

SYSTEMATIC REVIEW ARTICLE

A general guide to the teaching-learning of suprasegmental features (stress and rhythm) of English pronunciation in a Spanish secondary education bilingual context

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RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza la importancia de la enseñanza de la pronunciación en la adquisición del inglés como segunda lengua, que ha ido ganando importancia con el tiempo en relación con diferentes metodologías y enfoques pedagógicos. Sin embargo, los rasgos suprasegmentales (especialmente la acentuación y el ritmo) no siempre han recibido la atención que merecen, teniendo en cuenta que el objetivo principal del aprendizaje de una lengua es la comunicación eficaz. Además, se ha demostrado que estas características desempeñan un papel crucial en la inteligibilidad. No obstante, los métodos, estrategias y materiales más eficaces para enseñar la acentuación y el ritmo siguen siendo objeto de investigación. Por tanto, el objetivo principal es explorar la importancia de estas características de la pronunciación para desarrollar estrategias eficaces y prácticas para su uso en el aula. Este proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje se guiará por la metodología del Aprendizaje Integrado de Contenidos y Lengua Extranjera (AICLE), sin perder de vista el enfoque integrador adaptado a las necesidades del alumnado de la educación secundaria bilingüe.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Pronunciación;
Rasgos
suprasegmentales;
Acentuación;
Ritmo;
Contexto bilingüe

ABSTRACT

This article examines the importance of teaching pronunciation in the acquisition of English as a second language, which has been gaining importance over time in relation to different teaching methodologies and approaches. However, suprasegmental features (especially stress and rhythm) have not always received the attention they deserve, considering that the main aim of learning a language is effective communication. Furthermore, it is proven that these features play a crucial role in intelligibility. Nevertheless, the most effective methods, strategies, and materials for teaching stress and rhythm are still subjects of ongoing research. Therefore, the main aim is to explore the significance of these pronunciation features to develop effective and practical strategies for classroom use. This teaching and learning process will be guided by the methodology of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), without losing the focus of an integrative approach tailored to the needs of students in bilingual secondary education.

KEYWORDS

Pronunciation;
Suprasegmental
features;
Stress;
Rhythm;
Bilingual context

1. Introduction

Nowadays, English is acknowledged to be the most widely spoken language in the world. In fact, "one out of five people can speak or at least understand English" (Nishanthi, 2018, p. 871). According to this author, the main driver of this fact was British imperialism and the dissemination of English throughout the colonies, which shows that these days "67 countries have English as their official language and there are 27 countries that have English as their secondary official language" (Nishanthi, 2018, p. 871). Consequently, it is impossible to ignore its significance in many aspects of our daily life: understanding other cultures, acquiring new knowledge, engaging in business, travelling, and education, among others. Thus, learning English can now be seen not just as a benefit, but as a necessity. In this context, according to Lorenzo et al. (2009), many European countries have begun to implement the pedagogical approach called Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) due to the importance of

developing language competence, particularly in English, alongside disciplinary content mastery. Moreover, they would argue that

most European states are currently implementing bilingual type programmes in national education. The abundance of new initiatives suggests that this represents more than just a quantitative increase of second language provision in schools. The change now is pervasive and the foundations appear to be set for European multilingualism—the social phenomenon of multiple languages in social groups, and European plurilingualism—an ample language repertoire amongst a majority of individuals, which should enable students not only to *savoir* but also to *savoir faire* and *savoir être* in a reconfigured continental environment. (pp. 418-419)

Although CLIL has proved to offer students and teachers a wide range of positive outcomes, such as “necessary linguistic support to students, facilitation in the learning of content, and consolidation of the linguistic structures of the language of instruction and of other languages” (Pavón, 2014, p. 124), there is a language area that is often overlooked: pronunciation. In Spain, educational legislation concerning the teaching of EFL/ESL does not address how pronunciation and its teaching and learning process should be guided, leaving this responsibility to teachers (Fernández and Hughes, 2009). Furthermore, these scholars also highlight that, in the field of pronunciation, practice is often centred on repeating individual sounds at the segmental level, and the same approach is applied to the practice of longer segments at the suprasegmental level. Consequently, students may struggle to effectively develop the “key competence of oral communication and spoken interaction” (Fernández and Hughes, 2009, p. 105).

There should be no division between the importance of segmental and suprasegmental features, as pronunciation should be seen as an integrated aspect of the language rather than two separate elements. That said, it is also true that “native listeners rely on stress patterns much more than on segmental features and that incorrect stress patterns will render the speaker’s utterance unintelligible even if the speaker has appropriate consonant production” (Wang, 2022, p. 194). This area of pronunciation is often overlooked because, as Hussain and Sajid (2015) note, EFL teachers find suprasegmental features challenging, both to teach and learn, despite knowing their crucial role in communication, and therefore they treat them as “peripheral frills” (p. 3).

In light of the above, this research will focus on assessing and developing didactic strategies and tools mainly based on the practice and teaching of the prosodic features of stress and rhythm in a bilingual context, addressed to secondary education, with the necessary adaptations for each level. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) will serve as the primary pedagogical approach, as it is currently the most widely implemented in bilingual education settings. First, we will address the importance of pronunciation in the EFL/ESL teaching context, the beneficial influences it may exert on learners, and the issues and challenges that arise when it is not taught and learnt effectively, particularly regarding intelligibility in communication. Moving on to a more detailed analysis of pronunciation, we will also highlight the significance of the target suprasegmental features of this paper, stress and rhythm, in the acquisition of ESL/EFL, for they are tightly connected to oral

comprehension and intelligible spoken production, or, in other words, successful communication.

2. Importance of teaching-learning pronunciation

Any human language might be acquired and transmitted through speech or writing. In the natural process of learning a language, we are first exposed to oral input and, therefore, listening and speaking skills precede reading and writing (Crystal, 2019). This procedure is also extended in the teaching of English as a second language and, therefore, one of the main factors that should be considered is the acquisition of a major “intelligible” pronunciation. As Hişmanoğlu (2006) has observed, “since sounds play an important role in communication, foreign language teachers must attribute proper importance to teaching pronunciation in their classes” (p. 102). Moreover, Wang (2022) supports the former by asserting that “suprasegmentals should be given priority in PI [pronunciation instruction] as they have a greater impact on intelligibility” (p. 195).

However, it is commonly acknowledged that EFL/ESL teachers have not focused enough on the explicit teaching of pronunciation in the classroom despite being fostered by the current curriculum. Some scholars, such as Brown (1991), point out that “pronunciation has sometimes been referred to as the ‘poor relation’ of the English language teaching (ELT) world. It is an aspect of language which is often given little attention, if not completely ignored, by the teacher in the classroom” (p. 1).

As a consequence of their inadequate pronunciation, it is found that most students do not feel confident when uttering the language in order to avoid mistakes. This may lead to reluctance to speak up in class (Prodanovska-Poposka, 2017) and, as a result, to a standstill in their development of oral production. Moreover, their main objective of learning the language to communicate would be unsuccessful. Another problem is that teachers encounter a lack of available resources they can trust in the classroom as for the purpose of teaching pronunciation.

According to Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994), pronunciation can be defined in two different ways: on the one hand, “as the production and reception of sounds of speech” (p. 3) and, on the other hand, pronunciation can be understood in relation to acts of speaking, which involve the speaker’s intention and its effect on the hearer. In this way, sound production is “significant because it is used to achieve meaning in contexts of use” (p. 3). Additionally, Taylor (2002) asserts that “the phonology of a language is grounded in the human ability to produce, perceive, and above all, categorize sounds, and to form mental representations of sounds” (pp. 79-80). From all this, we should conclude that the main goal of learning pronunciation is successful oral communication in the target language, which is English in our case. For an English utterance to be understood, Jenner (1989) proposed a set of features common to all native speakers that enable them to communicate despite having different accents. Therefore, these are the main principles, which he termed “Common Core”, that any EFL student should consider for the sake of intelligibility:

- The distinction between long and short vowels.

- If there is no correspondence between the phoneme of a consonant in English and any of the source language, the student should associate it to a similar sound in their own language.
- The phonetic production is another strategy to achieve a correct pronunciation. As a result, the student attempts to pronounce a similar sound in their mother tongue, although sometimes it might not lead to success and lead to unintelligible chunks instead.
- Students tend to simplify consonant clusters.
- Coordination of stress in speech is important for the distinction of weak and strong forms, for example dealing with vowels sounds.
- Speech cannot be interrupted randomly, so rhythm is also considered in the production of the language.
- Contrastive stress, a key aspect of English, together with a correct intonation are essential for the accurate meaning of the utterance.

Teachers should concentrate on addressing these seven points so that students can attain full communicative competence. In fact, according to Wong (1993), students often make mistakes because they expect a one-to-one correspondence between sounds and their spelling, as their approach to pronunciation has not been sufficiently addressed in the classroom. Furthermore, this scholar claims that encouraging learners to work on their English pronunciation will positively influence and support other skills such as grammar, spelling, listening comprehension, and reading.

2. Importance of the teaching-learning of pronunciation

In bilingual secondary education schools, the recommended approach is CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning). Since most regulations in Spain are regional, two online regulations will be used as references. These are the *Andalusian Information Guide for Bilingual Education Centres* (2013) and the Resolution issued for implementing the CLIL programme in the Canary Islands for the 2024-2025 academic year. According to both, the main features characterising this methodological approach (CLIL) in classroom implementation are:

- Usage of methodological strategies that foster functional and integrated learning. These strategies include Project-Based Learning (PBL), the design of school projects involving the entire educational community, as well as cooperative and collaborative learning, and Task-Based Learning (TBL).
- The teaching process is student-focused, relevant to them, and involves applying the L2 to the study of other subjects. This will depend on the level and goals of the teaching-learning process, but the main aim is to teach and learn both the L2 and the target subject in an integrated manner.
- Lessons are contextualised within the subject taught, dealing with a specific topic that links English linguistic skills to the subject's area. This implies that teachers from different subjects need to cooperate to work collaboratively.
- Usage of different materials and resources, especially TICs.

- Lesson plans are organised regarding the joint ideas among the subjects or disciplines, their integration and common core elements.
- As for the role of teachers, CLIL promotes teamwork, and it contributes to the pooling of ideas to develop activities and techniques.
- It considers the difficulties that learning a subject in the L2 might entail for students. This would explain the use of different tools for planning the learning process, as well as the integration of multiple situations where content is revised and repeated to reinforce learning.

Nowadays, most of our current methodologies and approaches to EFL teaching are based on those developed at the end of the 20th century. The principles of Content-Based Instruction (CBI) are heavily rooted in the principles of the Communicative Approach, which is also closely related to CLIL since both consider (Jaén, 2016) the following elements:

- The integration of language and content throughout the process of language acquisition, as well as the integration of the four skills is of paramount importance in both principles.
- The use of language in context, that is, in a way that is useful and didactic to students, for example, in relation to another subject, for the study of cultural aspects, etc. Therefore, this will foster learners' motivation.
- The role of the student as essential in the context of the classroom.
- The integration of authentic material for a successful and satisfactory learning process.

Nevertheless, there are other factors that differ between CBI and CLIL. Dalton-Puffer and Smit (2013) point out that, frequently, CLIL teachers are usually non-native speakers, as opposed to CBI teachers. However, CLIL encourages the cooperation and coordination between the content teacher (of the target subject) and the language teacher (English) for those aspects that learners might find more difficult. Moreover, in these programs, language assistants play a crucial role, particularly in helping content and language teachers develop areas such as vocabulary and, more importantly to this article, pronunciation.

Conversely, the fact that the importance of bilingual instruction lies in content over form implies that aspects such as syntax, writing, informal or non-technical language, pronunciation, or pragmatics remain unaffected or indeterminate by CLIL (Dalton-Puffer, 2007, p. 5). This reinforces the previous ideas discussed in section 2., "Importance of the Teaching-Learning of Pronunciation": the insufficient attention given to teaching pronunciation, despite clear evidence that it is vital for intelligibility, communication, and successful English oral production.

Based on research by Rallo and Jacob (2015), a group of FI students and another group of CLIL students were examined in terms of "temporal measures of fluency along with phonemic errors" (p. 173). These were the results:

The results of the vowel error analysis showed that CLIL learners' pronunciation of English vowels was not significantly better than their FI peers'. Neither group of learners showed any improvement after 2 years of CLIL-based instruction. These results raise the question of whether 2 years of content-based instruction are sufficient to have a direct impact on learners' pronunciation. Furthermore, it should be highlighted that CLIL instruction in this case does not include specific activities to

enhance students' discrimination of English sound contrasts or activities aimed at practicing pronunciation. (p. 174)

Therefore, considering the above outcomes, in both contexts, students' needs mainly focus on practising and learning pronunciation, along with increasing the time and quality dedicated to oral input in the classroom. Consequently, the strategies and tools developed in this research will incorporate these suggestions to apply the most effective techniques and tasks for the acquisition of ESL pronunciation in the bilingual classroom.

3. Stress and rhythm in English communication

According to Solé (1991), the teaching of English pronunciation has traditionally focused on the study of segmental features, that is, phonetic or phonological details such as phoneme sequences or contrasts. Therefore, the aspects of the suprasegmental level—such as stress, rhythm, and intonation—along with larger speech units like whole words, phrases, or sentences, have been neglected and deemed less significant.

To deconstruct the previous idea and explain why, we will analyse in this section the roles of stress and rhythm in relation to English communicative purposes, emphasising their importance, characteristics in context, and how they influence intelligibility for ESL learners, particularly Spanish students. An initial statement made by Solé (1991) is that

[a]n appropriate stress and rhythmic pattern is more important for intelligibility than the correct pronunciation of isolated segments and, in fact, stress and rhythm determine the pronunciation of segments in English. Stress and rhythm are suprasegmental aspects that give the overall shape to the word or sequence. If easy intelligibility is to be achieved, it is important to give words their correct accentual pattern and rhythm. (p. 145)

Building on this same area of research, it has also been demonstrated that teaching prosodic or suprasegmental aspects to improve listening and speaking skills with communicative goals promotes students' mastery and confidence in SLA contexts (Zhang, 2004). Simultaneously, this facilitates the acquisition of appropriate verbal communication skills, which are accompanied by a good level of intelligibility.

First of all, both stress and rhythm are prosodic features that shape the form of words or sequences of words, meaning they are the "backbone of English pronunciation" (Solé, 1991, p. 147). Pavón (2017) further explains this by stating that stress and rhythm are crucial elements in pronunciation because they affect syllables and the sounds that make up spoken language syllables.

4.1 Stress or accentuation

Regarding stress or accentuation, the primary elements of these suprasegmentals are pitch and stress, alongside quality and duration (Finch & Ortiz Lira, 1982):

- Pitch is defined as the degree of highness or lowness of a note from a perception perspective, while, articulatorily (referring to production), it involves the tension and the way the vocal folds vibrate when producing the sound.
- Stress, also known as intensity according to Collins and Mees (2013), from the speaker's perspective, involves the energy used to produce a sound, requiring greater effort to release air from the lungs. From the listener's point of view, this results in what is perceived as loudness, which can vary from soft to loud.
- Quality relates to how the resonators shape the breath when it is spoken, leading to modifications in the sound's quality. This explains why we perceive two sounds with the same pitch but differing in duration and stress.
- Duration, quality or length refers to "the property of the sound that enables us [...] to place it on a scale going from long to short" (Finch & Ortiz Lira, 1982, p. 88).

Phonetically, the realisation of segments will be directly linked to the stress position, for instance in the case of vowel quality: in a stressed syllable, the vowel will preserve its full vowel quality whereas in an unstressed position, the vowel quality will be reduced to /ə/ or the reduced vowels /i/, /u/ (Solé, 1991). For example, this would be the case of emission /ɪ'mɪʃən/ regarding its first and last unstressed syllable, or the distinction between record as a noun: /'rɛkɔ:rd/ or as a verb: /rɪ'kɔ:rd/.

Table 2. Characteristics of stressed and unstressed syllables.

	<i>Stressed</i>	<i>Unstressed</i>
1 Intensity	Articulation with greater breath/muscular effort Perceived as greater loudness	Less breath/muscular effort Perceived as having less loudness
2 Pitch	Marked change in pitch	Syllables tend to follow the pitch trend set by previous stressed syllable
3 Vowel quality	May contain any vowel (except /ə/) Vowels have clear (peripheral) quality Diphthongs have clearly defined glide	Generally have central vowels /ə ɪ ʊ/ or syllabic consonants Vowels may have centralised quality Diphthongs tend to have a much reduced glide
4 Vowel duration	Vowels have full length	Vowels are considerably shorter

Note. Retrieved from *Practical Phonetics and Phonology*, by Collins and Mees, 2013, p. 130. Routledge.

As Collins and Mees (2013) indicate, different types of stress in a word can be distinguished: primary, which is the strongest and is marked by a vertical mark ['] placed just before the main stressed syllable (,expla'nation); the next level is secondary accent, which is weaker than primary stress but stronger than unstressed syllables and is indicated by this symbol [,], as seen in our example: ,expla'nation. Finally, lack of stress is not indicated, and these syllables are generally known as *unstressed*.

Ambalegin and Afriana (2023) claim that “English word stress is like English pronunciation that is inconsistent” (p. 24), because there are no fixed, established rules for students to learn. However, correct stress can be acquired and demonstrated through listening and practice, especially since Spanish is a syllable-timed language and English is a stress-timed language. For Spanish ESL students, stress does not come naturally; therefore, exposure to English speech production from both receptive (listening) and productive (speaking) perspectives is necessary.

4.2 Rhythm

According to Celce-Murcia et al. (1996), in order to perform the rhythm of an English utterance, word stress and sentence stress are combined. Therefore, it is argued that stress is highly rhythmical and tends to have a regular beat (Solé, 1991). Following Finch and Ortiz Lira (1982), rhythm can be defined as “the way in which accented and unaccented syllables follow each other in the utterance” (p. 115). These scholars also highlight that there is a principle to bear in mind when considering English rhythm, called isochrony or, in other words, equality in timing, which means that accented syllables are separated by equal time intervals. A consequence of this principle led Reed and Levis (2015) to classify languages into two groups: those with a stress-time rhythm, on the one hand, and those based on syllable-time rhythm, on the other.

Due to the reasons outlined above, English is recognised as a stress-timed language because accented syllables are separated by unaccented ones, and the time interval between each accented syllable remains roughly the same. For this to happen, unaccented syllables are compressed and sped up to maintain a regular rhythm and spacing between stressed syllables (Finch and Ortiz Lira, 1982). An example to illustrate this is the following sentences, where rhythm patterns (also known as “feet” or “rhythm units”) are marked with “□” for accented syllables and “_” for unaccented syllables (Pavón, 2017, p. 6):

'How many 'were there? → [□ _ _ □ _]

'How many more 'were there? → [□ _ _ _ □ _]

'How many more of those 'were there? → [□ _ _ _ _ □ _]

In all these sentences, the two words that are stressed are “how” and “were”, and the time taken to pronounce from the first one to the second one is roughly the same, although we encounter more unaccented syllables separating them in the last two examples.

Conversely, Spanish is regarded as a syllable-timed language since, in this case, “it is the syllables, either accented or unaccented, which tend to occur at a more or less regular intervals” (Finch & Ortiz Lira, 1982, p. 115). Thus, what characterises Spanish unstressed syllables is that they are weakened and shortened to a slight extent. In contrast, one feature derived from the English rhythmical principle of isochrony is the existence of full forms and weak forms. The former are “stressed for rhythmical, emphasising or contrastive reasons,” while the latter are “used when the word is unstressed and must be fitted between stresses”

(Solé, 1991, p. 155). For example, the auxiliary verb “do” in these examples can be stressed, maintaining its full form, or unstressed, which means it appears in its weak form.

'Yes, I 'do (stressed; full form: /du:/).

'What do you 'want? (unstressed; weak form: /də/).

In this context of the bilingual secondary school classroom, students will be guided to learn English from a global perspective, for that would encourage them to widely communicate when travelling abroad or meeting people from other countries. This implies that if “learners aspire towards a globalist orientation[,] then stress-based timing should be taught” (Low, 2015, p. 133). Nevertheless, instructors should also introduce the concepts of stress-based and syllable-based languages so that students can make their own decisions on how to approach English as an International Language: from a global or from a localist perspective (p. 134). At the same time, this will also help learners to understand the difference between the rhythm of their L1, Spanish, and the L2, English.

Given that rhythm is a vital feature for native English speakers, since their mother tongue is stress-based, Low argues that teachers should emphasise the practical implications when native speakers shift from stress-based to syllable-based timing to avoid misunderstandings in high-stakes cross-cultural communication, such as in educational or business contexts (p. 133). For that purpose, showing several examples of utterances in English and Spanish to illustrate the differences between both languages might help students, first, to recognise how speech varies between the languages; second, to practise English rhythm to modulate their voice correctly in the L2; third, to understand the pragmatic differences through different realisations of the same speech.

5. Pedagogical implications: factors and principles

Gilakjani (2012) claims that the first aspect to bear in mind for integrating English pronunciation into teaching and learning processes is how the curriculum addresses this issue. This means teachers need to clearly determine how they will develop their lesson plans and how students will work towards achieving the main goals outlined by the curriculum. According to this author, for a programme to be effective in emphasising the importance of pronunciation within the curriculum, these are the factors that should be considered:

1. Learners' profile, including aspects such as their age, their level, their educational context, their prior knowledge and experiences dealing with pronunciation acquisition and their motivation in the learning process.
2. Instructional settings are worth considering, which means whether we are dealing with a compulsory or optional classroom environment: language academy, school, university, or a specific job, for instance.
3. Institutional aspects are also relevant, including the previous instructor's experiences in the teaching environment, the curriculum's focus, the materials and equipment available for lesson development, and the size of the classroom, among other factors.

4. Another outstanding feature is the linguistic variables involved, namely the learner's mother tongue and whether there is diversity among the students in relation to this aspect.
5. The last variable relates to the methodology or approach that the program adopts.

Furthermore, recognising the lack of precision and uncertainty about how pronunciation should be integrated into the classroom, Levis and Grant (2003) propose a set of principles to guide teachers through this process. These principles are based on the idea that the main goal of teaching pronunciation, to be effective, must link speech features with their corresponding communicative functions rather than concentrating on irrelevant tasks or neglecting to provide context for their realisation.

The first principle they establish aims to focus on suprasegmental features, though not exclusively. This assertion was based on research by McNerney and Mendelsohn (1992), who argued that a good command of rhythm, stress, and intonation (suprasegmentals) is more influential for correct intelligibility than that of segmentals. Moreover, it is also believed that suprasegmentals are more prominent in speaking skills because they deal with connected speech and its meaning, rather than just isolated words.

The second principle entails primarily focusing the lesson on speaking skills. In this context, it is essential to consider that "a pronunciation syllabus should begin with the widest focus and move gradually in on specific problems" (Firth, 1992, p. 173). Furthermore, pronunciation is consistently understood and taught with an emphasis on speaking, for its production, and listening, for its acquisition. Additionally, it is important to recognise that learners often find it challenging to incorporate the newly learned pronunciation features into meaningful communication. Therefore, it is crucial to contextualise the primary didactic objectives of the lesson within the framework of oral communication (Levis and Grant, 2003).

The final principle deems the nature of speaking tasks to which students are exposed. If these are scheduled activities, such as presentations, they offer an appropriate opportunity to incorporate instructions related to the teaching and learning of pronunciation, given the need for extensive preparation. Conversely, if the tasks are based on spontaneous communication, meaning they are unplanned, learners should still receive guidance temporarily, and pronunciation should be regarded as a tool for effective utterance production. Overall, both formal, pre-planned activities and informal or more neutral, unplanned tasks should be supported by the teacher's guidance in pronunciation (Levis and Grant, 2003).

6. Strategies, tasks and materials for the teaching of stress and rhythm

Below, Morley (1991) provides an overview of the major changes in theoretical paradigms encountered across various methodologies and approaches in the teaching of ESL. They are:

- Firstly, the learner has become an active agent in the learning process, thus leading to a new understanding of the language acquisition process.

- The second change stems from the first and shifts the focus from “the group” during the teaching process to a more individual approach centred on personal strategies and customised learning styles.
- Another change involves shifting from viewing language solely as a formal system to seeing it as a combination of a formal and functional system. This approach highlights the communicative objective of the learning process, making it essential.
- New disciplines were introduced, such as pragmatics, semantics, discourse, and speech act theory. Consequently, the sole focus was no longer limited to sentence-level grammar.
- The focus shifted from instructional goals and linguistic structure to functional purpose and communicative objectives. Therefore, the primary aim was centred on communicative competence rather than purely linguistic aspects.
- The final modification pertains to the specific competences, which are focused on linguistic and pedagogical aspects, in contrast to the overarching or general competences outlined in previous stages. This revised conception encompasses grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competences.

This means that every aspect of the English teaching and acquisition process has been affected, including pronunciation, which remains our primary concern. This suggests that pronunciation is no longer taught as a set of fixed, established rules but as an integral part of communication. In fact, it is worth noting that the previous pronunciation coursebooks often focused mainly on sound discrimination related to segmental features (Wei, 2006). However, all elements essential for an accurate pronunciation pedagogy include, besides vowels and consonant phonemes, intonation, stress, and rhythm (that is, suprasegmental features).

Additionally, this section will primarily address material, tasks, and strategies associated with stress and rhythm. According to Firth (1992), these are some key questions necessary for selecting the appropriate material, both at word and sentence levels:

Can the students use loudness and length to differentiate between stressed and unstressed syllables? Can the student produce the schwa sound in unstressed syllables? Can the students use dictionaries to check stress patterns? [...] Is the student incorrectly stressing every word of a sentence equally? Is he/she able to produce appropriate strong and weak stresses? Are content words stressed and function words unstressed? Is the student placing major sentence stress on the appropriate words? Is the student linking words appropriately within sentences? (pp. 176-177)

Based on Fangzhi’s research (1998), Wei (2006) provided teachers some general advice on choosing materials to instruct learners’ pronunciation (p. 14):

1. “Providing meaningful materials”. This could include exercises contextualised in specific situations that entail an active participation of the students, for example: extracts of dialogues, pair words, etc., so that they feel their practice is relevant and useful to their process of acquiring English. Moreover, teachers can select different items of a wide variety of styles from the textbook they are using for the subject.

2. "Using songs, games and, tongue twisters". This is connected to the factor of motivation; the more entertaining and appealing the practice is to students, the more motivated they will be.
3. "Assessing students' progress". This will help maintain our students' motivation, not just by providing them with appropriate feedback, but also by appreciating and reminding them of every aspect they are successfully achieving.

As for specific strategies, tasks, and some illustrative examples dealing with stress and rhythm, Lin, Fan, and Chen (1995) made the following division (pp. 6-9):

1. Word stress, which included visual elements, rubber bands and tapping, clapping, or playing instruments in order to practice rhythm.
 - As for visual aspects, the stressed syllables could be highlighted using capital letters, in bold, underlining it or using a different colour from the rest of the syllables. For instance: *HOliday*, **h**oliday, holiday, *h*oliday.
 - When using the rubber band, students need to hold it with both hands, and the aim is to stretch it while pronouncing the stressed syllable of the word so that they can notice the difference between stressed and unstressed syllables.
 - The aim of clapping, tapping or using instruments is to emphasise the stressed syllables using these tools, thus giving them a strong beat which will be distinguished from the other syllables receiving a weaker beat. The sequence of stressed and unstressed syllables will also be marked by the rhythm they follow in their realisation.
2. Sentence stress. There are two main strategies:
 - The first step involves identifying content words, which will be taught by helping students understand the basic English pattern and demonstrating that content words usually receive the main stress. Afterwards, they will need to mark the words they believe are stressed, either by underlining or circling them, and emphasise these words when pronouncing the sentences.
 - The second strategy involves using rhymes when the rhythm of a sentence is introduced. For example: *Plicky Eater, FUssy Plicker.*
3. Linking. V. Pavón's frequently repeated class statement, "words go together like wagons on a train" (personal communication, 2017) must be clearly explained and conveyed to our students from the very beginning. There are various teaching techniques to demonstrate this, such as using visual depictions with pictures to connect words in a sentence or phrase, or curved lines to link words. For instance:

easy-peasy task   *or stand up* 

Jussain and Sajid (2015) propose other techniques for teaching suprasegmentals that can be quite helpful to students, such as "using nonsense syllables" to demonstrate complex intonation patterns, or to use slowing and speeding up speech as a method to enhance fluency; "back chaining" to practise the rhythm in connected speech, or "shadowing" so that learners attempt to follow the recorded voice and, as sound diminishes, they work independently (p. 4). This challenges students, as they are forced to keep up with the speed and fluency of native speakers.

Besides textbooks, sheets, and physical materials, we now rely on online resources due to technological advances, which offer a wide variety of materials and tasks for daily pronunciation teaching in the classroom. Referring back to stress and rhythm practice, this section will offer some examples.

Resources created by scholars such as Mark Hancock and Annie McDonald: <http://hancockmcdonald.com/>. Here, there are different sections where we can select the level of the students, the intended audience and the focus, which in our case will be pronunciation. The main advantage of this webpage is that all the resources are free, and there is open access to teachers' notes, images, audios, and video files. Besides, there is a brief description for each activity, so, for example, there is one called "Pronunciation Journey", addressed to A2 upwards level students, and the main points it tackles are:

- "Pronunciation: unstressed final syllables"
- "Distinguishing similar sounding words"

Another instance of exercise, intended for C1 level students, would be the one titled "Blues Band":

- "Listening Skills"
- "Music"
- "Authentic Listening"

Several online resources are provided by Oxford University Press: <https://elt.oup.com>. These materials are available for both learners and teachers. There is a section called "catalogue" where the level can be selected, the age of the students, the kind of accent (American or British), the skills we want to practice and the main focus of our interest (in our case, pronunciation). Once we choose the suitable options for our context, several options of apps courses and textbooks are given; some are free while others require special access available for teachers or can be bought. For example, we can select a pronunciation practice textbook called *New Headway Pronunciation Course: Upper-Intermediate* by Bill Bowler, Sarah Cunningham, Peter Moor and Sue Parminster (2002), and the key features that define it are:

- "Language Level: Elementary to Upper-Intermediate"
- "Sounds and spelling"
- "Stress and intonation"
- "Connected speech"

Authentic material based on real-life contexts can also be found. These resources are typically designed for intermediate and upper levels, with pronunciation practice being implicitly taught through real-life situations. Therefore, students learn how to produce stress and rhythm correctly through listening and assimilation. For instance, the public service broadcaster BBC (The British Broadcasting Corporation) offers access to any news report or article on topics such as culture, health, politics, etc.: <https://www.bbc.com/>. Another advantage of this webpage is that these materials are constantly updated. On the other hand, although it was previously pointed out that these resources are normally addressed to upper-intermediate learners (B2), and advanced and proficiency students (C1 and C2), the webpage called Simple English News (<https://www.simpleenglishnews.com/>) also offers an

opportunity to beginners, elementary and intermediate students (A1, A2 and B1) to practice with easier audio reports and transcripts.

Moreover, tools that use artificial intelligence can help teachers develop activities adapted from the aforementioned materials and others, thus enabling them to tailor the content to the students' level and needs, as well as the instructions and classroom dynamics.

7. Conclusions

Various studies emphasise the importance of teaching pronunciation in the classrooms of our bilingual secondary schools to enhance communication and intelligibility. Moreover, within the field of pronunciation, the aspects that have been mainly neglected are found at the suprasegmental level: stress, rhythm, and intonation, despite the fact that extensive research, as shown in this article, has highlighted their significance for successful communication, such as the enhancement of listening and speaking skills, or the construction of comprehensible utterances in oral connected speech.

One of the main learning barriers faced by Spanish students of English as a second language is that their language is syllable-timed, whereas English is stress-timed. This means that the rhythm of speech varies markedly, which they need to learn and understand early on in their learning process to begin working on the prosodic aspects of English. Another challenge in teaching this aspect of the L2 is that, as Hussain and Sajid (2015) point out, teachers struggle with teaching the suprasegmental features of the language and also find the learning process difficult.

At the same time, this article sheds light on the lack of guidance, strategies, and materials available to instructors for properly teaching suprasegmental aspects of English in classrooms. It therefore concludes that there is a legislative need to include this element of L2 teaching in Spanish curricula. This could serve as a foundation for further research that might expand on information related to this educational issue.

Furthermore, numerous strategies and materials can be implemented in the classroom to support the teaching and learning of suprasegmentals. To this end, a systematic review has been conducted, and available materials and resources have been compiled to serve as a guide—such as criteria for selecting materials, practical examples of strategy application, and online resources. These can also be adapted to meet the specific needs of our students' profiles. Similarly, confidence and motivation are also strengthened when the learning process is positively influenced and involves authentic communicative contexts, where pronunciation, especially suprasegmental features, forms the foundation for creating coherent and effective discourse.

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