the same way as the rest of the class during the treatment administration process. Finally, because of the school location, unpaved road, and surrounding mountains, the weather conditions may be a negative factor affecting the research. During the past years, when weather conditions were extremely adverse, landslides occurred. This impeded either a part of the school body or the whole population to attend lessons for a day or two. Unfortunately, the researchers cannot control these kinds of natural phenomena. Hence, a possible way to overcome this is by means of the flexibility and adjustment of the schedule.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Pronunciation:** Production of sounds of speech, including articulation, stress, and intonation, often with reference to some standard of correctness or acceptability.

**Syllabus:** Summary or outline of a discourse, treatise, or course of study or of examination requirements.

**Communicative Approach:** Teaching approach that establishes that learning language successfully comes through having to communicate real meaning. When learners are involved in real communication, their natural strategies for language acquisition will be used, and this will allow them to learn to use the language.

**Authentic material:** Material which was not originally designed for teaching purposes but can be easily adapted to teaching-learning settings.



Nonauthentic material: Instructional material in the target language designed for specific academic purposes.

Deductive Approach: Instructional approach in which the teacher gives the students new concepts, explains them, and then has the students practice using the concepts.

Inductive Approach: Approach which is based on student “noticing”. Instead of explaining a given concept and following this explanation with examples, the teacher presents students with many examples showing how the concept is used for them to pick it without explicit instruction.

Multistage Frame Technique: Sequence of instructional strategies and activities based on a logical sequence from the most basic to the most complex ones.

Intelligibility: Quality or condition of being understood by others when communication.

Comprehensibility: Level of effort listeners have to make in order to understand what the speaker tries to communicate.

Segmental elements: Set of consonant and vowel sounds that are part of a language.

Suprasegmental elements: Aspects of speech such intonation, stress, length, and tone which are beyond the level of individual sounds.

**Chapter Two**  
**Theoretical Framework**

It is imperative to keep in mind that speakers of English are expected to develop intelligible communicative skills. Thus, as a way to justify the implementation of a multistage frame that guides high school learners of English through the process of foreign language learning, the following literature review attempts to briefly explain elements such as the role of pronunciation in the EFL classroom, instructional pronunciation trends and challenges, the position of the Costa Rican Ministry of Public Education regarding pronunciation instruction, the teachers' and learners' role in pronunciation instruction, segmental and suprasegmental elements, and teaching learning strategies.

### **Overview of English Educational Issues in Costa Rica**

Inclusion of English as a foreign language within the Costa Rican public education curricula has been addressed for a long time. Throughout the years, EFL in Costa Rica has undergone great restructuring; programs, approaches, and aims have changed in order to best fit the constantly changing world's economy. The inclusion of this language has always served the need to provide the nation with prepared labor force comparable to any developed country. Even nowadays, this need remains in the current English Syllabus in which MEP (2003) stated the following:

The English Syllabus was written within the principles stated both in our Constitution, The Education Law and in the Educational Policy "Towards the 21st Century" in order to help the students face life and work situations which require an average command of English, with the desire that this preparation will allow them to participate actively into the challenges of the global economy for the benefit of the country. (p. 14)

Independently from the purpose of the inclusion of EFL in the Costa Rican classrooms, the approaches have also been moved by world trends. According to Barboza (2010), the United States and England have been the main sources of ideas to emulate. MEP has been proposing the eradication of the initial grammatical approach which required the pupil to repeat and learn by heart all the structures and vocabulary provided. Currently, MEP guidelines are trusted to the implementation of the Communicative Approach (CA) in all types of EFL classrooms. In their attempts to increase the linguistic level, MEP's authorities have developed a great variety of programs that range from the traditional Academic English to English for Specific Purposes among other modalities. Even though many aspects like assessment, syllabus, and contents change from one English class modality to the other, the CA continues to be used in each one of them. In the specific case of the modality *Technical Education English for Communication*, MEP (2009) proposed that "students will become independent users of the language which will allow them to face workplace situations once they will have finished" (p. 14). Once again by means of the implementation of the communicative approach, MEP intended to prepare Costa Rican youth for the future working challenges.

When doing further reading of the *Technical Education Syllabus: English for Communication*, it was found that MEP (2009) provided clear guidelines on how to best increase the students' linguistic skills. They stated that "In this syllabus, the communicative skill of the language is the object of study. Emphasis is given to the four basic linguistic abilities: listening and speaking, reading and writing" (p. 15). This passage is a small reflection on how, theoretically speaking, MEP program is based on the four linguistic skills along with some subskills such as grammar and vocabulary. In

addition, culture is included since the students have already acquired a higher level that will let them understand the sociocultural information that learning a language also requires.

On the other hand, the MEP (2009) addressed pronunciation as a complement to the other skills and subskills. Within the sixteen general objectives of the program, pronunciation is only mentioned in one of them. This objective stated as follows: “To develop in the students a clear pronunciation and the use of prosodic features of the English language which will allow them to be understood by a responsive native speaker in controlled and free situations” (p. 27). Although some importance is given to this linguistic aspect, MEP neglected further instruction on how to teach pronunciation in class in this specific modality. The suggestions are very vague and do not provide the teacher with a detailed perspective on how to work this subskill in class.

Regarding listening, MEP (2009) proposed two aspects related to pronunciation. One was a specific listening activity which stated, “distinguishing between sounds, stress and intonation patterns” (p. 28), and the other was some suggestion for activities related to listening comprehension in which the teacher must “provide practice in distinguishing among sounds, stress, intonation patterns, to understand sentences, short texts, and others” (p. 29). In both statements, the importance of the suprasegmental aspects of the language was not significantly mentioned. Finally, pronunciation is included as a part of the speaking skill, and the program proposed that students should be aware of some principles in which pronunciation is included. It mentioned that “speech delivery, rhythm, intonation and pronunciation are learned by

listening to appropriate language models (tapes, native speakers, teachers and other English speakers)” (p. 30). Although included in the speaking section, it did not provide any idea of how to include it not only as a source of input but as a way to obtain student’s output. After doing some research on the MEP’s guidelines for pronunciation instruction, it is relevant to analyze the role of this subskill in EFL communicative contexts.

### **The Role of Pronunciation in the EFL Communicative Contexts**

Developing good pronunciation is necessary because it helps speakers to be understood in any given context. Learners must be prepared to cope with real challenges outside the classroom walls and to be capable of being successfully understood by both native and nonnative speakers of English. Closely linked to the need to be successfully comprehended is the need to prove to be proficient in order to perform the communicative tasks learners are required to. It is necessary to take into consideration that there are large groups of people who need “a high level of intelligibility and therefore require special assistance with pronunciation” (Howlader, 2010, p. 235). In this regard, nonnative speakers who must perform tasks that demand constant interaction with other speakers of English are aware of the importance that intelligible pronunciation has in order to keep fluent communication. Finally, other learners who are capable of performing orally by means of an adequate production of sounds are those who are privileged with special conditions such as studying abroad in English speaking countries, moving to English speaking countries, and performing jobs that demand interaction with native and nonnative speakers.

Besides all these factors, having good pronunciation might be regarded as a synonym of prestige. In fact, a study conducted in Canada with nonnative speakers of English found that 53 % of the participants thought that Canadians who spoke the language natively would respect them more if they articulated English sounds correctly (Çakır & Baytar, 2014). Based on these findings, Çakır and Baytar (2014) concluded that “articulating the correct pronunciation in target language may show the social status of the people or their educational background” (p. 100). This might mean that learners of EFL look forward to pronouncing English as intelligibly as possible. What is important then is to find out if the right conditions to achieve this goal are given in Costa Rican high schools.

### **Inductive and Deductive Instruction**

The dilemma of whether language instruction should be deductive or inductive has been a topic of discussion and research. Teaching approaches have constantly evolved and theorists have eventually changed the concepts upon which language teaching was based in the past. Nowadays, language instruction is oriented toward real communication. The theoretical frameworks in most language syllabi follow the methodology known as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) which establishes that the lessons should consist of opportunities to communicate in the target language (Nunan, 2003). Although CLT is the most popular methodology implemented today in language instruction, sometimes the teachers have a misconception of what CLT really is. Some mistaken arguments state that CLT omits completely the inclusion of explanations and that all the learning process takes place based on open-ended discussions which gradually foment the learning of the target language. To clarify doubts

about what CLT means, Richards (2006) wrote “communicative language teaching can be understood as a set of principles about the goals of language teaching, how learners learn a language, the kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning, and the roles of teachers” (p. 2). According to this viewpoint, CLT integrates all the elements involved in language learning in a way that the communicative needs of the learners are met.

Although linguists who support CLT suggest that language instruction should be integrative, many researchers and teachers still make segregation between deductive and inductive teaching. This separation prevents instructors from integrating elements from both approaches. While “in a deductive classroom, the teacher conducts lessons by introducing and explaining concepts to students, and then expecting students to complete tasks to practice the concepts” (Bilash, 2009, Inductive and Deductive Instruction), the role of the teacher in a class developed by using the inductive approach varies considerably. In this setting, the instructor limits his/her participation in the learning process, and the students are expected to notice the concepts that they are taught. In an inductive classroom “instead of explaining a given concept and following this explanation with examples, the teacher presents students with many examples showing how the concept is used” (Bilash, 2009, What Is Inductive Instruction?). Given the guidelines of both approaches, and in accordance with the principles which CLT is based on, the integration of deductive and inductive teaching probably generates improved results in the instruction of pronunciation.



Some studies have found evidence that supports the effectiveness of deductive pronunciation instruction in EFL classrooms. The main objective of providing learners with instructed pronunciation is to help them notice the linguistic elements that must be learned. This affirmation is based on Schmidt's (2010) *Noticing Hypothesis* that stated that "people learn about the things that they pay attention to and do not learn much about the things they do not attend to" (p. 721). In a study conducted by Saito and Lyster (2012) based on form-focused pronunciation instruction, they found that controlled instruction helped participants to improve not only their pronunciation but also their linguistic skills in general. About this, the authors established:

The impact of FFI [form-focused instruction] on learners' interlanguage development was apparent not only at a controlled-speech level but also at a spontaneous-speech level, suggesting that FFI can promote not only development of a new metalinguistic representation of English but also its internalization in a learner's L2 developing system. (p. 626)

This reflects that the benefits of guided instruction can be many as long as the process is well-addressed. Another contribution to the discussion of whether to use inductive or decisive instruction is the one made by Lee, Jang, and Plonsky (2015). In their meta-analysis of 86 unique reports testing the effects of pronunciation instruction, the authors found that there was a general tendency to improvement every time there was pronunciation guided instruction involved. In this regard the researchers stated that "compared with meta-analytic findings in other areas of instructed SLA, these results show that instruction on pronunciation can be just as (or more) effective as vocabulary,

grammar, and pragmatics” (p. 357). This information reinforces the argument of including formal pronunciation instruction as an effective way of leading students to develop intelligibility in their second language acquisition process. Nonetheless, sometimes instructors tend to neglect the importance of complementing pronunciation modeling with real interaction practices. As mentioned, the aim of teaching pronunciation must be the improvement of communicative skills. As a complement of the type of instruction used in EFL classrooms, the type of material used plays a relevant role.

### **The Use of Authentic and Nonauthentic Materials**

In addition to counting on well-trained teachers with a high proficiency level of pronunciation, it is important to think about the supporting materials that can be used to implement the instruction of pronunciation in EFL classrooms. After doing some research in the main bookstores in Costa Rica and asking EFL teachers, it was found that it is difficult to purchase materials designed or adapted to instruct participants according to the contents that MEP includes in the syllabi. Since this linguistic subskill has not been emphasized in isolation in the Costa Rican educational system, pronunciation is arduous to teach due to the lack of authentic and nonauthentic materials adapted for the instruction process. Celce-Murcia et al. (1996) analyzed the importance of using authentic materials such as anecdotes, jokes, advertising copy, comic strips, passages from literature among others that were not originally designed for teaching purposes but which can be easily adapted. The helpfulness of the usage of authentic texts relies on the contact that learners may have with the real language in naturally-occurring contexts. This might facilitate the learning process and provide

students with encouragement and motivation since they feel that they are dealing with authentic language patterns that they might encounter in real events.

Some authors postulate that authentic materials fill the existing gap between the classroom context and the real world's communicative situations. Learners who are not immersed in a context in which English is used naturally need to be provided with alternative resources in order to fulfill the lack of exposure to the target language. This is not the case, for example, of learners of English who live in countries where English is the official or the second language. However, in countries like Costa Rica, the opportunities to interact in this target language are limited. Sometimes the instructor is the only source of input that the learners have. This creates the need to search sources that allow students to be in contact with real models. Nonetheless, instructors must be careful when choosing the texts to be used in the classroom since they must match the learners' goals. When authentic materials are used properly, they may help teachers increase students' comprehension skills and oral and written language performance. They may significantly enlighten the EFL class, expose students to cultural features, and generate a deeper understanding and interest in the topic (Shu-Chin, 2009). However, using authentic materials without considering the learners' goals or likes might hinder their instructional process.

Authentic materials demand previous planning which might be time consuming. If not well organized, the implementation of authentic materials may represent some risks for the success of the class. For example, if the material is too culturally-based for second language learners, they might have difficulties to understand content.

Additionally, in terms of pronunciation instruction, it is necessary to think about the variations of the target language, and such variations might result in divergences in the pronunciation of some specific sounds or words. Therefore, instructors must be aware of the possible challenges that may arise when trying to include this kind of material in their classes.

Although authentic materials are good sources of input for learners, sometimes it is advisable to use or design texts that are aimed at instructing specific linguistic aspects. These are known as nonauthentic texts. Non authentic materials are sometimes criticized because “they often do not transmit culture with the same richness and are not as motivating as an authentic text” (Rojas, 2008, p. 77). In addition, some researchers have argued that explicit teaching of language through contrived examples and texts might overprotect learners and it does not prepare them for the reality of language use outside the classroom (Tomlinson, 2012). However, for the specific purpose of teaching pronunciation, these materials may be really helpful since they focus on the linguistic elements that need to be emphasized. In this regard, Tomlinson (2012) stated that “proponents of the course book argue that it is a cost-effective way of providing the learner with security, system, progress and revision, whilst at the same time saving precious time and offering teachers the resources they need to base their lessons on” (p. 158). This would be helpful since counting on useful material which opens a spot for learners to practice the language meaningfully will contribute with their learning process and facilitate the teachers’ work.

The design of nonauthentic materials must be based on certain principles in order to ensure that such materials will fulfill the learners' academic goals. One of the principles that material writers like Tomlinson (2011) take into consideration is that in order for language acquisition to take place, learners must be "exposed to a rich, meaningful, and comprehensible input of the language in use" (p. 8). Based on this principle, the material designed for teaching specific features of the target language must provide learners with settings in which they experience the use of the language in a variety of ways and for a variety of purposes. Another principle that should be followed when creating teaching materials is the effective and cognitive engagement in the language experience. Learners must be fully involved in the learning experience and integrate the contents of the material used in class to their cognitive system. Besides, it is necessary to make sure that the level of the material is appropriate for the learners to understand. Then, Tomlinson (2011) appealed for learners' positive attitude towards the instructional material to be used in classes. According to this author, the material used in the classroom should evoke positive emotions, and it should reflect learners' positive advances in their learning process so that they feel motivated.

Language researchers also advocate for the use of stimulating mental resources that learners use when they acquire their mother tongue. According to Tomlinson (2011), there should be a multidimensional representation of the language the learners experience and the language they intend to produce. The material designed for teaching should encourage mental imaging so that the learning becomes more natural and vivid. This tenet was reinforced by Gass and Mackey (2006) when they referred to the *Interaction Hypothesis*. This hypothesis stated that second language development is the

product of the integration of “exposure to the language (input), production of language (output), and feedback on production (through interaction)” (p. 3). Material developed under this principle provides students with chances to interact and such interaction pushes them to elaborate, clarify, and reformulate the language they use in order to elicit meaningful and understandable input and output. It is important to consider that these principles should apply for both authentic and nonauthentic materials so that the learning becomes effective.

Considering the premises and some of the principles of authentic and nonauthentic materials, a combination of both kinds of texts should be implemented in order to enrich the learning process. The search for teaching aids must be constant. Instructors ought to identify the interests of the participants and their strengths and weaknesses so that the implemented resources are really effective. A lesson that combines authentic and nonauthentic resources has more chances to achieve the learning goals proposed in the syllabus. Besides, learners will feel more committed to the process. Undoubtedly, no matter how well designed the material is, teachers must keep in mind that in the end it must serve for communicative purposes.

### **Instructional Pronunciation Trends and Challenges**

The question of whether to teach pronunciation deductively or inductively has been the concern of many language experts who seek to develop effective teaching approaches. As a result of this concern, several trends have arisen. Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Goodwin, and Griner (2010) identified two general approaches in teaching pronunciation: an intuitive-imitative approach and an analytic-linguistic approach. The former is conceived to rely on the learners' ability to listen and imitate the phonetic

system of the target language without the intervention of explicit instruction. This approach played an important role especially in the early nineteenth century since most of the language teaching was based on exposure to linguistic patterns and then their repetition. The latter, which appeared as a supplement instead of a replacement of the intuitive-imitative approach, depends on the use of aids such as phonetic alphabet, charts, articulatory descriptions, and others in order to reinforce listening, imitation, and production. Based on these two approaches, different pronunciation teaching trends have been developed.

As the different teaching approaches have been implemented, the way to incorporate pronunciation to the learning process has evolved. Gilakjani (2012) identified and divided those trends in several main groups. First, pronunciation was not given much importance when Grammar Translation and Reading-based approaches were the base of the teaching syllabus. In such methods, grammar and text comprehension were taught by means of using the learners' native language, and oral communication, more specifically pronunciation, was not the primary instructional goal. Then, during the 1950s and 1960s, when the Audio-lingual method appeared, pronunciation took center stage. Pronunciation instruction was basically oriented toward the development of learners' capacity to copy the sounds they were exposed to through drilling activities. Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) stated that minimal pair drilling (drills that use words that differ in a single sound) was commonly used to teach pronunciation. However, this type of instruction revealed several drawbacks since the focus was the repetition of sounds through drilling, thus, this issue created a lack of intelligible communication.

Later in the 1980s, when the communicative method was developed, another change in the position regarding pronunciation instructions appeared. Errors in pronunciation started to be conceived as a part of the natural learning process, and linguists began working under the conception that such errors would disappear as the learners became communicatively proficient (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). Since the primary purpose of the Communicative Approach is the establishment of communication, renewed urgency is given to pronunciation. However, Celce-Murcia et al. have established that there is a big issue in regard to instructional methodologies because “the proponents of this approach have not dealt adequately with the role of pronunciation in language teaching, nor have they developed an agreed-upon set of strategies for teaching pronunciation communicatively” (p. 8). Based on this, Gilakjani (2012) stated that today many teachers struggle to teach phonology because they lack special training in the field. Even though, at the university, teachers are instructed on how to develop their own ability to adequately pronounce words, “L2 teachers are worried that they are not well prepared to teach pronunciation or even to incorporate some pronunciation activities into their regular language classrooms” (Gilakjani, 2012, p. 4). This issue may be the result of the lack of efforts made by academic institutions. As Baker (2014) established, “relatively few teacher education programs provide courses on how to teach L2 pronunciation” (p. 139). However, linguists like Celce-Murcia et al. have proposed alternatives to improve pronunciation instruction.

As a way to guide language instructors in the task of teaching pronunciation, Celce-Murcia et al. (2010), proposed a step-by-step approach to teach pronunciation in formal settings. This approach includes a scaffolded sequence of techniques which are



aimed at making learners develop intelligible pronunciation. The authors begin their proposal by presenting the target language sounds to the learners. Once the apprentices are acquainted with the sounds to be learned, the authors propose listening discrimination activities. Later in the process, the students should be provided controlled practice and feedback. After this step, there should be guided practice with feedback. Finally, the authors propose the inclusion of communicative practice and feedback. All the strategies proposed by these linguists fall into areas like the use of fluency-building activities, accuracy-oriented exercises, multisensory modes of learning, adaptation of authentic materials and use of instructional technology. Besides the analysis of the trends that have played an important role in the instruction of pronunciation, it is imperative to analyze the role that teachers and learners play in the process.

### **Teachers' and Learners' Role in Pronunciation Instruction**

Language instructors play a very important role in the development of the learners' pronunciation intelligibility; however, the students are the ones who play, perhaps, the most important role in this endeavor. As it is the instructors' responsibility to provide language learners with activities and materials that enhance their pronunciation, it is also the learners' task to put into practice what they are provided with. According to Howlader (2010), in countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India where the need to speak English has increased, students have to deal with a variety of limitations that need to be overcome in order to reach success in the English teaching programs. Students' pronunciation might be affected by a series of factors; some of them intrinsic, some others extrinsic. Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) identified elements such as accent, stress, intonation, rhythm, motivation, exposure, attitude,

instruction, mother tongue influence, age and personality as the responsible for the students' intrinsic limitations. This information was also supported by Qian (2011) who pointed out negative transfer, materials, and individual aptitude as the main factors that interfere with learners' pronunciation. All this reveals the existence of a series of elements that need to be overlooked while working on learning a foreign language; nevertheless, some of them are skipped or are not given the importance they deserve.

When teaching pronunciation, it is of great importance to help students use intelligible phonological patterns. Thus, teachers ought to search for effective techniques that make classes entertaining and engaging for students. Villalobos (2008) argued that "foreign language teachers need to change traditional learning-based activities, and use the acquisition-based comprehensible input more, considering new developments in second language acquisition theory" (p. 4). The change of traditional methodologies will provide instructors with bases to deal with some of the elements that prevent learners from developing intelligible pronunciation. Besides, changing traditional teaching strategies would be helpful to analyze the strategies used by EFL learners who have successfully developed their pronunciation capacity. These strategies, as defined by Hişmanoğlu (2012), are "intentional behaviors and thoughts used by learners so as to enable them to comprehend, learn, or remember L2 pronunciation" (p. 248). It is important to keep in mind that pronunciation learning is a process that requires the use of different methodologies according to the learners' needs. In a study conducted by Derwing and Rossiter (2002) with 100 learners of different L1 in Canada, they found that EFL learners who are aware of their pronunciation learning difficulties tend to use a series of strategies to cope with pronunciation failures. The most common strategies

reported by learners were paraphrasing, self-repetition, writing/spelling, and volume adjustment; nonetheless, Derwing and Rossiter found that these strategies are not really effective to solve the pronunciation breakdowns. A good aspect revealed through the study, however, was that even though the strategies use by ESL learners were not effective, they still were aware of the need for finding solutions to develop intelligible pronunciation.

Key factors in developing teaching-learning language sessions are the amount and quality of exposure to the target language. In this regard, language instructors are viewed as the primary source of input to which learners are exposed. In Costa Rica, learners are not set in a context in which English is spoken in ordinary situations; thus, teachers must act as role models. Taking into consideration that most teachers of English in Costa Rica are nonnative speakers of the target language, it is necessary to remark the importance of having instructors with a high level of proficiency. As Richards (2011) stated, it is not mandatory to be a native speaker of a language in order to teach it well; nonetheless, he pointed out the imperativeness of providing good language models. This will lead learners to copy the right patterns and use them later in actual communication.

Developing intelligible pronunciation is a complex succession of procedures that involves more than just instruction and practices. Also, there must be follow-up activities and discussions that generate analysis as a way to provide learners with feedback. In order to generate feedback, instructors require data obtained directly from the participants (Celce-Murcia et al. 2010). This collection of data is referred to as formative

assessment. According to Garrison and Ehringhaus (2011), this type of assessment is implemented for the following purpose:

It provides the information needed to adjust teaching and learning while they are happening. In this sense, formative assessment informs both teachers and students about student understanding at a point when timely adjustments can be made. These adjustments help to ensure students achieve targeted standards based learning goals within a set time frame. (p. 1)

This view proposes that assessing students' performance should be oriented towards the reinforcement of aspects that have been assimilated successfully and the design of instruments that help learners overcome the difficulties that are encountered along the process.

There are many classroom-instructional strategies that can be included as part of the repertoire of effective teaching. When teachers implement instructional practice for the specific purpose of gathering information on student learning, they are developing formative instruction. This leads to a close relation between training and assessment. In this sense, it is imperative to think of formative instruction not just as mere data collection but as the effective usage of such data. Garrison and Ehringhaus (2011) have suggested some instructional strategies that can be used formatively. These include criteria and goal setting, observation, questioning strategies, self and peer assessment, and student record keeping. Having this range of teaching choices may result in the facilitation of the teacher's job as long as the data collected are guided effectively. Once the data have been collected, they must be presented to the learners in a way that they can analyze them. Participants must be aware of what elements they have been able to

master and which ones they still have to work on. This conscious interpretation will help them internalize whatever information they consider meaningful. Assessment and feedback should not be thought of and taught as boring processes. The use of games and interactive activities may encourage pupils to find this learning stage appealing to their likes and interests.

### **Segmental and Suprasegmental Pronunciation Elements**

As briefly mentioned before, pronunciation is a linguistic subskill which is formed by segmental and suprasegmental elements. Knowing a language means to be acquainted with such elements. As Fromkin et al. (2011) said, “when you know a language you know the sounds of that language, and you know how to combine those sounds into words” (p. 189). Thus, being aware of the different sounds of a language provides learners with the capacity to understand and produce them. Sounds are referred to as language segments that are divided into consonants and vowels. Both present a certain level of difficulty for nonnative speakers of a language due to what Best (1995) explained as the *Perceptual Assimilation Model*. This model established that “that nonnative segments...tend to be perceived according to their similarities to and discrepancies from, the native segmental constellations that are in closest proximity to them in native phonological space” (p. 193). This model labeled the levels of perception in five different categories. The first one is referred to as *Single-category Contrast*. Sounds that fall into this category are not differentiated as separate sounds; learners, due to their native phone system, tend to assimilate both nonnative phones as a single one. An example of this is the assimilation of the English vowel sounds /i/ and /ɪ/ as the /i/ sound in Spanish. The second category is defined by Best as *Two-category Contrast*

in which discrimination of sounds is good since each nonnative phone is assimilated to a different phoneme category. An example of this occurs when learners categorize phonemes like /u/ and /ε/ as two completely different sounds. In the third category which was defined by Best as *Category Goodness Difference*, the learners notice that there is some differentiation between the sounds heard, but they are still not able to distinguish them separately. This category is similar to the previous one, but the differentiation is not so optimal. The fourth category is named by Best as *Uncategorizable Contrast*. In this category, even though the learners are able to perceive the phones, they cannot assimilate the sounds to a native phoneme category. An example of this is the /ə/ sound for Spanish speakers. This phone cannot be assimilated as any sound in their native sound system. Finally, the fifth category proposed by Best is the *Nonassimilated Contrast*. Phones in this category fall entirely outside of the native phonetic space, and learners are not able to perceive them as speech.

The other group of elements known as suprasegmentals consists of aspects of speech beyond the level of the individual sounds. Ladefoged and Johnson (2010) explained that suprasegmental features are aspects of speech that involve more than single consonants or vowels. The principal suprasegmental features are stress, length, tone, and intonation. Nonnative speakers of English, often find difficult to deal with some elements of the target language since they are different from their mother tongue. Sounds that do not exist in the first language (L1) and patterns of pronunciation and intonation which are emphasized in English make the mastering of the target language pronunciation a hard task for most learners.

For the particular purpose of this study, special attention will be paid to the set of English vowel sounds that represent one of the challenges for both ESL and EFL learners. A major difference in the vocalic systems of English and Spanish is the fact that the former has twelve monophthong vowels (vowel sounds that occur in isolation from other vowels). These vowels are articulated as explained by Dauer (1993), Celce-Murcia et al. (1996), Dale and Poms (2005), and Avery and Ehrlich (2008) (see Table 1).

Table 1  
English Vowels Summary

	Tongue				Lips			
	Front	Center	Back	Spread	Neutral	Rounded		
High	/i/	/ə/	/ɜ:/	/u/	/i/	/ɪ/	/ʊ/	/u/
		/ɪ/	/ʊ/					
Mid					/ʌ/	/ə/		
Low	/ɛ/	/ʌ/	/ɔ/	/ɛ/			/ə/	/ɜ:/
	/æ/		/ɑ/	/æ/	/ɑ/		/ɔ/	

Note. Table taken from *Accurate English: A Complete Course in Pronunciation* (p. 23)

In addition, English has five diphthongs (combinations of two vowel sounds). Spanish, on the other hand, contains five monophthongs (see Table 2). The set of Spanish vowel sounds was described by Avery and Ehrlich (2008) and Saucedo (2010) as follows:

Table 2  
Spanish Vowels Summary

	Tongue			Lips		
	Front	Center	Back	Spread	Neutral	Rounded
High	/i/		/u/	/i/		/u/
Mid						
Low	/ε/		/ɔ/ /a/	/ε/	/a/	/ɔ/

Note. Table adapted from Teaching American English Pronunciation by Avery & Ehrlich (2008)

Also, Spanish contains thirteen diphthongs, some of which do not have any correspondence in English. Table 3 compares all English and Spanish monophthongs and diphthongs as a way to represent the similarities and differences regarding Spanish and English vowels.



Table 3  
English and Spanish Vowels Comparative Table

English Vowel Sounds	Examples of English Words	Spanish Vowel Sounds	Examples of Spanish Words
/a/	fox	/a/	animal
/aɪ/	I	/ai/	paisaje
/aʊ/	cloud	/au/	Ausente
/ɛ/	ahead	/ɛ/	Perro
/eɪ/	say	/ei/	Reino
/ɪ/	Bit	-----	-----
/i/	see	/i/	Insistir
/ɔ/	all	/ɔ/	Oso
/oʊ/	go	-----	-----
/ɔɪ/	toy	/ɔi/	Heroico
/ʊ/	bull	-----	-----
/u/	tool	/u/	Usual
/æ/	cat	-----	-----
/ʌ/	but	-----	-----
/ə/	about	-----	-----
/ɜ-/	her	-----	-----
/ə-/	teacher	-----	-----
-----	-----	/eu/	reunión
-----	-----	/ia/	magia
-----	-----	/ie/	Nieve
-----	-----	/io/	violeta
-----	-----	/iu/	ciudad
-----	-----	/ua/	Guarda
-----	-----	/ue/	Huevo
-----	-----	/ui/	Ruido
-----	-----	/uo/	antiguo

Note: Table adapted from Teaching American English Pronunciation by Avery & Ehrlich

In Spanish, most graphemes (or morphemes) only correspond to one sound. For example, the grapheme “a” is pronounced /a/ in all words that contain it. Some samples that illustrate this pattern are *América*, *águila*, *papa*, and *ahora*. Another example is the

letter “i”. This morpheme is always pronounced /i/ no matter in what word it is contained. Some illustrations of this are *ilustrar, similitud, igual, domingo, and libro*. Contrastingly, morphemes in English have the particularity of being pronounced in a variety of forms depending on the words they are contained in. For instance, the letter “a” is pronounced differently in all the following words: *father* /ɑ/, *all* /ɔ/, *bake* /eɪ/, *cat* /æ/, *any* /ɛ/, *was* /ʌ/, and *about* /ə/. Besides these variations regarding the orthographic and phonetic systems, in Spanish there is no distinction among lax and tense vowel sounds as in English (Avery & Ehrlich, 2002). In English sounds like /i/ and /ɪ/ or /ʊ/ and /u/ represent a challenge for native Spanish speakers since it is hard for them to learn to differentiate such sounds. On top of this, foreign L2 learners must deal with sounds like /æ/, /ʌ/, /ə/, /ɜ/, or /ə/ which do not exist in their L1 (Avery & Ehrlich, 2002). All these variations may lead students to develop different strategies in order to cope with their learning needs.

L2 learners who find it hard to deal with some elements of pronunciation of the target language tend to substitute them with the most similar items from their native language. This is the result of what Ellis (2003) described as L1 transfer. When not having the knowledge in the target language to fulfill the L2 learner’s communicative task, language transfer becomes one of the most used learning strategies. Sometimes this transfer might be positive if the use of the L1 element is accurate and serves for the communicative purpose; nevertheless, and especially regarding pronunciation, this transfer from student’s L1 might not be effective, and it would result in the incorrect substitution of sounds or patterns of intonation as well as stress. Even though language transfer becomes one of the most used learning strategies for L2 learners, this strategy must be well implemented in order to avoid communication struggles.

**Chapter Three**  
**Methodology**

This chapter describes the quantitative methodology that was used to gather the information to reach the research objectives stated in Chapter One. First of all, it is mandatory to clarify that quantitative investigators “develop knowledge by collecting numerical data on observable behaviors of samples and then subjecting these data to numerical analysis” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003, p. 23) which is the case of this study. In this chapter, aspects such as research design, setting and participants of the study, the treatment, variables of interest and their definition, the instruments, data analysis and procedures, possible constraints, and research schedule are developed.

### **Research Design**

In order to reveal the findings of this study, the quantitative approach was selected. Dörnyei (2011) stated that “*Quantitative research* involves data collection procedures that result primarily in numerical data which is then analyzed primarily by statistical methods” (p. 24); similarly, this proposal looks forward to obtaining measurable data and analyzing the information obtained in the light of numerical methodology. Muijs (2011) mentioned that there are two main types of quantitative research: experimental and quasi-experimental. The difference between both designs relies on the allocation of the participants of the work groups. While in the experimental design participants are allocated randomly, due to the conditions of the study or practicality, in the quasi-experimental design the participants are not randomly allocated. In order to carry out this research, the participants had to share a series of features that to some extent ensured the group’s homogeneity. First, researchers looked for a sample population that belonged to the same age-group and who had common academic background. Then, the access to extracurricular English training was a variable that

needed to be controlled in order to minimize the alteration of the data elicited. Also, there was a need for counting on a group of participants who would have some meaningful motivation to develop intelligible language skills. Taking into consideration the academic high schools in the region that offer the Technical Education Course: English for Communication, Canaán High School was the only institution with the required population. Unfortunately, the number of participants who shared all these characteristics was limited. Therefore, the design used was the quasi-experimental one-group pretest-posttest proposed by Seliger and Shohamy (2011). This design attempts to use the participants as their own controls. According to the authors, the reliability of this design is explained as follows:

The design is efficient because it controls a number of extraneous variables which can affect the homogeneity of subjects when more than one group is involved. To some degree, the design also controls for attrition or loss of subjects. Since the same group is used for both pretest and posttest, it does not need to be matched to another group. (p. 139)

The study of the cause-effect relationship between the independent and dependent variables was the main focus of this research. In order to establish a starting point of comparison, a pretest (O1) was administered to the participants of the study. Then, in order to determine the relationship between the variables, a well-planned instructional treatment was administered. Seliger and Shohamy (2011) referred to this treatment as X. Once the treatment has been administered, the participants were required to take a posttest (O2), which measured the extent of the treatment (pp 137-139). This kind of

research design turned to be effective for the purpose of the study taking into consideration the characteristics of the setting and the population.

### **The Setting and Population**

The research was carried out in Canaan High School. This institution is located in Canaan, Rivas, approximately 16 kilometers from San Isidro de El General. This high school was founded in 1998. It was recognized by the MEP authorities as an academic high school with innovative orientation and became part of the Program for the Improvement of the Quality of Education (PROMECE) whose main goal is to close the technological gap between urban and rural areas. The institution has seven classrooms, three laboratories (science, computer and language), one library and the administrative offices. The current population is approximately 187 students from seventh to eleventh grades, divided into 10 groups (two per grade). All students live in the communities surrounding the institution; they come from Herradura, San Gerardo, San José de Rivas, Chimirol, and Guadalupe. The institution provides students with adequate free bus transportation from their communities.

The target population of this study is 10<sup>th</sup> grade students from academic high schools. These learners are part of the *Programa de Educacion Diversificada* which is composed of 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades. During these two years, students are required to achieve the objectives established in the Technical Education Syllabus. This is a two-year program developed by MEP. The courses may vary among institutions since learners are to choose the orientation that satisfies their needs. The complete syllabus, in the case of English for Communication for both 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades, is composed of a total of 14 units, seven for each level. The program establishes that “this proposal will

greatly improve students' ability to communicate in English in a wide range of life situations and will enlarge their knowledge of today's world" (MEP, 2009 p. 20). These students were selected to participate in this study due to a series of special characteristics. First, the course is oriented toward the student achievement of communicative competence. Second, the number of lessons assigned for academic English is not enough to implement a treatment like the one proposed in this study. ON the contrary, in English for Communication there is one more lesson is the aim of this program allows the inclusion of pronunciation instruction. The aim of the course is to help students develop linguistic skills that will help them become part of the country's work force.

The sample population of this research is the students in group 10-1A at Canaan High School. The group of the Technical Education Course: English for Communication is composed of 12 students, of which eight are female and four are male. The students' ages range from 15 to 17 years old. According to MEP parameters, students in this school level are expected to have a high-beginner English linguistic level (MEP, 2009). These students have a low/middle social status, and are granted a governmental scholarship to help them cover their educational expenses. The sampling method used was incidental because of the institution's accessibility regarding the researchers' entrance process. Additionally, the institution's curriculum design and community economic language interest served as impulses to carry out the study in this institution. However, taking into consideration that the informants are underaged and in order to keep their confidentiality, their personal data were not included in this research.

## The Treatment

In order to carry out this project, the treatment described in this section was developed. This proposal was named Multistage Frame Technique since it provides participants with an innovative methodology that allows them to improve their pronunciation skills through different stages along the learning process. The design of a sequential methodology was inspired by the theory and principles proposed by Celce-Murcia et al. (1996). The following chart summarizes the stages and includes a brief explanation of the procedures along with the goal intended.

<b>Multistage Frame Technique</b>			
<b>Name of the Stage</b>	<b>Stage</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Goal</b>
<b>Open your Ears</b>	Inductive presentation	These are lock-step activities based on-words that illustrate the sounds to be studied	To activate schemata.
<b>Get to Know It</b>	Deductive explanation	These are teacher-centered activities that include rule explanations and examples.	To provide direct input.
<b>Real Deal!</b>	Practice	These include practice activities like, games, multimedia and creative use.	To prepare students for real situations.
<b>How did It Go?</b>	Assessment	Consolidation activities are part of this stage.	To assess the students' progress.
<b>Be Better!</b>	Feedback	Based on the assessment generated in class, the teacher and student provide feedback through different activities.	To provide learners with error correction.



The treatment booklet was titled “*KEEP CALM AND LEARN PRONUNCIATION*” (see Appendix 8). It features a series of scaffolded activities aimed at promoting student’s awareness regarding the most relevant aspects of the Standard American English vowel sounds within MEP context. The sounds included in the treatment were /a/, /ɛ/, /eɪ/, /i/, /ɪ/, /ʊ/, /u/, /æ/, /ʌ/, /ə/. This selection was based on the consideration of the English vowel sounds that present potential problems for EFL learners. According to Avery and Ehrlich (2008), “ESL students generally have difficulty producing English vowel distinctions. This is because there are more vowels in English than in most other languages. Many of the world’s languages (e.g. Spanish and Japanese) have only five vowels” (p. 95). Comparing the vowel system of English and Spanish reveals the challenge that EFL learners must overcome. Research has shown that the differentiation between lax and tense vowels represent special difficulty for Spanish speakers learning English. In this regard, Avery and Ehrlich established the following:

The tense/lax vowel pairs of English, /iy/ vs. /ɪ/, /ey / vs. /ɛ/, /uw/ vs. /ʊ/, do not exist in a five-vowel system as there is no tense/lax distinction. The low front vowel /æ/ and the central vowels /ʌ/ and /ə/ do not exist in a five-vowel system. Furthermore, the English vowel /a/ is further back than the low vowel of a typical five-vowel system. (96)

Anticipating the most troublesome areas of English vowel pronunciation set the parameters of work for the design of the treatment. The booklet was designed by the researchers based on authentic and nonauthentic materials that serve as a practical and theoretical guide. Additionally, the booklet includes an answer key and teaching tips guide, plus an audio CD to help lead the learning process. The answer key contains

transcripts and solutions for the listening activities. Also, the teaching tips are simple recommendations on how to check and approach the tasks.

The “*KEEP CALM AND LEARN PRONUNCIATION*” booklet was designed to increase student’s awareness regarding the most relevant aspects of the Standard American English vowel sounds. The booklet offers five different stages designed to orient the learning process from guided and controlled stages to the freest and most critical thinking stages, in which students gain knowledge about the importance of acquiring intelligible pronunciation.

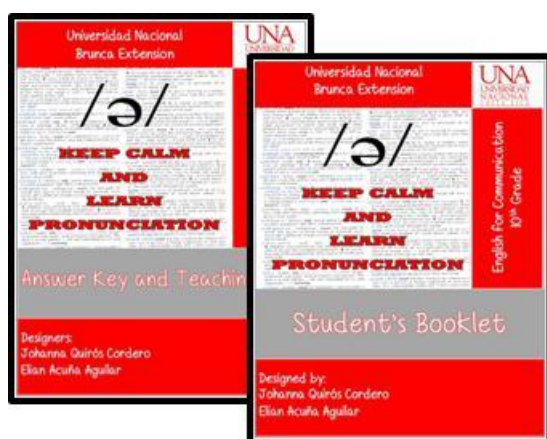


Figure 1. Booklet’s covers. Designed by the researchers.

The audios and activities used are aimed at exposing the students with common words that contain the studied phonemes. The tasks that require the students’ production are oriented to their age-related interests to increase the changes of meaningful learning. The activities that involve the usage of technological devices are also intended to attract the learners’ attention and willingness to practice. When dealing with the more controlled activities, it is recommended to keep them as simple and clear as possible. Motivation plays a crucial role during guided stages. The discussion and

exchange of ideas should be encouraged as a way to assure correct comprehension. This methodology allows participants to improve their pronunciation skills through the stages explained as follows:

### Stage 1: *OPEN YOUR EARS*

This stage is an inductive presentation of the sound or sounds to be studied. During this activity the teacher controls and guides the process through lock-step activities based on words that illustrate the sounds to be studied. The main goal of this stage is to activate schemata and therefore facilitate the acquisition of the sound.



Figure 2. Sample Page of Student's Booklet. Designed by the researchers.

### Stage 2: *GET TO KNOW IT*

In this phase, the students are provided with a theoretical explanation of the sounds to be studied. According to Celce-Murcia et al. (1996), "the presentation should provide students with information about the sound's characteristic articulation" (p. 111). These authors suggest the usage of illustrative images for the students to identify and clarify variables in articulation. In this regard, a helpful resource is the use of sagittal planes that explain the position of tongue and lips and jaw movement. The symbols used for the representation of the sounds are the ones contained in the introduction of

the booklet. The activities designed are teacher-centered which include rule explanations and examples in order to provide learners with direct input that theoretically justifies the studied phonemes. According to Celce-Murcia et al., “the perception of contrast is an essential starting point in the teaching of vowels” (p. 112). Thus, this section also includes controlled listening and speaking exercises are provided to assure adequate comprehension.

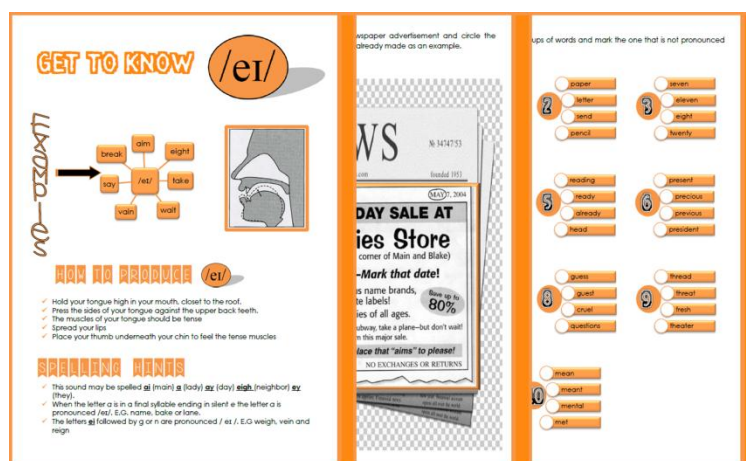


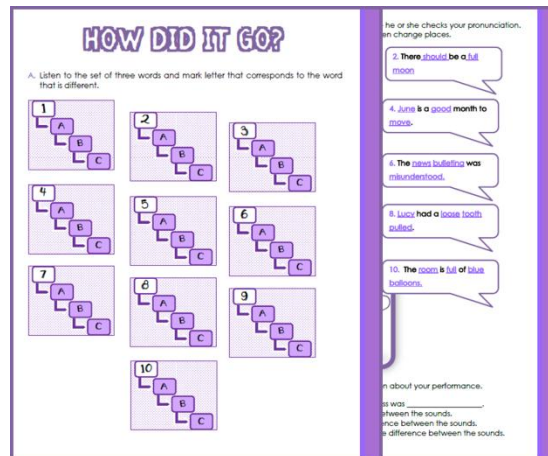
Figure 3. Sample Page of Student's Booklet. Designed by the researchers

### Stage 3: *THE REAL DEAL!*

By means of the usage of nonauthentic and authentic materials, the students are provided with opportunities to put into practice the target sounds. This stage includes practice activities like songs, games, videos and creative tasks. According to Celce-Murcia et al. (1996), “finding context in which a given vowel or vowel contrast naturally occurs is a key step in teaching pronunciation communicatively” (p. 115). Therefore, in this part of the lesson, students are given opportunities to use sounds in a free environment so that they prepare themselves for real situations through creative usage of the phoneme within a given context.



This section consists of consolidation activities that provide a concluding opportunity for students and teacher to assess the progress achieved during the previous stages. This is performed by different assessment techniques such as self,



peer, and teacher assessment. These types of assessments help ELF students to view their pronunciation process progress from three different perspectives. According to Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwing (1996) self-assessment leads EFL learners to develop awareness of their strengths and points of improvement in regard to pronunciation. These authors established that peer assessment offers student-student interaction which helps students put their new knowledge on pronunciation to immediate use. In regard to teacher assessment, the authors established that the teacher who is the one in the classroom with the technical and methodological knowledge “needs to determine the progress students are making in order to provide as much individualization as possible and to revise the curriculum” (p. 348) . In this stage activities are closed and help to encourage the students’ critical thinking by questioning not only their peers but themselves.

Figure 5. Sample Page of Student’s Booklet. Designed by the researchers

Stage 5: *BE BETTER!*

Based on the information gathered from the assessment techniques and a student's generated task, the students are provided with feedback as a way to improve the weaknesses found in the pronunciation of vowel sounds. This last activity provides the teacher with enough information to generate adequate feedback to help students. According to Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwing (1996) the most useful feedback comes when the teacher and learners work on the base of the output produced by the latter. Also, it generates a critical perspective in the students about their specific needs and points of improvement.

**BE BETTER!**

**What words were the most difficult for you?**

Make groups of 4 students. Follow these steps to play sound domino:

- 1 First, the dominoes must be shuffled, so that no one knows the location of any given tile.
- 2 Each student must take 4 tiles. The rest will remain facing down.
- 3 Begin by placing the **START** tile.
- 4 Each student will take turns to place a correct tile according to the sound required. It is necessary to link a symbol with a word that contains the sound. For instance:

START	/θ/
/θ/	upon
/ʌ/	lemon
/ʌ/	double
/θ/	up
/θ/	famous
/ʌ/	bug
/θ/	love

- 5 If a player doesn't have the tile needed, s/he can take one from the group facing down.
- 6 The game ends when one of the students plays all his/her tiles.
- 7 Take part in class discussion about the words used in the game.

day	/θ/	/θ/	away
/θ/	upon	open	/θ/
/ʌ/	lemon	must	/θ/
/ʌ/	double	/ʌ/	sun
/θ/	up	/ʌ/	seventy
/θ/	famous	typical	/θ/
/ʌ/	bug	/ʌ/	oven
/θ/	love	nation	/ʌ/

Figure 6. Sample Page of Student's Booklet. Designed by the researchers

### Variables of Interest

The following chart represents the variables of interest of this project. It includes the elemental unit, its characteristics, and the unit of measure of each variable.

ELEMENTAL UNIT	CHARACTERISTICS	UNIT OF MEASUREMENT
The students' pronunciation will provide the information elicited by measurement units.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Level of students' intelligible pronunciation of standard American English vowel sounds (dependent variable).</li> <li>-Use of multi-stage frame technique (independent variable)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Pretest (Administered during the first week of the process).</li> <li>-Posttest (Administered one week after the treatment was concluded).</li> </ul>

### Dependent Variable

Next, the conceptual, instrumental, and operational definitions of the dependent variables are outlined so that a clear description of each element is provided.

**Conceptual definition:** The dependent variable in this study was the students' intelligible pronunciation of standard American English vowel sounds. As defined by Ladefoged and Johnson (2010) pronunciation is regarded as the combination of the airstream and the movements of the lips and tongue in such a way that they form audible sounds that are put together in order to convey meaning. The study of pronunciation has been divided in two large groups; on the one hand, the particular sounds of the language referred to as segmentals include vowels and consonants; on the other hand, elements such as intonation, phrasing, stress, timing, rhythm are categorized as suprasegmentals. For the particular purpose of this research, the production of vowel sounds was the focus of study.



**Instrumental definition:** In order to study the students' intelligible pronunciation of standard American English vowel sounds, participants were administered a pretest, a treatment, and a posttest as part of the investigation. Also participants and EFL teachers were given a questionnaire. In this questionnaire, they were instructed to express their opinions about the relevance of pronunciation in the English learning process and their perception about the methodologies implemented.

**Operational definition:** This variable was measured by researchers by means of labeling the students' intelligible level of pronunciation of standard American English vowel sounds. Such level was first determined after administering the pretest. Once the treatment was concluded and the posttest administered, their level was measured again in order to establish a comparison point. The students' level indicators were *beginning, intermediate, and advanced*. In order to measure this variable, the researchers took in consideration the national evaluation guidelines established by MEP (2009) and the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* established by the Council of Europe (2003). The beginning level was determined if the grade obtained was between 0 and 59. The intermediate level was determined if the grade obtained was between 60 and 79. The advanced level was determined if the grade obtained was between 80 and 100.

### **Independent Variable**

Next, the conceptual, instrumental, and operational definitions of the independent variables are outlined so that a clear description of each element is provided.

**Conceptual definition:** The Multi-Stage Frame Technique is defined as a five-stage treatment in which the learners were fully involved in both theoretical and practical pronunciation activities.

**Instrumental definition:** This variable is defined by using a pretest which was administered at the beginning of the process, and a posttest which was administered once the treatment was concluded. Both the pretest and the posttest were administered to the students who participated in the process only.

**Operational definition:** The effectiveness of the treatment was determined by examining the data collected after administering the posttest. The measurement indicators were **effective**, **somehow effective** and **ineffective**. In order to measure this variable, the researchers took in consideration the national evaluation guidelines established by MEP (2009). The treatment would be considered effective if the percentage of participants who showed improvement in comparison to the pretest ranked from 100% to 70%. The treatment would be considered somehow effective if the percentage of participants who showed improvement in comparison to the pretest ranked from 69% to 40%. Finally, the treatment would be considered ineffective if the percentage of participants who showed improvement in comparison to the pretest ranked from 39% to 0%.

### **Description of Instruments**

As a way to obtain measurable data, questionnaires, and interviews were administered to different participants. Teachers, students, and MEP's stakeholders' perspectives regarding the formal instruction of pronunciation were analyzed as a way to support the relevance of the treatment. In addition, a pretest and a posttest were

administered to the participants in order to obtain the necessary data to examine the effectiveness of the treatment. After collecting the data, the findings are described in measurable terms.

### **Student Questionnaire (see Appendix 2)**

This questionnaire's main goal was to obtain the students' perspectives regarding different aspects of the pronunciation of standard American English vowel sounds during the language classes. This document was composed of nine closed questions. Students were requested to answer individually, based on their viewpoints, about the skills and subskills studied in class, the teacher's methodology, and the general perspective about the importance of learning the target language. With this document, the researchers obtained firsthand information about the students' perception about English lessons and what they believe to be the most important aspects to fulfill their communicative needs. This instrument was administered to tenth-grade-students, and it was written in Spanish to avoid any misunderstanding during the administration and assure reliable answers from the informants. An important fact is that this document was administered before the implementation of the treatment.

### **Teacher Questionnaire (see Appendix 3)**

The questionnaire designed for EFL teachers was oriented toward collecting their insights about the different aspects related to the instruction of pronunciation of standard American English vowel sounds during the English for Communication lessons. The teachers were requested to answer nine closed questions about their methodology concerning different language elements especially pronunciation. The information provided helped to understand the common techniques used when teaching

pronunciation, how it is addressed in class, and to what extent instructors are compromised with this subskill. Additionally, two items included contingency questions to reveal the teachers' thoughts about the importance of teaching pronunciation and their judgments about the MEP's program. This instrument was written in English since it was expected that teachers had no problems with the type of vocabulary and expressions used in it.

#### **Pretest (see Appendix 4)**

The pronunciation pretest was designed to measure the students' proficiency level regarding pronunciation of Standard American English vowel sounds prior to the administration of the treatment. This pretest was administered at the beginning of the 2014 school year to tenth-grade students. It consisted of a 48-point test divided into two different parts. The sounds included in this pretest were /a/, /aɪ/, /aʊ/, /ɛ/, /eɪ/, /i/, /ɪ/, /ɔ/, /oʊ/, /ɔɪ/, /ʊ/, /u/, /æ/, /ɪ/, /ə/, /ɚ/, /ɜ/. Since the treatment was designed by taking as a model the proposal made by Celce-Murcia et al. (1996), the same sounds included in their pronunciation teaching method were used in this section. The first part consisted of a list of sixteen words in isolation which contained the already mentioned sounds. The second part consisted of a set of sixteen short sentences and phrases. Each sentence contained two words that were analyzed based on their English vowel sounds. The data required in this part of the study were elicited by means of providing the participants with a written document which they were instructed to read carefully. The participants were allotted five minutes for them to get familiar with the content of each part of the task. When the five minutes were over, the students were requested to read each part out loud and record each part by using a microphone and a computer. In this part of the

procedure, the participants did not receive any external help. This data-elicitation method was used because of the need to control any possible interference and because of the lack of more advanced technological equipment.

### **Posttest (see Appendix 5)**

The posttest was designed to measure the students' final proficiency level regarding pronunciation of Standard American English vowel sounds after administering the treatment. This posttest was administered at the end of the 2014 school year to the group of tenth-grade students that participated in the project. The content and the administration method of the posttest were similar to the pretest. It consisted of a 48-point test divided into two different parts. The sounds included in this pretest were /a/, /aɪ/, /aʊ/, /ɛ/, /eɪ/, /i/, /ɪ/, /ɔ/, /oʊ/, /ɔɪ/, /ʊ/, /u/, /æ/, /ʌ/, /ə/, /ɚ/, /ɜ/. Since the treatment was designed by taking as a model the proposal made by Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin (1996), the same sounds included in their pronunciation teaching method were used in this section. The first part consisted of a list of sixteen words in isolation which contained the already mentioned sounds. The second part consisted of a set of sixteen short sentences and phrases. Each sentence contained two words that were analyzed based on their English vowel sounds. The data required in this part of the study was elicited by means of providing the participants with a written document which they were instructed to read carefully. The participants were allotted five minutes for them to get familiar with the content of each part of the task. When the five minutes were over, the students were requested to read each part out loud and record each part by using a microphone and a computer. In this part of the procedure, the participants did not receive any external help. This data-elicitation method was used because of the need to

control any possible interference and because of the lack of more advanced technological equipment. It is important to highlight that this instrument included the same words as the pretest; however, the words were placed in different order.

### Pretest and Posttest External Evaluation Process

With the aim of assuring the reliability and validity of the results obtained from the pre and posttests administered to the participants, three external raters were asked to check both tests. The external raters were chosen by taking into account three main aspects. First, these professors are currently working at Universidad Nacional which assures constant contact with the target language. Second, they have specific experience regarding phonetic aspects since they have taught pronunciation-related courses as part of the English Major. Finally, their lack of proximity with the participants of this study assures their objectivity when assigning grades. The chart below contains the most relevant information about the raters.

Table 4  
Raters' background information

	Current professional degree	Years of experience	Native/Nonnative speaker	Other languages spoken	EFL teaching experience in higher educational level	English learning Background
<b>Rater 1</b>	Master (UNA)	8	Nonnative speaker	None	8 years	Began EFL studies in 2005
<b>Rater 2</b>	Master (UNA)	8	Nonnative speaker	None	5 years	Began EFL studies in 2005
<b>Rater 3</b>	Master (UNA)	8	Nonnative speaker	None	3 years	Began EFL studies in 2007

Note: Information provided by external raters

Stimuli were presented to the raters blinded in blocks of two recordings by the same participant. Each participant was assigned a number to assure that they remained unidentified. One record contained the data collected during the pretest; the other one contained the information gathered during the posttest. The raters were instructed to grade both recordings based on the principle of correctness according to the American English standardized patterns of pronunciation. One of the researchers proctored the evaluation task. Once all the raters checked the tests, the researchers compiled and compared the information gathered into an average score that would help analyze the results obtained from both tests.

### **Data Analysis and Procedures**

This section contains the analysis of the most relevant findings obtained after the administration of the instruments during this research. A questionnaire was administered to EFL teachers to gather their insights about the importance of pronunciation within the EFL learning process in the Costa Rican context. Another questionnaire was administered to tenth grade students at Canaán High School to gather their insights about the importance of pronunciation within the EFL learning process in Costa Rican high schools.

### **Research Schedule**

In order to implement the different activities required in this quantitative research, the following research schedule was designed to outline the procedures and activities carried out during the study.

MULTISTAGE FRAME TECHNIQUE

	2014												
	January					February				March			
	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4	wee k 5	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4
Research proposal approval			X										
Theoretical Framework			X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Analyze the Syllabus of the course			X	X									
Draw the conclusion based on the analysis of the syllabus			X	X									
Design the treatment to be administered during 2014			X	X	X	X	X						
Administer questionnaire to students								X					
Administer questionnaire to teachers								X					
Administer interview to regional advisor								X					
Analyze data gathered from the questionnaire administered to students									X				
Analyze data gathered from the questionnaire administered to teachers									X				
Administer pretests to students									X				
Administer treatment to students										X	X	X	X



	April				May					June			
	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4	wee k 5	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4
Administer treatment to students	X	X	*	X	**	**	**	**	X	X	X	X	X

\* Holy week break  
 \*\* Teachers' strike

	July				August					September			
	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4	wee k 5	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4
Administer treatment to students	***	***	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

\*\*\* Midterm Break

	October				November					December			
	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4	wee k 5	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4
Administer treatment to students	X	X											
Administer the posttest to the students			X										
Score the pre and post tests administered to the students				X	X	X	X						

	2015												
	January				February				March				
	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4	wee k 5
Data analysis						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	*

	April				May				June				
	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4	wee k 5
Development of conclusions and recommendations	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

	July				August				September				
	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4	wee k 5
Development of conclusions and recommendations	***	***	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

\*\*\* Midterm Break

	October				November				December				
	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4	wee k 5
Development of conclusions and recommendations	X	X	X	X	X	X							
Supervisor's revision							X	X	X	X	X		

2016												
	January				February				March			
	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4
Corrections	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Reader's Analysis									X	X	X	X

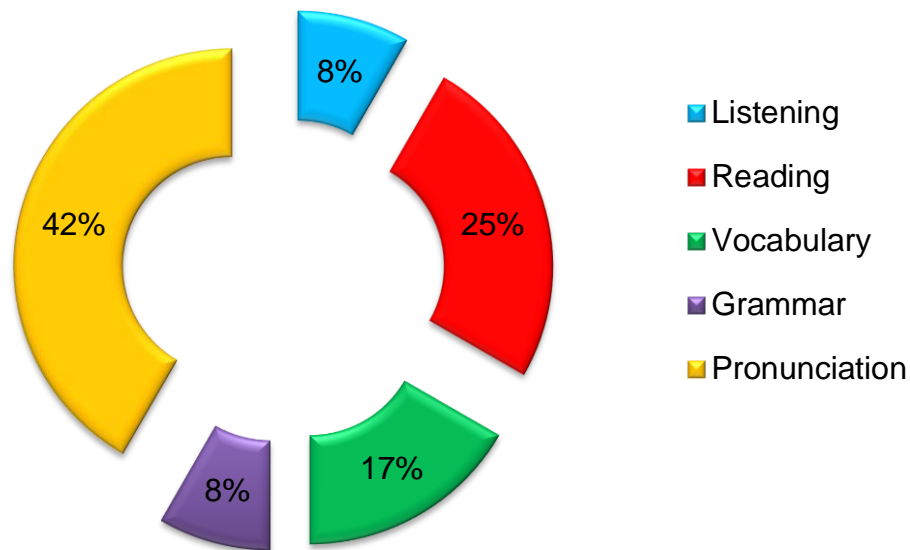
	April				May			
	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4	wee k 1	wee k 2	wee k 3	wee k 4
Correction	X	X	X	X				
Final Project Presentation					X	X	X	X

**Chapter Four**  
**Data Analysis and Interpretation**

This section analyses relevant data used to justify the treatment implemented. The analysis determines the participants' level of proficiency in the pronunciation of American Standard English vowel sounds. For this purpose, this section was divided into three main subsections. The first element presented is the data provided by EFL learners regarding skills and subskills, teacher's attitude toward doubts, activities, and learning preferences. The second section deals with EFL teachers' insights related to skills and subskills, teaching approaches, and activities. Finally, the third component discusses the outcomes of the pre and posttest and makes a comparison between both. As a way to assure the reliability of the findings, both tests were graded by external raters. However, the data presented in this section is still preliminary since more research is needed in order to prove the positive tendency evidenced through the analysis of the information gathered. In order to establish conclusive results, it is necessary to obtain data from a larger sample population, to include more raters (at least twelve), and to carry out a deeper statistical analysis.

### **Information Gathered from EFL Learners**

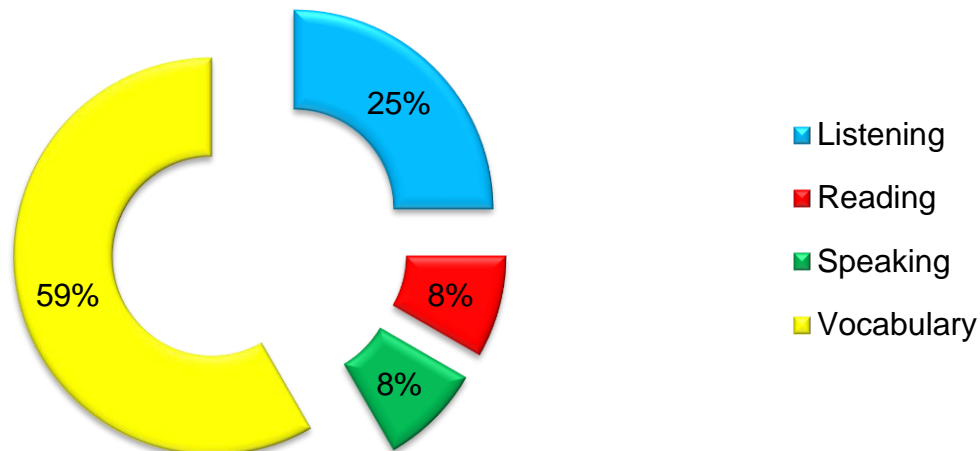
When inquired about the perception learners had regarding the importance of the linguistic skills and subskills in the EFL learning process, the participants highlighted pronunciation as the most important element (see Figure 7). They probably considered this subskill important because of the immediate need to be understood when presenting assignments orally. Interestingly, the participants did not consider production



*Figure 7.* The Most Important Skills and Subskills for Students. Data gathered from student's questionnaire. The informants responded to the question: ¿Cuál habilidad considera usted que es más importantes y que se debería enseñar en la clase de inglés?

skills (speaking or writing) to be relevant. The fact that these participants have been preparing for the national standardized test, which is based on reading comprehension only, may be the reason why they also gave much importance to reading and vocabulary.

Contrastingly, when inquired about their perception about the skills and subskills taught by their teachers, the participants considered that vocabulary is the most commonly taught subskill during the EFL classes (see Figure 8). This information somehow reinforces the

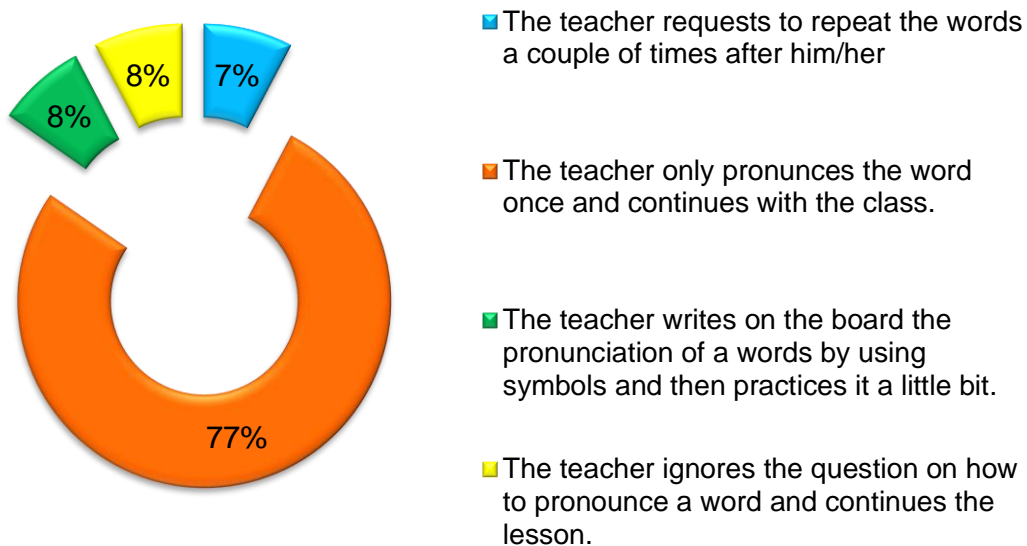


*Figure 8.* Students' Viewpoint on Skills and Sub-skills Taught. The informants responded to the question: ¿Cuál habilidad se enseña más durante las clases de inglés en el colegio?

perception they had in the previous question in which they considered pronunciation as an important element. It is interesting to notice that the participants did not consider that the production skills were reinforced by the teachers. In this regard, it is also noticeable that pronunciation was not perceived as an important subskill reinforced by instructors even though the learners considered it very relevant. These data must serve as an indicator of the importance of reinforcing skills and subskills that contribute to effective communication.

Even though the students did not consider that pronunciation was highly reinforced during the EFL lessons, they still had some perception about how the instructors corrected pronunciation errors. For the participants, the teachers just provided them with the correct forms by pronouncing the words that had been pronounced incorrectly;

however, after that there was not any follow up activity so that the students would actually pick up the correct patterns (See Figure 9). It is necessary to keep in mind that

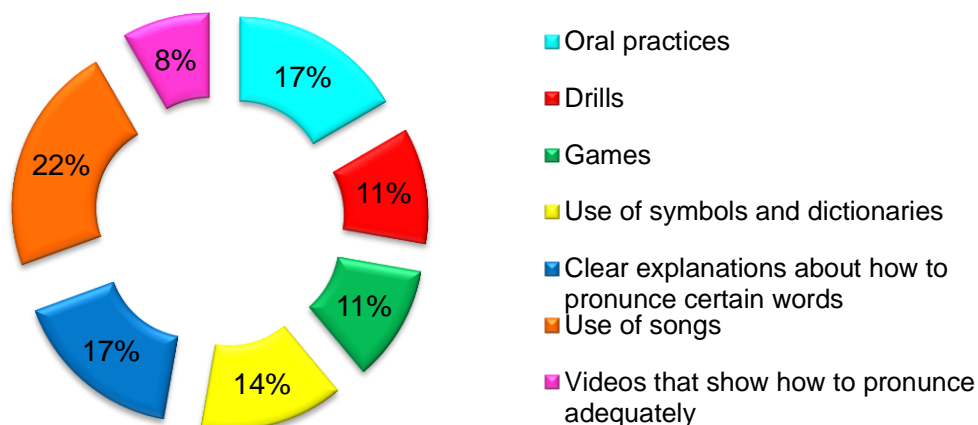


*Figure 9.* Teacher's Attitude Towards Pronunciation Doubts. Data gathered from student's questionnaire. The informants responded to the following question: Marque la opción que complete la frase adecuadamente según su experiencia en clase de inglés.

intelligible communication is achieved through the integration and reinforcement of all the elements included in the EFL acquisition process. Furthermore, teachers should take into consideration the different error correction techniques that can help learners improve their proficiency level.

In regard to their perception about the activities that should be used to teach pronunciation, the informants established their preferences towards the use of songs during classes (see Figure 10). Songs are authentic resources that help students

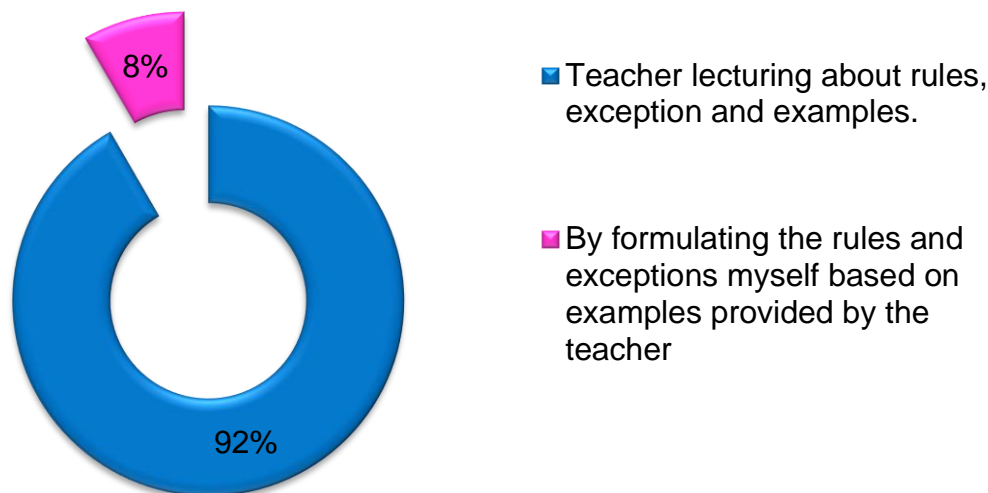




*Figure 10.* Students' Favorite Activities when Learning Pronunciation. Data gathered from student's questionnaire. The informants responded to the following question: ¿Qué actividades considera más adecuadas para aprender pronunciación?

acquire adequate pronunciation skills based on their interests and preferences. This perception finds justification in Abbott (2002) who argued that due to the repetition patterns that song lyrics follow, their use may help automate L2 learner's skills by exposing them to forms, syntax, lexical items, segmental, and suprasegmental elements. This finding helped to establish the route of work in this project through the inclusion of authentic material according to the learners' preferences. Besides the use of songs, formal explanations and oral practices were among the most significant activities that according to the informants help them learn pronunciation. This leads to infer that regarding pronunciation, formal instruction is perceived by learners as a way to be exposed to the correct patterns. Then, meaningful practice is considered necessary in order to apply the knowledge received. After asking participants their perception in regard to the activities they prefer in order to learn pronunciation, they were requested to provide information about the way they learn better. This was inquired in order to

establish a comparison between deductive and inductive instruction. According to the informants, the teachers should provide them with instruction on how to correctly pronounce the sounds in the target language (see Figure 11). This perception

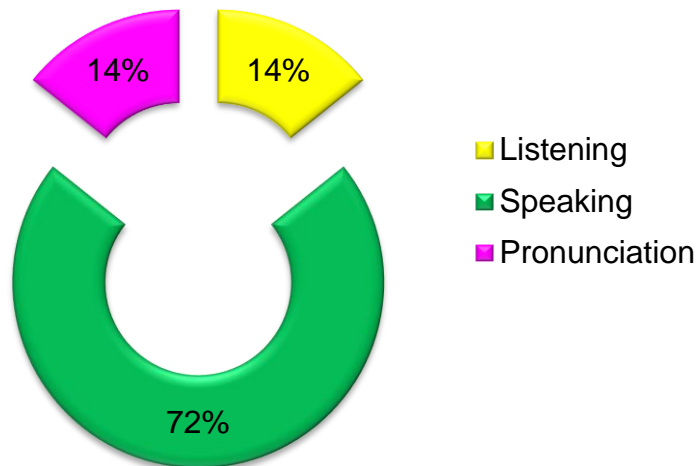


*Figure 11.* Student's Perspective on How They Learn Better. Data gathered from student's questionnaire. The informants responded to the following question: ¿Cómo aprende usted mejor?

helps reinforce the assumption that EFL learners' awareness of the rules and explanations can lead them to a successful development of the pronunciation skill.

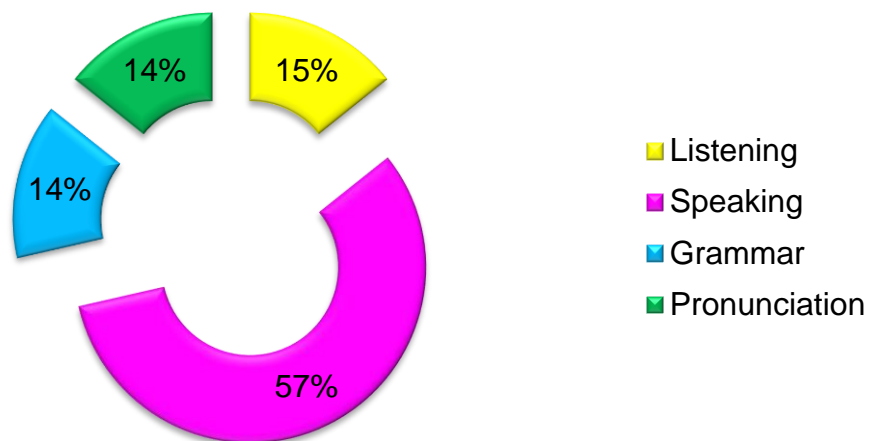
### **Information Gathered from EFL Teachers**

Teachers are in charge of leading the learning process. Even though they are provided with the guidelines that establish the contents to be included in the different learning settings, in the end, teachers decide which elements are mainly reinforced (see Figure 12). The MEP English syllabus suggests the Communicative Approach. When



*Figure 12.* Linguistic Skill or Subskill when Teaching. Data gathered from teacher's questionnaire. The informants responded to the following question: Which linguistic skill or sub-skill do you consider to be more important when teaching?

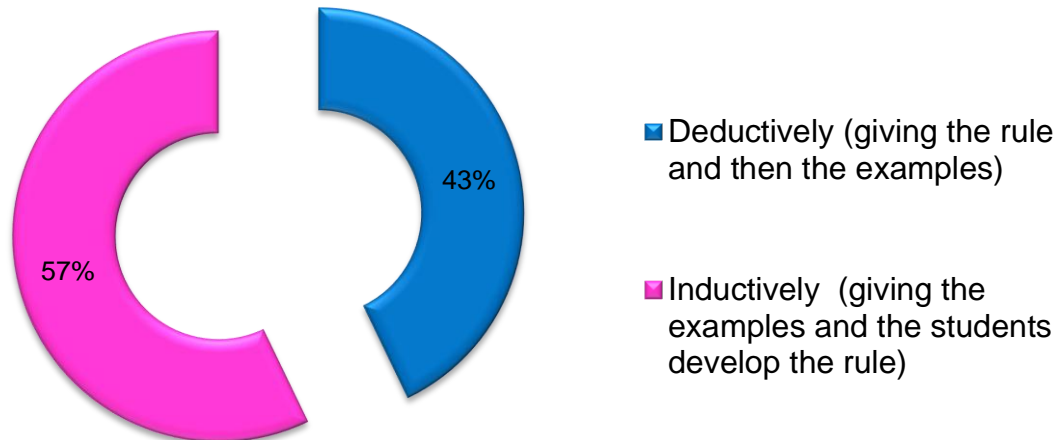
asked about the skills and subskills that they reinforce the most in their lessons, most EFL instructors agreed on highlighting speaking. After this, listening and pronunciation were spotted in second place. This perception, however, contrasts with the opinion that the participants expressed. When teaching a foreign language, teachers consider speaking as their main focus followed by pronunciation and listening (see Figure 13).



*Figure 13. Skills and Subskills Emphasized During Classes. Data gathered from teacher's questionnaire. The informants responded to the following question: Based on you experience, which skill do you emphasize during your classes?*

These elements can be considered crucial when attempting to achieve the communicative goals MEP has set. Interestingly, if the teachers' perspective is compared to the students' view point (see Figure 8), a discrepancy can be observed. The most worrisome issue is that the goal does not seem to be shared by both parties, and this makes the learning process difficult since efforts are misdirected on different aspects and lack cohesion during the learning process. It is essential to take into consideration that both teachers and students play a very active role in the EFL learning process. This is why, the teachers' efforts should be aimed at leading learners to develop their communicative competence.

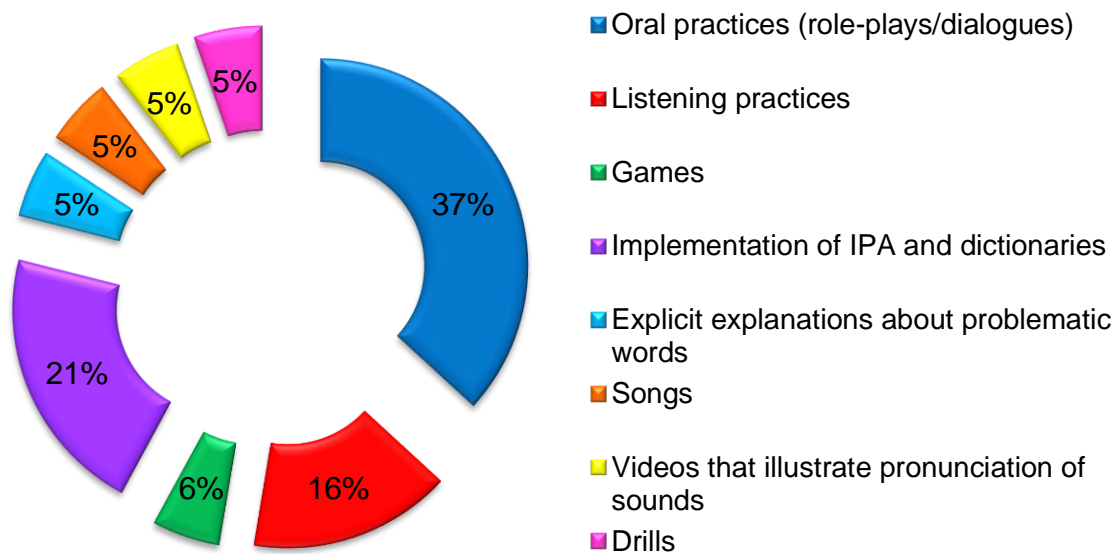
Trends on how to adequately address class explanations may vary greatly from one teacher to another. However, there is some consensus since a higher percentage of instructors rely on inductive teaching (see Figure 14). Once again, some inconsistency



*Figure 14.* Preferred Approach to Teach Pronunciation. Data gathered from teacher's questionnaire. The informants responded to the following question: What is the best way to teach pronunciation?

between the group of teachers and the group of students was revealed. When comparing students' preferences (see Figure 11) the percentage of students who prefer deductive instructions was higher than those who prefer inductive instruction. The fact that rules are more easily presented, and theoretical aspects can be absorbed more simply makes deductive learning more appealing for students. On the other hand, teachers tend to prefer inductive explanations due to its meaningfulness since they consider that students can remember better what has been discovered through their own efforts.

Regarding the perception that teachers have about the types of activities that should be used when teaching pronunciation in EFL classrooms, oral practices and the usage of IPA and dictionaries were highlighted as the two main resources. The use of listening activities, on the other hand, was spotted in the third place (see Figure 15).



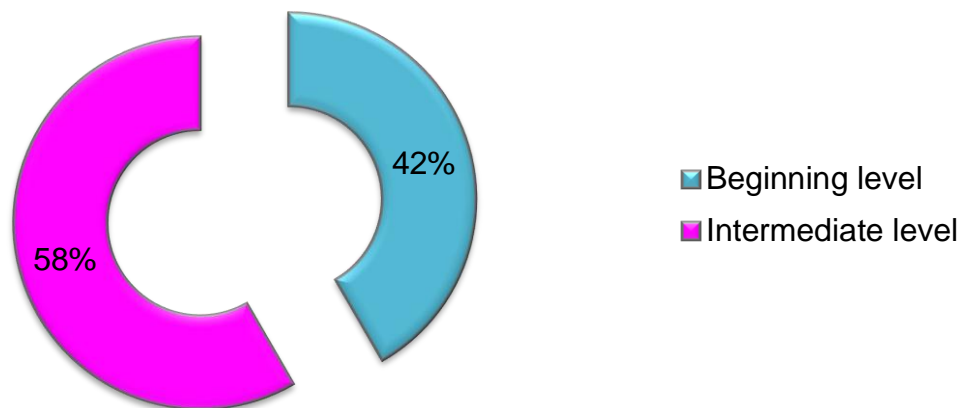
*Figure 15.* The Most Successful Activities Used to Teach Pronunciation. Data gathered from teacher's questionnaire. The informants responded to the following question: What three activities do you think would be more successful when attempting to increase students' pronunciation level? Organize the activities from 1 to 3, being 1 the most important and 3 the least important one.

These findings revealed that instructors do not believe that modeling is so relevant in the development of pronunciation skills. Interestingly, the students expressed that the use of songs would let them pick the correct patterns of pronunciation (see Figure 16) while in the graphic above the information shows that the instructors gave minimum importance to this resource.

### Results of the Pretest and Posttest

In this section, figures and tables explain the results obtained from the administration of two instruments. The first instrument was a Pretest which was administered before the implementation of the treatment. The other was a Posttest which was administered once the treatment was concluded. It is important to mention that both instruments were graded after the implementation of the treatment by three EFL teachers that served as external evaluators.

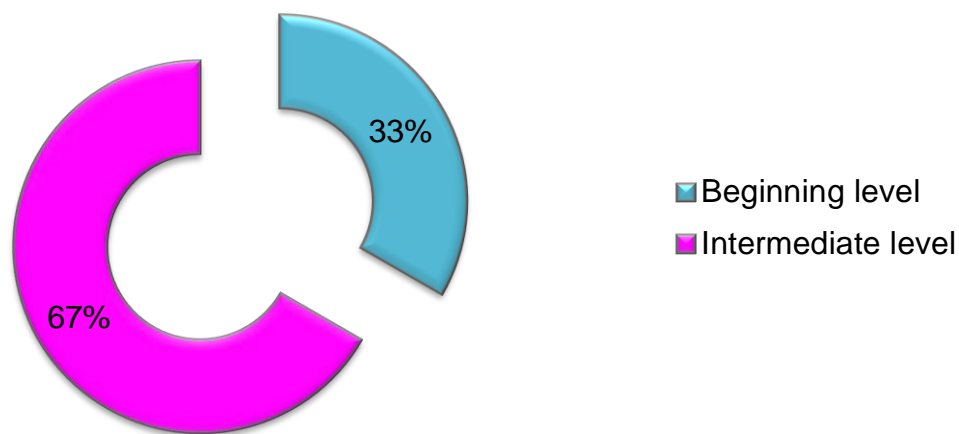
According to the data obtained out of the analysis of the pretest, students did have some notion on how to produce some common Standard American English vowel sounds provided in the instrument. However, the data also revealed that a large number



*Figure 16.* Pronunciation Level of the 12 Participants in the Pretest. Data gathered from the pretest grading made by the external evaluators.

of participants had a very basic level (see Figure 16) The fact that students were placed

in the lower rank is an important aspect for research purposes. Intelligibility must be a crucial point when communicating, and those students placed in the beginning level probably struggled when attempting to communicate in the target language. After the administration of the treatment, the data obtained by means of the posttest displayed an increase in the students' level of pronunciation of the Standard American English vowel sounds (see Figure 17). The shift from beginning to intermediate level, from



*Figure 17.* Pronunciation Level of the 12 Participants in the Posttest. Data gathered from the posttest grading made by the external evaluators.

intermediate to advanced level, and even from beginning to advanced level revealed positive outcomes. Also, it is important to highlight that no participants were ranked in the beginning level after the administration of the treatment. The students improved their ability to produce common Standard American English vowel sounds.

When analyzing individually the grades obtained by each participant, some important aspects can be addressed. Students' pretest grades were significantly low. The highest grades achieved ranged in an average of 70. If the passing grade for 10<sup>th</sup>,



11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> levels established by MEP in its evaluation and assessment guidelines is taken into account, 70 can be considered a very low grade. On the other hand, the posttest showed an increase in the grades obtained. Most students' grades reached an average of 80 and 90 (see Table 5). This demonstrates that the level of performance achieved after the administration of the treatment was significantly high. The data

Table 5

Individual comparison of the pre and posttests grades of each student

Participant	Pretest Grade	Posttest Grade
Student 1	73	85
Student 2	47	74
Student 3	46	68
Student 4	70	88
Student 5	54	81
Student 6	67	81
Student 7	75	90
Student 8	65	86
Student 9	78	93
Student 10	55	79
Student 11	55	79
Student 12	68	81

Note. Grades obtained from pre and posttest grading made by the external evaluators

obtained when comparing the grades obtained by the participants in the pre and the posttest showed that all of them performed better when attempting to pronounce Standard American English vowel sounds. The number of points improved by each

participant helps to demonstrate the level of improvement between the instruments administered before and after the implementation of the treatment (see Table 6).

*Table 6*

Number of points improved between the pre and posttests of each student

Participant	Number of points improved
Student 1	12
Student 2	27
Student 3	22
Student 4	18
Student 5	27
Student 6	14
Student 7	15
Student 8	21
Student 9	15
Student 10	24
Student 11	24
Student 12	13

Note. Data gathered from the pre and posttest grading made by the external evaluators.

As it can be observed, students whose performance was considered low improved a minimum of 12 points between the pretest to the posttest. Even though the number of points is low, improvement did take place. On the other hand, participants whose performance was higher increased up to 27 points in comparison to the evaluation. After analyzing all the grades obtained by the participants in the pre and the posttest, the average improvement was calculated in 19.3 points. The participants' progress in the pronunciation of Standard American English vowel sounds was relevant for the purpose

of the study; this demonstrates that students are capable of increasing their skills by means of appropriate instruction.

The initial level of students ranged between beginner and intermediate (see Figure 17). However, deeper analysis showed that students' individual performance evolved positively. Most participants that started the process in the beginning level shifted to intermediate level, and in some specific cases the variation was even bigger when participants moved from the beginner to the advanced level (see Table 6). Also,

Table 7  
Comparison of the Level Achieved in the Pre and Posttests by Each Student

Participant	Pretest Level	Posttest Level
Student 1	Intermediate	Advanced
Student 2	Beginning	Intermediate
Student 3	Beginning	Intermediate
Student 4	Intermediate	Advanced
Student 5	Beginning	Advanced
Student 6	Intermediate	Advanced
Student 7	Intermediate	Advanced
Student 8	Intermediate	Advanced
Student 9	Intermediate	Advanced
Student 10	Beginning	Intermediate
Student 11	Beginning	Intermediate
Student 12	Beginning	Advanced

Note. Data gathered from the pre and posttest grading made by the external evaluators

students who were originally placed in the intermediate level shifted to the advanced level. There were no students who decreased their pronunciation skills; all students showed a great advancement.

The analysis made in the pretest showed the deficiencies in the pronunciation of Standard American English vowels (see Figure 18). The most troublesome sounds were

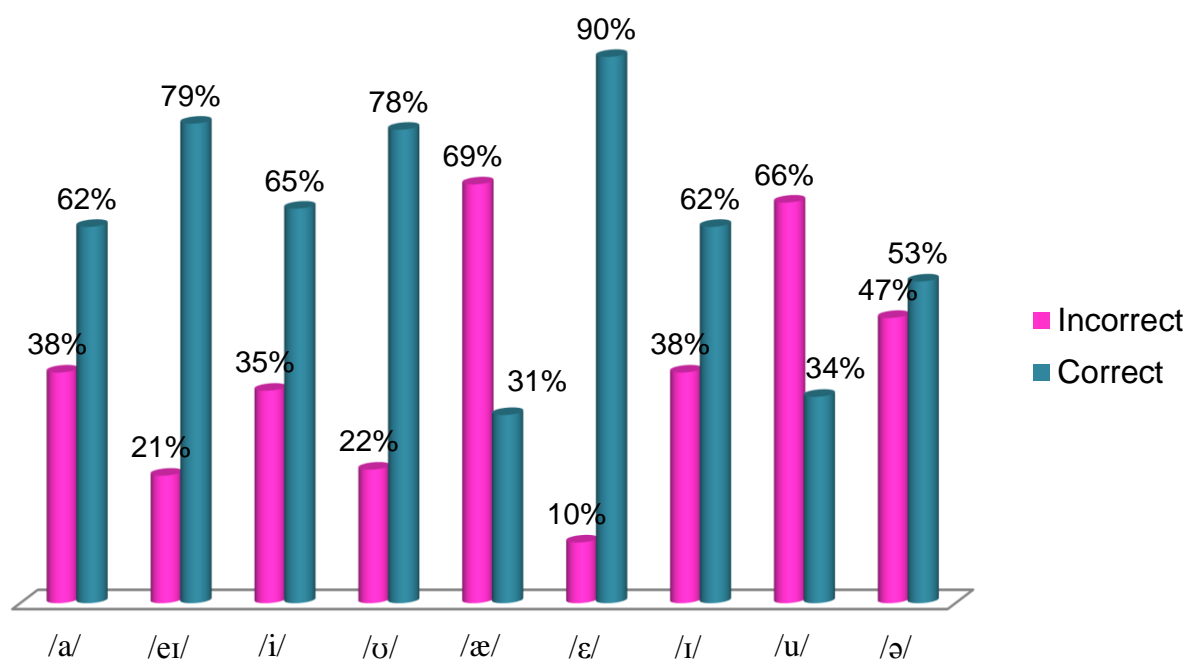


Figure 18 .Percentage of errors made by Sound in the pretest. Data gathered from the pretest grading made by the external evaluators.

/æ/, /u/ and /ə/. The sound /u/ was one of the most significantly problematic phonemes; it was often confused with the /ʊ/ sound. Taking Best's *Perceptual Assimilation Model* (1995) as a reference, since the students were not able to discriminate between the two phones, it may be argued that these two sounds fall into the single-category contrast. Also, the /æ/ sound showed to be troublesome for the participants. Referring to Best's

study sets the bases to consider that this sound tends to fall into the category-goodness difference because even though the L2 speakers identify that it is a sound that differs from others such as /a/ or /ɛ/, the participants were not able to discriminate them clearly. Another sound that showed some problematic outcomes was the /ə/. In the model proposed by Best, when learners are able to identify a sound, but they are still not able to establish a clear difference from other sounds, the former tends to fall into the category-goodness difference; based on the data gathered this may be the case of the /ə/ sound. The number of mistakes made by the participants in the posttest showed a great improvement in comparison with the quantity of errors made in the pretest (See Figure 18). Participants demonstrated improvement in the pronunciation of the sounds /æ/, /u/, and /ə/ which were regarded as the most difficult for them in the pretest. However, the graphic also reveals that even though the participants improved the pronunciation of the sound /æ/, it still remained troublesome (see Figure 19). As stated

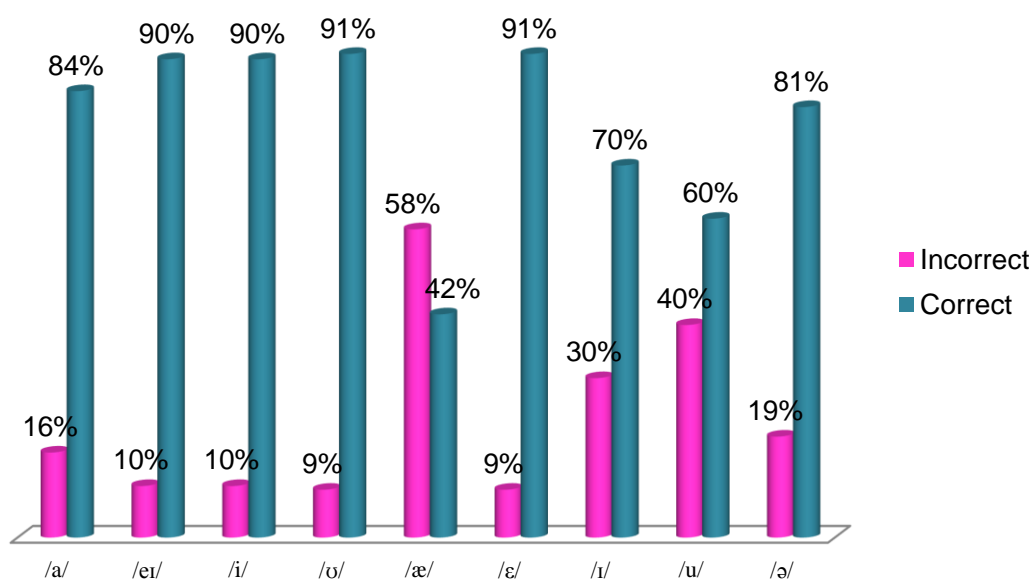
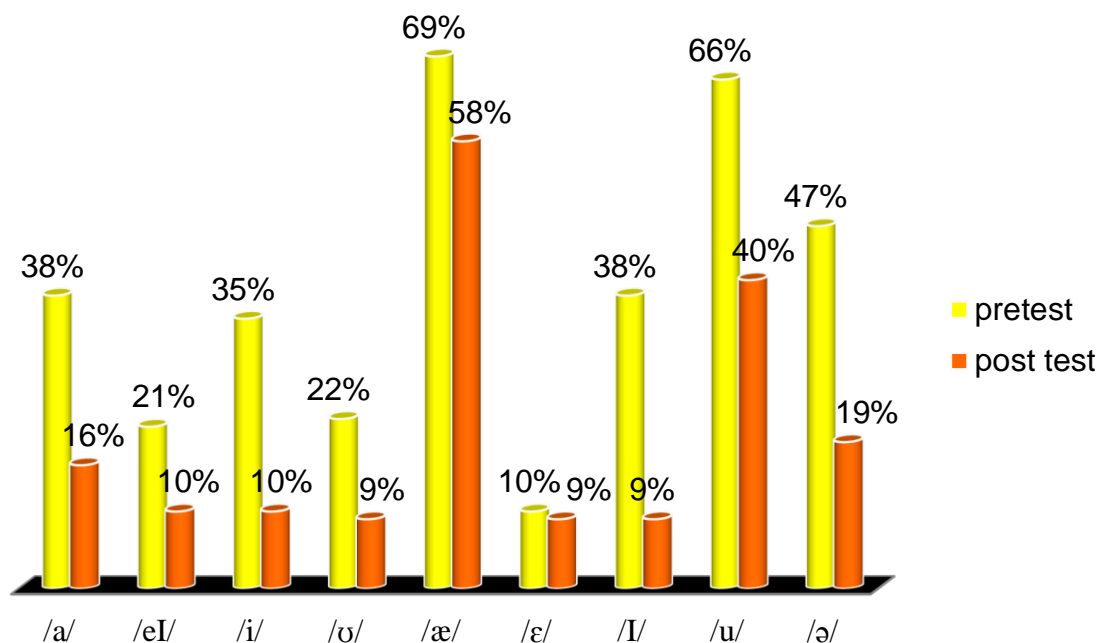


Figure 19. Percentage of errors made by Sound in the Posttest. Data gathered from the posttest grading made by the external evaluators

before, this might result from the learners' reactions to sounds according to the category-goodness difference proposed in Best's model.

In general terms, the comparison of the participants' errors in the pretest and the posttest revealed an important improvement in the level of performance (see Figure 20).

In average, the participants shifted from 38.45% of errors in the pretest to 20% of



*Figure 20.* Comparison of the Mistakes Made by Sound in the Pretest and Posttest. Data gathered from the pretest and posttest grading made by the external evaluators.

errors in the posttest. This information revealed that the errors decreased an average of 18.45% after the administration of the treatment. This information also demonstrated that the sounds /æ/ and /ɛ/ were the ones in which learners demonstrated little improvement. According to the instruments used to assess learners' performance, the limited enhancement may be attributed to the spelling patterns which Spanish speaking

learners are still not used to. This means that extra effort is needed in order to help EFL learners improve the pronunciation of these sounds.

After analyzing the data obtained through the administration of the different instruments, there are many aspects to highlight. First, although teachers and students have some perceptions in common, they still need to find some consensus on how to establish goals. They should agree on the skills to aim. Students mentioned what they would like, but teachers have different thoughts about what skills to emphasize. Also, the activities that can generate meaningful learning are very different. While students prefer songs, deductive approach, and oral practices, teachers favor IPA and dictionary use, inductive approach, and listening practices. Both teachers and students have opposite perspectives; therefore, a balance needs to be found in a way in which both participants reach satisfaction and success. Also, the fact that learners responded positively to the inclusion of pronunciation activities within the regular lessons is worth mentioning. The improvement that was shown by means of the different instruments suggests that regular exposure activities cause great benefits. Finally, the awareness generated regarding the assimilation of sounds helps to gain insights on how sounds like /æ/ need more attention by the teacher when addressing them.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**



## Conclusions

According to MEP syllabi standards, leading EFL learners to achieve clear communication in English is the main goal. Although big efforts are made to achieve this aim, developing the ability to orally communicate in the target language continues to be an issue that requires the implementation of effective strategies. As it has been vastly emphasized, developing comprehensible and intelligible pronunciation in the target language is crucial in order to become competent language users. The data collected along this research helped obtain meaningful insights related to the pronunciation of American English Vowel sounds.

By means of a meticulous analysis of the Technical Education syllabus designed for the instruction of English for Communication for tenth graders, a lack of clear guidelines regarding the inclusion of pronunciation elements was found. Unfortunately, this program only includes superficial elements. Aspects such as the development and distinction of sounds, stress and intonation patterns are only briefly mentioned in the 114-page document. The few lines devoted to pronunciation only establish that these elements must be included during the lesson. In addition to the lack of clarity to refer to segmental and suprasegmental pronunciation elements, there is no explanation of possible methodological approaches or instructional sequence. Therefore, teachers are not provided with clear goals and contents to work with. Also, the lack of coherence and cohesion in the integration of linguistic contents cause teachers to overlook the role of pronunciation during EFL classes. The absence of a structured instructional pattern makes teachers rely only on their intuition and their teaching training. Unluckily, not all

language instructors are willing to include phonetics in their classes, which leads to discrepancies in the level shown by EFL apprentices from one institution to another.

The importance of oral skills and pronunciation tend to be limited by most teachers and students as a consequence of the emphasis given to the skills needed to face the National Standardized Tests. This is the reason why most students suggested that teachers focus on reading skills and vocabulary during classes. The fact that every year each institution is measured according to the results obtained in those National Tests forces teachers to center their efforts on making sure their students will obtain the best possible grades. The lack of unified goals between MEP entities, their evaluation guidelines, and programs cause the orientation to only prepare the students for a test and not for real interaction in the target language outside the classroom.

Although the direct instruction of pronunciation of the Standard American English Vowel Sounds is rarely implemented in high school settings, positive attitudes in regard to this subskill were perceived among the participants of the project. Students showed to be receptive towards the concepts and instruction of the different vowel sounds. Questioning theoretical aspects that included spelling patterns, articulation of sounds, and possible application of sounds served as evidence of their acceptance of the subskill instruction. The students' performance during the administration of the pre and posttest also showed their ability to accept a mixture of orientations which generated enough input so they easily absorbed theoretical concepts.

The lack of pronunciation instruction causes low level of performance when attempting to communicate in the target language. When examining the results of the

pretest, it was clear that most students did have a notion of how to articulate sounds, but they failed to pronounce them adequately. After the administration of the treatment, all participants increased their scores from 12 to 27 points from one test to the other. This means that although the Costa Rican system overlooks the instruction of pronunciation, its inclusion in the regular classroom setting provides the students with adequate tools to become intelligible when interacting in the target language. The implementation of the Multistage Frame Technique improved the students' level of performance in pronunciation. After the implementation of the booklet "Keep Calm and Learn Pronunciation" which is divided into five different stages, the students performed significantly better. Participants began the school year with beginning and intermediate levels in pronunciation. Later, they were capable of improving their level up to intermediate and advanced levels. In addition, it is remarkable to mention that some participants showed great improvement by shifting from beginning to advanced level. The evolution that the students had in their pronunciation skills after the implementation of the technique confirms the efficiency of the methodology proposed by the researchers.

Even though there was improvement, the students still show difficulty with some specific Standard American English vowels after the administration of the treatment. The fact that the sounds /æ/ and /u/ prevailed as the most problematic phonemes is an important point to consider when addressing pronunciation during classes. The difficulty that these sounds cause is significant since the data gathered showed that the number of mistakes related to /æ/ only decreased 11 percent from the initial to the final diagnosis. In addition to this, the sound /u/ only improved 26 percent. The most suitable

cause for this phenomenon is the fact that Spanish lacks these two sounds therefore students rely on the most similar sounds that they have in their phonetic repertoire.

### **Recommendations**

After conducting the data analysis and establishing a series of conclusions, several recommendations were drawn. The first suggestion is a restructure of the Technical Education syllabus for English for Communication since it lacks coherent and cohesive guidelines. The gaps found in the program regarding clear guidelines should be filled with the necessary elements that really guarantee an effective learning process. By providing the teachers with specific tools on how to address pronunciation aspects, a national uniformity can be developed. The need to have clear programs which include all the linguistic aspects is critical. The teachers cannot be expected to only follow their best instincts to achieve the goal MEP has set. The entities in charge of developing programs must provide the teachers with all the elements needed to fulfill the program's objectives.

The teachers' attitudes towards teaching pronunciation should be reinforced by means of training sessions in order to help them implement teaching techniques that intertwine all skills when developing an EFL lesson. The lack of inclusion of specific elements lead teachers to overlook or even ignore the role pronunciation has in the final linguistic results. The MEP does not implement any teaching training on how to approach pronunciation in the EFL classrooms. Hence, teachers who have been working for this organization for many years become outdated and unaware of the new

trends or techniques to implement in the lessons. This is why, there is a strong need to help teachers achieve the assigned aims.

The methodology and goals have to be redirected so that the stakeholders aim their efforts to achieving linguistic competence instead of focusing on the National Standardized Test results. MEP's entities should reestablish the orientation of the efforts made by all the stakeholders. It is very difficult to promote communicative goals within a test oriented system since students, teachers, principals, and MEP's regional executives are all centered on the National Standardized Test results. Unfortunately, this test only promotes reading comprehension; therefore, it is simple to understand where all the efforts are directed to. The need to establish tests that really measure students' final linguistic competence in all skills and subs kills is a possible solution to make sure the efforts are placed on the right path.

High school students' aptitude and attitude towards pronunciation instruction must not be overlooked by the teachers due to false misconceptions on the possibilities to assimilate these concepts. Although, some teachers express that pronunciation has an important role during their classes, instruction is based on oral practices in which students must use the words previously given in a specific context. Most pronunciation instruction is based on imitation, which means that students lack more detailed understanding of pronunciation features. The teachers tend to avoid deep explanation of such elements believing that students might not understand the concepts necessary to achieve comprehensible pronunciation. However, the need to provide students with new concepts that help them face future challenges is a must. The students' receptiveness

might surprise teachers who have never attempted to include direct pronunciation instruction in the EFL lessons.

It is also necessary to include the instruction of pronunciation during EFL lessons as a way to improve students' communicative skills. The importance of contributing to the students' intelligibility and comprehensibility must be reflected during class mediation and they need to be given the necessary tools to help them cope with any linguistic challenge. The fact that some language learners lack security when speaking due to weaknesses in their pronunciation skills has to be solved and change the traditional approaches on how to teach pronunciation would bring great benefits in the EFL classrooms. Thus, the restructuring of teaching practices to include pronunciation instruction during each lesson will definitively help to link skills and help students become more confident language users.

The Multistage Frame Technique proved to be a satisfactory tool to help teachers organize the instruction of Standard American English Vowel Sounds during EFL lessons. Based on the data obtained through the different instruments, the implementation of methodological practices does contribute to the improvement of the students' communicative skills. The technique proved to be adequately designed to fulfill students' needs and likes and, at the same time, it proved to be a useful tool to help the teachers to manage pronunciation instruction in a structured and organized manner. Also, by mixing the deductive and inductive approaches along with authentic and nonauthentic materials, the students are exposed to a series of activities that prove to

be challenging and stimulating as they get prepared for genuine communicative challenges.

Phonemes such as /æ/ and /u/ along with other sounds that are not present in the Spanish phonetic system have to be given more emphasis during the class. The fact that Costa Rican students are learning English as a foreign language limits the amount of input received. Hence, the absence of contact with elements that are not present in the mother tongue causes a slower assimilation. This phenomenon requires the teacher to constantly assess students' development in order to modify and restructure the language learning process so they adequately absorb the new elements present in the target language. Phonemes such as /æ/ and /u/ have proven to be among the most troublesome sounds for students to adequately produce; therefore, these elements must be given more attention during the lessons to assure the learners' assimilation and improvement in proficiency.

**Chapter Six**  
**References and Appendices**



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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1: Interview for the Regional English advisor**

#### **Interview for the Regional English advisor**

The aim of the interview was to gather insights about different aspects related to the instruction of pronunciation of Standard American English vowel sounds according to MEP's interests and perspectives. The interview consisted of nine open-ended questions that inquired about MEP's orientation toward the inclusion of pronunciation in EFL lessons. Also, the interview intended to help understand the system guidelines about this subskill as well as weaknesses and strengths within MEP in regard to teacher training and attitudes perceived from them. This document was written in English due to the characteristic of the person being interviewed and his knowledge of the language. The importance of the interview relied on the exposure of insights that were obtained from one of the stakeholders regarding English teaching in the area and the direct link between him and MEP's higher authorities and their procedures.



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**RESEARCH: Implementation of the Multistage Frame Technique as a way to enhance the students' standard American English vowel sounds pronunciation in group 10-1A at Canaan High School.**

**RESEARCHERS:** Johanna Quirós Cordero / Elian Acuña Aguilar

Date of administration: \_\_\_\_\_



### **Instrument #1: Interview for the Regional English Advisor.**

The following interview is part of a study being conducted by two students of Universidad Nacional in the Applied Linguistics area.

**Objective:** The aim of this interview is to gather insights about different aspects related to the instruction of pronunciation of English vowel sounds according to MEP's interests and perspectives.

**Directions:** The following interview will be recorded and the information provided will be used for academic purposes only. Thank you for your cooperation

#### **Part I: Personal information**

Years of teaching experience: \_\_\_\_\_

Years in the Regional Advisor position: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What are MEP's expectations in regard to students' English performance once they accomplish Diversified Education?
2. What are the most important skills to develop by students during Diversified Education?
3. What kind of training does MEP provide teachers with in order for them to enhance students' English proficiency level?
4. Are any of those trainings oriented towards pronunciation instruction? Why?
5. What is MEP's position regarding pronunciation instruction?
6. What are the most adequate ways in which pronunciation should be taught to tenth graders taking English for communication?
7. Should pronunciation be taught deductively or inductively?
8. What activities could be used when teaching pronunciation?
9. In 2012 Abbas P. Gilakjani stated "Pronunciation tends to be neglected in the second language (L2) classroom, and L2 teachers are frightened by the idea of teaching pronunciation" (2012, p. 4). Does this reflect Costa Rica's reality? and more specifically the regional reality? What are some possible reasons for this phenomenon?

## Appendix 2: Student's Questionnaire



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**RESEARCHERS:** Johanna Quirós Cordero / Elian Acuña Aguilar

Date of administration: \_\_\_\_\_

**Instrumento #2: Cuestionario para estudiantes de décimo nivel**

El siguiente cuestionario es parte de una investigación realizada por estudiantes de la Licenciatura en Lingüística Aplicada en Universidad Nacional, Sede Región Brunca.

**Objetivo:** Conocer la perspectiva de los estudiantes sobre distintos aspectos relacionados con la pronunciación del inglés durante las clases del idioma.

**Instrucciones:** Responda las siguientes preguntas de acuerdo con lo solicitado. Los datos brindados serán utilizados únicamente con fines académicos y tendrán total privacidad.

**Información personal**

Nombre: \_\_\_\_\_

Edad: \_\_\_\_\_

Género: Femenino: \_\_\_\_\_ Masculino \_\_\_\_\_

**1. ¿Ha llevado o ha estado en algún tipo de curso de inglés durante su tiempo libre?**

\_\_\_ No

\_\_\_ Sí \*

\*Si contesto sí, ¿por cuánto tiempo estuvo asistiendo al curso(s) o ha asistido al curso?

\_\_\_\_\_

**2. ¿Cuál habilidad considera usted que es más importantes y que se debería enseñar en la clase de inglés? (únicamente elija una opción)**

\_\_\_ Comprensión auditiva

\_\_\_ Lectura

\_\_\_ Expresión oral

\_\_\_ Escritura

\_\_\_ Vocabulario

\_\_\_ Gramática

\_\_\_ Pronunciación

**3. ¿Cuál habilidad se enseña más durante las clases de inglés en el colegio? (únicamente elija una opción)**

- Comprensión auditiva
- Lectura
- Expresión oral
- Escritura
- Vocabulario
- Gramática
- Pronunciación

**4. ¿Qué tan importante considera usted que es pronunciar adecuadamente cuando se habla inglés?**

- muy importante                       no muy importante                       no es importante

**5. ¿Su profesor(a) de inglés explica la pronunciación adecuada de distintas palabras durante la clase?**

- siempre                                       nunca  
 a veces

**6. Marque la opción que complete la frase adecuadamente según su experiencia en clase de inglés. (únicamente elija una opción)**

*Cuando usted tiene una duda sobre cómo se pronuncia una palabra, su profesor(a) de inglés:*

- le solicita que repita la palabra un par de veces después de él/ella.
- únicamente lo pronuncia una vez más y continúa con la lección.
- escribe en la pizarra como se debe pronunciar usando símbolos y se practica un poco.
- ignora su pregunta sobre cómo se pronuncia la palabra y continúa con la lección.

**7. Cuando usted tiene dudas con respecto a la pronunciación de alguna palabra, ¿Cómo le gustaría que se le aclarará esa duda? (únicamente elija una opción)**

- Repetición de la palabra varias veces.
- Usando símbolos que le facilite entender desde una perspectiva más visual.
- Explicándole la pronunciación y luego poniendo en práctica la palabra en una actividad.
- Por medio de ejercicios auditivos que le permitan mejorar su capacidad de reconocer y repetir la palabra.

**8. ¿Qué actividades considera más adecuadas para aprender pronunciación? Organice sus respuestas de 1 a 3. Siendo número 1 la actividad que usted considera más importante y número 3 la que considera menos importante**

- \_\_\_ prácticas orales (conversaciones/diálogos).
- \_\_\_ prácticas auditivas.
- \_\_\_ juegos.
- \_\_\_ uso de símbolos y diccionarios.
- \_\_\_ explicaciones claras sobre como pronunciar ciertas palabras.
- \_\_\_ uso de canciones.
- \_\_\_ videos que demuestren como pronunciar adecuadamente.
- \_\_\_ repeticiones.

**9. ¿Cómo aprende usted mejor?**

- \_\_\_ con una explicación por parte del profesor sobre las reglas y excepciones con base en ejemplos
- \_\_\_ tratando de formular la regla por usted mismo y excepciones con base en ejemplos con ayuda del docente

**Appendix 3: Teacher's questionnaire**

**UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL  
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**RESEARCH: Implementation of the Multistage Frame Technique as a way to enhance the students' standard American English vowel sounds pronunciation in group 10-1A at Canaan High School. RESEARCHERS: Johanna Quirós Cordero / Elian Acuña Aguilar**  
Date of administration: \_\_\_\_\_

**Instrument #3: Interview for MEP EFL Teachers**

The following questionnaire is part of a study being conducted by two students of Universidad Nacional in the Applied Linguistics area.

**Objective:** To collect teachers' insights about the different aspects related to the instruction of pronunciation of vowel sounds during the English for communication classes.

**Directions:** Respond the following questions as elicited. Any information you provide will be used for academic purposes only. Thank you for your cooperation.

**Part I: Personal information**

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender:  Female  Male

Degree: \_\_\_\_\_

Years of teaching experience: \_\_\_\_\_

**1. Which linguistic skill or subskill do you consider to be more important when teaching? (mark only one option)**

Listening       Reading       Grammar       Pronunciation  
 Speaking       Writing       Vocabulary

**2. Based on you experience, which skill do you emphasize during your classes (mark only one option).**

Listening       Reading       Grammar       Pronunciation  
 Speaking       Writing       Vocabulary

**3. Mark the statement that you consider to be the most accurate according to the instruction of pronunciation during your class (mark only one option).**

- I teach pronunciation during every single class.  
 I only explain pronunciation whenever the students have doubts.  
 I only focus on words that I am sure will cause difficulties.  
 I rarely focus on pronunciation, I believe students will "pick up" the correct pronunciation as they progress.

**4. What is the best way to teach pronunciation?** Deductively (giving the rule and then the examples) Inductively (giving the examples and the students develop the rule)**5. Do you think that teaching pronunciation is difficult?** Yes No

Justify your answer:

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**6. Why do think that teaching pronunciation can be challenging?** Teachers are not well trained by MEP on how to deal with this skill. Teachers are insecure about their own pronunciation. Teachers lack knowledge about basic aspects of the pronunciation of English sounds. Teachers consider that they do not have enough tools to teach pronunciation (books, materials, dictionaries, software, videos, and so on.)**7. Does the Technical Education Syllabus for English for Communication include objectives aiming at increasing students' pronunciation level?** Yes No I don't know**8. Do you believe that the Technical Education Syllabus for English for Communication should include more objectives aimed at increasing students' pronunciation level?** Yes No

Justify your answer:

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**9. What three activities do you think would be more successful when attempting to increase students' pronunciation level? Organize the activities from 1 to 3, being 1 the most important and 3 the least important one.** Oral practices (role-plays/dialogues) Listening practices Games Implementation of IPA and dictionaries Explicit explanations about problematic words Songs Videos that illustrate pronunciation of sounds Drills

**Appendix 4: Pronunciation Pretest**

**UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL  
SEDE REGIONAL BRUNCA**

**RESEARCH:** Implementation of the Multistage Frame Technique as a way to enhance the students' standard American English vowel sounds pronunciation in group 10-1A at Canaan High School.

**RESEARCHERS:** Johanna Quirós Cordero / Elian Acuña Aguilar

Date of administration: \_\_\_\_\_

**Pronunciation pretest for tenth graders**

The following test is part of a study being conducted by two students of Universidad Nacional in the Applied Linguistics area.

**Objective:** To measure students' initial proficiency level regarding pronunciation of vowel sounds of the English language.

**Personal Information**

ID Number: \_\_\_\_\_ 48 points

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Points earned: \_\_\_\_\_ Score: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: Female: \_\_\_\_\_ Male: \_\_\_\_\_

**PART A**

**Instructions:** Take 5 minutes to read the words below. Once you have checked all of them, please record them as you consider they should be pronounced. You may only record them once. Use an adequate voice tone and try not to rush when reading. Begin each word by mentioning the number to which it corresponds.

1. Bee	__ ( )
3. It	__ ( )
5. Game	__ ( )
7. Head	__ ( )
9. Happy	__ ( )
11. Hot	__ ( )
13. Too	__ ( )
15. Cook	__ ( )

2. But	__ ( )
4. Boat	__ ( )
6. Boss	__ ( )
8. First	__ ( )
10. After	__ ( )
12. Cow	__ ( )
14. My	__ ( )
16. Oil	__ ( )

**PART B**

**Instructions:** Take 5 minutes to read the phrases below. Once you have checked all of them, please record them as you consider they should be pronounced. You may only record them once. Use an adequate voice tone and try not to rush when reading. Begin each phrase by mentioning the number to which it corresponds.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. An <b>animal</b> in the <b>pool</b> .<br>__ ( )    __ ( ) | 2. The <b>noise</b> in the <b>island</b> .<br>__ ( )    __ ( )   |
| 3. An <b>odd reason</b> .<br>__ ( )    __ ( )                | 4. They <b>don't listen</b> .<br>__ ( )    __ ( )                |
| 5. Go <b>away</b> a <b>minute</b> .<br>__ ( )    __ ( )      | 6. We <b>eat</b> an <b>apple</b> .<br>__ ( )    __ ( )           |
| 7. It's the <b>same idea</b> .<br>__ ( )    __ ( )           | 8. The <b>third hour</b> .<br>__ ( )    __ ( )                   |
| 9. The <b>song</b> was the <b>end</b> .<br>__ ( )    __ ( )  | 10. <b>Every group</b> help.<br>__ ( )    __ ( )                 |
| 11. My <b>uncles open</b> it.<br>__ ( )    __ ( )            | 12. The <b>foot</b> was in the <b>rain</b> .<br>__ ( )    __ ( ) |
| 13. <b>Cook</b> with <b>onion</b> .<br>__ ( )    __ ( )      | 14. The lost <b>dark coin</b> .<br>__ ( )    __ ( )              |
| 15. I <b>feel</b> as <b>mouse</b> .<br>__ ( )    __ ( )      | 16. <b>All</b> left <b>early</b> .<br>__ ( )    __ ( )           |



**Appendix 5: Pronunciation Posttest**

**UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL  
SEDE REGIONAL BRUNCA**

**RESEARCH: Implementation of the Multistage Frame Technique as a way to enhance the students' standard American English vowel sounds pronunciation in group 10-1A at Canaan High School.**

**RESEARCHERS: Johanna Quirós Cordero / Elian Acuña Aguilar**

**Pronunciation posttest for tenth graders**

The following test is part of a study being conducted by two students of Universidad Nacional in the Applied Linguistics area.

**Objective:** To measure students' final proficiency level regarding pronunciation of vowel sounds of the English language.

**Personal Information**

ID Number: \_\_\_\_\_ 48 points

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Points earned: \_\_\_\_\_ Score: \_\_\_\_\_

**PART A**

**Instructions:** Take 5 minutes to read the words below. Once you have checked all of them, please record them as you consider they should be pronounced. You may only record them once. Use an adequate voice tone and try not to rush when reading. Begin each word by mentioning the number to which it corresponds.

1. Eat	__ ( )
3. Minute	__ ( )
5. Same	__ ( )
7. Every	__ ( )
9. Apple	__ ( )
11. Odd	__ ( )
13. Foot	__ ( )
15. Group	__ ( )

2. Away	__ ( )
4. Open	__ ( )
6. Song	__ ( )
8. Early	__ ( )
10. Worker	__ ( )
12. Mouse	__ ( )
14. Idea	__ ( )
16. Noise	__ ( )

**PART B**

**Instructions:** Take 5 minutes to read the phrases below. Once you have checked all of them, please record them as you consider they should be pronounced. You may only record them once. Use an adequate voice tone and try not to rush when reading. Begin each phrase by mentioning the number to which it corresponds.

1. I am **happy too**.

\_\_ ( ) \_\_ ( )

3. I **feel hot**.

\_\_ ( ) \_\_ ( )

5. **Listen** to my **uncle**.

\_\_ ( ) \_\_ ( )

7. **My game** was good.

\_\_ ( ) \_\_ ( )

9. My **boss** is the **head** of the company.

\_\_ ( ) \_\_ ( )

11. **But**, I **don't** know.

\_\_ ( ) \_\_ ( )

13. It's **too dark**.

\_\_ ( ) \_\_ ( )

15. I saw a **bee** and a **cow**.

\_\_ ( ) \_\_ ( )

2. To use **oil** is a bad **idea**.

\_\_ ( ) \_\_ ( )

4. **It opens** at five.

\_\_ ( ) \_\_ ( )

6. The **reason** was an **animal**.

\_\_ ( ) \_\_ ( )

8. I saw a **mouse early** today.

\_\_ ( ) \_\_ ( )

10. This is the **end** of the **cook**.

\_\_ ( ) \_\_ ( )

12. There is an **onion** in the **pool**.

\_\_ ( ) \_\_ ( )

14. It **rains coins**.

\_\_ ( ) \_\_ ( )

16. It's the **third song**.

\_\_ ( ) \_\_ ( )

**Appendix 6: Entrance Letter**

San Isidro, Pérez Zeledón  
13 de Febrero de 2014

Señora Directora  
Msc. Grace Brenes Campos  
Liceo Canaaán, Rivas, Perez Zeledon.

Estimada señora,

Por este medio solicitamos, muy respetuosamente, se nos brinde el permiso para implementar el proyecto de graduación titulado: "Implementation of the Multistage Frame Technique to Enhance Students' Standard American English Vowel Sounds Pronunciation in Group10-1A at Canaán High School". Este proyecto consta de varias etapas en las que se presta atención a aspectos relacionados con la pronunciación del inglés durante la instrucción del idioma en el contexto del Ministerio de Educación Pública. En la primera etapa se pretende conocer la perspectiva de los estudiantes de decimo nivel cursando el curso de Tecnología: inglés para la conversación sobre la enseñanza de aspectos relacionados a la pronunciación del inglés. También, se realizará una prueba diagnóstica de la forma en que estos jóvenes producen ciertos sonidos vocálicos del inglés. La segunda etapa será la implementación de tratamiento metodológico que permita generar un cambio positivo en la pronunciación de los estudiantes a la hora de expresarse en inglés. Finalmente, se realiza otra prueba que permitirá conocer los alcances logrados mediante la implementación del tratamiento. Este proyecto es requisito para optar por el título de Licenciatura en Lingüística Aplicada de la Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica y brindará resultados que podrían ser de gran ayuda para generar mayor conocimiento en cuanto a las necesidades y perspectivas de los estudiantes de su institución. Agradeciendo de antemano toda su colaboración y apoyo nos despedimos.

  
Elian Acuña Aguilar  
111880178

  
Johanna Quirós Cordero  
111940265



**Appendix 7: Letter to the University Council**

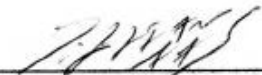
San Isidro, Pérez Zeledón  
7 de Enero de 2014

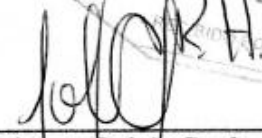
Señores  
Consejo Académico  
Universidad Nacional, Sede Regional Brunca

Estimados señores

Por este medio solicitamos la aprobación del anteproyecto de trabajo de graduación “Implementation of the Multistage Frame Technique to Enhance Students’ Standard American English Vowel Sounds Pronunciation in Group10-1A at Canaán High School”. Este trabajo se desarrollará según la modalidad proyecto de graduación. Igualmente, solicitamos su aval de la profesora M.A. Lena Barrantes Elizondo, como tutora de esta investigación. Ambos el anteproyecto y la profesora tutora ya fueron previamente aprobados por la Comisión de Trabajo Finales de Graduación de la Licenciatura En Lingüística Aplicada. Se adjunta el documento de aprobación entregado por dicha comisión.

Cordialmente,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Elian Acuña Aguilar  
111880178

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Johanna Quirós Cordero  
111940265



**Appendix 8: Letters to the External Evaluators**

**UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL  
SEDE REGIONAL BRUNCA**

**RESEARCH: Implementation of the Multistage Frame  
Technique as a way to enhance the students' standard  
American English vowel sounds pronunciation in group 10-1A at Canaan High  
School.**

**RESEARCHERS: Johanna Quirós Cordero / Elian Acuña Aguilar**



October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Professor Federico Soto Peralta

Dear Mr. Soto

We are writing to you in order to request your collaboration to listen and mark a Pre-test and a Post-test which were administered as a part of the graduation project *Implementation of the Multistage Frame Technique as a way to enhance the students' standard American English vowel sounds pronunciation in group 10-1A at Canaan High School*. This project is a requirement in order to obtain the Licentiate Degree in Applied Linguistics. The aim of using external raters is to assure the validity and the reliability of the results obtained. You have been chosen taking into consideration your vast experience in the field and your level of expertise.

We thoughtfully thank you for your cooperation.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'J. Quirós', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Johanna Quirós Cordero  
Researcher

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'E. Acuña', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Elian Acuña Aguilar  
Researcher

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'F. Soto', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Federico Soto Peralta  
External Rater

**UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL  
SEDE REGIONAL BRUNCA**

**RESEARCH: Implementation of the Multistage Frame  
Technique as a way to enhance the students' standard  
American English vowel sounds pronunciation in group 10-1A at Canaan High  
School.**

**RESEARCHERS: Johanna Quirós Cordero / Elian Acuña Aguilar**



October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Professor Viviana Fallas Gabuardi

Dear Ms. Fallas

We are writing to you in order to request your collaboration to listen and mark a Pre-test and a Post-test which were administered as a part of the graduation project *Implementation of the Multistage Frame Technique as a way to enhance the students' standard American English vowel sounds pronunciation in group 10-1A at Canaan High School*. This project is a requirement in order to obtain the Licentiate Degree in Applied Linguistics. The aim of using external raters is to assure the validity and the reliability of the results obtained. You have been chosen taking into consideration your vast experience in the field and your level of expertise.

We thoughtfully thank you for your cooperation.

  
Johanna Quirós Cordero  
Researcher

  
Elian Acuña Aguilar  
Researcher

  
Viviana Fallas Gabuardi  
External Rater

**UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL  
SEDE REGIONAL BRUNCA**

**RESEARCH: Implementation of the Multistage Frame  
Technique as a way to enhance the students' standard  
American English vowel sounds pronunciation in group 10-1A at Canaan High  
School.**



**RESEARCHERS: Johanna Quirós Cordero / Elian Acuña Aguilar**

October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Professor Karla Fonseca Sánchez

Dear Ms. Fonseca

We are writing to you in order to request your collaboration to listen and mark a Pre-test and a Post-test which were administered as a part of the graduation project *Implementation of the Multistage Frame Technique as a way to enhance the students' standard American English vowel sounds pronunciation in group 10-1A at Canaan High School*. This project is a requirement in order to obtain the Licentiate Degree in Applied Linguistics. The aim of using external raters is to assure the validity and the reliability of the results obtained. You have been chosen taking into consideration your vast experience in the field and your level of expertise.

We thoughtfully thank you for your cooperation.

  
Johanna Quirós Cordero  
Researcher

  
Elian Acuña Aguilar  
Researcher

  
Karla Fonseca Sánchez  
External Rater

**Appendix 9: Keep Calm and Learn Pronunciation Student's Workbook**

**Appendix 10: Keep Calm and Learn Pronunciation Answer Key and Teaching Tips Booklet**