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Can *Batxillerat* Students in Catalonia Overcome Their  
L1 Influence in Their Pronunciation in English?

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this study is to discover the presence of phonetics in English classes in Catalonia, due to the lack of data on the oral production of students in basic tests such as Basic Competencies or *Selectivitat*. At the same time, applying Corder's Error Analysis approach (1974), it is attempted to discover which are the most frequent errors in the phonetic production of English that *Batxillerat* students in Catalonia make, through the results of the 18 students of a secondary school in Cornellà de Llobregat (Barcelona), who were participants in this study, as well as proving whether applying designed materials, the errors could improve or not. Once the results of the first test had been analysed, different techniques and materials were designed and applied to improve the errors produced by the students, which presented a great influence of their L1 (Spanish). By carrying out a second and last test it was confirmed that the application of the materials and techniques applied for two weeks, could achieve an improvement in most of the errors worked on. Furthermore, the results of the surveys filled by both, students and English teachers, revealed that phonetics are not relevant in the English classroom in Catalonia.

**Key words:** Phonetics, L1 influence, Error Analysis, EFL.

## **Resum**

L'objectiu d'aquest estudi és descobrir quina presència té la fonètica a les classes d'anglès a Catalunya, a causa del buit de dades sobre la producció oral dels estudiants en proves bàsiques com són les Competències Bàsiques o la Selectivitat. Alhora, aplicant el mètode d'Anàlisi d'Errors de Corder (1974) s'intenta descobrir quins són els errors més comuns en la producció fonètica de l'anglès que els estudiants de Batxillerat a Catalunya cometem, a través dels resultats dels 18 estudiants d'un institut de Cornellà de Llobregat (Barcelona), els quals van ser participants en aquest estudi, a més de demostrar si aplicant materials dissenyats, els errors podrien millorar o no. Un cop analitzats els resultats de la primera prova es van dissenyar i aplicar diferents tècniques i materials per millorar els errors produïts pels estudiants, els quals presentaven una gran influència de la seva L1 (castellà). A través de la realització d'una segona i última prova es va confirmar que l'aplicació dels materials i les tècniques aplicades durant dues setmanes, podien aconseguir una millora en gran part dels errors treballats. A més, els resultats de les enquestes realitzades per estudiants i professors, van revelar que la fonètica no és rellevant a la classe d'anglès a Catalunya.

**Paraules clau:** Fonètica, influència de la L1, Anàlisi d'Errors, EFL.

## **Resumen**

El objetivo de este estudio es descubrir que presencia tiene la fonética en las clases de inglés en Cataluña, debido al vacío de datos sobre la producción oral de los estudiantes en pruebas básicas como son las Competencias Básicas o la Selectividad. Al mismo tiempo, aplicando el método de Análisis de Errores de Corder (1974) se intenta descubrir cuales son los errores más comunes en la producción fonética del inglés que los estudiantes de Bachillerato en Cataluña cometen, a través de los resultados de los 18 estudiantes de un instituto de Cornellá de Llobregat (Barcelona), los cuales han sido participantes en este estudio, así como demostrar si la aplicación de materiales diseñados puede mejorar los errores o no. Una vez analizados los resultados de la primera prueba se diseñaron y aplicaron diferentes técnicas y materiales para mejorar los errores producidos por los estudiantes, los cuales presentaban una gran influencia de su L1 (castellano). A través de la realización de una segunda y última prueba se confirmó que la aplicación de los materiales y las técnicas aplicadas durante dos semanas, podían lograr una mejora en gran parte de los errores trabajados. Además, los resultados de las encuestas realizadas por estudiantes y profesores revelaron que la fonética no es relevante en la clase de inglés en Cataluña.

**Palabras clave:** Fonética, influencia de la L1, Análisis de Errores, EFL.

## Table of Contents

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<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>2. Theoretical framework</b> .....	3
<b>3. Participants, Context and Method</b> .....	10
<b>4. Results and Discussion</b> .....	17
<b>5. Conclusions</b> .....	22
<b>5.1. Limitations</b> .....	23
<b>5.2. Further Research</b> .....	23
<b>6. Bibliography</b> .....	25
<b>7. Appendices</b> .....	27
<b>7.1. Appendix 1 – Survey on English students’ background</b> .....	27
<b>7.2. Appendix 2 – Survey on English teaching background</b> .....	28
<b>7.3. Appendix 3 – Test 1 – Pre-test</b> .....	29
<b>7.4. Appendix 4 – Materials’ dossier</b> .....	31
<b>7.5. Appendix 5 – Test 2 – Final test</b> .....	44
<b>7.6. Appendix 6 – Students’ Survey Results</b> .....	46
<b>7.7. Appendix 7 – Teachers’ Survey Results</b> .....	47

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays in Catalonia, students speak at least two languages (generally, Spanish and Catalan) both included in the school curriculum. But there is a third language that is studied in both primary and secondary school, English. This language began to be studied in Catalonia only in the last century and because of its differences with both Spanish and Catalan, not only in the written form of the language, but also in the spoken, the majority of people still have not acquired a good level. According to *Idescat (Institut d'Estadística de Catalunya)* (Statistics' Institute of Catalonia), only 28,3% of the population in Catalonia by 2013 would master English in all four areas of study (Listening, Speaking, Writing and Reading).

In order to improve the level of students in the areas mentioned, English is studied in secondary school for an average of 3 hours per week, the students being assessed in the four areas, according to *El currículum competencial a l'aula* (Competence curriculum in the classroom) established by the LEC, the Catalan law of education (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2018). Thanks to this, an improvement can be seen in the last years in the results of the *Competències Bàsiques* (Basic Competencies) in Catalonia, which show that the average grade of students of 4<sup>th</sup> of ESO in these tests improved 7 points in four years (Consell Superior d'Avaluació del Sistema Educatiu, 2018), the average grade was 66,9 in 2014 while in 2018 it was a 73,9. Furthermore, according to the results, the percentage of students scoring a low level of acquisition has been reduced by a 5,3%. The percentage of students in 2015 scoring on the low level was 19,0% while in 2018 it improved up to 13,7%. Also, having a look at the results in *Selectivitat* (the exams to access university in Catalonia) in the English area, there has been a considerable increase between 2014 and 2018. The average mark on the first was a 6,28 while on the later it was a 7,36, although it should be considered that in 2017 there was a noticeable lower grade (6,01) (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2018).

Despite having official exams showing an improvement in the acquisition of English in the youngest population when finishing their basic studies, there is one skill that is not assessed in any of the exams: the speaking ability. Thus, leading to the question of whether this ability is worked on in class at the same level as the other three or not. It is

true though, that for the Basic Competencies for the scholar year 2018/2019 the *Consell Superior d'Avaluació del Sistema Educatiu* (Higher Council for Evaluation of the Educational System) announced their purpose to evaluate some students on their oral expression in English, but not all students were submitted to this test and there are no details on the contents that were evaluated nor the criteria followed to assess these contents. Moreover, there is no information on whether this is a one-time situation or if the Generalitat wants to keep on with this test until reaching all students in order to have more data on the area of study. Still, this seems to be a good step towards including speech in studies of academic results, such as the ones mentioned previously.

Which brings this study to try and find out the answer to the following research questions:

1. Are students in Catalonia taught or corrected on a phonological level in high school?
2. Which are the most frequent challenges in phonetic production of sounds in students from Catalonia?
3. Can learning materials be designed and applied to improve the most frequent challenges in pronunciation according to this study?

Furthermore, the following objectives are the ones aimed to achieve in order to answer the previous questions:

1. To explore whether students in Catalonia are taught or corrected on a phonological level in high school through different surveys to both teachers and students.
2. To design a test to detect the most frequent pronunciation challenges in phonetic production in students from Catalonia.
3. To explore if the designed learning materials help the students to overcome pronunciation challenges.
4. To detect whether the learning materials have helped to improve the most frequent challenges in pronunciation according to this study through a post-test.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

This section of the study will be divided into two parts, in the first part theoretical aspects regarding the learning of phonetics and phonology in Foreign Language Acquisition (FLA), there will also be a review of the teaching styles and methodologies used to teach a foreign language to prove if there has been a focus on the speaking area of study in the classrooms or not. While on the second part, there will be a more focused approach to studies related to the theory mentioned in the first part with more focus to Catalonia, adding also some information regarding the possible difficulties Spanish-Catalan speakers may have when speaking English, and providing some approaches and suggestions made by experts in the area of teaching phonetics in classrooms, which is what this study intends to do.

### *Theoretical aspects*

According to Richards & Rodgers (2001), the traditional method used when learning a foreign language since the XIX<sup>th</sup> Century is the Grammar-Translation Method also known as the Prussian Method in the United States. This method consists on merely translating sentences from the language that is being learned to the Native Language (NL) of the student, which is a good technique for learning grammar and syntax and developing the writing and reading skills, but not enough for developing the listening and speaking skills. This practice is sometimes still used, nowadays, but it has diminished since the mid-nineteenth century due to the demand for communication between Europeans. This demand made possible the creation of both IPAs, the International Phonetic Association in 1886 in Paris and consequently the International Phonetic Alphabet in 1888 (International Phonetic Association, 2019).

This evolution in learning toward the implication of phonetics and phonology and therefore the oral abilities (speaking and listening), would open the discussion on how phonetics should be taught and how they should prevail over the Grammar-Translation Method, although no proposal on the area got to become a method. Until the Direct or Natural Method was established on the 1900s, the only problem was that the



implementation of the method in private language schools was successful while in regular schools it was not considered a good practice as it required native speakers to apply it.

It was not until the 1950s when Lado (1957) turned to open the field of investigation on how to teach phonetics in FLA with the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH). This hypothesis, considering the role of the L1 in FLA, intends to compare the NL and the Target Language (TL), so that pedagogical materials and the teaching of the TL are focused on the differences of both languages, since these differences are what is considered new learning and therefore, what the CAH thinks it needs to be learned. The CAH framework develops two different positions: the *strong* and the *weak*. The *strong* position stands for making the predictions of possible mistakes students may make comparing their NL and the TL, while the *weak* position insists on first testing students to see what errors do learners make and then teach based on what needs to be improved (Gass & Larry, 2008). Lado states himself that the CAH is just a theoretical hypothesis and therefore, it needs validation through testing students, since not all predictions are correct, yet most are and they can be most useful of guidance for teachers.

Researchers in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), during the 1960s and the 1970s and inspired by the CAH purpose of focusing on learners' mistakes to improve the teaching and learning experience, began to develop new theories and approaches in order to achieve this purpose and so the Error Analysis (EA) approach became to be. This approach focuses on observing what errors learners make when producing the TL and comparing them to how the TL should be produced to give feedback on how to improve those errors regarding the cross-linguistic influence of the NL on the TL (Gass & Larry, 2008). Corder (1974) states the following steps in order to research in EA:

- “1. Collecting samples of learner language
2. Identifying the errors
3. Describing the errors
4. Explaining the errors
5. Evaluating/correcting the errors”

Hendrikson (1978) remarks that in FLA there should be a correction of errors when they are shown very frequently. Thus, if we detect a punctual mistake, there is no need for

remarking the student that they have made a mistake unless that the same mistake has been constantly produced, which would probably be an error instead and it would then need the proper correction for the student to know what to improve. He also argues that errors should be corrected only when impeding the intelligibility of the message or interfering with the process of communication, not when the error is minimal. The approach that teachers should follow to make the correction should be to provide the correct form and make sure that the student understands the correction and why it was previously wrong. As the EA steps mentioned by Corder, above, indicate.

In terms of approaching the acquisition of L2 phonology in SLA, it is considered a complex process since the phonology of both languages need to be taken into account. When learning to speak an L2, students have a tendency towards applying the sounds they know having the possibility that they are the same or assimilations to the ones they have to produce and learn to perfect. Therefore, depending on whether the NL and the TL are phonologically close or distant learners will have more or less difficulty in learning the phonemes of the language. Thus, being almost mandatory to compare both languages and take into consideration the CAH, which was rejected in syntactical teaching but seemed to accomplish a better function in phonology. And also, the help of using the EA with each student.

In relation to the last idea, believing that acquiring different sounds is harder than acquiring similar sounds is a mistake according to the Similarity Differential Rate Hypothesis, which states that because of the similarity of sounds, the learner might omit that they are failing to produce the right sound since they cannot perceive the difference. Therefore, both the learner and the teacher would focus on more noticeable mistakes, which would be the dissimilar sounds between languages (Major & Kim, 1999).

According to Krashen (1986), the input hypothesis implies that for students, being either children or adults, to acquire a language at a phonological level, they must be constantly receiving input in class. This means that the teacher being a native of the language that is being learned or being a local, must speak the language they are teaching at all times in class. This input should be perfectly comprehensible for students to pick it up and get to acquire it progressively.

After everything mentioned so far, it is clear that students, in order to acquire phonology in the FLA, should receive a lot of comprehensible input. This input would be progressively acquired so students, in consequence, would sooner or later produce output. That would be the appropriate moment in which teachers could use both the CAH and the EA to analyse errors in their students and correct them based on their observations.

### ***What about Catalonia?***

According to Lomas (2015), in the 1990s, the Communicative Approach was applied in the scholar curriculum in all Europe, including Spain. This stirred up the most conservative teachers since they were used to the traditional grammar classes and therefore, were opposed to teaching the communicative competence. According to Hymes (1971), this competence needs to be taught since the purpose of learning a foreign language is to communicate with one another and to do so, we need to learn to speak a language. Tusón (2015) argues that everybody learns their native language by being exposed to it, not to the grammar, but to the spoken words. However, in Spain, the traditional method of translating from English to Spanish and the other way around is nowadays still present in some areas (González-Davies, 2007).

Even though the linguistic communicative competence is established in the actual law of education in Spain, following the affiliation to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe, 2001), Lomas (2015) argues that competencies should not be demanded to students in order to get to some objective, but rather acquired with the help of teachers so that they are useful for meaningful-real life skills, such as communicating with people from other countries, in this case. Also, according to the *CEFRL* (Council of Europe, 2001) somebody that speaks two languages or more, therefore a bilingual or multilingual person, develops a plurilingual and pluricultural competence that helps them interrelate all languages and cultures. Something that teachers should bear in mind when teaching a foreign language, not focusing only on the knowledge of the book, but follow the *CEFRL* and help students acquire the plurilingual competence too.

Following with what was mentioned during the introduction of this study and with the question on how English speaking is being developed in Catalonia, the only official study

that gives information about oral production is the one carried away by the *Consell Superior d'Avaluació del Sistema Educatiu* (Higher Council for Evaluation of the Educational System) in 2006, which not only evaluated that students spoke fluently but also evaluated some phonological aspects:

“The interpretation of graphic symbols and the adequate pronunciation of words that include the regular past, the “h” in the initial position, the “r” in the final position, words that are predictably unknown, common words that usually present pronunciation challenges and, finally, the intonation of questions and conditional sentences.”<sup>1</sup>

This statement of the evaluation already indicates that the department of education is aware of which are some of the challenges that Spanish-Catalan students face when speaking in English. Which brings us to the question of why are there not more evaluations on this skill? Pronunciation requires the constant practice of the same sound before acquiring it, unlike words which we can easily learn one per day, but Spanish and English are quite different in phonetics, which means students need to make an extra effort and so teachers too (Estebas Vilaplana, 2014).

Aside from the difference in phonetics that Spanish and English share, there is also another difference that might make it harder for Spanish students to learn English pronunciation, especially when reading words aloud or trying to speak remembering written words. In Spanish all the letters in the words are pronounced, thus making Spanish a transparent language, since you pronounce what you see, whereas English is an opaque language, you pronounce sounds that you do not relate to the letters of the word and you see letters that you do not pronounce. Also, Catalan should be considered a semi-opaque language since some letters and sounds might vary depending on the position of the letter on a word and the stress of the word (Arroyo, 1992). This concept of opacity and transparency is mostly applied to talk about teaching languages to people with dyslexia, but it can also be a justification on some of the challenges Spanish speakers have to face when speaking English or reading it aloud.

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<sup>1</sup> Translated by the author of this paper

According to Broselow (1987) not only sounds of the NL are transferred onto the TL, but also the syllable structure. In Spanish (L1) and English (L2) learning, the initial position of *s* that we see in words such as *snob* in English is difficult to reproduce for Spanish speakers since this kind of cluster in Spanish does not exist. Thus, Spanish speakers would insert an epenthetic (addition of a vowel that should not be there) and would, therefore, produce the word \**esnob*, instead.

Continuing with the results of the study (Consell Superior d'Avaluació del Sistema Educatiu, 2006), they indicate that only 41% of students in 4<sup>th</sup> of ESO would achieve the A2 level from the *CEFRL* in oral production but the results were very low in general (the average grade was a 57,6%). The final consideration of the study argues that: “one in four students has a pronunciation, generally, clear enough to be understood despite the influence of their L1”<sup>2</sup>. Also, according to the study, both teachers and students were asked about the methodology used in class, and they agreed that it was a traditional methodology (use of the book and grammar exercises).

Agreeing with what has been mentioned previously in this section of the study, González-Davies (2007) makes a series of proposals that could improve the level of students in English and especially create communicative needs for them:

“teaching English in English; [...] make English possible to find outside school: subtitling films and TV programs, materials in public libraries; promoting English communication in two different ways: inside the own communities by creating spaces so that people from different nationalities can meet to speak, or creating virtual spaces so that the same can be done from distance; promote students' and teachers' mobility; and making English a vehicular language in other subjects of the curriculum (CLIL).”<sup>3</sup>

Since the publication of her article, most of the ideas mentioned by González-Davies have been developed in Catalonia, like the implementation of CLIL in every public or private school or high school. The improvement of the level in English shown in the results of

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<sup>2</sup> Translated by the author of this paper

<sup>3</sup> Translated by the author of this paper

the Basic Competencies mentioned in the introduction of this study is living proof that some of the objectives are being met. However, there is still a lot more to do.

### 3. Participants, Context and Method

The aim of this study is to detect which are the most frequent challenges in phonology in Spanish-Catalan students, that speak Spanish as their L1, Catalan as their L2 and are learning English as their L3, and to prove whether or not an improvement can be achieved by using specific materials and speech techniques focused on phonetics. In the process of doing so, taking into account the previous theoretical framework stating that classes are still very traditional nowadays in Catalonia and phonetics in the teaching area are almost forgotten since teachers do not tend to correct students when making errors, different surveys will be made to both teachers and students from the same high school, where this study will take place to know if that would be the case here. As well as different tests to detect the phonological errors students make the most ([h], the insertion of an epenthetic in front of an *s* cluster in initial position, [v], [ɪ] vs. [i:] and [ʊ] vs. [u:]) and materials and exercises to improve them.

#### *Participants and Context*

This study has been carried out in a secondary school in Cornellà de Llobregat which is located right in the suburbs of the city of Barcelona. The students are mostly middle-class, and the proportion of immigrant students has increased in recent years, although a stagnation process is now underway. There are no details on how the socioeconomic level of the students affects school life.

In this school, there are three different studies taught, these would be: *Educació Secundària Obligatòria (ESO)*, *Batxillerat* and *Cicles Formatius* (GCSE, Higher Education or Baccalaureate and Further Education). In ESO, there are 4 levels, in 1st of ESO there are 6 lines, in 2nd of ESO there are 5 lines and then in 3rd and 4th there are 4 lines, meanwhile in *Batxillerat* there are only 2 lines per each of the two levels. In *Cicles Formatius*, there is only one class per each study. All the lines or classes are formed by an average of 25 – 30 students, depending on the year.

The participants in this study are mainly the students of 1<sup>st</sup> of *Batxillerat* from this school. Aside from the students' collaboration, there is also a brief contribution from the teachers

of the English Department in the same school. The number of students selected was twenty, yet two of them had to be dropped out of the study. They were selected randomly from the four split groups there are in their year, which is divided into two lines and each line subdivided once a week into two groups to do speaking activities with half of each group. The chosen students speak Spanish as their L1, Catalan as their L2 and English as their L3. According to the book the students use which is *Initiative 1* (Howarth, P., Collins, N., McBeth, C. & Humphreys, N., 2014), they should be acquiring a B1 level indicated by the *CEFR*. This makes us believe that students will have a certain level of both grammar and vocabulary, therefore they will be able to read and understand oral and written texts of intermediate difficulty as well as produce them orally and written.

### ***Method***

The procedure of this study was carried out as follows: first of all, both students and teachers were subject to two different kinds of surveys (Appendixes 1 and 2). One of them was destined for the teachers and the other for the students. These surveys aimed to answer the question on how phonetics are present in the school where the study was taking place, as well as having some more information on the English background of both groups as students or teachers, so that later I could see if there were any factors that could influence the results of the following step in the study. After handing out the surveys, the procedure of applying the Error Analysis approach by Corder, mentioned in the Theoretical Framework, begun:

First and foremost, there had to be a collection of samples of how the learners produce the language, in this case, English. To do so, there were two weeks in which the eighteen students were asked out of their English classroom one by one and taken to the English Department of the school to conduct the pre-test (Appendix 3) of the study. This test consisted of the production of all possible phonemes in English to seek which of these phonemes were the most mispronounced by students, when putting in common all the mistakes from all students. To be more certain of the mistakes, students were recorded in the process, as to have a back-up material to try and collect all of them, since the pace of reading and speaking of the students and the ratio of mistakes they did, would not allow me, as the examiner, to grasp all of the errors at once.



Following with the EA steps, the errors should be identified and described and then explained to the students (steps 2, 3 and 4). This was made once the tests were analysed and all mistakes were put in common. So, I made sure to give some feedback to students, as well as preparing some materials extracted and adapted from self-study books specialised in phonetics (*Teach yourself English pronunciation* and *English pronunciation in use*). The feedback consisted of giving them back a photocopy of their test marked with the mistakes each of them did. Showing them on their sheets some examples of them having done the mispronunciation and also exemplifying myself what the student had done wrong and what they should have done correctly, instead. Aside from telling each student their particular errors and mistakes, there was a special remark on the errors they all had in common and that were going to be worked on in the following sessions. The procedure of analysing the tests, putting in common the mistakes, consequently designing the materials to work with in class and giving the feedback to students lasted around a month.

The errors students made the most and for which some materials and speech techniques were designed, extracted, adapted and applied from different books for self-study, were the following: on the one hand, regarding consonants, there were three errors made very frequently ([h], the insertion of an epenthetic in front of an *s* cluster in initial position and [v]). On the other hand, regarding vocalic errors, there was found a general and extensive problem with almost all of them. Yet there seemed to be a frequent issue with the differentiation between the lax and tense *i* and *u*, so students had to work on the phonemes ([ɪ] vs. [i:] and [ʊ] vs. [u:]).

Finally, the fifth step of the EA would be met when, after making students aware of which were their most common mistakes, there would be some classes taught with the support of some materials (Appendix 4) in order to try and correct the errors students made. So that there could be an improvement shown when taking a final test with the same structure as the pre-test, but more focused on the phonemes treated in the lessons. These lessons took place three times a week for two weeks. Students were taken out in groups of four or five from their English classroom and taken to another class during half an hour, where they would be shown the proper way to pronounce each one of the phonemes this study was focusing on. Each class was entirely dedicated to one of the errors.

The first class was dedicated to the phoneme [h]. Students were asked if they knew which was the error they made regarding this sound, to which they correctly answered that they produced the sound [x] like in the word *jardín* (garden in Spanish), instead of the sound [h]. After knowing that students were aware of the mistake, the next step was to give them some tip for them to produce the right sound, and not to tend to go find a similarity to their L1. The tip given for this phoneme was to imagine they had a mirror in front of them and that they were exhaling the air in their lungs into it, so to have the mirror covered with steam. After practising this technique, I, acting as the teacher, would pronounce some words as a demonstration and students would repeat them right after while overexaggerating the tip mentioned above. Then students would read some words with the phoneme individually, and not only me, but also the rest of students would say whether each student was doing it right or wrong. In case it was wrong, the student would repeat it once or twice, until getting it right. Finally, students would have to read the following sentence “Harry had a habit of helping hitch-hikers” and they would be asked to practise it at home, too.

The second class was dedicated to the *s* cluster in initial position. The structure of this class was quite similar to the first one. Students were asked if they knew which was the error they made regarding this sound, to which they correctly answered that they would add an [e] sound before the *s* in this kind of words. After knowing that students were aware of the mistake, the next step was to give them some tip for them to produce the right sound, and not to tend to go find a similarity to their L1. The tip given for this cluster problem was to say a word producing the error (e.g. Spain [es'pam]), and because students would divide the word into two syllables, having the first one finish with the [s] sound they actually need to produce at the beginning of the word, they would be asked to hold the *s* and not carrying on pronouncing the following syllable, so that they could notice the position of their mouth, at that moment, when producing the *s*. Next, they were asked to try and produce the word correctly by remembering the position of their mouth when producing the *s* as they had just practised. After practising this technique, I would pronounce some words as a demonstration and students would repeat them right after while overexaggerating the tip mentioned previously. Then students would read, one by one, a sequence of words with the phoneme individually, and not only me, but also the rest of students would say whether each student was doing it right or wrong. In case it was wrong, the student would repeat it once or twice, until getting it right.

The third class was focused on the phoneme [v]. Following again a similar structure to the previous classes, students were asked if they knew which was the error they made regarding this sound, to which they correctly answered that they produced the sound [b] when finding the grapheme *v*, instead of the sound [v], since this sound is not used in Spanish anymore. After knowing that students were aware of the mistake, the next step was to give them some tip for them to produce the right sound. The tip given for this phoneme was to gently press their front upper teeth on their bottom lip and to let the air out while finding a vibration on their lip. This way, they were supposed to be releasing a [v] sound, like in vibration [vaɪ'breɪʃən]. After practising this technique, I would pronounce some words as a demonstration and students would repeat them right after while overexaggerating the tip mentioned above. Then students would read some words with the contrast in minimal pairing of the sounds [b] and [v], and not only me, but also the rest of students would say whether each student was doing it right or wrong. In case it was wrong, the student would repeat it once or twice, until getting it right. Finally, students would have to read the following sentence “Vera drove to Venice in a van” and they would be asked to practise it at home, too.

The fourth and fifth classes were focused on the phonemes [ɪ] vs. [i:] and [ʊ] vs. [u:], respectively. In these classes, the first step was to explain the difference between the lax and the tense vowels for each case, since students would not know about the existence of the production of the lax vowel. Students were told that both tense vowels ([i:] and [u:]) were produced the same as their equivalent in Spanish, yet a little bit longer on duration, so they could rely on their L1 but exaggerating a little bit. For the production of the lax vowels ([ɪ] and [ʊ]), they were told to put their mouths in the position of producing an [e] sound yet releasing the sound of the vowel they actually wanted or had to produce. After practising these techniques, I would pronounce some words as a demonstration and students would repeat them right after while trying to apply the tips practised before. Then students would read some words with the contrast in minimal pairing of the sounds [ɪ] vs. [i:] in the first class, and [ʊ] vs. [u:] in the second class, and not only me, but also the rest of students would say whether each student was doing it right or wrong. In case it was wrong, the student would repeat it once or twice, until getting it right. Finally, for the second of these two classes, students would have to read the following sentences “That

cook couldn't cook if he didn't look at a cook book" and "Sue knew too few new tunes on the flute". They would be asked to practise them at home, too.

The sixth and final class was left to make a review of everything and having students comment on whether any of the phonemes was being difficult for them. So that during the review, there could be a focus on certain phonemes according to the needs of students. There was also an explanation to students on how the final test would be, as well as the repetition of some of the exercises already done in the previous classes.

After the classes, students were taken out of their English classroom, in pairs, during the following week so that they could take the final test, which was more focused on the phonemes worked on, so that there were more possibilities to extract a conclusion on whether the classes and materials had been useful to get an improvement or not on their pronunciation. Thus, during the following weeks, a comparison between the results of both tests could be made, and plenty of conclusions could be extracted from there.

### *Instruments*

Taking into account the theory mentioned in this study plus the results of previous studies regarding the level of English in Catalan students, and the focus over the oral production, especially in phonetics, this study aimed to find out what challenges do Catalan students face and why they are produced. To do so, different instruments were applied during the procedure.

First of all, there was a need to know whether phonetics were ever treated in the English classroom at some point during the students' stay in high school. The way to know this, and to contrast it, was to give both the students participating in the study and the English teachers of the Language Department of the school a survey (Appendices 1 and 2) with different questions about phonetics and speaking in the classroom, as well as getting to know a little bit more of their backgrounds in English studying and teaching, respectively.

Secondly, in order to find out the errors produced by the students subject to the study, following the CAH and the EA, they took a pre-test (Appendix 3) (adapted from lectures from the courses of English Phonetics and Phonology I and II and Use of the English

Language: Advanced Oral Expression from the English and French Studies' Degree at UAB, 2013-2015) in which they had three reading aloud exercises and a fourth in which they had to produce the speaking spontaneously. The first exercise consisted of reading separate, individual words. The second exercise was about reading different short sentences, while the third exercise consisted of reading a brief text. Finally, the fourth exercise of the test was asking students to make an introduction of themselves, a list of possible topics they could talk about was provided in case they went blank and had no idea of what to say. All three written exercises were extracted material from the book students were using in class (Howarth, P. et al., 2014). This test was recorded at the same time that in a separate worksheet, I was already writing down some of the errors identified during the process of the test. The recordings were useful for me to identify all mistakes later with a second and third review, since grasping all the mistakes at first can be difficult if there are lots to identify.

The following step of the procedure was to identify the errors and make a list of all of them to observe which were the most frequent, considering all 18 students' results. Also, feedback on the mistakes was given to students as well as an explanation of what they were doing mistakenly. According to the results, some materials (Appendix 4) to work on the improvement of these errors were retrieved from self-study books with exercises specialised in improving the phonetical abilities of an English learner (*Teach yourself English pronunciation* and *English pronunciation in use*) and applied in class, to see if an improvement could be reached.

The final step of the study was to take a final test (Appendix 5). It was made as similar as possible to the pre-test with which the errors worked on were collected, with the slight change in the fourth exercise in which instead of introducing themselves, they would introduce another person, and also the main focus was on the phonemes worked in class after the results of the pre-test. So that it could be possible to notice if there was an improvement. The test was, of course, carried out after having applied all the materials in class. Finally, after having the results, it was possible to compare them to the ones obtained from the pre-test. The comparison of both tests, with the application of the materials between them, would determine whether an improvement in phonetics could be possible following this procedure or not.

## 4. Results and Discussion

In this segment of the study, the results obtained from the instruments are going to be discussed and compared, in order to find some answers to the Research Questions of this study, while also checking if the objectives proposed from the beginning have been met. The segment will be divided into two parts, the first one will be focused on the results and discussion of the surveys, while the second part will be about the results and discussion of the tests students were subject to.

### *Surveys*

The results of the teachers' survey (Appendix 7) indicate the following data: that despite having more or less experience in teaching (Question 1) and having different teaching positions outside of the high school (Question 2), these two facts do not affect the general results on how the teachers from this school treat phonetics in their classroom. The answers of Questions 5 and 6 show that all teachers agree that their students do have difficulties when speaking in English regarding phonetics (e.g. long words, *s* cluster in initial position, new words amongst others) and also that there is something they could do about it to try and fix their students' difficulties (e.g. songs and activities to drill the correct pronunciation of words or practising pronunciation in smaller groups amongst other proposals). However, the answers of Question 3 show that none of the teachers dedicate any of their sessions specifically to phonetics, yet in Question 4, on the one hand, three of the teachers affirm to correct their students' pronunciation sporadically in class, especially when reading aloud but once they finish reading, and the other two, on the other hand, accept that they usually do not make corrections at all.

These data collected and presented so far is backed up by the results of a very similar survey made to the students of the same high school participating in the study. According to the results of the students' survey (Appendix 6), they have never been to a phonetics' class (Question 4) and while two thirds of them (12 students) say they usually are not corrected in class (Question 5), the other six students say they have sometimes been corrected in class. Students also agree with their teachers on their answers for Questions 6 and 7. All of the students say they have difficulties when speaking in English (e.g.

pronunciation of unknown words, they have to think about what they want to say and the influence of their L1 amongst others) and they also believe there is something that could be done in order to fix these difficulties (e.g. speaking classes, classes focused on pronunciation, help of the teacher and exchange trips amongst other ideas).

Thus, according to the evidence collected in both surveys, the first objective of this study (1. Introduction) is achieved and an answer to the first research question is given, as well. Students in Catalonia are not specifically taught on a phonological level in their high school, yet some of the teachers try to correct them when they make some mistakes on their speaking. Still, most teachers do not take their time to correct their students and the ones that give some corrections do not correct everything, therefore, it could be concluded that nowadays, phonology is not considered a relevant element in the Catalan education system in TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language).

### *Tests*

After having analysed the results of the pre-test in order to find out which were the most frequent challenges in phonetic production of sounds in students from Catalonia (second Research Question from this study), these were the errors found:

On the one hand, regarding consonants, the ones that were constantly produced were the mispronunciation of the phoneme [h] in words such as *help* or *hero*, that were pronounced as [ˈxɛlp] and [ˈxɪrəʊ] instead of being pronounced as [ˈhelp] and [ˈhɪrəʊ]; also, the insertion of an epenthetic in front of an *s* cluster (an *s* followed by one or more consonants) in initial position of a word, thus for example, instead of pronouncing the word *spend* like [ˈspend], they would pronounce it as [esˈpend]; and finally it would be found in the results that there is a third consonantal mispronunciation to work in class, that would be the phoneme [v] changed by students for the phoneme [b] like in Spanish. So, words like *vegetables* or *advertisement* would be produced as [ˈbedʒtəb(ə)lz] and [ədˈbɜ:tismənt] instead of being produced like [ˈvedʒtəb(ə)lz] and [ədˈvɜ:tismənt]. It is true that more consonantal mistakes were found during the realization of the test, but those were well pronounced at times, which lead to the thought of students unknowing when to use a phoneme or another, but not having trouble to produce them, therefore not being errors, but mistakes.

On the other hand, regarding vocalic errors, there was found a general and extensive problem with almost all of them. Here, there had to be a differentiation between the mispronunciation of phonemes and the lack of knowledge of how a word is pronounced. After taking everything into account, the vowels selected to be practised were (*i* and *u*) and its respective phonemes ([ɪ], [i:], [ʊ] and [u:]), since it seemed that in these cases students tended to use their L1 vowels ([i] and [u]) every time they read the corresponding grapheme and they also showed a lack of knowledge about when to produce these sounds when corresponding to a different grapheme. Thus, students needed to be made aware of the existence of the lax vowel for both graphemes *i* and *u*, as they had been omitted in production on the results of the pre-test, as well as trained on knowing when to produce each of them. Examples of these phenomena would be the word *history* being produced as ['xi:stəri:] instead of ['hɪstəri] in the case of the vowel *i* or the production of the word *currently* as ['ku:rəntli] instead of ['kʌrəntli] in the case of the vowel *u*.

All the common errors found on the pre-test and presented above were found in all students, without exception, and not only on the words given as an example, but also in other words present in the pre-test, that would contain these sounds. Additionally, it can be seen thanks to the description of the errors that they all have in common the fact that they show an influence of the students' L1 (Spanish) in their phonological English production. Taking into account the results of the pre-test, some materials were applied to try and correct the errors found. After some classes, the students were subject to a final test, which was very similar to the pre-test yet more focused on the errors worked on and it was also indicating where to produce the sounds for ([ɪ], [i:], [ʊ] and [u:]) since students only practised the way to pronounce them and not where they could be found. This final test was made to check whether an improvement could be achieved or not.

After analysing the results of the final test, there could be found a difference between the reading aloud exercises (1, 2 and 3) and the speaking production one (4). Regarding the reading exercises, all eighteen students produced the phoneme [h] as it should be released in English, examples of this would be words like *humanity* and *headline* produced as [hju:'mænɪti] and ['hedlɪn] respectively. Seventeen of the students were able to avoid the insertion of an epenthetic in front of an *s* cluster in initial position, therefore, producing words like *screen* and *scarecrow* as ['skri:n] and ['skeəkrəʊ] like in English,



this is not the case with Student 7 who still was producing the error detected on the pre-test. When seeing the results of the production of the phoneme [v], only one of the students got to do it properly (Student 1), thus, producing words like *version* and *environment* as ['vɜ:ʃən] and [ɪn'vaɪərənmənt], while the other seventeen students were still producing the error detected on the pre-test. Regarding phonemes [i:] and [u:] all students produced them correctly, thus pronouncing words like *treat*, *beach*, *fool* and *tune* like ['tri:t], ['bi:tʃ], ['fu:l] and ['tju:n]. Yet observing their pronunciation of the phonemes [ɪ] and [ʊ], students failed to produce them properly each time they appeared on the test, although sometimes they did achieve the right pronunciation in words like *myth*, *citizen*, *hook* and *full* respectively produced as ['mɪθ], ['sɪtɪzn], ['hʊk] and ['fʊl].

Despite these results, when analysing the data obtained from the fourth exercise of the test in which students had to produce a speech with their own words, all the errors were present. Some of them were produced correctly almost each time a word including the phoneme was used like *has* or *hobbies* for the phoneme [h], *studying* for the *s* cluster in initial position, *meeting* for the phoneme [i:] and *future* for the phoneme [u:], while the phonemes [v], [ɪ] and [ʊ] were mostly produced incorrectly and rarely pronounced properly.

Comparing the data obtained from the pre-test and the data obtained on the final test, after having applied some materials to try to improve the phonological errors of the students, an answer to the third Research Question of this study can be given. According to this study, some materials can be designed and applied in order to fix these errors. Since although it is true that not all errors were corrected and that the ones that showed a bigger improvement were not perfect on the free speech exercise of the test (exercise 4), out of the seven phonemes worked on in just two weeks, 2 of them were correctly produced on the final test ([i:] and [u:]) and another 2 ([h] and the *s* cluster in initial position) were incorrectly produced only a few times, thus going from being errors to merely being mistakes. Therefore, new materials should be designed for the 3 remaining phonemes ([v], [ɪ] and [ʊ]) that did not show a positive outcome of improvement.

It should be taken into consideration that the first materials were applied only two weeks before the final test and students got to show an improvement in a very short amount of time. Which brings us to the hypothesis that applying different materials during an

academic year, instead of just two weeks, the results would be more promising at the same time that it would allow us to work on more phonological errors students produced. Furthermore, the whole procedure of designing the tests and the materials, applying them and analysing the results, have made possible to achieve the objectives 2, 3 and 4 proposed at the beginning of this study.

## 5. Conclusions

The present study was conducted in order to try and find out how phonology was present in the EFL classroom in Catalan secondary schools, as well as detecting which are the most frequent challenges students face in phonetic English production and seeing if an improvement could be achieved after applying different materials following the Error Analysis approach by Corder. To do so, different objectives were proposed as well as different research questions were made (1. Introduction). To get an answer to the research questions first and foremost, all the objectives were achieved as stated in the previous sections of this study. Then, as stated in the Results and Discussion section, through the accomplishment of the objectives an answer to all the research questions asked were found.

The study was carried out in a secondary school in Cornellà de Llobregat (Barcelona). Subject to this study were 20 students of 1<sup>st</sup> of *Batxillerat*, although two of them had to be dropped out, and the teachers of the English Department. The L1 of students is Spanish, their L2 Catalan and their L3 English, a data that proved to be important to take into consideration when seeing the results of the errors produced by students on the pre-test.

According to the results obtained in this research study, students are barely taught and corrected on a phonological level in high school (answer to the first research question), which brings students to have a good level of English in different areas as shown in the results of the Basic Competencies except for the speaking. Related to this, the study has found through the application of the Error Analysis approach by Corder (1974) that the most frequent challenges in phonetic production of sounds in students from Catalonia are the production of [h] as [x], the insertion of an epenthetic in front of an *s* cluster in initial position, the production of [v] as [b] and the inability to distinguish between [ɪ] vs. [i:] and [ʊ] vs. [u:] (answer to the second research question). Additionally, all these errors were found to have in common the factor that they were all influenced by the students' L1, which is Spanish. Finally, this study proved that it is possible to improve these challenges in pronunciation after designing specific materials and applying them (answer to the third research question). Since out of the seven phonemes worked on in just two

weeks, 2 of them were correctly produced on the final test ([i:] and [u:]) and another 2 ([h] and the s cluster in initial position) were incorrectly produced only a few times, thus going from being errors to merely being mistakes. For the other three remaining phonemes ([v], [ɪ] and [ʊ]), it can be hypothesised that new materials should be designed or a longer period of time should be applied to work on their improvement. It should be also taken into consideration the fact that the materials were only applied for two weeks, which is not too much time to get a positive outcome and still some of the phonemes did show an excellent or considerable improvement, despite the errors that could not be fixed.

### **5.1. Limitations**

During the execution of this study, there have been some limitations regarding time to implement the materials; they were thought to be implemented during a longer period of time, ideally, an academic year would have been better so to properly apply more materials and to work in other errors. Also, there was a limitation as regards schools and number of participants. The data collected from this school proved to be very homogeneous, yet with the data from other schools and students, the outcome could be different. Therefore, seeing the small amount of participants, the results cannot be extrapolated to the rest of Catalonia although they can be taken into account for further research on the topic.

### **5.2. Further Research**

Considering everything mentioned above, further research is still required in this field. The study should be carried out with more students from different secondary schools during a whole academic year. In case the results proved to be positive in terms of improving the pronunciation worked on, this could be ideally applied in 1<sup>st</sup> of ESO, so that students began to work on their pronunciation as soon as possible. Bearing in mind that the results of the pre-test could vary, new and more extensive materials and techniques should be designed according to the necessities found on students. Also, the analysis of the students' recordings should be done by more than one teacher in order to have more accurate results. Furthermore, in this study students were supposed to practise at home, something that cannot be proved whether it was made or not because there was

no procedure applied to know for certain, thus, some way to know this data should be designed for further research on this study.

Thus, considering the conclusions of this study, it can be seen that the application of the Error Analysis approach as well as different materials can help *Batxillerat* students overcome their challenges and L1 influence in English phonetic production, although the materials applied for three of the phonemes in this study did not get a very positive outcome. For this, further research could be done by applying the Action-Research Cycle (Lagerwaard, 2019). This means that a teacher needs to research ways to improve their teaching and to do so, they use their classes to observe what problems can be found. Based on these problems, they find possible solutions and try to apply them (the new approach or method) and observe the results, thus in case that the outcome is not positive, the cycle begins again until finding the right answer. In this case, the right techniques and materials to improve each difficulty students can present.

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## **7. Appendices**

### **7.1. Appendix 1 – Survey on English students' background**

1 – How long have you been studying English?

2 – What level of English do you think or know that you have?

3 – Have you studied English somewhere else aside from school?

4 – Have you ever been to a special class focused on pronunciation?

5 – Have you ever been constantly corrected when making mistakes in your pronunciation?

6 – Do you think you have any difficulties when speaking in English? If so, list some of them giving examples (if possible).

7 – Do you think you could fix these difficulties you have? If so, how?



## **7.2. Appendix 2 – Survey on English teaching background**

1 – How long have you been teaching English?

2 – Have you taught English somewhere else aside from high school? If so, where?

3 – Have you ever taught a special class focused on pronunciation?

4 – Have you ever constantly corrected your students when making mistakes in their pronunciation?

5 – Do you think your students have any difficulties when speaking in English, regarding phonetics? If so, list some of them giving examples (if possible).

6 – Do you think you could fix these difficulties they have? If so, how?

### 7.3. Appendix 3 – Test 1 – Pre-test

#### 1 – Read out loud the following words:

Agent	Hero	History	Honestly	Society
Attached	Doubt	Story	Ireland	Because
Help	Throughout	Though	Watched	Iceland
Often	Island	Debt	Demon	Judge
Spend	Flood	There	Rhythm	Blood
Stressful	Advertisement	Vegetables	Species	Donkey
Author	Bought	Hotel	Anxiety	Jungle

#### 2 – Now read the following sentences:

1. Sara asked whether he was a friend of mine.
2. Have you ever been to one of his parties?
3. Performing live on stage is an ambition for many young dancers.
4. The word doping has very negative connotations and is usually substituted by the phrase *use of performance-enhancing drugs*.
5. Auto-Tune is a piece of software that is becoming increasingly popular with major singers and musicians.

#### 3 – Read the following text trying to respect all the punctuation marks:

We have all seen images of sporting accidents which result in serious injury. Footballers lying on the pitch after a bad tackle are a familiar sight and the result is often weeks or months out of action. The case of British motorcyclist James Toseland, who was forced to retire following a wrist injury during a race in Spain, is more serious. Incidents like this may be rare, but all competitive sports come with an element of risk.

What if it were possible to minimise the risks of sporting injury during training and competition? New technology currently under development may make this a reality in the future. The Center for Body Computing (CBC) at the University of Southern California is creating high-tech devices, called biosensors, which will provide essential information about an athlete's condition whilst in action.

**4 – Make an introduction of yourself. Here there are listed some of the things you can say:**

Name

Age

Where do you live

Studies

Hobbies

Like/Dislike

Future plans

Friends

Family + Pets

Others...

## 7.4. Appendix 4 – Materials' dossier

### [h] sound

#### ● ● ● TIP 12. Spanish [x] vs. English [h]

##### Common mistake

🔊	hello	[xe'lou]
	high	[xai]

##### Expected pronunciation

🔊	hello	[hə'ləʊ]
	high	[haɪ]

##### Description

One of the most common mistakes for Spanish speakers is the mispronunciation of the English sound [h], which appears in some English words such as *hello* or *high*. This sound does not exist in Spanish and hence Spanish speakers tend to produce the previous words with [x], which is the sound that begins the Spanish word *jardín*.

In order to produce English [h] Spanish speakers should try to make a sound similar to the expulsion of air through the mouth in a strong breath.

*If any help...* The pronunciation of English [h] is close to the way Andalusian and Canarian speakers produce the first sound of words such as *jarabe* or *genio*.

Listen to the following words containing [h]. Repeat and imitate the speaker's pronunciation.

🔊	hard	[hɑ:d]
	how	[haʊ]
	hot	[hɒt]
	hotel	[həʊ'tel]
	house	[haus]

### Exercise 3

Even though [h] is the most common pronunciation for the letter «h», there are some English words where the spelling «h» is silent. Listen to the following words which begin with the letter «h» and indicate whether the «h» is produced ([h]) or not. Tick your answer.

Example: helicopter ✓ [h] no [h]

- |            |     |        |
|------------|-----|--------|
| 1. history | [h] | no [h] |
| 2. hour    | [h] | no [h] |
| 3. honest  | [h] | no [h] |
| 4. habitat | [h] | no [h] |
| 5. hair    | [h] | no [h] |
| 6. heir    | [h] | no [h] |
| 7. heavy   | [h] | no [h] |
| 8. help    | [h] | no [h] |

### Exercise 4

As before, not all the words that contain the spelling «wh» are produced with [h]. Now listen to the following words that begin with the letters «wh» and indicate whether they are produced with [h] or not. Tick your answer.

Example: white [h] ✓ no [h]

- |          |     |        |
|----------|-----|--------|
| 1. where | [h] | no [h] |
| 2. whore | [h] | no [h] |
| 3. wheat | [h] | no [h] |
| 4. what  | [h] | no [h] |
| 5. whole | [h] | no [h] |
| 6. whom  | [h] | no [h] |
| 7. when  | [h] | no [h] |
| 8. whose | [h] | no [h] |

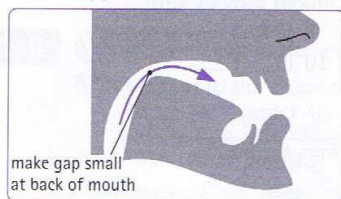
## 10

### Hear, we're, year The sounds /h/, /w/ and /j/

The sounds /h/, /w/ and /j/ only happen before a vowel sound.

A

- A44a • Listen to the sound /h/. Look at the mouth diagram to see how to make this sound.
- A44b • Listen to the target sound /h/ in the words below and compare it with the words on each side.
- A44c • Then listen and repeat the examples of the target sound.



target /h/

old	hold	old
art	heart	art
force	horse	force
sheet	heat	sheet

Examples

hair head who  
ahead perhaps behave

"Harry had a habit of helping hitch-hikers."

Important for listening

Some speakers, e.g. in London, do not pronounce the H, so *hair* /heə/ sounds the same as *air* /eə/.

## [s] + consonants at the beginning of a word

### ● ● ● TIP 27. [s] + consonant/s

#### Common mistake

🔊	<u>s</u> low	[es'lou]
	<u>S</u> pain	[es'peɪn]

#### Expected pronunciation

🔊	<u>s</u> low	[sləʊ]
	<u>S</u> pain	[speɪn]

#### Description

A large number of English words start with a combination of two consonants consisting of an [s] and another consonant, such as [p] (*Spain*), [t] (*steal*), [k] (*sky*), [m] (*smoke*), [n] (*snore*), [l] (*slow*) or [f] (*sphere*). Since in Spanish there are no words which start with an [s] followed by a consonant, it is difficult for Spanish speakers to produce the previous English words. Thus, Spanish speakers usually pronounce an [e] vowel before the [s]. This should be avoided since it causes a very strong foreign accent effect.

Listen to the following words produced with an initial [s] followed by a consonant. Repeat and imitate the speaker's pronunciation.

🔊	steal	[sti:l]
	sky	[skaɪ]
	smoke	[sməʊk]
	snore	[snɔ:]
	sphere	[sfɪə]

Note that the same applies when the word starts with an initial [s] followed by two consonants, as for example *strong*. No [e] vowel should be produced before the [s].

Listen to the following words produced with an initial [s] followed by two consonants. Repeat and imitate the speaker's pronunciation.

strong	[strɒŋ]
screw	[skru:]
square	[skweə]
spray	[spreɪ]
splash	[splæʃ]

### Ear training

#### Exercise 1

Listen to the following words which start with an [s] followed by one or two consonants, as shown in the transcription. Indicate whether the words are produced with the right pronunciation ([s]+consonant/s) or the wrong one ([es]+consonant/s). Tick your answer.

Example:	smart [smɑ:t]	✓ right	wrong
1. street	[stri:t]	right	wrong
2. slice	[slais]	right	wrong
3. story	['sto:ri]	right	wrong
4. sport	[spɔ:t]	right	wrong
5. straight	[streɪt]	right	wrong
6. snail	[sneɪl]	right	wrong
7. small	[smɔ:l]	right	wrong
8. stew	[stju:]	right	wrong

### B

When there are two Cs at the start of a syllable:

- if the first C is /s/, the second C can be any of these: /f/, /k/, /l/, /m/, /p/, /t/, /w/, /j/.
- if the first C is any sound other than /s/, the second C can only be one of these: /l/, /t/, /w/, /j/.

When there are three Cs at the start of a syllable:

- the first C is always /s/.

You may find some of these syllables with more than one C at the beginning difficult to say.

Listen to these examples.

#### B16

/s/ + C: spell stairs sleep small snack swim

C + /l/, /t/, /w/ or /j/: blue fly dress ground quick swim view tune

/s/ + CC: spring strange square scream

### C

When there are two or more Cs at the beginning of a syllable, many learners add a V before the first C or between the Cs. Be careful!

- If you add a V before the first C, you may get a different word. For example, if you add a vowel before *sleep*, it may become *asleep*.
- If you add a V between the Cs, you may get a different word. For example, if you add a vowel between /s/ and /p/ in *sport*, it becomes *support*.

## [v] sound

### ● ● ● TIP 22. English [v] [f]

#### Common mistake

🔊 ☺ ferry [ˈfɛəri]  
very [ˈberi]

#### Expected pronunciation

🔊 ferry [ˈfɛəri]  
very [ˈveri]

#### Description

[f] is the sound produced at the beginning of the English words *ferry*, *fine*, and *four*. Spanish speakers do not have any problems in producing this sound which is the same one as the Spanish sound at the beginning of *faro*.

[v] is the voiced counterpart of [f] and it is found in English at the beginning of the words *very*, *visit* and *voice*. In Spanish, words spelt with a «v» letter are produced with [b], as for example *visita* [biˈsita]. Thus, the most common mistake for Spanish speakers is to produce the English word *very* as [ˈberi]. In order to pronounce [v], Spanish speakers should utter a long [f] and then start singing in the middle. The ending sound would be [v]. It is very important for Spanish speakers to make sure that they produce [v] when

120

necessary, otherwise they may be subject to misunderstandings since *very* [ˈveri] contrasts with *berry* [ˈberi].

Listen to a few words containing [f] and [v]. Repeat and imitate the speaker's pronunciation.

🔊 few	[fju:]	view	[vju:]
fat	[fæt]	vat	[væt]
fail	[feɪl]	veil	[veɪl]
fan	[fæn]	van	[væn]
fairy	[ˈfeəri]	vary	[ˈveəri]



Example: ✓ bet [bet]      vet [vet]

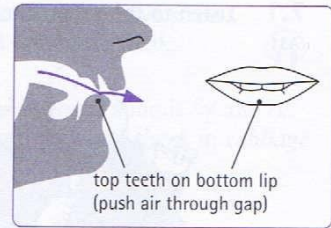
- |    |       |         |       |         |
|----|-------|---------|-------|---------|
| 1. | best  | [best]  | vest  | [vest]  |
| 2. | by    | [baɪ]   | vie   | [vaɪ]   |
| 3. | bolt  | [bɔʊlt] | volt  | [vɔʊlt] |
| 4. | bow   | [baʊ]   | vow   | [vaʊ]   |
| 5. | boat  | [bəʊt]  | vote  | [vəʊt]  |
| 6. | bowel | [baʊəl] | vowel | [vaʊəl] |
| 7. | bent  | [bent]  | vent  | [vent]  |
| 8. | bat   | [bæt]   | vat   | [væt]   |

# 8

## Few, view

### The consonant sounds /f/ and /v/

- A** **A35a** • Listen to the two sounds /f/ and /v/. Look at the mouth diagram to see how to make these consonant sounds. Notice that in the sound /f/, there is no voice from the throat, and when you say this sound, you can feel the air on your hand when you put it in front of your mouth. In /v/, there is voice from the throat.

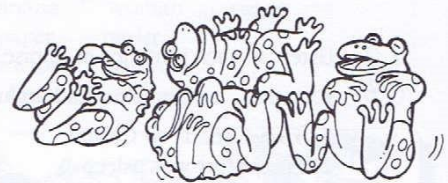


- B** **A35b** • Now listen to the sound /f/ on its own.

- A35c** • Listen to the target sound /f/ in the words below and compare it with the words on each side.

target /f/

view	few	view
leave	leaf	leave
three	free	three
copy	coffee	copy



"Frank found four frogs laughing on the floor."

- A35d** • Listen and repeat these examples of the target sound.

photo    fly    freeze  
offer    selfish    gift  
knife    stuff    laugh

- C** **A36a** • Listen to the sound /v/ on its own.

- A36b** • Listen to the target sound /v/ in the words below and compare it with the words on each side.

target /v/

ferry	very	ferry
best	vest	best
wet	vet	wet
than	van	than



"Vera drove to Venice in a van."

- A36c** • Listen and repeat these examples of the target sound.

visa    vote    voice  
river    wives    loved  
wave    twelve    of

## [i:] and [ɪ] sounds

### ● ● ● TIP 3. Spanish [i] vs. English [i:] [ɪ]

#### Common mistake

🔊 <u>deep</u>	[dɪp]
dip	[dɪp]

#### Expected pronunciation

🔊 <u>deep</u>	[di:p]
dip	[dɪp]

#### Description

English has two vowels of an i-type, [i:] and [ɪ], which differ both in quality and duration. The most common mistake for Spanish speakers is to pronounce both sounds with a Spanish [i] vowel, thus making the words *deep* and *dip* undistinguishable for an English speaker. Again students of English should try to overcome this problem if they want to avoid misunderstandings.

#### [i:]

The production of English [i:] should not be a big problem for a Spanish speaker since English [i:] and Spanish [i] are almost identical in quality. The

only aspect Spanish speakers have to pay attention to when uttering this sound is to make it longer than their usual Spanish [i].

Listen to a few words containing [i:]. Repeat and imitate the speaker's pronunciation.

🔊 <u>please</u>	[pli:z]
treat	[tri:t]
niece	[ni:s]
<u>degree</u>	[drɪ'gri:]
meat	[mi:t]

## [ɪ]

English [ɪ] is much shorter than [i:] and its quality is nearer to Spanish [e] than to Spanish [i]. Thus, Spanish speakers should be aware that if they want to produce an English [ɪ] they should try to make it sound closer to the vowel of the Spanish word *mes* than to the vowel of *mis*.

Compare the pronunciation of the following words in the two languages. Note that the vowel of English *miss* is closer to that of Spanish *mes* than to that of Spanish *mis*. Also note that English [e] is more open than Spanish [e] even though the same symbol is used in transcription (see tip 2 for more details).

Compare the pronunciation of the following words in the two languages.

🔊	Spanish	mis	[mis]	English	miss	[mɪs]
		mes	[mes]		mess	[mes]

Listen to a few words containing [ɪ]. Repeat and imitate the speaker's pronunciation.

🔊	bin	[bɪn]
	six	[sɪks]
	lip	[lɪp]
	river	['rɪvə]
	rhythm	['rɪðəm]

Now listen to the following sets of English words which illustrate the contrast between [i:], [ɪ] and [e]. Repeat and imitate the speaker's pronunciation.

🔊	read	[ri:d]	rid	[rɪd]	red	[red]
	cheek	[tʃi:k]	chick	[tʃɪk]	check	[tʃek]
	beater	['bi:tə]	bitter	['bɪtə]	better	['betə]

Finally listen to a few words containing [i:], [ɪ], [e] and [ɜ:]. Repeat and imitate the speaker's pronunciation.

🔊	teen	[ti:n]	tin	[tɪn]	ten	[ten]	turn	[tɜ:n]
	bean	[bi:n]	bin	[bɪn]	Ben	[ben]	burn	[bɜ:n]
	Pete	[pi:t]	pit	[pɪt]	pet	[pet]	pert	[pɜ:t]

Note the different pronunciation of the words *this* and *these*.

this	[ðɪs]
these	[ði:z]

## Common spellings

[i:]	«ee»	meet	[mi:t]
	«ea»	read	[ri:d]
	«ie»	piece	[pi:s]
	«i»	machine	[məʃi:n]
	«e»	theme	[θi:m]
[ɪ]	«i»	trip	[trɪp]
	«y»	hymn	[hɪm]
	«e»	reflect	[rɪˈflekt]

## Ear training

### Exercise 1

Listen to the pronunciation of the following words and decide whether they are produced with [i:] or [ɪ]. Tick your answer.

Example: silly [i:]    ✓ [ɪ]

- |     |                  |      |     |
|-----|------------------|------|-----|
| 1.  | P <u>et</u> er   | [i:] | [ɪ] |
| 2.  | be <u>as</u> t   | [i:] | [ɪ] |
| 3.  | str <u>ee</u> t  | [i:] | [ɪ] |
| 4.  | dr <u>ill</u>    | [i:] | [ɪ] |
| 5.  | mil <u>k</u>     | [i:] | [ɪ] |
| 6.  | bee              | [i:] | [ɪ] |
| 7.  | king             | [i:] | [ɪ] |
| 8.  | que <u>en</u>    | [i:] | [ɪ] |
| 9.  | re <u>le</u> ase | [i:] | [ɪ] |
| 10. | mir <u>or</u>    | [i:] | [ɪ] |

### Exercise 2 ✕

Look at the following words and listen to the pronunciation of only *one* of them. Tick the word that is produced.

Example: beat [bi:t]    ✓ bit [bɪt]    bet [bet]

- |     |               |         |      |        |        |        |
|-----|---------------|---------|------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1.  | neat          | [ni:t]  | nit  | [nɪt]  | net    | [net]  |
| 2.  | peak          | [pi:k]  | pick | [pɪk]  | peck   | [pek]  |
| 3.  | seat          | [si:t]  | sit  | [sɪt]  | set    | [set]  |
| 4.  | P <u>e</u> te | [pi:t]  | pit  | [pɪt]  | pet    | [pet]  |
| 5.  | heel          | [hi:l]  | hill | [hɪl]  | hell   | [hel]  |
| 6.  | lead          | [li:d]  | lid  | [lɪd]  | led    | [led]  |
| 7.  | reach         | [ri:tʃ] | rich | [rɪtʃ] | wretch | [retʃ] |
| 8.  | feel          | [fi:l]  | fill | [fɪl]  | fell   | [fel]  |
| 9.  | meal          | [mi:l]  | mill | [mɪl]  | Mel    | [mel]  |
| 10. | Neil          | [ni:l]  | nil  | [nɪl]  | Nell   | [nel]  |

## [u:] and [ʊ] sounds

### ● ● ● TIP 5. Spanish [u] vs. English [u:] [ʊ]

#### Common mistake

🔊 fool [fu:l]  
full [fu]

#### Expected pronunciation

🔊 fool [fu:l]  
full [fu]

#### Description

English has two vowels with an u-type of quality, [u:] and [ʊ]. Similar to the [i:] and [ɪ] and the [ɔ:] and [ɒ] pairs, the u-vowels differ both in quality and duration. A common mistake for Spanish speakers is to pronounce *fool* and *full* with the same vowel quality (Spanish [u]). This may cause misunderstandings with English speakers since it is not clear whether the word [fu] means «fool» or «full». Therefore, it is important for Spanish speakers both to perceive and produce the two vowel qualities.

#### [u:]

[u:] is similar to the Spanish [u] but is much longer than the Spanish sound. Spanish speakers should produce English [u:] as a Spanish [u] but they should lengthen its duration.

Listen to a few words containing [u:]. Repeat and imitate the speaker's pronunciation.

🔊	moon	[mu:n]
	route	[ru:t]
	blue	[blu:]
	ruler	['ru:lə]
	crew	[kru:]

### [ʊ]

English [ʊ] has a shorter duration than [u:]. Its quality is between Spanish [u] and [e]. In order to get an idea of how this sound should be uttered, Spanish speakers can try to produce a long Spanish [u] and in the middle open their mouth a bit and slightly relax their lips so as to have a bit less of lip rounding.

Listen to a few words containing [ʊ]. Repeat and imitate the speaker's pronunciation.

🔊	good	[gʊd]
	wolf	[wʊlf]
	put	[pʊt]
	woman	['wʊmən]
	took	[tʊk]

Now compare the pronunciation of pairs of words containing [u:] and [ʊ]. Repeat and imitate the speaker's pronunciation.

🔊	Luke	[lu:k]	look	[lʊk]
	wood	[wu:d]	would	[wʊd]
	boule	[bu:l]	bull	[bʊl]
	pooling	['pu:lɪŋ]	pulling	['pʊlɪŋ]
	woof ( <i>thread</i> )	[wu:f]	woof ( <i>dog's bark</i> )	[wʊf]

## Common spellings

[u:]	«oo»	goose	[gu:s]
	«ue»	clue	[klu:]
	«wo»	two	[tu:]
	«ew»	screw	[skru:]
	«u»	rumour	[ˈru:mə]
	«ui»	fruit	[fru:t]
[ʊ]	«oo»	cook	[kʊk]
	«u»	put	[pʊt]
	«ou»	could	[kʊd]

## Ear training

### 🎧 Exercise 1

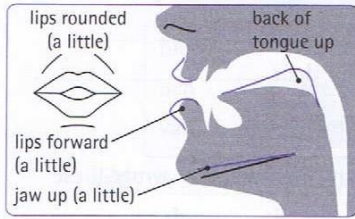
Listen to the pronunciation of the following words and decide whether they are produced with [u:] or [ʊ]. Tick your answer. Note that all words are spelt with double «o» («oo»). Thus, students cannot rely on the spelling to differentiate between the two sounds.

Example: cook [u:] ✓ [ʊ]

1. spoon [u:] [ʊ]
2. book [u:] [ʊ]
3. food [u:] [ʊ]
4. foot [u:] [ʊ]
5. brook [u:] [ʊ]
6. wool [u:] [ʊ]
7. wood [u:] [ʊ]
8. tool [u:] [ʊ]
9. proof [u:] [ʊ]
10. tooth [u:] [ʊ]

**B**

- A85a • Listen to the sound /ʊ/. Look at the mouth diagram to see how to make this short vowel sound.
- A85b • Listen to the target sound /ʊ/ in the words below and compare it with the words on each side.
- A85c • Then listen and repeat the examples of the target sound.



target /ʊ/

luck	look	Luke
pool	pull	Paul

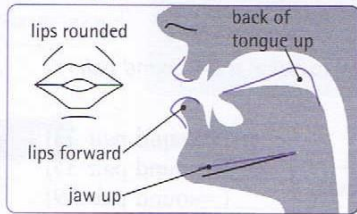
**Examples**

full good foot  
wolf would put

"That cook couldn't cook if he didn't look at a cook book."

**C**

- A86a • Listen to the sound /u:/. Look at the mouth diagram to see how to make this long vowel sound.
- A86b • Listen to the target sound /u:/ in the words below and compare it with the words on each side.
- A86c • Then listen and repeat the examples of the target sound.



target /u:/

full	fool	fall
road	rude	rod
but	boot	boat

**Examples**

shoe shoes shoot  
new lose soup

"Sue knew too few new tunes on the flute."

Important  
for listening

Many words which have /j/ before /u:/ in British English don't in American English. Compare: *news* /nju:z/ - *news* /nu:z/, *tune* /tju:n/ - *tune* /tu:n/.

**D**

Notes on spelling: If there is an R after the letter U (and the R does not have a vowel after it), U has a different pronunciation. (See Unit 19.)



## 7.5. Appendix 5 – Test 2 – Final test

### 1 – Read out loud the following words:

Advantage [ɪ]	Gig [ɪ]	Version [ɪ]	Citizen [ɪ][ɪ]	Speech [i:]
Humanity [u:] [ɪ] [i]	Hobby [ɪ]	Environment [ɪ]	Villain [ɪ]	Healthy [i]
Screen [i:]	Treat [i:]	Annoyed [ɪ]	Sting [ɪ]	Sporting [ɪ]
Bully [ʊ] [i]	Beach [i:]	Feet [i:]	Headline [ɪ]	Headphones [ɪ]
Myth [ɪ]	Authentic [ɪ]	Whistle [ɪ]	Scarecrow [ɪ]	Visit [ɪ] [ɪ]
Revelation [ɪ]	Tune [u:]	Fool [u:]	Snowboarding [ɪ]	Full [ʊ]
Hit [ɪ]	Ageing [ɪ]	Spit [ɪ]	Hook [ʊ]	Hold [ɪ]

### 2 – Now read the following sentences:

- I love your garden. The roses smell lovely.  
[ɪ] [i]
- I have been studying classical ballet for ten months.  
[i:] [ɪ] [ɪ]
- All three charities are trying to help people in developing countries.  
[i:] [ɪ][i] [ɪ] [i:] [ɪ] [ɪ] [ɪ] [i]
- We've been practising our dance steps since we heard about the audition.  
[i:] [i] [ɪ] [ɪ] [ɪ] [i:] [ɪ] [ɪ]
- Dancers have to pay taxes and social security to the government and also a fee to their agent.  
[ɪ] [ɪ] [ɪ][i] [i:]

**3 – Read the following text trying to respect all the punctuation marks.**

Graham Greene was born on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1904. He studied history at the University of  
[i:] [i] [I] [I] [i] [u:] [I] [I] [i]  
Oxford. He graduated in 1925 and then worked as a freelance editor, notably for *The*  
[i] [ɒ] [I] [I] [i:] [I] [I]  
*Times* and *The Spectator*. He also travelled extensively. While he was working as an  
[i] [I] [I] [i] [i] [I]  
editor, he published his first novel, *The Man Within*, and decided to become a novelist.  
[I] [i] [I] [I] [I] [I] [I] [I] [I] [I]  
Greene's success came later with the publication of *Stamboul Train* in 1932. By then, he  
[i:] [I] [I] [u:] [I] [i]  
had already written three novels and had published a collection of poems. During the  
[i] [I] [i:] [I] [I]  
war years (1939-45), Graham Greene lived in West Africa, working as a secret  
[i:] [I] [I] [I] [I] [i:] [I]  
intelligence officer for the British government. Greene was a prolific writer of novels,  
[I] [I] [I] [I] [I] [I] [I]  
travel books, plays and short stories. In addition, he used to adapt his books for films,  
[ɒ] [i] [I] [I] [i] [u:] [ɒ] [I] [ɒ] [I]  
including the classic *The Third Man*. He was still writing at the time of his death in 1991.  
[I] [u:] [I] [I] [i] [I] [I] [I] [I]

**4 – Make an introduction of your best friend or somebody you know really well. Here there are listed some of the things you can say:**

Name

Age

Where does he/she live

Studies

Hobbies

Like/Dislike

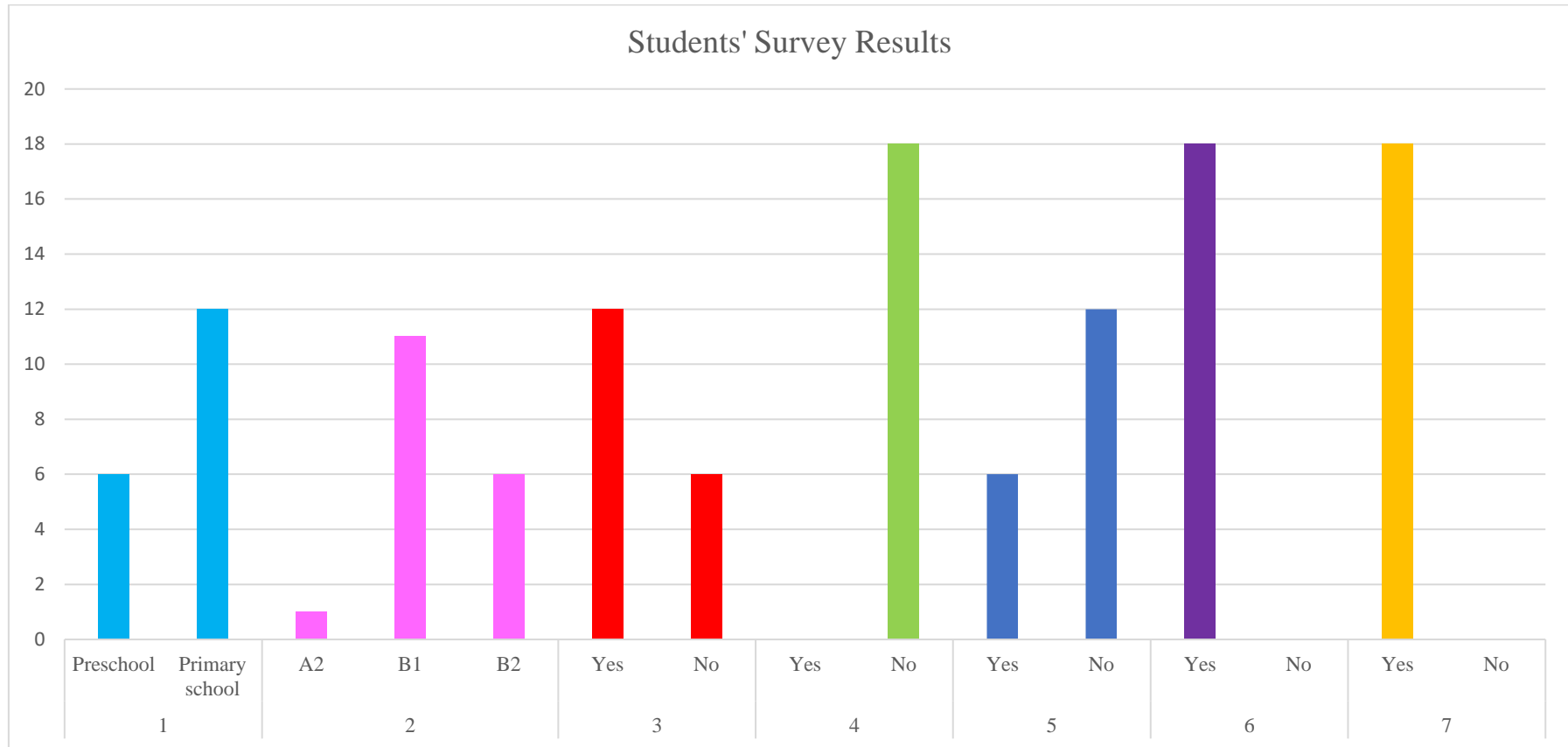
Future plans

Friends

Family + Pets

Others...

### 7.6. Appendix 6 – Students’ Survey Results



### 7.7. Appendix 7 – Teachers’ Survey Results

