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**English Suprasegmental Instruction: Insights on Integrating
Suprasegmental Pronunciation Instruction in EFL Teaching**

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A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Patricia Aparicio Santisteban". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P'.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the history of English teaching, not all the linguistic domains have received the attention they deserve from English Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and programs. In fact, many EFL courses have been designed to promote and to give attention to teaching and learning specific linguistic features such as grammar and vocabulary. This is mainly due to schools' preference for traditional English teaching approaches, which are characterised by teacher-centred lessons guided by textbooks that mainly focus on teaching grammar and lexis. As a consequence, the domain of pronunciation has been often neglected from EFL teaching curricula despite teachers' recognition of the crucial role pronunciation plays in achieving successful communicative interaction, –a situation that Darcy calls the *pronunciation teaching paradox* (2018: 16)–. In fact, if a non-native speaker does not succeed in reaching an acceptable level of pronunciation accuracy despite their adequate use of grammar and vocabulary, the process of communication fails.

Another issue with pronunciation instruction is that not only traditional teaching approaches tend to ignore most, if not all, of the phonological aspects that conform English phonetics from their syllabi, but there is also a tendency to avoid certain aspects of phonetics within traditional L2 pronunciation instruction. This is particularly the case of language suprasegmental features. Experts support this fact by claiming that suprasegmentals instruction has not been a priority within traditional L2 pronunciation teaching programs, since they usually give more emphasis to segmentals by concentrating on the use of minimal pair drills of vowel and consonant sounds that are hard for students to distinguish and produce (Gilbert, 2008; Thomson & Derwing, 2015). Even nowadays main suprasegmental aspects of language –stress, rhythm and intonation– are hardly ever studied in depth or even mentioned in many EFL courses that implement pronunciation teaching in the classroom. Darcy (2018) establishes the lack of teacher training as one of the reasons why pronunciation instruction is not implemented in classrooms. Similarly, Murphy (1997, as cited in Murphy 2014) concludes from a survey addressed to MATESOL students that teacher preparation courses give limited attention to pronunciation instruction techniques; instead they focus more on how phonological systems work. His study also indicates that almost half of the MATESOL programs that were offered in American universities did not include a course on phonology. As a result, a gap in English pronunciation teaching might exist since EFL students do not have the knowledge to

produce as well as to perceive the different suprasegmental properties that characterises English native speech due to the lack of teachers' knowledge on how to teach them.

Fortunately, over the past few decades, there has been research that tried to give emphasis to the importance of including suprasegmentals in EFL classrooms by proving the improvement of English language learners' intelligibility due to primary stress (Hahn, 2004) as well as the development of their abilities to understand spoken English (Gilbert, 2008). At the same time, these studies strived to break down the segmental and suprasegmental dichotomy that supports the idea of teaching both phonological levels independently as they represent individual and separated entities (Wang, 2020). Thus, there is a strong need to integrate not only segmental or suprasegmental aspects of the target language, but a more equal representation of both in EFL teaching curricula, since they are key elements that conform the English pronunciation system. EFL teaching programs need to take advantage of this interconnected relationship that both levels have.

To have a better knowledge of what the term *suprasegmentals* means in a specific language, Ladefoged defines it as "those aspects of speech that involve more than single consonants or vowels" (2011: 243). They are specific and unique features that have an effect over the level of an individual sound within a word or an utterance (Celce-Muria et al., 1996). Therefore, they are extended to a macro-level over individual segments in words, phrases and sentences. As a consequence of being macro-features of language, suprasegmentals include tone, pitch, pausing and connected speech, among others, though the principal suprasegmental aspects of language are stress, rhythm and intonation.

Having a good command of these aspects of language affect communication positively. Many EFL students want to improve their speaking skills as well as their pronunciation in order to make themselves understood, and that is why I choose the field of pronunciation - more specifically of suprasegmentals - as the topic for my end of degree paper. My interest in pronunciation began when I attended the courses on English Phonetics I and II during my English Studies degree. At that moment I realised how much of an instructional priority segmentals and suprasegmentals are. From my experience as an EFL student, I am aware of how little attention these aspects of language receive within EFL teaching programs. Thus, I would like to contribute to encouraging EFL pronunciation teaching in my future professional career as an EFL teacher. Thanks to the writing process of this paper, I have deepened my knowledge on pronunciation instruction, especially with regards to suprasegmentals, and how

they can be implemented in the classroom. It is my hope that the reading of this paper will help other EFL students and teachers understand the importance of including these aspects of language in their teaching curricula and to increase awareness of issues related to pronunciation instruction.

After having identified a possible lack of training in EFL teachers on pronunciation instruction, and the preference for traditional EFL pronunciation instruction to focus more on segmentals than on suprasegmentals, the purpose of this paper is to explore aspects that are relevant in answering the question *why and how suprasegmental instruction should be approached in an EFL teaching context?*

In order to tackle this issue, this paper is divided into four main parts. The first part addresses the question of *why* suprasegmentals should be taught in EFL courses by introducing the actual impact that suprasegmental features have in L2 language production and perception due to their effects on learners' intelligibility, mainly, but also on comprehensibility, fluency and proficiency. This part also highlights the implementation of the *intelligibility principle* (Levis, 2005) as the goal of pronunciation instruction. The second part focuses on *how* to implement suprasegmental instruction in a classroom while making reference to teaching methodologies that have been used in the instruction of prosodic features and several teaching principles in order to achieve a successful teaching process of English suprasegmentals. Next, the third part analyses the results obtained from a survey we administered to EFL teachers who work in English language schools. This survey aims to show what beliefs teachers hold about suprasegmentals and pronunciation instruction and explores the extent to which suprasegmentals are taught in English language schools. Finally, the fourth part proposes some exercises to work on English lexical stress and rhythm in order to demonstrate how the different aspects that had been analysed in the previous blocks can be applied in the future in an EFL classroom setting.

2. THE EFFECTS OF SUPRASEGMENTALS ON ENGLISH PERCEPTION AND PRODUCTION

As one of the main purposes of this paper is to highlight the importance and the positive effects of teaching EFL suprasegmentals, this section will discuss *why* suprasegmental competence is essential for foreign language acquisition due to its favourable effect on the oral perception and production of the target language. Apart from that, not knowing about the suprasegmental aspects of speakers' target language can lead to problems in a communicative exchange, as it seriously affects speakers' intelligibility. For this reason, this chapter also considers a model based on intelligibility as the main goal for pronunciation instruction.

2.1. The importance of teaching suprasegmental aspects of language

Many experts in the field of pronunciation instruction rely on the idea that suprasegmentals are essential features that have a crucial effect on EFL learners' intelligibility (Hahn, 2004) and comprehensibility (Derwing & Munro, 1997). However, it is important to make the distinction between these two terms clear. Derwing and Munro (2009) define *intelligibility* as how understandable L2 speech actually is, whereas they define *comprehensibility* as "the listener's perception of how easy or difficult it is to understand a given speech sample" (2009: 478). Both concepts are strongly related as they are essential constituents of good L2 perception and production skills; however, there is a clear distinction: "comprehensibility is about the listener's effort, and intelligibility is the end result: how much the listener actually understands" (2009: 480). Therefore, as long as the listener has understood the speech produced by a speaker, this speaker is considered intelligible.

The importance of prosodic instruction is supported by the findings of Derwing and Munro, who concluded in one of their studies that "improvement in NNS *comprehensibility*, at least for intermediate and high proficiency learners, is more likely to occur with improvement in prosodic proficiency than with a sole focus on correction of phonemic errors" (1997: 15). Fraser (2001, as cited in Zielinski, 2015) also agrees that suprasegmentals positively influence comprehensibility as she includes word and sentence stress as the most important features that should be firstly taught, since both have a great impact on speakers' speech. Fraser also claims that English native listeners rely on suprasegmental patterns, such as stress, much more than on segmental features because producing incorrect stress patterns will render speech

unintelligible, even if the speaker produces speech sounds accurately (i.e. individual consonant and vowel sounds). These studies strengthen the idea that if the goal of pronunciation teaching is to help students become more understandable, then it should consider a stronger focus on prosodic features of the target language.

Besides the impact that suprasegmentals have on comprehensibility and intelligibility, there are also other aspects of language that might improve if EFL learners had a proper knowledge of the prosodic characteristics of the language they study. Kang et al. (2010) found empirical evidence that teaching and practicing suprasegmental aspects of speech significantly improved L2 oral *proficiency*. Their study pointed out that the use of rising tones, controlled pitch and linking are important factors in determining perceived proficiency. In addition to this, the correct use of some suprasegmental features such as pause duration also affects L2 speech *fluency* (Trofimovich & Baker, 2006). For example, in order to sound fluent in English, learners should focus on making pauses at the right time within an utterance and avoid silent pauses in the wrong place within a sentence to keep listeners' attention focused on the message.

All these aspects of language such as intelligibility, fluency and comprehensibility characterise oral production. However, not only does suprasegmental instruction improve learners' speaking skills, it also increases listening comprehension and speech processing. Students who are taught about English prosodic patterns often show improvement in understanding oral production (Gilbert, 2008). After all, if learners fail to learn the correct stress pattern while acquiring a new word, they probably also fail to identify that word when it occurs in an utterance. Therefore, it can be stated that there is a relationship between speaking and listening comprehension. Gilbert explains why this happens; she states that suprasegmental-trained students have learned to know how melodic patterns are used to organise information and to provide utterances with specific meaning, and how prosody changes how words sound. Thus, listening comprehension can be improved, for example, by focusing on how content words are highlighted due to prosodic influence in order to guide the listener(s). In addition to the improvement of listening skills due to suprasegmental learning, Cui et al.'s (2020) recent research indicates that with explicit instruction and exposure to suprasegmental knowledge, reading comprehension can also improve, especially with regards to reading speed and reading aloud in lower reading proficiency students. Consequently, phonology is related not only to oral production and perception (speaking and listening) but also to reading comprehension. Thanks to the capacity of suprasegmentals to promote

improvement in oral perception and production and due to its relationship with other skill areas besides speaking, pronunciation should be ideally taught in connection with speaking, listening and reading skills.

Because some languages differ in the way they make use of suprasegmental information, prosodic features of the target language need to be approached in detail in EFL classrooms. This situation is influenced by the interference from learners' L1 prosodic features of stress, rhythm and intonation. To illustrate this, EFL learners whose L1 is Spanish will probably suffer the influence of their L1 syllable-timed rhythm while speaking English. English native speakers may find speech hard to process when produced with non-native rhythm, as they expect the continuous alternation pattern of reduced and unreduced syllables, and strong and weak words that characterises the rhythm of the English language. This lack of understanding can be also applied to the other two major prosodic characteristics of language (lexical stress and intonation). Stressing the wrong syllable in a word can be highly detrimental for communication with individuals for whom English is their L1. The failure to perceive and produce the right stress pattern can cause confusion between not only words but phrases such as "his story" and "history". Moreover, English native speakers rely on stress patterns to store and classify vocabulary items within their long-term memory (Gilbert, 2008). EFL learners also rely on their L1 stress patterns and this affects where they place the stress while speaking the target language. For example, L1 Spanish speakers tend to pronounce the adjective *Catholic* as /kə'θɒlɪk/ instead of /'kæθəlɪk/ due to L1 interference. In addition, putting the stress on the wrong syllable also affects the quality of the stressed vowel as well as the reduction of unstressed syllables. This demonstrates how segmentals go hand in hand with suprasegmentals and they both should be taught simultaneously. Pitch pattern or intonation is another suprasegmental feature that is also affected by L1 interference. In fact, English uses rising and falling pitches and tones differently from other languages such as Spanish and has its own distinctive melody and intonation patterns that control the structure of information that is being uttered. For example, an EFL student might not be aware of the fact that using a rising intonation in wh- questions expresses surprise and not a real question asking about new information, which might be the main purpose of the student while asking the question. These aspects, of course, affect the meaning of utterances. Moreover, as these stress, rhythm, and intonation patterns might probably differ from how they work in the learners' native language, it is important to raise their awareness on suprasegmentals. If teachers approach this issue,

learners will probably develop their ability to avoid interference from their L1 prosodic features into the target language, and this will positively affect their L2 production and perception.

Considering all these factors, it is fundamental that EFL teaching programs incorporate a whole view of phonetic instruction. They need to integrate in their teaching curricula a more inclusive representation that includes both English segmentals and suprasegmentals. After all, practicing pronunciation by paying attention only to individual sounds is like using only a part of the language. As Gilbert states “practicing pronunciation without prosody is like teaching ballroom dancing, only the students must stand still, practice without a partner, and without music” (2008: 9). However, this critique can be also applied if suprasegmentals were a priority within teaching curricula, since neither suprasegmentals nor segmentals should dominate over the other. Otherwise, EFL students that do not have the capacity to identify and to use segmental as well as suprasegmental features will suffer a negative effect on their spoken language and listening comprehension abilities. This might result in communication breakdowns due to lack of intelligibility, comprehensibility and understanding between speaker and listener. In the same way, Levis (2005) states that the three components of intelligibility, comprehensibility and understanding, in which suprasegmentals play a crucial role, are the foundations of a successful communication process. These three components must be the main goals of language teaching and learning as they assume both a listener and a speaker, and both are essential factors in communication, being this the basic principle on which language use is built.

2.2. A model of suprasegmental instruction based on intelligibility

Two opposing views on pronunciation teaching, the intelligibility principle and the nativeness principle, have been considered models of instruction (Levis, 2005). The intelligibility principle holds that learners’ speech should be understood, whereas the nativeness principle advocates that an L2 student should seek to sound like a native speaker of the second language (Levis, 2005). That is, those who advocate for the nativeness principle accept the necessity for learners to get rid of their foreign accents and to produce a highly accurate L2 speech, while supporters of the intelligibility principle do not regard native-like production as a goal because they do not consider foreign accent as an obstacle to communication. Instead, they rely on the importance of learners being understood while they produce L2 speech. In fact, experts in the

field of teaching support the idea that EFL sessions should aim to help learners improve their intelligibility because empirical evidence has supported the intelligibility principle. Derwing and Munro's (1999) research on accentedness, intelligibility and comprehensibility concluded that even when a speaker's speech is heavily accented, it is not associated with a lack of understanding. Accent is a prominent feature of speech, but it does not necessarily affect communication. In fact, modifying accents may not improve intelligibility at all (Derwing & Munro, 2009).

Fortunately, the recent interest in pronunciation research has changed the focus from native-like models towards intelligibility. However, despite the efforts to emphasize speech intelligibility and comprehensibility over nativeness, many EFL programs establish native-like pronunciation as the main target (Thomson & Derwing, 2015). Nevertheless, the trend towards intelligible speech as the main goal of pronunciation instruction is a positive change since the nativeness principle is considered "an unrealistic burden" for EFL learners (Levis, 2005: 370), which probably might result in a lack of motivation for learners as they struggle to reach native-like pronunciation. In fact, the nativeness principle clashes with what the actual aim of L2 pronunciation is: to be able to communicate successfully by improving pronunciation accuracy, and this implies helping learners make their speech highly intelligible and comprehensible. Therefore, the aim to completely eradicate L1 accents from foreign-accented speech must be left aside from classroom settings as it has been demonstrated that this factor does not affect speakers' intelligibility or comprehensibility. Munro and Derwing (1995) proved this by asking native English listeners how intelligible and comprehensible English speech produced by Mandarin native speakers was. They found that a strong foreign accent does not necessarily reduce comprehensibility or intelligibility of L2 speech.

As pointed out in the previous section, suprasegmental instruction is necessary in order for EFL students to achieve a certain level of intelligibility and comprehensibility in their speech production. Language learners need to be intelligible in order to communicate successfully not only with English native speakers but also with non-native ones. Therefore, pronunciation instruction should not be about neglecting foreign accents or developing accuracy of pronunciation but more about understanding speakers' utterances. However, learners might have mastered the basics of English communication and their oral productions might have a good level of intelligibility. In this case, "refinements can be marked as a goal if the student wants to put more effort and time into learning nuances of spoken English" (Gilbert,

2008: 42). Therefore, if the first and main aim of pronunciation instruction of developing pronunciation that is “listener friendly” is already achieved by learners, and they want to take a further step in achieving a native-like pronunciation, this can be done, but without forgetting that the first and most important aim in pronunciation instruction is to achieve a “listener-friendly pronunciation” (Kjellin, 1998, as cited in Gilbert, 2008: 42).

3. IMPLEMENTING SUPRASEGMENTAL INSTRUCTION IN AN EFL CONTEXT

3.1. Teaching approaches and methodologies to practice suprasegmentals

An important aspect that has to be taken into consideration while trying to answer the question of *how to teach English suprasegmentals?* is the different methodologies that have been used in order to instruct the macro-features of the English language. Taking into account that L2 suprasegmental learning resembles the acquisition of L2 segments (Trofimovich & Baker, 2006), the methodologies used to teach these features of language do not vary too much from those that have been used to instruct individual sounds.

In this section, an analysis of the early traditional instruction of the suprasegmental features of language, as well as of the more recent communicative approach will be provided. As a final point, a combination of the two different foci on form and communicative approaches that has been supported by several experts in the field of teaching pronunciation (Gordon, 2021; Gilbert, 2008; Celce-Murcia et al. 1996) is mentioned as it has been encouraged to be implemented in EFL courses in order to achieve successful learning of suprasegmentals.

3.1.1. Early traditional instruction: the predominance of the imitative approach

In order to discuss the early history of pronunciation instruction, two main teaching approaches need to be considered: the *intuitive-imitative approach* and the *analytic-linguistic approach* (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996). According to the *intuitive-imitative approach*, learners listen and imitate the patterns of the target language without teacher's intervention to provide an explicit focus on form. With regards to the *analytic-linguistic approach*, this method is characterised

by the use of supporting tools and pedagogical aids so that students could consciously pay attention to sounds and rhythms of the target language. According to Celce-Murcia et al. (1996), this last approach provided a complementary function to the intuitive-imitative approach, which was preserved in order to practice the linguistic information provided in the analytic-linguistic approach.

Taking these two approaches into consideration, several techniques have been used for the acquisition of the different suprasegmental features of the target language. The listen and imitate technique -also known as *shadowing*, *echoing* or *parroting*- has been very popular within suprasegmental instruction, especially to teach pitch and intonation (Thomson & Derwing, 2015). This technique constitutes a fundamental teaching tool within the Direct Method in which students listen to a provided model and repeat or imitate it (Celce-Murcia et al. 1996). The use of visual aids is another technique used in the analytic-linguistic approach that calls learners' attention and supports teachers' explanation of how suprasegmental patterns work in a specific word or sentence, such as the use of arrows to show rising or falling intonation patterns or the use of bullet points and lines to highlight stressed syllables. The comparison and practice of stress shifts related by affixation (i.e. aCADemy and acaDEmic), by different grammatical word categories (i.e. *n.* REcord and *v.* reCORD) or by the different attributive or predicative use of adjectives (i.e. a CHINese guide, and the guide is ChinESE) is another technique that is based on rules of generative phonology (Chomsky and Halle 1968, as cited in Celce-Murcia et al., 1996). In this method, the instructor points out the "rule-based nature of stress shifts in etymologically related words in order to raise awareness" (1996: 9); additionally, sentences that include the pair of words that suffered a stress shift may be provided as oral practice to perceive the contrast between both. Finally, reading aloud sentences, texts, poetry, dialogues or using dramatic techniques such as role plays are also very common methods to make learners practice on stress, rhythm and intonation patterns.

All the emphasis in these early pronunciation instruction techniques has been on trying to acquire specific target features of language with words in isolation. While putting in practice these techniques, students do not deal with language in real context, instead their speech production is limited as these techniques only involve extremely controlled linguistic environments. There is no opportunity for learners to produce spontaneous language while implementing these methods. For this reason, there is some doubt about whether such imitation,

comparison or reading-aloud exercises in isolation can actually improve learners' pronunciation in an actual conversational setting.

3.1.2. Recent pronunciation instruction: the communicative approach

In the 1980s a new approach was introduced in the pronunciation instruction realm: the communicative approach. This approach was developed as a response to the artificiality and lack of spontaneous speech production of the earlier controlled techniques that emphasised repetition, imitation and reading aloud activities, which were discussed in the previous section. A necessity to create meaningful activities in which language has its real communicative function was therefore prioritized. In the last decades, this approach is acquiring more relevance in foreign language teaching and so is EFL pronunciation instruction because the shift from more controlled to more spontaneous communicative load will give learners the opportunity to practice oral production in less synthetic and more real communicative situations. Moreover, this approach has brought an extremely needed vision to the teaching of pronunciation that included the aim of avoiding communicative problems by performing learner-centred lessons in which students are “better motivated to make their English speech clearer and more comprehensible” (Celce-Murcia, 1983: 6).

However, though the communicative approach has a large number of defenders due to the creation of interactive settings that enhance implicit language acquisition, no formal explicit linguistic instruction takes place in this approach. This represents an obstacle for learners who require more formal phonological teaching episodes to acquire specific phonological properties through noticing and raising awareness of those key features at some level of processing (Mora & Levkina, 2017).

3.1.3. Advocating for a combination of traditional form-focused methodologies and communicative-based approaches to teaching suprasegmentals

As a result of the lack of attention to focus on meaning in early pronunciation teaching approaches and of explicit focus on form in communicative approaches, many studies advocate for incorporating a type of instruction that contains explicit and

communicative activities in teaching suprasegmentals (Celce-Murcia et al. 1996, Darcy, 2018; Gilbert, 2008; Gordon, 2021).

Focus-on-form (FonF) instruction aims “to draw learners’ attention to a particular problematic feature and it offers learners an opportunity to “notice” this feature in the input” (Trofimovich & Gabonton, 2006: 520). There are several techniques to promote FonF teaching such as explicit explanation, metalinguistic feedback and input/output practice. Many experts in phonemic instruction have advocated the necessity to use FonF instruction in order to raise awareness of the target feature because “while many learners may have an ‘ear’ for different forms of the L2, others will benefit from instruction that directs their attention to specific features of the L2” (Gordon, 2021: 12).

Within the existing FonF techniques, some of them seem to be more effective than others. However, further research in real teaching contexts need to be done in order to establish a preference. For example, Trofimovich and Baker (2006) conclude that supporting visual presentation of intonation contours promote suprasegmental learning more effectively than perceptual discrimination learning or delayed auditory feedback. Saito and Wu (2014) advocate for guiding learners to notice phonetic dissimilarities of new suprasegmental feature(s) through meaningful teacher-learner interactions and input enhancement while increasing pitch and simplifying prosody in order to easily identify the target suprasegmental pattern(s). Other experts rely more on the necessity to implement explicit instruction before practice for foreign language learning to become automatic and natural (Gordon, 2021; Darcy, 2018).

All in all, what really has been proved is that students first need to perceive and to notice the target feature(s) in order to develop phonological competence since phonological acquisition requires conscious knowledge of the target language phonological system (Mora, et al. 2014). However, it is important to emphasise that the effect of just *perceiving* and *noticing* does not necessarily imply producing that aspect of language that is being studied accurately (Kennedy & Trofimovich, 2010) or at least that is not enough for phonological learning to take place (Mora, et al., 2014). By raising language awareness EFL learners become conscious of how an aspect of foreign language speech conveys meaning but still cannot proficiently use that aspect in speech. For example, an EFL student might be aware that in all English multisyllabic words one syllable carries the stress, and that this syllable is higher in pitch and consequently the other syllables are reduced. Despite knowing about these aspects, the learner

might still be unable to stress the right syllable and reduce the other unstressed syllables in multisyllabic words. In this case, awareness of a suprasegmental aspect would not necessarily translate into its accurate use. However, as a first step to learn suprasegmentals, both *perceiving* and *noticing*¹ are necessary since phonological acquisition in the L2 “requires conscious knowledge of the L2 phonological system at the level of noticing and at the level of understanding” (Mora et al., 2014: 59).

Having commented on the need to implement FonF instruction in order to consciously perceive and notice certain phonological aspects of the target language, communicative practice is necessary at a later stage for learners to put into practice those feature(s) in a meaningful communicative context. As Gordon (2021) noticed in one of his studies, communicative tasks matter while teaching and learning suprasegmentals, but learners receiving both explicit instruction (form-focused) and meaning-focused instruction demonstrated more improvement than the only meaning-focused group. Pronunciation instruction thus needs to lead learners towards a focus on both form and meaning at once. In other words, a dual-focus approach to teach pronunciation that combines a focus on form and a later communicative purpose to finally automatize the production of the target feature(s), seems to be an effective approach to learn EFL pronunciation.

3.2. *Teaching guiding principles*

Many EFL teachers are reluctant to teach pronunciation, in part because they have had no training in the area or because many coursebooks present no practical suprasegmental rules, which represent a burden for EFL teachers in the phonetics field (Derwing & Munro, 2009). Darcy (2018) establishes three factors that may account for this resistance of including pronunciation in the teaching curricula: the *time* obstacle (when and why), the *methodology* obstacle (how), and the *focus* obstacle (what are the learning priorities). Despite all these barriers, teachers should be confident in teaching pronunciation. In order to simplify the task of teaching pronunciation and to help instructors to accomplish pronunciation instruction and learning goals, some guiding pedagogical principles from different authors are presented in this section in order to find the solution to the three main difficulties of what, when and how to

¹ *Perceiving* implies a lower level kind of awareness (i.e. to perceive difference in the recognition of stress and intonation patterns) while *noticing* entails a higher level of awareness (i.e. to transform students’ ability to perceive suprasegmental features into the ability to imitate them) from Mora et al., 2014.

teach pronunciation that EFL teachers face. These principles are (1) *to establish a teaching focus based on learners' needs* (Darcy, 2018), (2) *to take a systematic approach to pronunciation instruction* (Zielinski & Yates, 2014), (3) *to give feedback and to assess the targeted feature(s)* (Zielinski and Yates, 2014), (4) *to integrate pronunciation into every lesson and at beginner levels* (Zielinski & Yates, 2014; Darcy, 2018). Principle 1 is linked to the question of *what to teach in pronunciation*, principles 2 and 3 answer the question of *how to teach pronunciation*; finally, principle 4 tries to give answers to the challenging task of *when to teach pronunciation*. Taking them into account while designing a lesson plan would be highly recommendable.

Principle 1. To establish a teaching focus based on learners' needs (Darcy, 2018). This is the first step that teachers should consider while teaching pronunciation. Instructors need to establish what is essential to teach based on the intelligibility principle (Levis, 2005). This is crucial to achieve an effective teaching process, otherwise, time spent on something that does not affect intelligibility or comprehensibility results in neglecting something that really does matter. In Munro and Derwing words “there is a risk of teaching things that are salient, but which will not result in actual improvement in communication for the speaker” (2011: 482). Thus, the first step should be to establish whether the form under consideration is problematic for intelligibility and comprehensibility.

In order to tackle the issue on what to put the focus on, teachers need to identify learners' needs through a pre-test based on intelligibility and comprehensibility factors. Thomson and Derwing (2014) established the necessity to do both controlled (i.e. reading aloud) and spontaneous pre-tests (i.e. spontaneous dialogues) in an attempt to identify what aspects of pronunciation need to be addressed and in what order. Additionally, pronunciation goals should be prioritized based on individual student's needs, since most probably not all students will share the same needs. Next, a specific list of goals can be established based on what are the aspects that learners should improve based on what features are the most important for intelligibility of the English language² (*Figure 1*).

² This is a short list of features that are important for intelligibility of the English language (Goodwin, 2014 as cited in Darcy 2018, p. 30). (1) Word stress, number of syllables; (2) Intonation and natural breaks; (3) Connected speech and linking; (4) Syllable timing and vowel reduction (5) Pausing and fluency (6) Final and “important” consonants (7) Vowel duration (see *Figure 1*).

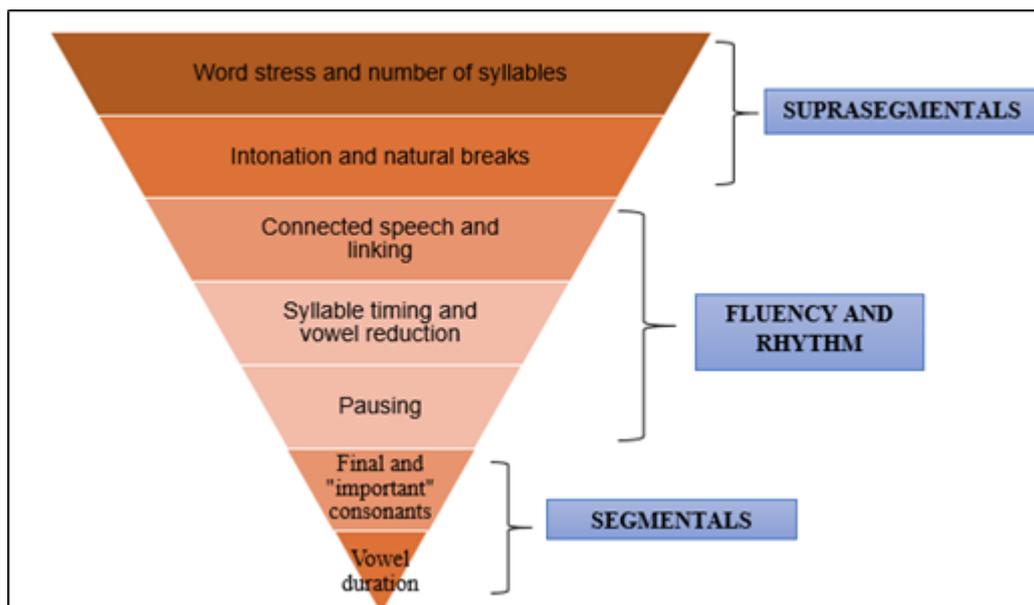


Figure 1. Inverted pyramid that represents the hierarchical priority in pronunciation features based on Goodwin's list, 2014 (as cited in Darcy, 2018).

Principle 2: To take a systematic approach to pronunciation instruction (Zielinski & Yates, 2014). Though this aspect has been discussed in the previous block advocating for a dual instruction approach that alternates focus on form and meaning, Zielinski and Yates (2009, 2011; as cited in Zielinski & Yates, 2014) narrow this scope and they stipulate an organised teaching structure made up of four stages and aims to teach suprasegmentals (see appendix A). A first stage requires “listening and awareness” that involves perceiving and noticing. At this first level, there is no production but perception of the target feature(s). To teach explicit phonetic and phonological aspects of the target language in order to make learners become aware of specific features is a necessity in foreign language learning. A second stage called “control” refers to controlled practice in which focus on form is still a priority in order to develop learners’ control over the pronunciation of the target feature. A third stage known as “practice” focuses on less controlled but still guided learning in which there are more opportunities for production of the target feature. At this level, complexity is an important factor to bear in mind while designing activities that are appropriate for specific learners’ levels of proficiency. Finally, “extension” works as a close step in which learners practice the language in more spontaneous and authentic settings in order to determine the actual impact of teaching the target feature(s) and to finally contribute to the internalisation of them.

Apart from the implementation of this four step-based systematic approach, teachers need to bear in mind the factors of task variation and repetition while designing pronunciation

activities. Students need opportunities for repetition of a specific language feature in order to internalise language knowledge and suprasegmentals are not an exception. Task variation is also necessary while teaching pronunciation since including a wider variety of activities motivates students in the process of learning.

Principle 3. To give feedback and to assess the targeted feature(s) (Zielinski & Yates, 2014) has as its aim to make learners understand how they need to modify their speech in order to be intelligible outside the classroom.

Concerning pronunciation assessment, this should involve both controlled (i.e. reading aloud) and spontaneous (i.e. picture narratives) pre-tests (as mentioned in *principle 1*) and delayed post-tests. It is important to do both assessments since doing pre-tests determine the actual learners' needs on specific suprasegmental feature(s) whereas doing post-tests confirm whether there is "long-term retention related to a specific intervention" (Thomson & Derwing, 2014: 339). It is also important to include in the assessing process not only production of the different suprasegmental feature(s) but also perception since both are closely related and both should be assessed to determine the efficacy of instruction (Thomson & Derwing, 2014). Also, teachers need to implement English variety in their lessons and assessing processes in order to provide students with a more authentic input while trying to develop their perceptive skills and perception assessment (Darcy, 2018). This will help learners have a contact with the actual variety of the language, since English is a language that is spoken in many countries. Moreover, Darcy advocates for basing pronunciation assessment on comprehensibility rather than on intelligibility, since an orthographic transcription is needed while assessing intelligibility (Derwing and Munro, 1997). It is better to base assessment on comprehensibility by evaluating on a scale how difficult or easy an utterance is to understand. However, all in all, the nature of the scale can vary depending on the goals established by the teacher. Moreover, pronunciation is a skill subject that is harder to score objectively than others such as grammar or vocabulary. For this reason, the elements that are going to be analysed in the pre-tests must be intentionally taught, in order to assure better results in the post-tests because as Gilbert states "teaching to the test is essential: the test must measure what teachers are going to teach and the curriculum that is going to be presented, including prioritizing of topics, must be directly addressed in the pre-testing" (2008: 44).

In relation to feedback, teachers need to implement it in order to achieve effective pronunciation instruction. Studies suggest an important role of corrective feedback when it is followed by explicit pronunciation instruction in pronunciation learning (Gordon, 2021). However, while feedback is more helpful than no feedback, certain types of feedback seem to be more effective for pronunciation instruction. In this case, explicit feedback seems to be very important, whereas no explicit feedback (i.e. recasts) can be ambiguous for learners since the recast may not cause learners to be aware that their production was incorrect. Moreover, explicit feedback helps students develop self-awareness of their production problems, and it helps them identify when these problems occur so that they can be able to correct and monitor themselves. Saito and Wu's (2014) research on pronunciation corrective feedback supports this claim. Their results suggest that form-focused instruction without corrective feedback promotes better sound learning and they even claim that initial beginner to intermediate foreign language learners should initially be encouraged to notice the target suprasegmental feature(s) only through focus on form instruction and repetition with no pressure for modified output through recasts or implicit feedback. However, this does not mean that the learning pattern of focus on form instruction and corrective feedback approach does not apply for learning other aspects of language, because the use of corrective feedback is effective in vocabulary or grammar learning, but not in pronunciation acquisition.

Principle 4. To integrate pronunciation into every lesson and at beginner levels (Darcy et al. 2014; Darcy, 2018).

Many teachers believe that pronunciation is reserved for the higher levels of proficiency. However, pronunciation instruction starts in the early levels and for this reason it is important to start implementing it from the very basic levels of instruction (Darcy, 2018). Of course, teachers should bear in mind what aspects of pronunciation are more suitable to address depending on learners' language proficiency level. In order to facilitate this task of adapting suprasegmental teaching to learners' proficiency levels, Darcy et al. (2014) establish a list of elements that needs to be approached depending on learners' proficiency level. For beginners, it is important to focus on the word-level paying attention to lexical stress, English stress timing and the basic rising and falling intonational patterns to ask and to answer questions. For intermediate levels, the attention moves towards sentence-level features. Raising awareness of connected speech is central as well as on perception of strings of sentences and chunks. For

higher levels, the focus is more on stress accuracy, intonation, rhythm and linking with the goal of providing students with adequate knowledge to increase self-monitoring of their own speech.

Apart from the recommendation of implementing pronunciation at very elemental levels of English proficiency, pronunciation must be embedded, both within the curriculum as a whole, and within each lesson even for a short period of time (Darcy et al., 2012). In this manner, pronunciation teaching should become a regular activity and a necessary part of language learning. In fact, several studies reveal the importance of paying attention to suprasegmentals every day, even for just a few amount of time to help students to develop comprehensible L2 speech in a short time (Darcy & Rocca, 2021; Gordon & Darcy, 2016 as cited in Gordon 2021). This improvement that is shown in a short period of time also results in higher levels of motivation for students to keep learning. Moreover, pronunciation should not be taught separately from other aspects of language such as grammar or vocabulary. It should rather become an integral part of language instruction. This also applies to segmental and suprasegmental features since both are essential aspects of pronunciation. Therefore, even when the course's learning goals do not include pronunciation, teachers need to use opportunities from the course materials to create short pronunciation teaching and learning episodes in everyday lessons. By drawing students' attention to suprasegmental aspects of language every day even for a short period of time, teachers are giving students the sense that suprasegmentals matter.

4. EFL TEACHERS' OPINIONS ABOUT TEACHING SUPRASEGMENTALS IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

4.1. The study

Teachers from different English language schools were surveyed regarding their beliefs and practices on teaching pronunciation (see appendix B). The main motivation for doing the survey is to understand the current situation of pronunciation instruction and more specifically of suprasegmental instruction in different English language schools. In total, 27 teachers participated in the survey; 14 were English native speakers and 13 were not native speakers of English though they stated they have a high command of the English language. Regarding the

question about their formal education on Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), 26 teachers said that they do have formal education in this academic field, while only one instructor answered that he/she did not have any formal education in TEFL.

The survey was not compulsory and it was anonymous. It consisted of 13 questions divided into 3 categories. In the first category (questions from 1 to 5), participants were asked to indicate what level of importance they give to segmental and suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation as well as their beliefs on when to implement certain aspects of suprasegmental instruction (at what level of proficiency). In the second category (questions from 6 to 10), answers from surveyed teachers aim to provide information about what suprasegmental features they include in their lessons (*Figure 3*) and how they actually teach them, if so. Finally, the third category (questions from 11 to 13) deals with questions of survey respondents' knowledge on teaching different pronunciation aspects and what are the main difficulties they have experienced while teaching them. The questions were as follows:

1. What level of importance do you assign to teaching pronunciation in relation to other language skills?
2. What level of importance do you assign to teaching segmental aspects of pronunciation (vowel and consonant sounds)?
3. What level of importance do you assign to teaching suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation (i.e. lexical stress, rhythm, intonation, linking, ...)?
4. What level of importance would you assign to implementing suprasegmental instruction at a very basic level of English proficiency?
5. What level of importance would you assign to implementing suprasegmental instruction at intermediate and high levels of English proficiency?
6. Do you include teaching of any of the following suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation in your language instruction classes? (Please, tick all that apply: lexical stress, stressed-timed rhythm, intonation, I do not teach any suprasegmental features, other).
7. If you include teaching of any suprasegmental features in your English instruction what methods do you use to teach them?
8. Do you take into consideration any of the following suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation while assessing your students' speech?

9. Do you provide your students with feedback regarding stress, rhythm and intonation during oral tasks?
10. In general, what is your learners' goal regarding speech production?
11. How would you rate your knowledge of how to teach pronunciation in general?
12. How would you rate your knowledge on how to teach suprasegmentals?
13. In general, what major difficulties have you experienced while teaching pronunciation?

4.2. Results

The ratings in the first category were given on a Likert scale of 1 (not important at all) to 7 (extremely important). Analysis of responses from this section shows that the majority of teachers consider teaching pronunciation “extremely” (19%) and “very important” (70%) in relation to other language skills teaching, while only a few teachers (11%) regard pronunciation teaching as “moderately important”. Comparing teachers' ranking individually on the level of importance they assign to teaching segmentals and suprasegmentals, a very equal division is found: 37% of the teachers consider that both teaching segmentals and suprasegmentals share the same amount of importance; 33 % reported a higher level of importance to suprasegmental teaching, while 30% proclaimed a higher level of importance to segmental teaching. These results indicate a very equal division among teachers' belief on how much importance do they give to suprasegmentals and segmentals (*Figure 2*). However, a high number of teachers believe that suprasegmental instruction is “important” (44%), followed by 41% of the surveyed teachers who considers it “extremely important”, whereas only a few think that suprasegmental instruction is “not very important” (15%). If we compare these results with the ones obtained on the question of *what level of importance do you assign to segmental teaching*, a slightly contrast can be seen: a smaller number of teachers consider segmental instruction as “not very important” (4%) and as “extremely important” (19%); a higher number of teachers think that segmental instruction is “important” (52%) and 22% consider it as “very important”. All in all, a high number of teachers considers suprasegmental teaching at a high level of importance, though there is a higher number of teachers that regard suprasegmental teaching as less important than segmental teaching. Regarding the question on *at what level of proficiency should teachers implement suprasegmental teaching?* a high number of teachers give more importance to implement suprasegmental instruction at intermediate and high levels of proficiency (48%). Only a few of them reported a high mark of importance to implement them

at basic levels of proficiency (19%) and others reported the same level of importance to implement suprasegmental instruction at both levels (33%).

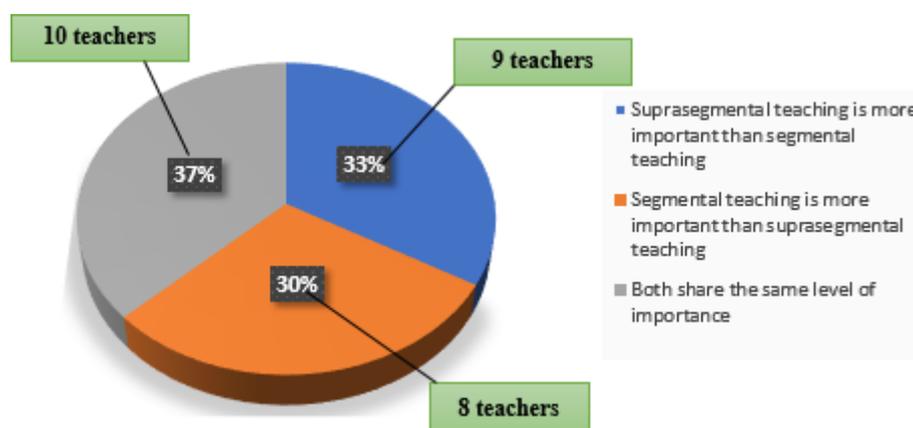


Figure 2. Is it more important to teach suprasegmentals or segmentals aspects of language according to individual responses?

Answers from the second category show that lexical stress is the most widely taught, followed by intonation and stress-timed rhythm. Only a few teachers added a new suprasegmental feature to this teaching list: connected speech (15%) and just one teacher reported that she / he does not take into account any suprasegmental feature while teaching, though she / he stated that “I teach other aspects of pronunciation through repetition”. All in all, a relatively high number of teachers include the three most important suprasegmental features (48%) in their lessons. Regarding the question on *what teaching methodologies do they use while teaching suprasegmentals?* (Figure 4), explicit instruction and imitation/repetition are the most preferred teaching techniques (89% and 82% of the survey respondents use these teaching methods respectively). Reading out loud activities and role plays received the same amount of preference (45% of the survey respondents have selected both as their usual suprasegmental teaching methods). Some teachers included in the category “others” games and guided discovery³ as their common suprasegmental teaching resources. However, it needs to be highlighted that after having analysed the responses individually, there are teachers (13%) who only consider explicit instruction as their teaching suprasegmental technique, with no further practice. Only 44% of the surveyed teachers include a less controlled

³ *Guided discovery* is a learner-centred technique where teachers provide examples of a language item and help the learners to find out the rules themselves. In this approach, teachers’ role is to guide students to their own discovery and experimentation, not to give students the information on the linguistic rules. (Esmailzadeh et al., 2019)

task such as role plays in their pronunciation teaching lessons. Regarding assessment, a high number of teachers do not take into account all suprasegmental aspects that they reported to teach in the assessing process (41%) and a few do not take into account any suprasegmental feature in their assessment (8%). Regarding feedback frequency, most teachers said that they usually provide feedback on pronunciation (70%), though there are also teachers that stated they occasionally (26%) or never (4%) provide feedback on pronunciation aspects in oral tasks.

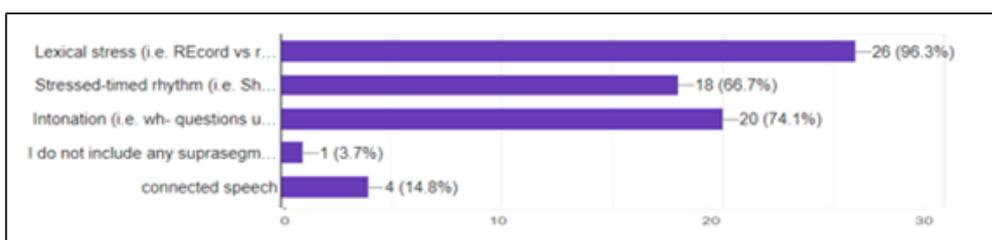


Figure 3. Suprasegmental features that teachers include in their lessons.

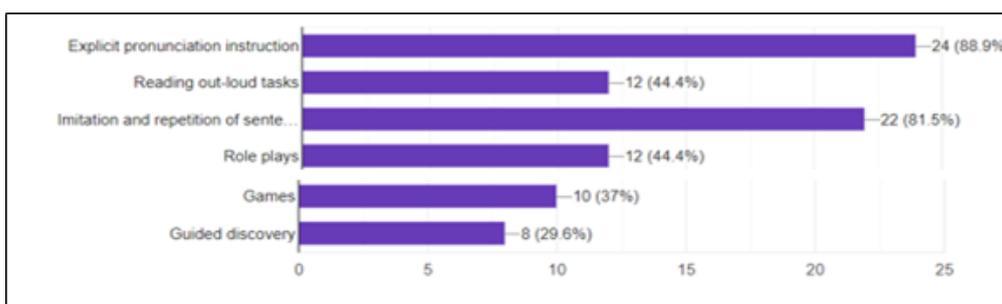


Figure 4. Teachers' techniques while teaching suprasegmentals.

Finally, answers from the third category reveal that learners' main goal while dealing with pronunciation, most teachers reported that their learners' goal regarding pronunciation is to achieve a good level of intelligibility (59%) while others consider that their learners do not seem to give enough importance to their English pronunciation (22%). A few teachers mentioned that their learners' goal is to achieve a native-like pronunciation (19%). In relation to teachers' opinion about their knowledge on teaching pronunciation and their knowledge on teaching suprasegmentals, answers to both questions present little variation. Only the rating on teachers' knowledge on how to teach suprasegmentals received negative values (4% of the teachers consider having a "extremely poor" knowledge on teaching suprasegmentals, 4% of the instructors marked "very poor" and 7 % of the teachers believe that their knowledge on suprasegmental teaching is "poor") which contrast with the relatively good ratings on their knowledge on how to teach pronunciation in general (22% reported to have "extremely good" knowledge, 41% reported to have "very good" knowledge, and 37% reported to have "good"

knowledge on how to teach pronunciation in general). A smaller number of teachers (30%) reported a higher mark for assessing their knowledge on how to teach pronunciation than on how to teach suprasegmentals. In other words, 30% of the surveyed teachers consider that their knowledge on how to teach suprasegmentals is not so good as on how to teach pronunciation in general, being all of them English native language speakers. There are no teachers to whom English is not their native language that reported to have less knowledge on how to teach suprasegmentals than to teach pronunciation in general. In relation to the open question on *what difficulties do surveyed teachers encounter while teaching pronunciation*, some commonly stated challenges include the following (they have been classified into 6 different categories):

1. Students' age-related and L1 background factors: "with adults, the bad old habits can weigh a lot"; "the older ages are less likely to pick up suprasegmental features naturally"; "multilingual classes with different L1 backgrounds".
2. Students' socio-psychological factors (motivation, anxiety and personality): "learner anxiety and self-consciousness"; "lack of confidence from learners in their ability to replicate segmental and suprasegmental features"; "lack of interest on students' part"; "inhibition in front of other students"; "anxiety and shyness of students when they have to work on speaking production and pronunciation".
3. Time obstacle: "not enough time to dedicate to teaching it [pronunciation]"; "insufficient time is assigned for teaching pronunciation systematically due to tight schedule".
4. Material obstacle: "topics are not present in most course books"; "a lack of good material"; "inaccurate explanations/rules in materials about pronunciation"; "very few fun activities available".
5. Teaching learners why learning pronunciation and more specifically suprasegmentals is important: "helping students understand the importance of intelligible pronunciation since many believe that grammar is more important"; "getting students to see its [pronunciation learning] importance"; "students need to be taught why suprasegmentals are important".
6. Teachers' lack of knowledge on some phonological aspects that have to do with segmentals: "gaining enough knowledge myself to teach where sounds are physically made in the mouth – lack of training about this in the EFL profession"; "a good deal of

previous knowledge and/or research needs to be put into it, and as an English non-native speaker certain sounds can be tricky due to my own L1 interference”.

4.3. Discussion and conclusions

This survey-based study has shown that EFL teachers believe that pronunciation teaching is an important aspect of language and that suprasegmental aspects of language are actually implemented in their lessons. A fact that contrasts with what Darcy calls the *pronunciation teaching paradox* (2018: 16) that highlights that despite teachers' recognition that pronunciation teaching is necessary, pronunciation instruction is not taught at schools. However, there is no need to completely discard experts' assumption that there is very little pronunciation teaching that involves looking at suprasegmentals being done due to some limitations that have been encountered while analysing the results and that are explained at the end of this section. In relation to the level of importance that EFL teachers assign to suprasegmental and segmental teaching, a small number of instructors (30%) share the vision that both should share the same level of importance since both are essential features that define pronunciation (Zielinski, 2015). Teachers should understand first that both levels of pronunciation share the same level of importance and spread this knowledge to their students. They also need to be aware of the importance of starting to include suprasegmental instruction at beginners' levels of proficiency since only 19% of EFL teachers share this opinion.

In general, these results show that suprasegmentals are taken into account by a vast majority of the surveyed teachers. It seems that researchers' effort on demonstrating the importance of pronunciation teaching in the last decades is reflected on teachers' implementing pronunciation episodes on suprasegmentals in their lessons. Moreover, teaching methodology used while teaching suprasegmentals is critical in achieving effective learning. However, some of the results obtained in the second category can lead to the conclusion that some EFL teachers do not apply an efficient teaching approach on suprasegmental instruction since some of them do not include explicit instruction of the target suprasegmental features in their lessons. Also, teachers need to understand that it is a must to assess all the features that are being taught (Gilbert, 2008) since a high number of the surveyed teachers (41%) do not take into account all suprasegmental aspects that they reported to teach in their learners' assessing process.

The debate over how well TEFL programs train EFL teachers how to teach pronunciation seems particularly important for discussing the third category of the survey.

Derwing & Munro (2009) stated that many EFL teachers are afraid to teach pronunciation, in part because they have had no training in the area. However, this cannot be applied to all teachers, since the results have shown that among those interviewed, a high number of teachers believe that they have a good knowledge on how to teach pronunciation and suprasegmentals. In fact, they have only included segmental aspects in the list of what are the difficulties they experience while instructing pronunciation. Also, they mentioned as a common teaching pronunciation burden the lack of time to dedicate to instruct pronunciation aspects. In order to reduce this difficulty, Darcy (2018) encourages teachers to establish an organised lesson plan in which learners' needs must be approached.

As a further reflection on this survey, it needs to be said that the findings of this study are a first attempt to shed some light on teachers' opinion, practices and knowledge on teaching suprasegmentals. However, after having considered the results obtained, some limitations on how the survey has been conducted need to be considered. First, the fact that this survey was voluntary for teachers might have conditioned the responses obtained. In order to avoid this, the survey should have been distributed to a wider population of teachers from the same teaching institution. Second, it should have been mandatory for all teachers. By doing this, we avoid responses from only those teachers who are interested in pronunciation teaching or in teaching suprasegmentals. Also, in order to gather this information more reliably, apart from taking a different approach, it is advisable to do a survey to EFL students from the same language school to see their knowledge and beliefs on suprasegmentals. Consequently, a wider vision on suprasegmental teaching and learning can be reached.

5. A PRACTICAL PROPOSAL FOR TEACHING ENGLISH LEXICAL STRESS AND RHYTHM

This last section seeks to put into practice and to illustrate some of the teaching guiding principles commented in section three in order to provide practical examples on how to include the suprasegmental aspects of English lexical stress and rhythm in the classroom even if the teaching curricula does not consider these aspects of language. The exercises proposed in appendix C are thought to be used to practice the specific suprasegmental features of lexical stress and rhythm, but they can also be used to include others depending on learners' need such

as pausing, linking, or intonation. All the exercises that are included in Appendix C are thought to be addressed to EFL students with a low intermediate English level (B1) and they are just an example of how suprasegmentals can be included in a common unit that deals with topics related to jobs. This does not mean that all lessons need to be exclusively focused on these aspects of language. In fact, other aspects of pronunciation such as segmental features of language need to be approached depending on learners' needs as well as other linguistic frameworks such as grammar, lexis, or pragmatics. Moreover, though it is not included in the appendix, teachers should do a post-assessing process at the end of the course similar to the one proposed in the pre-assessing step.

Before commenting on the exercises proposed, first of all the teacher needs to understand what are their students' goals before establishing what needs to be practiced in class. In order to do so, the teacher should do a pre-assessment to detect what pronunciation goals should be prioritized based on learners' needs. The two exercises (a reading aloud text and a spontaneous speaking activity) that are shown in appendix C are thought to be implemented as part of the pre-assessing process. Once the pre-assessing process is done, the teacher and the students can identify the most challenging target features after listening to the recorded performance of both activities. Afterwards, the teacher can compare student and teacher lists of weaknesses, go over the features, and set up an agreed list of main goals to work on during the course. By doing this, teachers give opportunities to students to participate in establishing the main teaching goals regarding suprasegmentals and increase learners' motivation, since they have the opportunity to take part in deciding what aspects of language need to be approached and improved along the teaching course.

After having set up the target suprasegmental features, the teacher can elicit learners' actual knowledge on how lexical stress and rhythm work in English and provide a brief explicit instruction on these features. The purpose is not to give learners a deep metalinguistic explanation, but to make learners understand the main characteristics of English lexical stress and rhythm and their importance to achieve a good level of intelligibility in their speech. In this case the teacher can mention that stressed syllables are longer, louder and higher in pitch and that these aspects also apply to the quality of the stressed vowel sound. Moreover, teachers should encourage them to be aware of the importance of rhythm and the musicality of English by considering the aspects of vowel reduction in unstressed syllables, weak forms of grammatical words and strong forms of lexical words.

Following this, the first stage “listening and awareness” takes place. In order to include this stage in the lesson, teachers just need to include a written source such as a text or a dialogue and a listening source. The script included in Appendix C is an example that could be implemented to draw attention to suprasegmental features of lexical stress and rhythm. In order to make this activity more effective and practical, the teacher can make students reflect on the target features by asking them what words and syllables stand out in the text? Why were these words chosen to stand out by the speaker and what type of words are they? By doing this, teachers are training learners to know how to listen for both target features.

Next, learners need to work on the second stage called “control” that aims to develop their ability to produce English lexical stress patterns and rhythm. At this stage, imitation and repetition of the previous text presented in the first stage can be done. Students need to listen to the audio again, while mimicking the production of lexical stress and rhythm patterns. Then, the teacher asks students to repeat this exercise until they feel more comfortable and accurate with the features. As a final exercise, the teacher can ask students to write a list of words they know to the lexical stress patterns that appear in the text. This way, the teacher incorporates both reception and production into the controlled practice.

In the third stage of this pronunciation teaching framework called “practice” the activity designed (see appendix C) asks students to work on their own on elaborating a short monologue talking about what they wanted to be as a child. Once they feel ready to do it, they should talk about it while the teacher audio-records the speech. By doing this, the activity moves towards a less controlled activity, though students have had time to prepare their short speech before making it.

The last stage in the four-part pronunciation framework called “extension” allows students to work on a more communicative and complex task, in order to help them to internalize the target features. In this case, the exercise is a role play on the topic “looking for a job”. Students will have the opportunity to use the vocabulary learnt in the unit using the proper lexical stress in each word as well as they will practice the English rhythm patterns while performing the job interview. Also, it would be a good idea to include a third student in each of the role play groups to monitor the speech of the other two peers that are performing the role play. This way, teachers encourage students to participate in observing and identifying the mistakes that might affect intelligibility during the performance of the role play. After that,

all together can comment on the most important mistakes produced in each group and the teacher can provide students with explicit feedback.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions reached in this paper answer the main aims established at the beginning of this work of why and how suprasegmental instruction needs to be implemented in EFL classrooms. All EFL teaching programs must include suprasegmental aspects of language in their curricula due to the important role these features play in learners' perception and production skills. Besides, though this paper focused mainly on suprasegmental instruction, segmentals should also be taken into consideration while teaching EFL, since both features need to be addressed in order to improve intelligibility. Moreover, intelligibility needs to be a model for foreign language instruction and suprasegmentals have a close relation with it. In fact, it has been established through the research of experts in the field that this close relation is the main reason for suprasegmentals' inclusion in EFL instruction.

In the future, it is my hope that all EFL teaching programmes include in their curricula pronunciation aspects with the aim of improving the skills that allow learners to become intelligible in real-life language uses. Fortunately, it seems that thanks to the empirical evidence provided by numerous research studies of the importance of teaching pronunciation aspects of language, a higher number of EFL teachers include pronunciation language episodes in their lessons. Nevertheless, these teachers often face many difficulties while teaching pronunciation such as the time or the material obstacle, individual learners' differences, or teachers' lack of knowledge and confidence on knowing how to teach these aspects of language. In this sense, programs that instruct EFL teachers to become professional need to include a list of topics that deal with not only the theory of English segmentals and suprasegmentals but also on how to actually teach these aspects of language. Therefore, all the developments in EFL teaching and learning pronunciation ought to go hand in hand with the developments in teacher education so that second language learners are able to communicate effectively.

As a final remark, EFL teachers should move beyond the English pronunciation teaching paradox permanently by showing the integration of EFL pronunciation in every lesson and by making their students aware of the importance of learning pronunciation.

Moreover, future lines of research could focus on putting into practice all the aspects that have been analysed in this paper in a real teaching context.

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**APPENDIX A – A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO PRONUNCIATION
INSTRUCTION FROM YATES & ZIELINSKI 2009, 2011 (AS CITED IN GRANT L.
& BRINTON D., 2014 P. 80)**

Stage of Development	Aims
1. Listening and awareness	To develop learners' awareness of the target pronunciation feature and how it differs from the feature in the L1. Learners need this exposure in order to discover the physical and perceptual aspects of the target English sound or pattern. At this stage learners might, for example, develop their ability to identify words that start with the target sound, words that have the same stress pattern, or words that are emphasized in a particular phrase.
2. Control	To develop learners' physical control over the pronunciation of the target feature. At this stage learners might, for example, work on a particular sound at the beginning of words, the production of words with a particular stress pattern, or the emphasis of the appropriate word in a phrase.
3. Practice	To develop learners' ability to produce the target feature in a range of different and increasingly difficult structured contexts. For example, learners might start by practicing a pronunciation feature in single words and then progress to pronouncing that feature in short phrases and then longer sentences.
4. Extension	To develop learners' ability to apply their new skills in a range of contexts. At this stage, learners might practice the target sound or pattern in somewhat less structured activities such as answering questions or participating in short scripted dialogues. They might then progress to using that feature in slightly more spontaneous classroom contexts (e.g., asking for directions, making appointments, or participating in everyday conversations).

APPENDIX B – TEACHERS’ SURVEY ABOUT PHONOLOGICAL INSTRUCTION

Survey on English Suprasegmental Instruction

This short questionnaire is addressed to EFL teachers only.

The aim of this survey is to gather information about how English pronunciation, particularly suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation such as stress, rhythm, and intonation are actually taught in language schools.

This questionnaire is part of a research undertaken by a BA student at the Universitat de Barcelona. All information that is collected in this study will be treated confidentially and will be used only for academic purposes.

Completing this questionnaire will take approximately 5 minutes of your time.

Thank you for your participation in advance.

***Required**

EFL Teacher Profile

1. 1. Which of the following statements are true about you? *

Mark only one oval.

- I'm an English native speaker
- I'm not an English native speaker though I have a high command of English
- I'm not an English native speaker though I have an intermediate command of English

2. 2. Which of the following statements are true about you? *

Mark only one oval.

- I have formal education on TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language)
- I do not have any formal education on TEFL
- Other: _____

English Pronunciation Teaching

3. 1. What level of importance do you assign to teaching pronunciation in relation to other language skills? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
The least important	<input type="radio"/>	The most important						

4. 2. What level of importance do you assign to teaching segmental aspects of pronunciation (vowel and consonant sounds)? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Not important at all	<input type="radio"/>	Extremely important						

5. 3. What level of importance do you assign to teaching suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation (i.e. lexical stress, rhythm, intonation, connected speech ...)? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Not important at all	<input type="radio"/>	Extremely important						

6. 4. What level of importance would you assign to implementing suprasegmental instruction at a very basic level of English proficiency? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Not important at all	<input type="radio"/>	Extremely important						

7. 5. What level of importance would you assign to implementing suprasegmental instruction at an intermediate and high levels of English proficiency? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Not important at all	<input type="radio"/>	Extremely important						

8. 6. Do you include TEACHING of any of the following suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation in your language instruction classes? (More than one answer is possible) *

Tick all that apply.

- Lexical stress (i.e. REcord vs reCORD)
 Stressed-timed rhythm (i.e. She will SELL her CAR because she's GONE to FRANCE)
 Intonation (i.e. wh- questions use falling intonation vs yes/no questions use rising intonation)
 I do not include any suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation during my language instruction

Other: _____

9. 7. If you include any suprasegmental features in your English instruction, which methods do you use to teach them? (More than one answer is possible) *

Tick all that apply.

- Explicit pronunciation instruction
 Reading out-loud tasks
 Imitation and repetition of sentences
 Role plays
 I do not teach any English suprasegmental features in my English class

Other: _____

10. 8. Do you take into consideration any of the following suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation while ASSESSING your students' speech? (More than one answer possible) *

Tick all that apply.

- Lexical stress (REcord vs reCORD)
- Stressed-timed rhythm (i.e. She will SELL her CAR because she's GONE to FRANCE)
- Intonation (e.g. wh- questions use falling intonation vs yes/no questions use rising intonation)
- I do not take into account any suprasegmental aspects while assessing my students' speech

Other: _____

11. 9. Do you provide your students with feedback regarding stress, rhythm and intonation during oral tasks? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	Always						

12. 10. In general, what is your learners' goal regarding speech production? *

Mark only one oval.

- To achieve an English native-like pronunciation
- To achieve good intelligibility and comprehensibility in their English speech production
- They do not seem to give enough importance to their English pronunciation
- Other: _____

13. 11. How would you rate your knowledge of how to teach pronunciation in general? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Extremely poor	<input type="radio"/>	Excellent						

14. 12. How would you rate your knowledge of how to teach suprasegmentals (i.e. lexical stress, rhythm, intonation)? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Extremely poor	<input type="radio"/>	Excellent						

15. 13. In general, what major difficulties have you experienced while teaching pronunciation? *

APPENDIX C – ENGLISH LEXICAL STRESS AND RHYTHM ACTIVITIES

1. Pre-assessing activities:

- a. Controlled: The teacher asks their students to read the following text aloud while they audio-record themselves. (This activity can be done at home if there is not enough class time to spend on it).

THE NORTH WIND AND THE SUN

A dispute arose between the North Wind and the Sun, each claiming that he was stronger than the other. At last they agreed to try their powers upon a traveler to see which could soonest strip him of his cloak. The North Wind had the first try.

Gathering up all his force for the attack, he came whirling furiously down upon the man, and caught up his cloak as though he would wrest it from him by one single effort: but the harder he blew, the more closely the man wrapped it round himself. Then came the turn of the Sun. At first he beamed gently upon the traveler, who soon unclasped his cloak and walked on with it hanging loosely about his shoulders, then he shone forth in his full strength, and the man, before he had gone many steps, was glad to throw his cloak right off and complete his journey more lightly clad.

- b. Spontaneous: The teacher gives the students a less controlled task in which learners have to speak independently about a topic they are interested in for one minute (i.e. if learners are teenagers some of the topics could deal with technology, video games or hobbies; if learners are adults the topic could be about briefly describing their favorite film, book, etc.).

2. Activities that follow the systematic approach to pronunciation instruction proposed by Yates and Zielinski 2009, 2011 (as cited in Grant, L. & Brinton, D. 2014).

- a. Activity to work on the first stage called *listening and awareness* to introduce students to English lexical stress and rhythm. The teacher asks the students the following questions in order to raise awareness on lexical stress and rhythm:

- What words stand out in the text?
- Why were these words chosen to stand out by the speaker?
- What type of words are they?

The teacher should ask the students to mark a darkened circle above the stressed syllables and to highlight the words that are going to be produced in their strong forms (lexical words). Then, students need to check their predictions by listening to the audio for the whole script. Are there any differences with their analysis of the text in the predicting stage? If so, can learners explain them? (The link that gives access to this video is www.ello.org/video/1101/V1117-Dreamjob.htm) The script below is an example that could be used to draw attention to suprasegmental features such as not only the target features of lexical stress and rhythm but also pausing, or linking.

Script: Hi, my name is Julia, I'm from the UK and my question is what did you want to be as a kid? Well when I was a child, I really wanted to be an artist and that's one of those dreams that, I don't know, being an artist seemed so attractive and romantic and interesting when I was a child but I guess you have to have a certain amount of skill and even though I would still quite like to be an artist, I really don't think that I could support myself and my family on my abilities as an artist. So I think art for me is still a passion and a hobby but in fact I became a teacher. It was a more practical profession for me.

- b.** Activity to work on the second stage called *control* that aims to develop learners' control over English lexical stress patterns and rhythm. At this stage, imitation and repetition of the previous text can be done. Students need to listen to the audio again, while mimicking the production of lexical stress and rhythm patterns. Then, the teacher asks students to repeat this exercise until they feel more comfortable and accurate with the features. As a final exercise, the teacher can ask students to add other words they know to the lexical stress

patterns that appear in the text. This way, the teacher incorporates both reception and production into the controlled practice.

Oo	oO	oOo	Ooo	ooO	Others
Teacher ...	Became ...	Profession ...	Family	Interesting ...

- c. Activity to work on the third stage called **production**. Once the students feel comfortable, they should record themselves the script aloud in the same manner as the speaker in the video. They might use the marks they have made to highlight stressed syllables and to identify weak grammatical and strong function words as a guide.
- d. Activity to work on the fourth and last stage called **extension**. For this stage students need to do a role play on the topic “looking for a job”. This is a role play to practice standard conversations that looks to put into practice a more communicative approach. In this activity, one of the students plays the role of a person who is looking for a part-time job in a supermarket while another student plays the role of the interviewer. A third student can write a list of major mistakes that might affect comprehensibility while performing the role play. The link that gives access to these cards is https://www.eslprintables.com/speaking_worksheets/role_plays/job_interview_role_play/Role_play_cards_series_A_job_545721/

<p>Student A: You would like to get a job in a supermarket. Ask the manager about the details.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - greeting / job offer? - kind of job? - difficult? duties? - how much money per hour? - when/work? - clothing? - interested/how apply? 	<p>Student B: You are the manager of the supermarket. a teenager is looking for a job. Answer the questions.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Job Offer: Help needed</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - part time - duties: clean and restock shelves - 8 € / hour - 10 hours a week - Monday - wednesday - Minimum age: 16 - uniform provided by supermarket - send application form to info@tesco-supermarket.co.uk </div>
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