A Comparative Linguistic Analysis of English and Spanish Phonological System[1]

Un Análisis Lingüístico Comparativo del Sistema Fonológico del inglés y el español

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Abstract

This paper analyzes a few significant differences between Spanish and English in relation to phonological patterns. First, a short introduction is given about these two languages, and it is briefly explained in what linguistic aspects they are similar or different. Then, each of these linguistic features is analyzed in detail, clearly establishing the differences existing between Spanish and English. The specific phonological features that are addressed on this academic paper are vowel and consonant phonemes, diphthongs and triphthongs, as well as word and sentence stress. Furthermore, several pronunciation difficulties for Spanish speakers are discussed. Finally, some didactic implications are considered so that teachers can help their students of either language learn the second one considering important linguistic features.

Keywords: Spanish, English, vowel and consonant phonemes, word and sentence stress, pronunciation difficulties, didactic implications.

Resumen

Este artículo analiza algunas diferencias significativas entre el español y el inglés en relación con los patrones fonológicos. En primer lugar, se hace una breve introducción sobre estos dos idiomas y se explica brevemente en qué aspectos lingüísticos son similares o diferentes. A continuación, se analiza en detalle cada uno de estos rasgos lingüísticos, estableciendo claramente las diferencias existentes entre el español y el inglés. Las características fonológicas específicas que se abordan en este artículo académico son los fonemas vocales y consonantes, diptongos y triptongos, así como el acento de sílabas y oraciones. Además, se discuten varias dificultades de pronunciación para hispanohablantes. Finalmente, se consideran algunas implicaciones didácticas para que los profesores puedan ayudar a sus alumnos de cualquiera de los dos idiomas a aprender el segundo considerando características lingüísticas importantes.

Palabras claves: español, inglés, fonemas vocales y consonantes, acentuación de palabras y oraciones, dificultades de pronunciación, implicaciones didácticas.

Resumo:

Este artigo analisa algumas diferenças significativas entre o espanhol e o inglês em relação com os padrões fonológicos. Em primeiro lugar, faz-se uma breve introdução sobre estes dois idiomas e explica-se brevemente em que aspectos linguísticos são similares ou diferentes. A continuação, analisa-se em detalhe cada uma destas características linguísticas, estabelecendo claramente as diferenças existentes entre o espanhol e o inglês. As características fonológicas específicas que se tratam neste artigo académico são os fonemas vocais e consoantes, ditongos e tritongos, bem como o acento de sílabas e orações. Além disso, discutem-se várias dificuldades de pronunciação para hispano-falantes. Finalmente, consideram-se algumas implicações didáticas para que os professores possam ajudar seus alunos de qualquer um dos dois idiomas a aprender o segundo, considerando características linguísticas importantes.

Palavras chaves: espanhol, inglês, fonemas vocais e consoantes, acentuação de palavras e orações, dificuldades de pronunciação, implicações didáticas.

A brief review describing my professional opinion about the paper

The current paper I have written has a significant impact on the teaching and learning of both target languages, which are Spanish and English. Teachers and students ought to be aware of the main phonological differences existing between these languages so that the teaching-learning process regarding pronunciation can take place smoothly. Being conscious of features such as vowel and consonant phonemes, diphthongs and triphthongs, word and sentence stress and identifying common pronunciation difficulties will definitely facilitate learning. Teachers can easily and smartly address those problems by using some meaningful and practical techniques so that students can hone their pronunciation. Therefore, the content of this paper will positively contribute to those who are teaching or learning Spanish and English as a foreign or second language.

Introduction

L earning English as a foreign or second language (EFL/ESL) involves, just like Spanish or any other language, the development of the four fundamental skills, which are reading, listening, writing and speaking as well as grammar, discourse, lexis and phonology. Uribe, Fuentes, Vargas, and Rey (2019) state that in communication, that is, when learners apply their speaking skill, the phonological system plays an important role. Pronunciation defines how comprehensible ideas are so that their interlocutors can understand them smoothly.

Therefore, to convey a clear message, it is fundamental to have good pronunciation. However, mastering appropriate English pronunciation can represent a big problem for EFL or ESL learners since there are several factors that generate obstacles when learning pronunciation. But naturally, that does not only happen with English, but with other languages as well. If we take, as an example, English and Spanish native speakers, trying to learn these languages as a second or foreign language, it will definitely cause a problem in several areas, but especially in pronunciation because the phonological system of each language works differently.

Now, English and Spanish languages, at first sight, may seem to have quite similar phonological features; but this is not necessarily true. Even though the alphabet is nearly the same in both languages, there are extreme differences in pronunciation. Shoebottom (2017) states that the phonological system of English differs a lot from that of Spanish, especially in several significant aspects such as vowel and consonant sounds as well as syllable and sentence stress. As a result, for English speakers, trying to learn to speak Spanish, at times may not be such an easy task to do because there are certain sounds that they do not have in their mother tongue. Similarly, for Spanish speakers, it becomes quite complicated to acquire English as a second or foreign language due to the complexity of pronunciation of words in L2. But differentiated phonemes are not the only factor that students must be aware of at the moment of learning proper pronunciation in the target language, syllable and sentence stress also play a significant role when dealing with phonological patterns. Comparing and contrasting the phonological systems of both languages will allow them to have a better panorama of which these differences are that seem to make learning more difficult or easy for some language learners. This paper will, therefore, present some of these differentiated phonological aspects that are extremely influential when learning either language: Spanish or English.

Literature Review

Vowel Phonemes

First, let us compare the number of vowels found in each language. On the one hand, according to Shoebottom (2017), there are only 5 pure vowels in Spanish, where the length of the vowel is not meaningful when differentiating between words. These vowel sounds are: *a (paso), e (peso), i (piso), o (poso), u (puso).* On the other hand, there are 12 pure or basic vowel sounds in Standard English, being the following: *iː (sheep), ɪ (ship), e (pet), æ (cat), ʌ (sun), aː (father), ɒ (dog), ɔ (all), ʊ (put), uː (soon), ɜː (bird), and ə (the).* As just seen above, the number of pure vowel sounds in English is significantly higher than the ones in Spanish, and that is one of the salient reasons why Spanish speakers frequently find it grueling to produce all English vowel sounds properly.

Now, let us notice that the number of English vowel sounds shown above is only referring to the basic ones; if we consider the variations coming from those pure sounds, we can get more. If we start from saying that English vowel sounds can be divided into several categories: monophthongs (short and long vowels) diphthongs, triphthongs, vowels before historical R, and weak vowels. According to Wood (2019), the number of vowel sounds in English depends upon the variety of English we are talking about. Although, in the written alphabet of both target languages (English and Spanish) there exist 5 vowel letters (a, e, i, o, u), in spoken English the case is different. Generally speaking, there are approximately 20 distinct vowel phonemes in English. But, as mentioned above, the exact number of this type of sound will vary according to the English accent we are talking about. Ballester (2015) also suggests that the exact number of these sounds usually depends on the manner the system is analyzed. Equally, their sound qualities may vary significantly from accent to accent. To give an example, the American English vowel sounds are evidently different from those of British or Australian. However, this is not the case of Spanish vowel sounds as they are clearly differentiated in pronunciation.

So, if we consider the Standard Southern British English, the number of vowel phonemes is 19, being these: */ɪ/ (sit), /e/ (dress), /æ/ (trap), /ʌ/ (strut), /ɒ/ (lot), /ʊ/ (foot), /iː/ (sea), /ɔː/ (north), /uː/ (goose), /aː/ (palm), /aɪ/ (price), /eɪ/ (face), /ɔɪ/ (choice), /aʊ/ (brown), /əʊ/ (boat), /ɪə/ (near), /ɛː/ (square), /ɜː/ (nurse), and /ə/ (about). However, the total number of vowels in General American English is 21 and those are the following: /ɪ/ (myth), /ɛ/ (bread), /æ/ (cat),/ʌ/ (son), /ʊ/ (took), /iː/ (people), / aː/ (watch), /uː/ tuna), /aɪ/ (try), /eɪ/ (say), /ɔɪ/ (noise), /aʊ/ (noun), /oʊ/ (slow), /ɪr/ (clear), /ɛr/ (fair), /ɔr/ (four), /ar/ (car), /ʊr/ (ensure), /ɝ/ (mercy), /ɚ/ (feather), and /ə/ (common).* As it is clearly seen, one important detail to mention is that some of the phonetic symbols also change from British English to American English.

Now, considering the numerous vowel sounds found in English, it is now understandable why it is extremely difficult for Spanish speakers to learn to differentiate

among all those phonemes. Shoebottom (2017) states that some typical problems entail the failure to differentiate between sounds in words such as sit/seat, cat/cut, fast/first, etc. In the first illustration, for example, students may not be able to easily differ the short /ɪ/ from the long / iː/. Normally, English learners, whose mother tongue is Spanish, struggle a lot with such differentiated sounds since in their mother tongue there is only the phoneme /ɪ/ not the long / iː/. Consequently, dealing with minimal pairs, especially beginner or basic levels, is quite challenging for them. In Spanish, though, learning minimal pairs is not as hard as in English because the vowel sounds are quite different from each other.

Diphthongs and Triphthongs

With regards to diphthongs, which is the combination of two vowel sounds, according to Vizental (2008), there are 8 diphthongs in English, and these are divided into 2 types of sounds (considering the position of the speech organs): closing and opening diphthongs. In closing diphthongs (ei, ai, ɔi, au, əu), the nucleus is more open than the glide, whereas in opening diphthongs (iə, ɛə, uə), the vowel is closer than the glide. In Spanish, however, diphthongs, which can be rising or falling. Rising diphthongs entail a semivowel + a full vowel (ia, ie, io, ua, ue, uo, iu, ui). In contrast, falling diphthongs consist of the opposite sequence (ai, au, ei, eu, oi, ou), giving a total number of 14 diphthongs in this language (Garita & María González, 2019).

In relation to the number of triphthongs, which refers to a combination of three vowel sounds in one syllable, Ballester (2015) states that there are 5 in English, being these: /eɪə/ (player), /aɪə/ (fire), /ɔɪə/ (soya), /əuə/ (lower) and /auə/ (hour). Basically, as seen above, all triphthongs combine a diphthong and the schwa sound /ə/. Nonetheless, triphthongs are uncommon in Spanish. Salcedo (2010) states that they may emerge in strange noun forms such as *buey* and *huey*. Likewise, they might appear in the second person plural form of the verbs, which is in the *vosotros* endings such as *limpiéis*.

Consonant Phonemes

Interestingly, there are numerous differences between the consonants in English and Spanish. Vizental (2008) contends that, according to phoneticians, there are 24 consonant phonemes in English, and they are grouped as plosive, affricate, fricative, nasal, and lateral consonants. In Spanish, however, Salcedo (2010) says that most American Spanish dialects have 19 consonant phonemes, and they are classified as stops, slit fricatives, groove fricatives, affricates, nasals, laterals, and tap consonants based upon the manners of articulation.

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Frederi (2005) points out that there are 15 phonemes that happen in both languages, but 5 from these only occur in Spanish, and 9 only in English. Some of the phonemes that occur in both languages can be "ch" and "sh". Even though these are different phonemes in English, in Spanish, these sounds may be pronounced interchangeably in the same word whose meaning will not be changed. This can be done in the word *chimenea*, where students might say *"chimenea"* or *"shimenea"*. Evidently, something like this cannot happen in English because the meaning would be totally different. For example, in the words *cheap* and *sheep*, it is not possible to pronounce these sounds interchangeably because they are referring to two different things. The same happens with the letters "v" and "b". Although in English these are different phonemes, in Spanish, depending on the dialect, both consonants appear in written words, but people usually pronounce these two phonemes as "b". For instance, the word *vaca* (cow) sounds like *baca*.

As mentioned above, there are certain consonant sounds that only occur in Spanish, but not in English (Frederi, 2005). For example, the trilled "rr", a phoneme which can be heard in words such as *carro* meaning *car* and *pero* which is the conjunction *but*. Evlampieff (2017) posits that this is one of the typical phonemes English speakers find quite challenging to correctly pronounce in order to have a proper Spanish accent. If the phoneme is not correctly pronounced, the meaning of the word will be totally different from the one intended. Another phoneme that exists only in Spanish, but not in English is "ñ" as in *baño* to say *bathroom*. English speakers at first might be unclear about how to pronounce this consonant, however, paying attention to the phoneme "*jə*" as in the word *canyon*, they can become successful in producing this phoneme accurately. The consonant sound "ll" as in *lluvia* meaning *rain* may also be complicated to pronounce for English speakers. What they can do to properly pronounce this sound is focus on their sound "*ʒ*" as in the word *genre*. This phoneme resembles the one in Spanish "ll" and can facilitate learning its proper pronunciation.

Similarly, there are consonant phonemes that only occur in English but not in Spanish. Whitley (2002) states that there are unshared consonants in these two languages. For example, "ð" is in *father*, appears in English, but not in Spanish. Nonetheless, learning to produce this phoneme does not really seem extremely difficult for Spanish speakers because they can merely connect "ð" to the sound "d" as in *día* meaning *day* or use "t" instead of /θ/in the word *thank*. Another phoneme existing in English, but not in Spanish is "*dʒ*" as in *jungle*. Yet, the closest Spanish sound that resembles "*dʒ*" is "ll" as in *llorar* meaning *cry*. To some extent, these two consonant phonemes may sound pretty much the same and students might not be able to clearly identify the difference in pronunciation unless they are carefully explained about the manner of articulation of each sound. Whitley (2002) also mentions that the English phoneme "ŋ" as in *king* does not exist in Spanish. Still, Spanish speakers might focus on the phoneme "g" as in *gato* meaning *cat* to try to produce the phoneme "ŋ" at the end of an English word.

Word and Sentence Stress

Frederi (2005) states that Spanish is a syllabic language. He explains that each syllable in this language has the same duration regardless of where the stress falls in the word. Usually, this is one of the main reasons for several English speakers to assume that Spanish speakers are "rapid" talkers. This responds to the fluent manner syllables are pronounced in Spanish. English, on the other hand, is characterized by having an accentual rhythm of speech. In other words, the accented syllables in a word tend to have a longer duration in comparison to the unaccented ones. For instance, in the word *banana* in English, the first and last syllables are pronounced very quickly because they have the unstressed schwa phoneme /ə/ while the second syllable is stressed as it has the phoneme /æ/. Taking the same word in Spanish, all the three syllables have the same duration and stress, and of course, the schwa phoneme /ə/ does not exist in this language. With regards to this phoneme, Shemesh (2012) indicates that there are 3 types of stress in English being these primary, secondary, and weak, which is the schwa sound. She goes on to explain that the primary stress is always longer, louder, and higher on pitch. For instance, in the word *tomorrow*, the first syllable sound "*tə*" has a weak stress, /mɒr/ has a primary stress, and /əʊ/ has a secondary stress. In Spanish though, there are only 2 two types of stress: primary and secondary, no matter how many syllables there are in a word. Taking the same example, *mañana*, which is "tomorrow", the syllable "ña" has a primary stress, while the other two syllables "ma" and "na" have a secondary stress.

Another noticeable difference between these two languages is the use of a dash representing an orthographic sign that goes on the vowel of the stressed syllable, which is found in various cases of Spanish words (Lavandeira, 2015). This dash clearly suggests what syllable must be stressed in the word, and depending on the utterance, the meaning will change. For example, *tomate* without this accentual dash means "tomato" in English; with the orthographic sign though, *tómate*, the meaning of the word changes to the imperative form of verb *take* conjugated in the second singular person. This orthographic sign does not appear in English words; hence, it becomes more complicated for Spanish speakers to know what syllable is the one which has to be stressed in an English word. This is one of the reasons why English learners sometimes have trouble accentuating the right syllable in certain words.

For example, beginner English students might accentuate the syllable "ti" in the word "article" because the word in Spanish is *artículo*, being "tí" the accented syllable with the orthographic sign. Another example would be the word *helicóptero*, where "có" is stressed; as a result, students might think that in English, the right syllable to accentuate is not "co" in *helicopter*, but first one "he". Hence, this linguistic detail might cause confusion to Spanish speakers with regards to learning to accentuate syllables in English. For people who are learning to speak Spanish though, the orthographic sign can facilitate their learning as this dash explicitly tells them what syllable they are supposed to stress in a word.

With regards to sentence stress, Ballester (2015) points out that the relative stress of words in a sentence relies on their relative importance. In other words, the more significant a word is in a sentence, the stronger it will be stressed. These content words include nouns, adjectives, main verbs, and adverbs. This linguistic detail is found in both languages: Spanish and English; nonetheless, having a longer duration in content words of a sentence does not occur in Spanish.

Let us take the example of a complete sentence: "We stayed there for a while", there are two accented areas of stress and as opposed to the other sounds in this statement, they have a slightly longer duration. This phonological phenomenon would not take place in Spanish even if the same sentence were translated into this language (Frederi, 2005). "Permanecimos ahí por un tiempo" does not have any special longer accented area of stress that stands out from the other sounds in the sentence. Indeed, the primary stress occurs in the syllables "ci", "hí" and "tiem", but this does not mean that the syllable sound is going to be longer as it happens in English. Therefore, accentual rhythm of speech would never take place in Spanish unless this were deliberately done to emphasize something like the message to be delivered or proper articulation of the syllable being accentuated.

Pronunciation Difficulties for Spanish Speakers

Undoubtedly, one of the biggest challenges for Spanish speakers when learning English as a foreign language is pronunciation. Afonso (2021) explains that they usually struggle to make certain sounds in English which are not found in their mother tongue. For example, they generally have trouble with these sounds /ɪ/ /iː/ /æ/ /ʌ/ /ɜː/ /ɛː/ /ə/ /ʊ/ /w/. For example, Spanish speakers find it hard to say *feel* and *fill* accurately as in their mother tongue they only have the short /ɪ/, not the long vowel sound. The same happens with /æ/, /ʌ/ and /aː/ which correspond to Spanish /a/ so Spanish native speakers struggle with these 3 different sounds. As a result, they will say these 3 words, for example, *bad, but* and *bar* in the same way with the sound /aː/. Besides vowel sounds, Spanish speakers also have issues with several consonant sounds. Uribe, Fuentes, Vargas, and Rey (2019) state that typically, it is hard for them to produce certain sounds like /ŋ/ /dʒ/ /ʒ/ /ð/ /θ/ /z/. It is common to hear learners using the /t/sound instead of /θ/ in words like *thanks* or *through,* /s/ sound instead of /z/ in words such as *is* or *zoo* and the /g/ sound as in *good* in words like *wood* or *would.*

These authors also point out that regarding phonological differences between English and Spanish, some phonemes in these languages are done in a different manner and place of articulation. For instance, the phoneme /r/ is vibrant alveolar in Spanish, whereas in English, it is approximant post-alveolar. As a result, the speech organs of the Spanish speakers who are learning English have to be adjusted to the exact English articulation movements so that the phonemes are produced appropriately. Another

case is the phonemes /d/ and /t/. In English, these sounds are produced by touching the tip of the tongue against the upper gumline. In Spanish, however, these sounds are made by touching the blade of your tongue (just behind the tip) to this same position.

Another difficulty Spanish speakers have in pronunciation is word stress. Darren (2020) posits that in English, vowels are eaten. He explains that both of these languages have cognates, which are words that have the same origin. When these cognates are pronounced, however, the sound of certain phonemes change. For instance, in Spanish, vowels are normally produced more completely; meanwhile in English, they are usually reduced to the "schwa" sound /ə/. This occurs in syllables that are not stressed. A few examples of these cognates are: *color*, which in English it sounds like "colr", but in Spanish it sounds exactly as the way it is written. Another example can be the word *normal*, which in English the sound goes like "norml", but in Spanish it also sounds the way it is written.

Cognates can also lead to mispronunciation of certain phonemes of some particular words in English. Likewise, Spanish spelling has a big influence on English pronunciation. (Afonso, 2021) explains that spelling and pronunciation are very strongly associated in Spanish, so beginning students commonly pronounce English words in the same way they are written, letter by letter. Here we are also talking about L1 interference since their mother tongue negatively influences the way they read English. There are some common words Spanish speakers mispronounce. For example, *mother /moder/, money /moneɪ/, chocolate /tʃokoleɪt/, friend /frɪend/*. But they also have problems identifying letters or sounds which are silent in English, so it is hard for them to identify and memorize which phonemes do not sound in English. Some typical examples are *answer, island, honest, palm, climb, knife* among other words.

Moreover, some Spanish speakers tend to drop consonant sounds at the end of words. Moore (2020) points out that this usually happens in words like "breakfast", and learners just say "brekfas". Another example is when they say *mine* trying to say *mind*, or *tex* instead of *text*. But this also occurs when they have to say the plural form of certain words. For example, in *sentences* they only say *sentence*, or *task* instead of *tasks*. Another mistake they make in pronunciation is when they have to use the past of some regular verbs and they don't add the phoneme /d/ in verbs like *loved, decided, created, changed,* etc. They say these verbs as if they were in the present tense.

Now, Spanish speakers not only tend to drop consonant sounds at the end of terms, but they also tend to add the sound /e/ at the beginning of some words starting with 's' and a consonant. Some typical examples happen in these words: *street* as *'estreet'*, *school* as *'eschool'*, *strict* as *'strict'*, and some others. According to Moore (2020), this occurs because words in Spanish do not normally start with a consonant cluster. Therefore, sounds like */sp/, /st/, /sk/, /sl/, /sm/* do not exist in Spanish and they will always have a vowel sound before. For example, *esperar, estado, esmero*, etc. A good way to correct

this pronunciation mistake in learners is to practice saying 'ssssss' several times before actually saying the word which starts with /s/.

Didactic Implications

Unquestionably, learning to properly articulate and produce the target phoneme in either language (English or Spanish), at times, might not be very straightforward to carry out. However, it is the teacher's responsibility to give students the necessary linguistic tools so that they become successful in pronouncing well the vowel, consonant, or syllabic sounds in the language they are learning. But in order to be able to accomplish this, students need to know the correct position of their mouth, tongue, lips and other speech organs when learning to articulate new phonemes.

Frederi (2005) points out that when language teachers are working with bilingual students, it is essential to know about common articulation rules as well as patterns of speech of the learners' language. Being aware of these linguistic factors helps the language instructor better appreciate the phonological differences of these two languages, but more importantly, how to take advantage of these variances to smoothly teach the students the second or foreign language, which in this case would be Spanish or English.

Similarly, it is important and beneficial for students to work with minimal pairs since working with words, whose meaning and pronunciation differ from one sound, allows them to practice using correct pronunciation for each pair of words. Tursunkulova & Juraboyeva (2021) point out that minimal pairs offer great benefits when teaching and learning pronunciation of another language. They help students overcome their difficulties in pronunciation. Working with two words at the same time, where only one phoneme is different in each word, helps students' identity and learn proper articulation of sounds of each phoneme as they can contrast two nearly alike sounds.

Likewise, Nordquist (2017) agrees that minimal pairs serve as linguistic tools which permit to indicate that two sounds are contrastive. He also claims that a minimal pair is the easiest and clearest manner to recognize phonemes in a language. Yule (2010) also suggests that minimal pairs allow students to develop their capacity to comprehend the distinction in meaning based upon the minimal sound contrast. Hence, these pairs of words help students practice and differentiate common bewildering sounds like */s/ and /z/, /tʃ/ and /ʃ/, /iː/ and /ɪ/* among other phonemes in English. When learning Spanish, minimal pairs also help distinguish consonant and vowel sounds such as in words like *poca* and *foca*, *diga* and *digo, fuerte* and *suerte,* etc.

Having several repetition exercises is another key factor that greatly contributes to model and obtain proper pronunciation of such complicated sounds in either language,

Spanish or English (Ballester, 2015). Students should have as many opportunities as possible to practice listening to words, and then repeating them right after the word heard because the more they repeat, the faster they will learn to accurately pronounce the new utterances. But it is essential that language teachers wisely correct students' mispronunciation on time by using appropriate techniques to avoid making students feel frustrated or demotivated because of having too much correction.

According to Thornbury (2005), repetition and drilling is generally seen as an advantage when learning correct pronunciation of new items because it develops articulatory control over language. In other words, drilling allows proper articulation of sounds because the organs of speech production take the right position in order to properly say the utterances intended. But drilling is also seen as a fluency-enhancing technique because it does not only improve correct pronunciation of chunks but also speaking in a more natural manner without hesitation. So, the teacher should model correct pronunciation of the target words by having choral drilling, that is, asking all the students to repeat the words at the same time, and individual drilling, which means asking individual students at random to repeat the words to check and correct pronunciation.

But error correction ought to be used wisely and appropriately. Gumbaridze (2012) argues that one type of error correction cannot always be seen as the only primary method for all types of learners because for some students it can be motivating while for others it might be discouraging. Indeed, it is necessary to have many drilling exercises to enhance and perfect pronunciation of words, but it is also crucial to correct students' mistakes in a proper way utilizing different appropriate strategies that do not hinder learners from speaking the language. Thus, constant repetition exercises help optimize pronunciation and avoid having fossilization mistakes, but the teacher should be cautious and sensible in the way they correct learners' inappropriate articulation of sounds.

There are many other activities that can be applied in the classroom to model proper pronunciation of words, phrases and complete sentences. For example, to practice pronunciation of words, the technique "Odd One Out" is useful. Tursunkulova & Juraboyeva (2021) points out that this activity can make any pronunciation rules more memorable for learners. The idea is to choose some similar words in terms of pronunciation or their meaning. For instance, *leap, tea, sea, great*, etc. and students are supposed to choose the word, which is different from the group, which in this case is *great*. This activity can be done either as a reading exercise, where learners can read the words to themselves aloud and then identify the target sounds in the written words or as a listening exercise, where the teacher reads the words and the student just chooses the odd one out.

The activity "Reading out-loud" is another great tool to rehearse pronunciation. Uribe, Fuentes, Vargas, & Rey (2019) postulate that this technique has been

implemented in L2 teaching so that student's oral production can be enhanced. This activity offers several advantages. It not only improves pronunciation of individual words, but it also fosters fluency so that students can speak faster in a natural way. Moreover, it helps learners to improve word and sentence stress as well as intonation patterns. Naturally, this helps the teacher identify pronunciation mistakes and correct those errors afterwards. The teachers' role is extremely important in this exercise since if they do not model proper pronunciation of words, phrases, or even sentences, the students will continue making the same mistakes and those will become fossilized.

Thornbury (2005) also suggests using this technique as it has the advantage of providing a safe framework within which students can concentrate on lower-level features of speaking, such as pronunciation, stress and intonation. So, it is helpful if learners first mark onto their script the main stressed words and then divide each word or expression into meaningful chunks. This will allow them to sound more natural, accurate and fluent when speaking the target language.

This author also recommends using chants in the classroom because they represent a more playful way of practicing repetition and drilling of chunks. Thornbury (2005) states, "because they are contextualized, the chunks in chants may in fact be more memorable than in standard drills" (p. 66). In order to work best, the chants ought to include repeated examples of short, multi-word series, and should also have a constant rhythm. Once learners have heard the chant a couple of times, learners can try to reconstruct it in a written version, before they chant it in unison. Teachers can also ask students to mark the main stressed words to practice sentence stress. If tough utterances are included or found in the chant, they can be modeled in an isolated way and have learners repeat them a few times until correct pronunciation is heard.

There are many other activities that can be done when teaching both languages to improve the learner's pronunciation. Afonso (2021) suggests several famous techniques that teachers can apply in the classroom. For example, the phoneme race where the class is first divided into two teams and the teacher jots down some phonetic symbols on the board. These will be pronounced for students to listen to. Then he will write words on cards and the learners from each group have to run towards the teacher to obtain a card. Later, each team needs to identify the phoneme of the word pronounced, write it down on the back of the card and then run back to the teacher. If the word written is correct, that group is given another card. In the end, the group that has accumulated the most cards is the winner.

Afonso (2021) also recommends playing the game *Chinese whispers* where learners sit in a circle. The instructor displays one of the students a symbol and he has to whisper it to the next student. The next student whispers the symbol he heard to the next student and so on until the last learner gets that symbol. They should say the sound of that symbol to compare with the original one given to the first student. Now, this technique can be used not only symbols, but words, phrases or even sentences. It

all depends on what the teacher wants students to practice such as pronunciation of individual utterances, intonation, word or sentence stress.

Another useful technique to improve students' pronunciation in either language, Spanish or English, is using dictionaries. This activity works well if students are teenagers and adults whose level of English is at least (pre) intermediate and who have a good understanding of the phonetic alphabet. The teacher selects five words and at the same time they are phonetically transcribed. Individually or in pairs, they are required to write the corresponding word. Then learners exchange papers with another pupil or pair and are asked to check whether they have done it correctly. The winner is that learner or pair of students who got it right.

For students whose level of English is more basic or have no good domain of the phonetic alphabet, audio dictionaries can be used. The idea is that the teacher plays the audio of the word/s that need to be practiced and then students are asked to listen and repeat. Listening to the correct pronunciation provided by the dictionary can significantly help improve students' pronunciation. The teacher can even foster autonomous learning by encouraging learners to visit an online audio dictionary or download a complete one such as Cambridge, Oxford, Longman, etc. so that they can check the correct pronunciation of any word that they want to practice. Dictionaries with audio are such great tools to learn and improve pronunciation. But eventually, learning to read the phonemic charts is extremely important and beneficial because students will know exactly how to pronounce each symbol and consequently how to pronounce words correctly. So, language teachers should gradually incorporate pronunciation lessons along with the phonemic chart to help their students to improve this speaking sub-skill.

Conclusions

To sum up, there are a few similarities between Spanish and English regarding their phonological system, but there are more differences encountered between these two languages. In this paper, it was seen that even though several phonemes and a few other phonological patterns such as vowel and consonant sounds, diphthongs, triphthongs, word and sentence stress occur in both languages, the number of distinctive features between them is not the same. For example, considering the numbers of sounds mentioned above, it is concluded that English has a total of 44 phonemes, whereas Spanish has only 24 phonemes. Another difference is that English has an accentual rhythm of speech, where some syllables are longer than others, while in Spanish certain syllables are stressed, but they do not have longer duration. Finally, teachers need to take into consideration several factors when teaching about pronunciation to their students so that words are properly pronounced in either target language they are

learning. There are a variety of strategies and techniques such as the ones mentioned above that teachers can employ to help their learners improve their speaking skills, particularly pronunciation, intonation, proper word and sentence stress.

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