

Teaching English as a Lingua Franca in Spain: A Possible New Paradigm

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Materia: Inglés. **Idioma:** Inglés.

Title: Teaching English as a Lingua Franca in Spain: A Possible New Paradigm.

Abstract

When English was taught in the past, a native accent either RP or GA have been chosen. Linguists are aware of the emergence of a new accent: English as a lingua franca. Students vary in their teaching expectations; they may only want to communicate with international people, in which case they would only need to be instructed on those crucial features for intelligibility purposes. Experts are developing new corpora in order to reach further conclusions concerning this new trend. But not everyone would agree with this view: within a Spanish context, new teaching materials and resources would be needed.

Keywords: Phonetics, Phonology, Teaching English, English as a Lingua Franca

Título: Enseñando inglés como lengua franca: un paradigma nuevo posible.

Resumen

En el pasado, si los alumnos aprendían inglés, normalmente los acentos elegidos eran el RP o el GA. Los lingüistas están empezando a percibir un nuevo acento: el inglés como lengua franca. Nuestros alumnos pueden tener diferentes expectativas sobre su enseñanza, por lo que solamente deberían recibir instrucción sobre aquellas características de la pronunciación inglesa que muestren ser esenciales para llegar a alcanzar inteligibilidad. Los expertos están desarrollando corpus para poder alcanzar conclusiones fiables sobre este aspecto. Pero no todo el mundo está de acuerdo con estos puntos: en un contexto hispano, nuevos materiales y recursos metodológicos deberían ser desarrollados.

Palabras clave: Fonética, Fonología, enseñanza del inglés, el inglés como lengua franca.

Recibido 2017-01-17; Aceptado 2017-01-23; Publicado 2017-02-25; Código PD: 080056

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This research has been carried out as the final project for the Master's Degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. The specific study field chosen is English Phonetics and Phonology; in particular, pronunciation in Spanish secondary education. The aim of this Master's thesis is to discuss a new term that has emerged quite recently: English as a lingua franca. In order to do so, the Lingua Franca Core developed by Jenkins (2000) is analysed and additional comments made by different linguists are included, as this seems to be a controversial area. Following Jenkins' study, some linguists are carrying out their own studies which are usually in the form of corpora. The viability of implementing a paradigm such as the LFC in Spain is also discussed in this paper.

Justification

I have chosen this particular field of study because I consider Spanish citizens and young students in particular, show serious pronunciation problems when trying to speak English. Whilst engaged in my teaching training period, I observed that, although some progress has been made in the teaching of the English language (the four skills are now much more integrated than in the past), little has been done in the last ten years concerning pronunciation (as Jódar-Bonilla states [2005] and based on my own experience as a student in secondary education between 2002 and 2006). Observing the texts they study, we can conclude that students only have to deal with the pronunciation of some isolated phonemes and the intonation of affirmative, exclamatory and interrogative sentences following very simple tasks.

For a number of years now, Spanish students have acknowledged that they find it hard to pronounce the sounds of the English language correctly after having ended their secondary education, four years in which English is a compulsory subject. Students usually feel embarrassed by their English pronunciation as they are aware they tend to pronounce English words with a strong Spanish accent (Romero-Lacal, 2011).

During the past 35 years, Spanish governments have introduced seven different educational laws, where the teaching of English pronunciation has been depicted as English as a foreign language. Different linguists are highlighting that a new variety or register is emerging: English as a lingua franca, a new phenomenon that seems to be in its first stages of evolution but which might be quite revealing for Spanish students as different phonological features which are usually described as difficult are eliminated in these projects.

This project is divided into five main chapters preceded by the abstract and followed by the references of the Thesis: in chapter 1, an introduction of the topic I am concerned with is made, where the justification and structure of this study are included; in chapter 2, a review of Jenkins' LFC with other projects derived from it are provided; the different objectives of this master's thesis precede chapter 4, where the main criticisms the LFC has received are offered; chapter 5 includes the pedagogical implications of teaching the LFC in Spain; chapter 6 summarises the findings of this study.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Pronunciation is one of the most important issues when learning a foreign language. Setter and Jenkins (2005) consider this linguistic field as the most important factor if one wants to communicate properly in English. Mispronunciation will lead the listener to pay attention to the way a person is speaking instead to the message itself. Besides, pronunciation is closely related to the concept of personal identity, as, for instance, we can reveal what our native language¹ is.

Students finish their secondary education being incapable of striking up a conversation in English (Romero-Lacal, 2011: 1), just one student out of four is able to have a real conversation (Colpisa, 2014), and many of them show fossilized mistakes (Chela-Flores, 2008: 285). Besides, the tool most frequently used is a textbook (Jódar-Bonilla, 2008); therefore, the teaching-learning process is limited by the materials publishers and teachers have chosen. After having analysed a variety of resources used in upper secondary schools in Spain, Jódar-Bonilla found out (2008: 331) that, on many occasions, pronunciation is even omitted, and just a very brief final section includes some points concerning this linguistic field, which is unrelated to the personal linguistic background of the students (a point shared by Gallardo-del-Puerto and Gómez-Lacabex, 2008: 39), because, as Setter (2008: 447) states: "pronunciation is sometimes neglected in the process of language teaching in favour of reading and writing" and the teaching of the English language has been basically focused on instructing grammar, vocabulary and certain written skills (Romero-Lacal, 2011).

According to Chela-Flores (2008) pronunciation points should be included within vocabulary and/or grammar explanations dealt with in class; by doing this, we would reinforce those explanations and students would be able to focus their attention on the pronunciation points because the context is already familiar, and they would not be distracted by unknown words or structures.

Another reason why Spanish students are incapable of speaking English properly is because they feel embarrassed (Lendoiro, 2014), and so choose to sound as Spanish as possible instead of feeling pretentious. But this fact does not only occur in the educational sphere; we are getting used to seeing many adverts and hearing many actors and actresses, politicians, television presenters, etc. who usually mispronounce the English language (Romero-Lacal, 2011).

Gallardo-del-Puerto and Gómez-Lacabex (2008: 39) mention two basic approaches teachers follow in order to teach pronunciation: 1) choosing a native model, because students are supposed to reach a close native accent (the pronunciation models chosen have always been Received Pronunciation² and General American³); 2) Intelligibility as the most important criterion in conversations between non-native speakers of English, which would require students being able to communicate in English without choosing a particular variety of English as their best model. Nevertheless, teachers usually follow the first approach, as non-native pronunciation may be misjudged and materials usually choose either RP or GA as their main models.

Following Gallardo-del-Puerto and Gómez-Lacabex' ideas (2008: 39), Mompeán- González (2008) discusses the main criteria teachers follow in order to choose a model for their teaching, the main ones being: 1) communicative criteria, considering how intelligible an accent might be and "the chances of exposure to the model students have outside the classroom" (p. 960); 2) geo-cultural criteria, "referring to geographical and/or cultural proximity between students of EFL

and territories where English is a native language” (p. 960); 3) criteria to do with linguistic policies, where the attitude the national curricula may show is considered, which in the case of Spain, seems to be very limited as English is regarded as a language with no accentual variation; 4) socio- psychological criteria, related to teachers and learners’ personal opinions on the different English varieties; 5) pedagogical criteria, considering the amount of materials available; 6) linguistic/phonetic criteria, considering “the functional load of certain elements of accents, such as the number and frequency of minimal pairs, phonemes and their combinations, etc” (p. 962). In any case, teachers should justify their choice, and clarify the fact that this model is used for descriptive rather than prescriptive purposes.

Teachers should consider which accent they want to choose as a model for their teaching. According to Mompeán-González (2004: 1044), some language teachers suggest that no policy is necessary for the choice of a particular model, accepting any foreign accent as satisfactory, but he reminds us that we need to seek successful communication. He then provides different categories: 1) the choice of an international variety, which might be extremely impractical as it has not been developed yet, and which would be quite artificial (as Jenkins’ proposal, 2000); 2) the choice of representative local accentual varieties, which would require choosing a single variety or a multiple selection (the former being the most common choice, while the latter may cause some confusion among students since they may not know how to master more than one variety).

The fact that RP is considered by some linguists (Trudgill, 2001; Collins and Mees, 2003) a prestigious variety of English spoken just by a limited number of people in the British Isles makes some other native speakers, from both the British Isles and the colonies, reject it (Monroy-Casas, 2007a). On the other hand, GA tries to reflect a uniformity which is quite different from the real variety that we actually find in America (Monroy-Casas, 2007a). The conclusion turns out to be a bit complicated because current hybrid varieties are emerging (Spanglish, Franglais, Chinenglish, etc.) while other phoneticians suggest teaching other different varieties such as Scottish English, which would be easier (according to Abercrombie, 1956) as its phonological structure is not as broad as the RP one.

During the last decades, different phoneticians have tried to create a core to teach a common set of features of English as a foreign language, the first one being Hockett back in 1958 (Jenkins, 2000: 125). But the one that seems to have received the most positive and negative feedback is the one established by Jenkins (2000), an innovative proposal which accepts any phonetic feature non-native speakers may use, as long as they do not hinder neither communication nor intelligibility (Monroy-Casas, 2007b: 966).

Jenkins is depicting here a phenomenon that phoneticians (Seidlhofer too, 2001) are becoming increasingly aware of: English as a lingua franca⁴. Nowadays, only one in four speakers is a native speaker of English, which means that most of the speakers of this language communicate between each other using a language that is not their first in a culture which is not theirs (Seidlhofer, 2006). It is quite clear that when a language is used as a tool for communication between people with different mother tongues, this language cannot be considered as a “foreign language”, since for example “who is the foreigner [...] when a speaker from Chile interacts with a colleague from Kazakstan. Using English?” (Walker, 2010: 6).

Currently, the most influential criterion for describing English as a world-wide spoken language is Kachru’s (2006) tripartite model where he includes native-speakers in an Inner-Circle, speakers of English as a Second Language in the Outer Circle and speakers of English as a Foreign Language from different nationalities in the Expanding Circle. It should be said that speakers of the Expanding Circle are not given the right to develop their own variety, because they are seen as norm-dependent. The problem with this division is that we do not know who is included in each category, as “nations, types of speakers, functions of English as well as types of variety are all referred to” (Mollin, 2006), and speakers of the three different Circles may also communicate between each other, but Kachru does not give them the right to develop their own “variety” or “register”⁵.

With the Lingua Franca Core⁶, after having completed a study with foreigners, Jenkins tries to facilitate the work of those instructors teaching English as an International Language⁷ who need to teach students to communicate with non-native speakers of English who are outnumbering native speakers. As a consequence, the main goal that needs to be achieved is intelligibility⁸ (Jenkins, 2000).

Jenkins’ proposal (2000) takes features from GA and RP because those two accents are essential for intelligibility in her database. As for the contents, she considers both segmental and suprasegmentals, each of them containing some other subcategories: the former consists of consonants and vowels, and the later comprises “weak forms and other features of connected speech, rhythm, word stress, and intonation (in particular, pitch movement, nuclear stress and word groups)” (2000: 146).

Focusing on segmentals, and more specifically on consonants, Jenkins (2000: 137) points out several aspects which she considers essential for intelligibility purposes on EIL:

- ✓ Omission of /ð/ and /θ/, but acceptance of their dental variants /t̪/ and /d̪/ which occur in certain regions of Britain and in some indigenous English varieties.
- ✓ Omission of dark /l/, or /ɫ/, “syllabically (for instance, in ‘little’) and before a consonant sound (for example, in ‘milk’), or a pause” (Jenkins, 2000: 138), but approving clear /l/ or its substitution for /ʊ/, as this phoneme is becoming vocalic in some English varieties.
- ✓ Acceptance of the GA retroflex approximant [ɻ] instead of the RP post-alveolar approximant [ɹ] (thus, recommending the rhotic variant of /r/) because <r> is indicated orthographically.
- ✓ Omission of the voiced flap [ɾ]; therefore, approval of the RP realization of <t> in all contexts as it is closer to orthography.

Another instance of the controversy of the lack of a proper definition of ELF is the one proposed by Malmkjaer (1991) where he equals English as a lingua franca and pidgin languages, when the first does not necessarily mean the second.

- ✓ Inclusion of the aspiration [h] of the voiceless plosive sounds in initial word position (since this is the most important feature that makes the listener distinguish voiceless and voiced sounds) as well as the fortis-lenis distinction because of ease of articulation and intelligibility.
- ✓ Omission of deletion in consonant cluster simplifications, while accepting addition to clarify the consonant carrying the epenthetic vowel. In the case of <-nt->, RP is preferred over GA as it is closer to orthography.
- ✓ Avoidance of the substitution of /b/ and /v/ for the Spanish fricative allophone [β] and the mispronunciation of /h/ as the voiceless velar fricative /x/.

Jenkins (2000: 144-146) proposes a number of guidelines to teach the second subcategory of segmental elements in pronunciation (English vowels):

- ✓ The teaching of vowel quality¹⁰ is prioritised over vowel quantity¹¹ as the later one may differ depending on the phonetic environment (as in the case of fortis-lenis consonants) or depending on the geographical origin of the British speaker as it is considered quite teachable and, over time, students are eligible to incorporate vowel quantity.
- ✓ Reduction in the number of vowels to be taught as rhotic accents are preferred; therefore, those diphthongs ending in schwa disappear and triphthongs are not even mentioned in the Core. Accents within the British Isles differ in vowel quality in the diphthongs; as a consequence, quantity should be carefully produced and diphthongs need to sound the same as long vowels.
- ✓ Necessity of a clear instruction in the sound /ɜ:/, considered as markedness¹², and prevention of its substitution for /ɑ:/.

The second main category in the LFC for the pronunciation of the English language is suprasegmentals, which is divided into a number of subcategories in Jenkins’ Core:

“weak forms and other features of connected speech, rhythm, word stress and intonation (in particular, pitch movement, nuclear stress, and word groups)” (2000: 146). The main aspects included in the LFC are the following:

- ✓ Two options are proposed for the use of function words¹³: the omission of the teaching of weak forms or their adaptation to EIL use, which means shortening the vowel but retaining the quality.
- ✓ Teaching of elision¹⁴, assimilation¹⁵, catenation¹⁶, linking of /r/¹⁷, intrusion of /j/,

/w/ and /r/¹⁸ for receptive purposes only.

- ✓ Teaching English not as a stress-timed rhythm¹⁹ (in contrast to syllable-timed rhythm²⁰) “but as occupying different points on a timing continuum” (Jenkins, 2000: 150).
- ✓ Teaching of general guidelines about word stress because it affects the placement of nuclear stress and the aspiration of initial word voiceless plosives.
- ✓ Intonation (divided into pitch movement, nuclear stress and tone units) is considered a very subjective field and identifying pitch direction is a difficult task for teachers. On the other hand, the “accentual function of intonation” (Jenkins, 2000: 153) should be included as it catches the speaker’s intention, due to the fact that it marks the most important part of the message and can be taught during the lesson plans throughout grammar, vocabulary, listening or speaking activities and can be indicated in written texts.
- ✓ Teaching of tone units because, “although the ILT data does not include examples of miscommunications caused specifically by the lack of (or inappropriate) word grouping, its potential to affect nuclear placement and its usefulness in pedagogic description necessitate its inclusion in the LFC” (Jenkins, 2000: 156).
- ✓ Teaching of articulatory settings as it “both facilitates the production of core sounds and enables the speaker to manipulate these sounds to produce nuclear stress” (Jenkins, 2000: 156).

Jenkins only established some features after having developed a research study with a number of foreigners, but other linguists are trying to go a bit further and carry out deeper analyses to find out those possible characteristics used by non-native speakers of English in order to accept ELF as a reality. Some (Jenkins and Seidlhofer, 2001; Mollin, 2006) even seem to believe in the existence of a European English variety. In particular, it could be possible and more manageable to observe English as a lingua franca from a regional perspective, focusing on Europe or what Jenkins and Seidlhofer (2001) consider as Euro-English. This variety has not been described as it is in its first stages of development:

“English as a lingua franca in Europe (ELFE) is likely to be some kind of European-English hybrid which, as it develops, will increasingly look to continental Europe rather than to Britain or the United States for its norms of correctness and appropriateness” (Jenkins & Seidlhofer, 2001).

These analyses are being developed by using different corpora, which show great pedagogic possibilities as they display what is typical in the language, but little research has been carried out on speech studies in contrast to written ones. One of these studies is that developed by Seidlhofer alongside a number of project researchers where they have taken the LFC (Jenkins, 2000) as their starting point, and developed a Corpus project where their main concern is to collect data from people using English as a lingua franca²¹. VOICE²² is a readable collection of spoken language data whose aim is to:

“open the way for a large-scale and in-depth linguistic description of this most common contemporary use of English by providing a corpus of spoken ELF²³ interactions which will be accessible to linguistic researchers all over the world. The widespread use of ELF in the world and the availability of a description of its linguistic characteristics are likely to have considerable implications for the way objectives of English teaching might be defined. It is important to stress, however, that a consideration of such pedagogic implications is not within the scope of the VOICE project itself” (“the Vienna-Oxford Corpus of International English, n.d.).

VOICE was developed with the intention of focusing on a form of language with a great deal of variation away from the standardized and stabilized written language. That is why Seidlhofer and her team chose to record oral productions of rather fluent non-native speakers of English within a context whose first language is not English as in an Inner Circle country (2001), which also allowed them to record the reception, and thus the amount of intelligibility in each conversation. This corpus was firstly intentioned to contain half a million words approximately, transcribed and annotated.

The first consideration of this project was that, although a conversation might contain what would be considered as many grammatical mistakes, it would not mean that intelligibility was not obtained in the end, which parallels some of Jenkins’ findings (as the nonessential distinction between /ð/ and /θ/ to reach intelligibility). This suggests the existence of a common set of features between those speakers of ELF in terms of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation deviating from USA or British rules (Seidlhofer, 2006). Therefore, Seidlhofer and her team try to answer the following question: “has this been said and understood in English as a lingua franca?” (2001).

The most important discovery the VOICE project has found is that there is a certain tendency to omit some linguistic characteristics that have always been considered as essential for a proper use of the English language, but which do not seem to interfere in communication, the most important ones being: omission of the <-s> for the third person in present simple; use “which” and “who” interchangeably; avoidance of definite and indefinite articles; pluralize uncountable nouns which are only supposed to be used in the singular form; use of the demonstrative “this” for both the singular and the plural; use of general verbs (such as “take”, “do”, “make”...) to cover more meanings; simplification of question tags into two different options: “isn’t it?” and “no?”; increase clarity by adding a preposition or a noun after a verb (Seidlhofer, 2006).

These aspects seem to occur because a person whose first language is not English might not want to be distinguished as part of a particular native community; thus, they may avoid native linguistic features as lexico-grammatical, phraseological and, which is the part this paper is dealing with, fast speech phenomena as weak forms, elision and linking (Seidlhofer, 2008).

Although the VOICE project offers a description, Seidlhofer (2008) warns teachers against using it for prescriptive instead of descriptive purposes, because they are just trying to highlight those features that are crucial for international communication. In those lessons with special attention on ELF, these characteristics can be considered as a starting point for production and reception, while those features that have not been considered as they could cause misunderstanding, could be left aside.

Another research study has been carried out by Mauranen as the project leader in the University of Helsinki where the main focus is to try to come up with a better understanding of the English used in academic settings, which seems to differ to the one utilised by native speakers and the one depicted in the different manuals and textbooks. The ELFA24 project has achieved one million words of spoken academic English where the main topic of the conversation is not the English language itself; therefore, ELT classes are not included. Native speakers have also been excluded from this study, where the participants show different levels of proficiency. Spelling in the transcriptions has been kept as close to Standard (British) English25 as possible, in order to facilitate searches (Mauranen, 2009).

OBJECTIVES

This MA Thesis has a triple objective: 1) to present ELF (English as a lingua franca) as a possible reality; 2) to review the main criticisms levelled at ELF; 3) to discuss its viability within a Spanish context.

CHAPTER 4. MAIN CRITICISMS

Although some linguists (Seidlhofer, 2001; Mauranen, 2009) view Jenkins’ LFC as a very revealing approach which represents what is currently occurring worldwide, others believe that it needs some improvement as her empirical research did not provide enough evidence to support her findings and that she is trying to develop a variety that is not real.

First of all, Jenkins gathers features from both RP and GA, but what she seems to have forgotten is that this mixture of RP and GA can result in some kind of artificial accent which lacks real teaching resources (Monroy-Casas, 2007b: 969). Jenkins points out that some of the characteristics that are taught at the moment may be difficult for our learners and unnecessary to reach intelligibility, but all her points need to be adapted to the different learners’ backgrounds, because every single language possesses phonetic and phonological features which may be very similar to those of the English language, and their learning might result in being quite motivating for those students as they already know how to pronounce them (Walker, 2001).

Moreover, both the particular phonetic realisations of the model we choose and their variants should be taught in order to make students able to understand a native speaker. This means teaching pronunciation for receptive purposes (G-del-P and G-L, 2008: 44), simply because many Spanish speakers acknowledge that they are unable to understand the native speakers’ discourse when they arrive at the British Isles. In order to minimise possible misunderstandings, teachers should show students different English varieties (Mompeán-González, 2004: 1045), as well as make them practice those phonological and phonetic features which are usually difficult for non-native speakers (Wells, 2005: 4).

Aiming our attention at the first category described by Jenkins (segmentals), and more particularly on consonants, a number of phoneticians have put forward proposals remodelling or rectifying those aspects proposed by her in the LFC:

Concerning the realization of the dental fricative sounds, Wells (2004) goes a step further and proposes teaching students the change in the Cockney realization of the voiceless one as an alveolar plosive [d] in initial word position, a sound that might be easier for students and that needs to be understood receptively.

In opposition to Jenkins' belief of facilitating teachers' work by omitting dark /l/, we should rather see the learner's L1 as a vehicle to achieve a close native-speaker pronunciation and not as an obstacle, while teachers should "highlight the value of their own language as a tool for learning English" (Walker, 2001)26.

Concerning the use of /r/ in the repertoire proposed by Jenkins (2000), Monroy- Casas (2007b: 966) states that she is contradicting herself by proposing both the maintenance of the vowel length and the rhotic variant of /r/. Some linguists (as Setter, 2008: 449) believe that students need to take their decision and determine which native accent they want to produce, as rhotic accents occur both in the British Isles and USA.

Some linguists and phoneticians (such as Dauer, 2005) believe that teaching the shortening of vowels before voiceless consonants and their lengthening before the voiced ones is something very difficult for learners to master, even fluent speakers of English fail to pronounce them properly (Gallardo-del-Puerto and Gómez-Lacabex 2008: 40).

Jenkins believes that permitting inclusion instead of deletion in consonant clusters is a good idea, and this could be a quite beneficial characteristic as Spanish students usually tend to incorporate an epenthetic vowel (typically <e>) before an <s> belonging to an onset (Baker, n.d.), because these <s-> placed at the beginning of a word without a previous vowel do not exist in the Spanish language.

The substitution of /b/ and /v/ for [ɸ] should be omitted because words such as "berry", "bury" and "very" would otherwise become homophones27, as the voiced labiodental fricative does not exist in Spanish (Quilis, 2008). On the other hand, the

English glottal fricative /h/ shows some similarities with the allophonic variation of /x/ in Andalusia: [h]28.

On the other hand, Wells concludes that, in terms of consonants, he agrees with Jenkins in making students differentiate between these pairs of sounds: /b-v/, /r-l/, /s-ʃ/,

/s-z/, /tʃ-dʒ/ and /j-dʒ/, because "failure to discriminate one or two of these pairs can perhaps be condoned, given sufficient redundancy in the context to disambiguate otherwise ambiguous messages. [...] But Japanese English in which /b-v/ and /r-l/ are confused [...] ends up unintelligible" (2005: 6).

Walker (2001) establishes some common features between English and Spanish consonants, enabling teachers and students to use them in order to facilitate their teaching and learning: 1) /g/ is sometimes replaced by /x/ in final word position as in "big", but

/g/ actually exists in Spanish in words such as "gato"; 2) /s/ and /z/ are usually confused, but he states that /z/ exists as an allophone in words such as "mismo"29 ; 3) /z/ is used in Argentinian Spanish in words such as "yo"; 4) /ŋ/ is found in words such as "banco"; 5)

/w/ is found in "suelo".

Changing our focus to vowels, Monroy-Casas (2010: 4) states that "if length is distinctive in certain varieties (the non-rhotic ones), it has to be mandatorily stable, otherwise the short vs. long distinction would not apply". He adds that Jenkins does not offer further empirical support when trying to define how much intelligibility is obtained with the shortening of vowels before a fortis consonant, or how comfortable the pronunciation of a short vowel is before a fortis consonant. He then points out the contradiction of expecting length and a rhotic realisation of /r/ because "rhoticity nullifies vowel lengthening" (p. 4), and presents two studies, one carried out by Gimson and a different one carried out by himself, where they concluded that length does not affect intelligibility.

Moreover, there is a lack of empirical research when Jenkins mentions the importance of quantity for the intelligibility of diphthongs. The most important pronunciation dictionaries (*Longman Pronunciation Dictionary*, *Oxford Dictionary of Pronunciation* and *Cambridge Pronunciation Dictionary*) do not mention length as an important feature in the case of diphthongs (Monroy-Casas, 2010: 8). Besides, although there is some variation in both vowels of the diphthong, they are

rarely a problem for learners. Further on, Monroy- Casas (2010: 7) carried out a study where he discovered that the native speakers who participated in his investigation did not have any problem understanding the words intended when /ɜ:/ was replaced by /e + r/.

Wells (2005: 7) agrees with Jenkins in that the distinction between /ɪ:/ and /i/ should be made, firstly in terms of quality and then in terms of quantity, but he does not agree in distinguishing /u: - ʊ/, and /ɔ: - ɒ/ as most Scottish and Americans do not distinguish them. He adds that the vowel oppositions /e - æ/, /æ - ʌ/, /ɔ:- əʊ/ should also be taught, as Spanish speakers tend to pronounce “bad” and “bud” as homophones, involving possible misunderstandings. In the case of the first and second pairs, /e - æ/and

/æ - ʌ/ are sounds in which teachers must insist both in terms of pronunciation and the most frequent spellings, since no native-English speaker merges them.

Besides, southern varieties of Spanish substitute the postvocalic <-s> for the opening of the preceding vowels, resulting in the particular case of /a/ becoming /æ/ (Díaz-Campos, 2003), the same sound that occurs in the word “cat” in RP; thus, if we asked our students to imagine that these vowels realised as /æ/are followed by an <s> and that they have to pronounce them as in Murcian Spanish for instance, they would probably produce those sounds quite correctly, using the L1 as a tool to reach a closer native pronunciation (Walker, 2001).

Concentrating now on supra-segmentals, Jenkins’ proposal could be quite appealing for teachers because this category does not seem to be instructed in the Spanish educational system. Gutiérrez-Díez (2008: 347) took two different theses into consideration (Jódar-Bonilla, 2005; Martínez 2004) which echo the lack of instruction in prosody³⁰. Gutiérrez-Díez found out several aspects that occurred during the past decade concerning this theory: rhythm and intonation were not taught back in those years in secondary education, whilst vowels and consonants were taught in isolation without bearing in mind those features of connected speech, either because teachers simply omitted that information, or because the resources used in the classroom did not include those points; besides, we cannot use anymore than the pretext of the teachers’ lack of instruction in this field. This last statement contrasts with the information provided by Romero-Lacal (2011: 7), G-del-P and G-L (2008: 39), who actually suggest that English Philology students are not properly prepared because Spanish universities are adapting their level to the low level of proficiency of those students coming from upper secondary education. Moreover, as teachers we cannot instruct our students on these aspects concerning rhythm by just describing those phonetic realisations and providing theory; otherwise, we would follow the grammar-translation method (Gutiérrez-Díez, 2008: 348).

Wells (2005: 10) remarks on the necessity of teaching nuclear stress by exemplifying a case where this is a relevant aspect in order to avoid miscommunication: “a big one” (“one” being a function word) is not the same as “a big one” (“one” being a content word); therefore, he agrees with Jenkins in her proposal. In contrast, Collins and Mees (2003: 113) warn about the number of irregularities that actually exist; students should learn to use a dictionary to check pronunciation and stress, because this will facilitate their communication with foreigners in the future. In addition, languages share some kind of universal approach when distinguishing affirmative and interrogative sentences; thus, this may not be a difficult feature to be learnt (Chela-Flores, 2008: 290).

CHAPTER 5. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS: LFC AS A TEACHING MODEL

Different linguists, apart from Jenkins (2000), have also shown their concern about teaching English as a lingua franca³¹ (Mollin, 2006; Seidlhofer, 2001; Walker, 2010). Training in ELF is an aspect linguists have started to study quite recently, and some of them are trying to implement or put into practice something similar to what Jenkins established in her LFC (2000), because we should wonder which features seem to be more important and more useful for international communication and intelligibility using ELF. This has to be studied empirically in order to reach reliable conclusions about “how ELF manifests itself, linguistically, what it actually looks and sounds like, how people use it and make it work” (Seidlhofer, 2008).

Walker (2010: 76-96) is aware of the necessity of developing more studies and research projects about ELF as it is becoming fundamental in applied linguistics; thus, he took Jenkins’ LFC as his starting point in order to develop some guidelines to teach ELF. He firstly suggests teachers provide students with basic instructions about the English pronunciation system teaching every phoneme individually so that they do not get lost, and then we teachers can follow his contribution. Besides, to make things easier, teachers could firstly use our native language’s vowels and then add new

qualities. After having analysed his points, only those that can be adapted to Spanish speaking students are going to be presented with some practical instances:

- ✓ Minimal pairs: a very useful technique to teach vowel length and quality, such as the difference between /æ - α: - ʌ/, a very difficult for Spanish speakers.
- ✓ Drills³²: they can even be disguised in the form of tongue-twisters, and Spanish students could practice the difference between /b - v/: “this is my very best berry vest”.
- ✓ Voicing: in order to learn to distinguish and learn it, teachers could ask learners to place their hands against their throats to make them notice the chord vibrations.
- ✓ Aspiration: instructors could place a piece of paper before them and make students perceive the strength of the stream of air coming after pronouncing a voiceless plosive. After that, teachers could produce their Spanish counterparts so that learners could notice the difference.
- ✓ Word groups: in order to avoid students producing wrong pauses when reading or speaking, teachers could make them listen to some recordings and write down where the pause is, and then make learners predict them.
- ✓ Nuclear stress: we teachers could use “pairwork exercises in perceiving and placing nuclear stress” (Walker, 2010: 86) and ask them to figure out the intended meaning.
- ✓ Dictations between pairs, so that they have to improve both their productive and receptive skills.
- ✓ Ask them to prepare and record a speech and foster feedback between groups.
- ✓ Expose them to other ELF accents using the CD provided by Walker.

If we follow his ideas (he thinks that learners’ L1 can be a support [Walker, 2001]), we would firstly have to carry out our own inventory comparing the English and the Spanish pronunciation systems to establish the phonetic and phonological similarities of both languages and develop materials to teach ELF in our country. Later, we would have to accomplish a research project analyzing Spanish people speaking in English with non- Spanish speakers (so that they do not accommodate their speech) in order to observe similarities between them and how intelligibility is successfully obtained. After these two previous steps, we would have to develop our own corpus to have enough contextualized examples, and take this as the starting point to develop our own teaching materials; but we would previously have to make a survey and ask our students which expectations they have in their English lessons and what accent they want to be taught in, as teachers are mere guides during their learning process and have to fulfill students’ needs.

Speech corpora is one of the instruments that is being used by linguists because they are a good starting point to present different communicative contextualized expressions, terms, lexicon, a help for text comprehension, use of grammatical aspects... which may not be properly described in manuals (as spoken language is not accurately described in teaching materials), offering a more realistic perspective of the language instead of the traditional divisions provided by textbooks where the language is cut into categories, such as morphosyntactic, lexis and idioms (Mauranen, 2004); therefore, a great level of authenticity can be achieved as important aspects of the English language can be studied. They are more helpful than invented examples by the teacher where real life is not properly represented and can be used to complement traditional resources such as manuals or textbooks (Al Saeed & Waly, n.d.). We can also notice aspects that may not be believed to be important by the speaker, but which can be very frequently used in conversations, and thus be considered relevant by linguists.

But in order to introduce corpora into de classroom so that students can use them as a source of authentic language reference, learners firstly have to be taught how to use them so that they do not get confused by the vast number of examples; even teachers who have never worked with them could be skeptical about the advantages of using corpora and would need to receive some type of instruction too (Al Saeed & Waly, n.d.). More simple programmes would be utilised in schools as they could serve as first training with this type of software; but before doing so, students need to be asked about their learning objectives and necessities, so that corpora could be developed following their pedagogic needs (Mauranen, 2004). Nevertheless, students can be introduced to free corpora online (Al Saeed & Waly, n.d.) since these can

even be used at home. On the other hand, if corpora are used inside the classroom, these contexts cannot be reproduced by students and consequently may not be considered as authentic material (Mauranen, 2004).

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS

Pronunciation is a very important field when learning a foreign language, but there is a noticeable lack of instruction on this matter in Spain. When this linguistic category is taught in schools, a native accent (usually from the British Isles because of geo-cultural criteria) is the one chosen, instead of asking learners about their interests.

Some linguists are aware of a new phenomenon that is emerging since quite recently: English as a lingua franca, and are trying to find out those common features that make it possible. The project that is receiving more positive and negative feedback is Jenkins' LFC (2000). Other experts have developed their own studies in order to reach further conclusions, and the instrument most of them are using is a corpus, as the VOICE and ELFA projects. But a lot of work is still needed because speech corpora are proliferating at a very low pace. Walker (2010) seems to go a bit further and proposes a number of activities to be implemented in the classroom.

A new research project should be driven in Spain to find out students' perspectives and the viability of implementing a model as the ELF in a Spanish context. In order to do so, grown-up students (from the age of 16 onwards studying either upper-secondary education, enrolled in the Official Language School or in a vocational training course) would have to be surveyed, as they already have mature opinions and are making a decision about their future careers (and would therefore know their purposes for studying English); this would require putting aside secondary education. English courses could be introduced in some degrees (such as in business studies) either as optional or compulsory subjects, where asking students' about their expectancies would be much more relevant as they have very specific language purposes; or even a new plan of study could be incorporated in the Official Language School, so that anyone interested in this new accent could learn it.

I personally think that we are still a long way from teaching ELF in Spain although some projects are being carried out in Europe, because there are not enough conclusions and teaching materials available. The government would have to regularise this accent by introducing new educational policies following linguists' findings; besides, if we used corpora in our classes, we would firstly have to instruct both teachers and students on how use them, so that both of them could see the advantages corpora provide.

1 Hereafter L1.

2 From now on: RP

3 Henceforth: GA

4 ELF from now on.

5 It seems that ELF cannot be considered a new variety, but a new register because Mollin (2006) did not find enough evidence in her own corpus that supported the emergence of a new variety of English in Europe. In order to consider ELF a new variety, it should have developed its own syntax and it should have become the standard form in the mind of the speakers (Kachru, 2006). Therefore, in order to ELF become a variety in itself, speakers would have to share a common set of features (Mollin, 2006).

6 LFC henceforward.

7 EIL henceforth.

8 Unintelligibility is said to be caused by "interspeaker variation and, more specifically, some kind of L1 transfer" (Jenkins, 2000: 123).

9 Peter Roach (2009) states that many languages establish pairs of consonants which are only distinguished in terms of voicing, being "strong", or fortis, and "weak", or lenis (also known as "voiceless" and "voiced"[Jenkins, 2000: 162]), referring to the "amount of energy used in their production" (p. 33). Those voiced consonants have very little voicing; therefore, the term lenis, meaning weak, is a better term.

10 Quality indicates the position of the tongue when producing a vowel (Roach, 2009: 98).

11 Quantity indicates the length of the vowel (McArthur, 2005).

12 Markedness refers to a linguistic feature that stands out as being unusual, or marked, in contrast to a more regular form, or unmarked (Battistella, 1996).

13 Function words possess both a strong and a weak form, where the quantity and quality of the vowels are modified usually resulting in a schwa (Roach, 2009: 34).

14 Omission of some sounds in rapid and colloquial style (Roach, 2009: 27)

15 Two sounds being linked together or a sound influenced by its neighbours (Roach, 2009: 7)

16 The link of a consonant sound at the end of a word and a vowel sound at the beginning of a word (Basquille, n.d.)

17 Insertion of /r/ when it appears orthographically “in order to facilitate the articulation of a sequence” (Collins and Mees, 2003: 104)

18 The addition of a sound that is not represented orthographically in order to facilitate the articulation of a sequence (Skandera and Burleigh, 2011: 97).

19 English rhythm, according to some linguists, can be divided into equal intervals of time called feet (Roach, 2009: 74). A foot in English rhythm consists in a stressed syllable followed by a number of unstressed syllables (Roach, 2009: 32).

20 In syllable-timed rhythms, syllables remain of the same length without bearing in mind the duration (weak or strong) of those syllables, as in Spanish (Roach, 2009: 74).

21 English as a lingua franca understood as: “any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option” (Seidlhofer, 2011: 7)

22 The Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (“Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English”, n.d.)

23 ELF is understood in VOICE as: “an additionally acquired language system that serves as a means of communication between speakers of different first languages, or a language by means of which the members of different speech communities can communicate with each other but which is not the native language of either – a language which has no native speakers” (Seidlhofer, 2001).

24 English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings.

25 For a number of linguists, we can only consider the written language as standard English, because a standard form of the spoken language should be constant while the different accents within a language are predestined to be in constant change (Parsons, 1998).

26 This would therefore mean that dark /l/ should be shown to Spanish students as they are used to hear this sound in Catalan speakers of Spanish (Recasens and Espinosa, 2005: 1) or they might even be from Catalonia (and this might result in being quite motivating for them as they are asked to produce a sound they already know).

27 “Two words pronounced identically” (Roach, 2009: 40).

28 Following Walker (2001), it might be interesting to show this sound to Spanish students

29 Walker seems to be mistaken in this point, as the /s/ sound only has one allophone, voiceless too, in Spanish: [s] (Quilis, 2008: 55).

30 A synonym for suprasegmentals (Roach, 2009: 69).

31 ELF hereafter.

32 A type of activity used in the classroom to usually develop proceduralisation of the objectives to be learnt. There are three different types: mechanical drill: repetition of structures; meaningful drill: focus on both form and meaning; and communicative drill: the most important thing is to transmit content while there is also a focus on form (Paulston, 1970).

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