

**The Benefits of Implementing English Native Accent and Pronunciation Patterns as a
Tool in Improving English Standard Pronunciation Learning in Students from Fourth
Grade at Eco Centro Braulio Carrillo School in San Jerónimo, Moravia, San José,
During the III Quarter, 2024.**

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Thesis submitted to obtain the licentiate degree in

English teaching for I and II Cycles

UNIVERSIDAD HISPANOAMERICANA

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

SCHOOL OF LANGUAGE TEACHING

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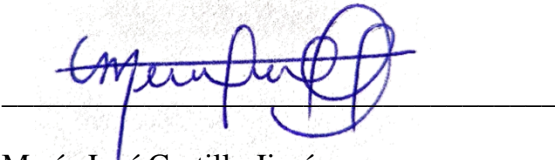
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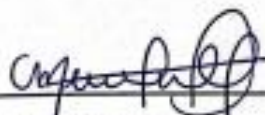
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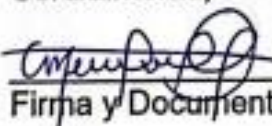
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“Everything is possible for one who believes”. – Mark 9:23

RESUMEN

El presente proyecto abarca los beneficios de implementar patrones de la pronunciación y el acento nativo del inglés como herramientas con el propósito de mejorar la pronunciación del inglés estándar. Esta investigación es llevada a cabo en la escuela Eco Centro Braulio Carrillo ubicado en San Jerónimo, Moravia, San José. El objetivo principal de este proyecto es presentar herramientas y actividades aplicables para la mejora de la pronunciación y el acento del idioma inglés, determinando los beneficios que estos puedan aportar a los estudiantes.

El primer capítulo presenta el problema de investigación, el mismo explica la causa principal por la cual se lleva a cabo este proyecto. Asimismo, contiene los antecedentes para sustentar la investigación. Los objetivos de la investigación son puntos clave para el proyecto y por medio de ellos se desarrolla el tema.

En el segundo capítulo, se describe la base teórica. El capítulo comienza con el contexto histórico de la institución donde se lleva a cabo la investigación. Además, el capítulo provee información valiosa para la investigación, así como detalles relacionados a la historia de la enseñanza del inglés en Costa Rica, las metodologías aplicadas en la enseñanza del inglés a través de la historia, y sobre las interferencias y transferencias que influyen en el proceso de aprendizaje de la pronunciación estándar del idioma inglés, así como también técnicas que podrían ser aplicadas para mejorar el acento y la pronunciación.

En el capítulo tres, se muestra la metodología aplicada, así como aspectos relacionados a la investigación y a su naturaleza, la población y fuentes de estudio.

También, se mencionan las técnicas y los instrumentos utilizados para recolectar información, cuyos datos son analizados más adelante.

Seguidamente, en el capítulo cuatro se muestra la recolección de datos. En este apartado, los datos obtenidos se muestran gráficamente y es analizada. Cada instrumento es estudiado cuidadosamente y muestra los principales resultados de la investigación.

El capítulo cinco muestra las conclusiones y recomendaciones de la investigación. Las conclusiones mencionan que, a través de la aplicación de un software para modelar la pronunciación, y de actividades para mejorar el acento del idioma inglés, los estudiantes pueden mejorar sus habilidades comunicativas acercándose a un acento estándar. Asimismo, se mencionan algunas recomendaciones útiles para obtener mejores resultados.

Finalmente, en el capítulo seis, el investigador desarrolla una propuesta basada en el objetivo “Demostrar los beneficios de la implementación de herramientas de acento y pronunciación nativos con estudiantes de cuarto grado”. La propuesta consiste en una comparación sobre la forma en la que los estudiantes pronuncian y acentúan en inglés antes y después de aplicar las herramientas descritas.

ABSTRACT

This project encompasses the benefits of implementing native accent and pronunciation tools with the purpose of improving the English standard pronunciation. This research is carried out at Eco Centro Braulio Carrillo located in San Jerónimo, Moravia, San José. The main objective is to present tools and activities that can be implemented to improve the English accent and pronunciation, determining the benefits that will be contributed to the students.

The first chapter presents the research problem, which conveys the main cause why the project is carried out. Also, it contains the antecedents to support the research. The objectives of the investigation are the key points for the project and through them the topic is developed.

In the second chapter, the theoretical basis is described. The chapter begins with the historical context of the institution where the research is held. In addition, it provides valuable information for the investigation, as well as details related to the history of the English teaching in Costa Rica, the applied methodologies in English teaching in Costa Rica through its history, and the Costa Rican interferences and transfers that influence the English standard pronunciation learning process. Furthermore, it provides techniques that could be applied to improve the English accent and pronunciation.

In the third chapter, the methodology applied is shown, as well as aspects related to the research and its nature, along with the subjects and sources of study. Also, it mentions the techniques and instruments used to collect information, which data is analyzed later on.

Then, chapter four shows the data collection. In this chapter, the data is shown graphically, and it is analyzed. Each instrument is observed closely since the main results of the investigation are shown.

Chapter five shows the main conclusions and recommendations of the investigation. The conclusions mention that through the application of a software to model pronunciation, and activities to improve the English accent, students can improve their speaking skills, getting close to a standard English. Also, some recommendations are provided in order to obtain better results.

Finally, in chapter six, the researcher develops a proposal based on the objective “To demonstrate the benefits of implementing native accent and pronunciation tools with fourth grade students” The proposal consists of a comparison about the way students pronounce and accent in English before and after applying the tools previously described.

CHAPTER I: RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.1. Introduction

Currently many countries in the American continent are teaching English as a secondary language, including Costa Rica. Today the requirement of speaking at least 80% English in order to apply for a job, or a scholarship is very common and important when you read the news or search for information. For many years the Ministry of Public Education in Costa Rica has been trying to improve the English programs for elementary schools and high schools; however, in I and II cycles the students' schedule focuses on Spanish, math, science, and social studies subjects; which means that the English program emphasizes on learning vocabulary and the application of some basic grammar structures, but the time for practicing and learning the correct pronunciation of words is limited or very basic; this means that students get the vocabulary words but they do not learn the correct sound of specific phonemes native from the English language. That is why many students from high school in Costa Rica understand what they hear or read, but they cannot speak clearly, or they sound like they just “survive” while they communicate.

The history of the Spanish language in Latin America takes us to the XV century, right at the moment when Christopher Columbus sailed to America. His mother tongue was Spanish. After what the scientists called “hispanization”, Spanish became the first language in the region. During the first years of the hispanization, the local dialects were very difficult to understand for the Spanish; thus, the Catholic Church intervened, and the Jesuits and Franciscans established institutions in order to teach the Catholicism in Spanish. The children were the first ones to learn the language, and as they grew the language began to expand and spread. The Spanish leaders tried hard to impose their language, but since there

was a great population of Indians, it caused the Spanish to mix with the local dialects. Moreover, the Mexicans and the Peruvians influenced significantly the language that is spoken today in Latin America. At that time explorers from Andalusia appeared to help to form the pronunciation of the Latin – American Spanish to the official Spanish. That is why certain words in Spanish and Latin – America Spanish sound different, even when they are written with the same orthography. All these influenced the Spanish that we speak nowadays in our country.

1.1.1 Background

In the present research, there are investigations that explain how the Costa Ricans are influenced by their native Spanish language characteristics, and how this affects the way students learn and pronounce the words in English. Also, other studies show how the differences between the Costa Rican Spanish and the standard English languages influence the learning process.

First, the Costa Rican accent and pronunciation of words is a factor that could limit students to sound more natural in the English language; moreover, there are many sounds (phonemes) in the Standard English that do not exist in Spanish; therefore, it is difficult for students to feel comfortable during the English lessons. They are afraid of listening to songs or dialogs in order to complete a practice based on the listening skill, and they are afraid of talking in front of the class because they do not know how to pronounce the words. According to the discoveries of Fries (1945), Lado (1957), Stockwell (1965), and

Bowen (1965), the English language and the Spanish language differentiate by their morphology, phonology, and syntaxes; this means that the structure of the words and their elements, the way in which the sounds are organized, and the way in which groups of words are combined in order to express a complete thought are very different from each other. Many of the English sounds are hard to pronounce because of their phonology (location in the mouth where the sounds are produced); this is a factor that affects the English pronunciation in Spanish native speakers, but this does not mean that a Spanish native speaker will never pronounce as an English speaker. In addition, there are certain characteristics of our mother tongue that affect the pronunciation of the English language. The major problem is based on the fact of the interference of the distinctive sounds of the mother tongue in the speaker. It is important to mention that the proper characteristics of the mother tongue depend on the identity and ideology of the country.

Regarding to a research from Carla Jara Murillo (2006), a national Master in Linguistics from the University of Costa Rica, in which she studied the differences between the Spanish spoken in the different places in our country, it is known that every province has its own characteristics, for example, people from Guanacaste and the Northern part of Costa Rica are influenced by Nicaraguan people; thus, they show a variation in the accent and pronunciation of common words. People who live in Limón are influenced by the Caribbean people and Jamaicans in both, Spanish and English languages. For this reason, people from Limón sound very different in both languages, even though they live in the same country. Third, people from San José and the Central Valley speak with a different accent and stressed sounds in particular words that people from other provinces shorten or

change at the ending of those same words. Finally, in Costa Rica there is also found in specific regions such as Talamanca, Bribri, Guatuso and Curré, Indigenous people that speak a different dialect, nonetheless, most of them also speak Spanish. They have to attend to classes just like the rest of the students along the country do. Additionally, all provinces are also influenced by the education level of their population and the economical and productive activities developed in those places; for instance, people from the shores and the South of our country have different accents and even different popular sayings.

Furthermore, regarding to Miguel Ángel Quesada (1996), a national linguistic, there are certain sounds in our Costa Rican Spanish that differentiates significantly from the rest of the countries in Central America; the Spanish spoken in our country is faster and fluid. There are interesting differences also between Costa Rica and the Central American countries, such as the use of “l” in Spanish words: the majority of the countries pronounce it like a short “i”, and the pronunciation of all “v” as “b” sounds. (Taken from “Los fonemas del español de Costa Rica: Aproximación Dialectológica” Lexis Magazine X, 1-2. 1996). Arturo Agüero (1960) exposes that in the rural areas, people even “eliminate” some consonants at the end of some words, such as “usté” instead of “usted” (“El Español en América y Costa Rica”. San José, 1962; “El Español de Costa Rica. San José. UCR Editorial, 2009.”).

In Costa Rica, English began to be taught as a subject in the XIX Century, about the year 1825. Students were supposed to attend to the English classes three hours a day (González, 1978). As reported by González, it was until 1854 that the first foreign professors appeared; they started to offer private lessons to people. The methodology that they used consisted of memorizing vocabulary and translating grammar structures and

words. By the year of 1887, a new methodology was introduced to the classroom, especially in high schools: the German Direct method, by Rodolf Lenz and Schnitzler (1976, p.76). It basically stated that the learning process of a second language should be developed just like the mother tongue is acquired: the environment shall feel natural, spontaneous; students must have time to talk, express their feelings, discuss, and communicate to others, they should not translate the words or the grammar rules. (Brown, 2000 p.45). By 1936, the people who taught in high schools were foreigners, or Costa Ricans who learned the English language while they lived or studied in a different country; nevertheless, these people were not capable to teach because they did not receive any pedagogical course; due to this the University of Costa Rica opened a course in which teachers could attend to some workshops to learn the new audio – lingual teaching methodology (Cabrera, 1986, p.4). It was not until 1957 that University of Costa Rica inaugurated the English Teaching career with a special curriculum that included oral expression, literature, pedagogy, and a final course in which students had to do an investigation of a specific group in an institution. They had to inquire about the group's needs, location, population, and teaching techniques. (González, 1978). The objective of implementing this new audio – lingual method was to improve and develop the following four skills: oral comprehension, oral expression, reading comprehension, and written expression; for this they focused on memorization of words and dialogs, mimic, role plays, and the use of grammar patterns Cabrera (1986); nonetheless, phonics and phonology (pronunciation) was an area that did not improve at that time. By the year 1974 this curriculum was edited due to the fact that the specialists on English teaching wanted to emphasize the correct pronunciation of words in the target language. On the other hand, in 1980 the English programs changed again, focusing on reading comprehension, and the

analysis of different texts, leaving aside the oral skill, which involves pronunciation. From 1990 to 2005 the Ministry of Education began to include again the oral skill in the new English programs. This time the English classes were supposed to be more dynamic: students should communicate, express, and expose their ideas in the target language. However, there is an interesting fact; during this time, people from rural and touristic areas, and children from “marginal” areas had no access to any English program. There was until the year 1994 that José María Figueres Olsen started with the process of including this curriculum to the people mentioned before. (Taken from “Actualidades Investigativas en Educación” Magazine. Vol.5, N°2, 2005. ISSN 1409-4703).

This research shows that through the decades the learner has been exposed to different environments, curricula, and teachers. The methodology and approaches changed many times, fact that evidences that the pronunciation was the least important area to work on, most of the time. In addition, before the 2000s, students learned English at the school and high school, but they did not have the appropriate curriculum to develop the four skills or practice the language. Added to this, in the case of the English language, there are certain phonemes which are difficult to comprehend for Costa Ricans and Latin Americans as long as these particular sounds are not found in our Spanish phonetics. In English, there are forty-four sounds, and more than one hundred-one ways to write them; in contrast, in Spanish there are thirty-five sounds, and thirty-eight ways to write them; that is a big difference. Even so, Latin Americans tend to pronounce words better than people from Spain as a result of being more influenced from United States in our culture, the products we get from the market, the video games children and teenagers play, and because of being touristic countries.

Scientifically, it is known that every time a person who is learning a second language does not know a word or does not find out how to express a feeling or an idea in that language, he/ she goes back to his/ her mother tongue structures and vocabulary, in order to try to translate the words, or find a way to tell what he/ she is thinking. This is how the different investigations aid in this research to accomplish the objectives presented.

1.1.2 Justification

This dissertation focuses on two areas: social and linguistic. The input to these areas relates to the need of the Costa Ricans to learn how to pronounce correctly, in order to communicate to foreign people and to be understood. The information will help the English teachers to identify the main weaknesses to work on in the curriculum, in order to change them and adequate the planning by including a specific time in the schedule to teach, practice, and develop the oral expression skill during the lessons, and to evaluate the benefits of implementing English native accent and pronunciation patterns as a tool in improving the English standard pronunciation learning in students. This will also help them find accurate strategies and techniques to apply to accomplish the goal.

Today many professionals and experienced people are meeting in order to build the best English programs for Costa Rican schools and high schools, to change what opposes and limits the learning process of the language, to reorganize the contents, to implement

new objectives, and to include what is necessary to practice and know about English. Even the news in Costa Rica evidence the need of a new and better program regarding to the English teaching:

“There is a disconnection between school and college that the new curriculum seeks to correct. The reform raises the need to provide comprehensive training for the student to be able to express themselves in a second language”, said Ana Campos, adviser to the MEP. (p. 23A).

Mohamed Amin said:

“Proper spoken English instantly marks you out as a highly educated person whose views and opinions are to be taken seriously” (“The Importance of Speaking Proper English”. 2011)

Since speaking English has become a factor to grow and get better opportunities in life, it is important and urgent to face the problem for helping this generation that is in need of finding working positions in which they may involve and contribute to society what is required in order to respond to the demands of a globalized world.

1.1.3 Problematization:

Costa Rica has become a country that welcomes at least 3 million tourists every year. Tourism has represented the first percentage of the income the country earns for many years, and it exceeds the rates of money generated by the exports of different products. The areas near the coasts require building more hotels, places to have fun, restaurants, banks,

stores, markets, and many others. Thus, Costa Rican people need to speak English in order to communicate to foreigners, or to apply a job in those areas. Moreover, many foreign companies settle down their departments and offices in this country annually because they pay less taxes and salaries are cheaper from their perspectives; this situation has generated the opening of a lot of vacancies throughout the provinces. This is why technical high schools in Costa Rica are offering technical careers, including “Conversational English” and “Executive English”. However, the pronunciation continues to be the area in which the programs should focus on. Currently, children and adults take at least three English courses through their lives, jumping from one place to another, and consequently from one methodology to another, which ends in a frustrating and confusing experience. The English pronunciation should be trained since enrolling to the first grade of school. The fact of learning a second language -in this case English- implies a process in which the learner must know, internalize and put into practice the rules and vocabulary learned about the target language, and to be conscious of the big differences between the mother tongue and the second language. The main issue consists of the evidence of the changing English programs through the history of the English teaching in Costa Rica. This has been the root of the frustration of many ex-students from the public education, and the main obstacle of being able to reach an accurate methodology or approach that allows the student to learn the target language, to achieve the objectives of the English curricula, and to develop the different skills proposed on the programs in order to guarantee meaningful language learning to the student, and to promote bilingual graduates to the labor sectors. This is also a reason why private institutions buy international programs to teach English as a foreign language.

1.2 Problem Statement:

Accent and pronunciation struggle that Fourth grade students show while learning English as a foreign language.

1.2.1 Research Question

What are the benefits of implementing English native accent and pronunciation patterns as a tool in improving English standard pronunciation learning in students from Fourth grade at Eco Centro Braulio Carrillo School in San Jerónimo, Moravia, San José, during the III quarter, 2024?

1.2.2 Hypothesis

Fourth grade students from Eco Centro Braulio Carrillo School will improve their accent and pronunciation by implementing native accent and pronunciation patterns in their English lessons.

1.3 Objectives

1.3.1 General Objective:

To determine the benefits of implementing English native accent and pronunciation patterns as a tool in improving English standard pronunciation learning in students from

fourth grade at Eco Centro Braulio Carrillo School in San Jerónimo, Moravia, San José, during the III Quarter, 2024.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives:

1. To determine how the Costa Rican native accent and pronunciation influences the learning process of an English standard pronunciation.
2. To identify the limitations of the Costa Rican accent and pronunciation while learning the English pronunciation.
3. To identify techniques that could be implemented in order to improve the English pronunciation in students.

1.4 Scope and Limitations

1.4.1 Scope

This investigation is addressed to fourth grade students from Eco Centro Braulio Carrillo School, specifically the class 4-1. The students' age is 9-10 years old. Besides, the students who are part of the research are in English class. Eco Centro Braulio Carrillo School is located in San Jerónimo, Moravia, San José. This is a bilingual and ecological private school.

The study is going to reach the analysis of the benefits of implementing native accent and pronunciation patterns as a tool in improving the English standard pronunciation

in students. This present research is focused on pronunciation since students need to improve this skill.

Also, Eco Centro Braulio Carrillo School is going to benefit from this research. It can help students to improve their pronunciation into a more natural standard English way, as well as providing the teachers a clear understanding of how the native Costa Rican accent and pronunciation influence and intervene in the learning process.

In fact, the school can modify and implement strategies during the English lessons based on the results of this investigation. At this point, it will allow the students to review the vocabulary of that specific content, but also to practice the structure and pronunciation of the words, and to inhibit the fear of executing different oral tasks in English.

This project is carried out in the third quarter of 2024.

1.4.2 Limitations

Regarding the limitations of the project, the size of the population. It would have been better if the population and sample would have been bigger quantity.

Also, some of the data present in Costa Rica (studies) consulted for this project date from years ago, being that some of the studies are not very recent or have not been updated.

CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

2.1.1 Origin of Eco Centro Braulio Carrillo School

The institution where the investigation will take place is Eco Centro Braulio Carrillo School. This is an educational institution which includes preschool and elementary school. It was founded in 1993 and is located in San Jerónimo, Moravia, San José.

According to Eco Centro Braulio Carrillo School (2023):

“Somos un centro educativo bilingüe fundado en 2004. Nos enfocamos en una educación bilingüe, innovadora y ecológica, donde brindamos un ambiente natural, familiar y seguro, con atención personalizada y equidad de oportunidades”. [We are a bilingual educational institution founded in 2004. We focus on a bilingual, innovative and ecological education, where we offer a natural environment, familiar and safe, giving personalized attention and equal opportunities]

Regarding the mission of the school,

“En nuestra institución cada uno de nuestros estudiantes construye su propio aprendizaje en colaboración con la comunidad educativa, mediante el desarrollo de destrezas y habilidades desde las áreas “aprender a hacer”, “aprender a ser”, “aprender a convivir” y “aprender a aprender”. Para ellos, trabajamos día a día con amor, por el bienestar de nuestros estudiantes, mediante la vivencia real y el fortalecimiento de los valores individuales y colectivos, comprometidos con la construcción de una cultura de paz.

Es por ello que, como parte de nuestra responsabilidad con la sociedad costarricense y el mundo entero, contribuimos con la formación de personas modelo, capaces de responder a los desafíos de la nueva ciudadanía planetaria con identidad nacional; en esta misma línea, para nosotros es de suma importancia colaborar con el cuidado del ambiente natural por lo que fomentamos la conciencia y la acción ecológica en toda la comunidad educativa”. [In our institution, each of our students build their own learning in collaboration with the educational community, through the development of skills and abilities from the areas of “learning to do”, “learning to be”, “learning to live together” and “learning to learn”. For them, we work every day with love, for the well-being of our students, through real experience and the strengthening of individual and collective values, committed to building a culture of peace. That is why, as part of our responsibility to Costa Rican society and the entire world, we contribute to the training of model people, capable of responding to the challenges of the new planetary citizenship with national identity; in this same line, for us it is of utmost importance to collaborate with the care of the natural environment, which is why we promote ecological awareness and action throughout the educational community.] (Eco Centro Braulio Carrillo School, 2019)

Eco Centro Braulio Carrillo School establishes as its vision,

“Deseamos proyectarnos como una de las mejores opciones dentro de las instituciones educativas de la zona en que nos ubicamos, para las familias que necesitan apoyo en la atención y la formación integral de sus hijas e hijos desde el marco de la equidad de oportunidades. Además, trabajamos constantemente para integrar en nuestra oferta curricular las mejores tendencias en educación, según se vaya actualizando en el

sistema mundial y brindar una educación bilingüe de calidad. También, tenemos sistema mundial y brindar una educación bilingüe de calidad. También tenemos proyectado convertirnos en una institución modelo en el desarrollo sostenible, en equilibrio con la naturaleza, galardonada con el programa Bandera Azul Ecológica” [We wish to project ourselves as one of the best options within the educational institutions in the area where we are located, for families who need support in the care and comprehensive training of their daughters and sons from the framework of equal opportunities. In addition, we constantly work to integrate the best trends in education into our curricular offering, as they are updated in the world system and provide quality bilingual education. Also, we have a global system and provide quality bilingual education. We also plan to become a model institution in sustainable development, in balance with nature, awarded with the Ecological Blue Flag program.] (Eco Centro Braulio Carrillo School, 2019)

2.2 THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL CONTEXT

2.2.1 History of English Teaching in Costa Rica

The English teaching in Costa Rica began as a will and as a need for Costa Ricans to communicate to foreign people due to the fact that our country started to export products to other countries; thus, in the middle of the XIX century, Costa Rica’s commerce was very important for the country. Córdoba (2005) states:

In our country, the teaching of languages, especially English and French, began in the middle of the XIX century. As González (1978), says, “the teaching of languages awakened the interests in the first years of the Republic.” In relation with the teaching of

English in our country, the first reference is from the year 1825, when the Executive Branch decreed the internal rules of the Casa de Enseñanza de Santo Tomás, beginning the study of foreign languages in an institutional way.

The English as a subject taught in public and private institutions in Costa Rica has been a strong goal to achieve for the government and independent institutions that try to instruct Costa Ricans to learn this language for many reasons. Geographically talking, this language strongly influences the Central American countries; moreover, our economy and culture has also been impacted by countries like United States.

According to the chronology of the English Teaching in Costa Rica, by the end of the XIX century, the government establishes the importance of the English in the developing of the country's economy. Quesada (1993) explains that at those times, the English controlled the 50% of the harvests of coffee grains that Costa Rica exported. However, the teaching of the English language began to appear at the beginning of the XX century with a very traditional methodology. During the first two decades, most of the teachers were foreigners, and some Costa Ricans who had the opportunity to travel to United States or England for a long time and came back to Costa Rica, since they learned the language, they were pioneers in teaching the subject. By the year of 1901 the government decides to hire English teachers specifically from the United States; they had a lot of privileges such as: they were paid in dollars, the government paid for their transportation, food, and lodging expenses; moreover, they worked four hours a day only.

They began to teach English in specific institutions like Liceo de Costa Rica, Liceo de Señoritas, Colegio San Luis Gonzaga, and Instituto de Alajuela. Until this period of time, English was taught mainly through the translation of vocabulary, memorizing, and learning grammar structures. In the same year, as Vladimir de la Cruz (2003) mentions, the government asks to form a committee which would regulate the methodologies used to teach the target language; some principals from public institutions present a new curricular reformation, and a new regulation in order to improve the education.

During the first years of the XX century United States expands its economy to Central America and Caribe, triggering an economical dependency to this country, and consequently, an intervention of the nation to the Costa Rican education, politics, and culture. By this time United States established a company called United Fruit Company, which demanded the production of coffee and bananas to export, but during this decades, after the World War I, it was very difficult for the government to hire English teachers. In 1931, the government of Costa Rica implemented an “exchange program” called *International Friendship League*, which would offer the opportunity for Costa Rican and American teachers to visit for a period of time the country, to learn and study more about the language, and to have a closer contact with the culture. During this decade appeared the private commercial institutes which were located in Limón and the capital; all of them taught English. The Business Agreement signed by Costa Rica and United States significantly boosted the English teaching in our country, and more schools like Escuela de Comercio Minerva, Escuela Manuel Obregón, and Escuela Castro Carazo implemented the English program for their students. In addition, they prepared their students for working in

the jobs that the country demanded at that time, for instance typing, shorthand in English and Spanish, accounting, and librarianship.

Córdoba (2005) adds that:

In 1935, after an analysis of educational situation in our country, and having in mind the need of renovation in education, several changes happened in the Costa Rican educational system, which transformed the teaching of English. After having analyzed the syllabus and with a modernizing vision, The Board of Principals of Secondary School, only coordinating organism in Costa Rican education at that time, approved a five-year plan that began in 1936. In this plan three areas were distinguished: philological-historical, scientific-mathematic, and technical-artistic. In the first category, English was included part of the block of subject matter. In that way, four lessons were taught in the first and second years, and three lessons in third, fourth and fifth years. (p. 24)

On the other hand, in the 1940's certain bilingual schools were founded in Limón, for example Home High School, West End School, La Adventista, Alpha Cottage School, Union Negro Improvement Association School, Salvation Army School, Escuela Inglesa Católica, and Escuela del Barrio del Hospital (National Archive of Costa Rica).

In 1941 the Inter-American Summer University opened their doors for the first time in San José. The purpose of this institution was to attract tourists who wanted to learn a

little bit of Spanish during the months of June, July, and August. It also offered free English courses for Latin-American teachers. The university offered great advantages for the students, for instance going to field trips to different places of our country, English tutoring classes on the weekends, oral Spanish expression courses, Central American Literature, courses of History, Geology, and Botany (National Archive of Costa Rica). Furthermore, Costa Rica also won something through this: students who came from the United States donated books, materials, music recorders, and movies for the national students to use. After this, the government asked the Secretary of Education to create a project in which English was going to be taught in the first cycle of the elementary schools, so that by 1949 the rest of the levels of the elementary schools should be included in the English teaching programs. During these years the Centro Cultural Costarricense - Norteamericano was created, it was supported by the American Embassy of our country. In 1950 the government realized that it was necessary to focus on programs to prepare teachers to be capable of teaching students in schools and high schools with the appropriate strategies, and also to include pedagogy to the curricula. The University of Costa Rica was the entity in charge of leading this process in 1948 (Vincenzi Gang, 1978), the main purpose was to create a capacitation program for the new English teachers. The next year -1949- the number of students increased significantly along the country as long as the promulgation of the Constitution of 1949 established the free education service for all Costa Ricans. During the first six years of the 1950's education turned its curricula more into a technical approach, based on the UNESCO programs. Later on, in 1957 UNESCO launches its second mission: a festival in which experts could participate in the elaboration of different offers to modernize the high school programs (Dengo, 1995). In 1948 the department of English Counseling is created in the Ministry of Education. Its objective was to check and update

the methodologies and programs used until that date to teach the target language. This department decided to include important aspects to work on and implement in the English programs, such as: phonetics and pronunciation, grammar, the use of didactic materials to teach, evaluation instruments for teaching, and different techniques (direct method, grammatical method, and translation), reading comprehension, and the study and analysis of poetry and prose. In the 1960's Costa Rica began to experiment agricultural exports, mainly of sugar, banana, and beef. This allowed the country to increase its incomes, and therefore to open night schools and preschool buildings, and the high school's programs were reformed (Dengo, 1995). The education purpose changed: now the government wanted to educate the students for the opening of a labor market, and consequently to improve their lifestyle. In 1965 the Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje (INA) was founded to prepare people for medium-term technical courses. It is until 1987 that the globalization comes up with it a new paradigm based on the scientific technology, demanding more expectations of the English teaching in Costa Rica.

Towards the XXI century the four public universities: Universidad de Costa Rica, Universidad Nacional, la Universidad Estatal a Distancia, and Instituto Tecnológico Costarricense began to offer free courses of conversational English. In this same context, in the year 1989 the scientific and bilingual high schools were inaugurated. The objective was to promote bilingual education, at the hand of the computation and the business management approaches. In the 1990's more than one hundred foreign companies settled their offices in Costa Rica. Navarro and Piñeiro (2011), state that in the administration 1990-1994, the Ministry of Education designed a program to integrate the teaching of

different languages in public schools in our country, as a result of the changes occurred after the economic crisis that affected the social-political areas of the country after the World War II. In July 1994 the Foreign Languages Program began to be taught along the country, it included the teaching of English, French, and Italian. The scope was about 270 000 children from elementary school, 1400 from preschool, and 1230 teachers by the year 1999. This last year the schools from rural areas and one-teacher schools were included in the program.

2.2.2 Applied Methodologies in English Teaching in Costa Rica through its History: Review

As it was previously mentioned, the teaching of the English language in Costa Rica started in the XIX century. From this date, the Government of Costa Rica began to include the English teaching in high schools, experimenting different methodologies. The first two decades of the century teachers were foreign, or Costa Ricans who had lived in an English – native speaking country for a long time. It is important to emphasize that most of these people were not teachers; they were people who knew the language and were willing to teach it. The first methodology that was used was a traditional method in which the students had to translate different texts, and to study some grammar structures. The classes were taught in Spanish, and the communication in English did not matter. This methodology was valid until the year 1901, when there were only four high schools in Costa Rica (Liceo de Costa Rica, Liceo de Señoritas, Colegio San Luis Gonzaga, and Instituto de Alajuela) they all taught English as a subject. During this year, the Government met with the most recognized professors of Costa Rica (Zacarías Salinas, Roberto Brenes,

José Fidel Tristán, and Juan Dávila) to create a curricular reformation, and to propose a new regulation in order to ensure a modern State, and a trained population particularly in the English area (Dengo, 1995). They all worked under the thought “The education characterizes itself by its worthy pedagogy;” therefore, their purpose was to transform the actual methods, processes, and educational systems. (Vladimir de la Cruz, 2003, p.34). The high school Colegio Superior de Señoritas was the first one to implement the modifications in its curriculum and the new regulations. In 1929 Luis Felipe González proposed an innovative educational reformation, based on the application of the pedagogical methodologies to the social areas. By the year 1930 appeared the first private trade schools in Limón and San José. They used their own textbooks which were not made in Costa Rica, for example, Escuela de Comercio Manuel Aragón used a textbook called “*English for Beginners*”; and it was brought from the United States (Dengo, 1995).

After the World War II and its devastating consequences, the methodology changed: the Government began to bring people from United States - who were not teachers- for students to have contact with native speakers. In 1941 teachers began to offer tutoring classes in English on weekends, specifically for practicing conversation. At that time American people came to our country in June, July, and August to address Spanish courses at the Inter-American Summer University. They donated books, materials, recorders, magazines, and movies for students to use these resources during the English lessons. Due to this, in 1944 Carlos Luis Jiménez Pacheco, a politician, announced the promulgation of the obligation of the English teaching in all the elementary schools of Costa Rica. The different institutions along the country began to use the donated resources in the English

classes. During this decade, the Centro Cultural Costarricense-Norteamericano opened their doors, offering an innovative methodology: the use of audio-visual materials and textbooks donated by the American Embassy of our country. In addition, this institution hired teachers who were capable and already trained, and who had studied English as a formal career. In 1958 the University of Costa Rica created a special curriculum to train English teachers (Vincenzi-Gang, 1978).

From 1950 to 1956 Costa Rica began to implement the technical education, based on the UNESCO Technical Assistance Mission programs (Dengo, 1995). In 1958 the English Counseling Department was created as one of the most important of the Ministry of Education. It was in charge of the English language teaching process in Costa Rica. This department began to establish programs and methodologies which included aspects that were ignored before, such as: teaching phonetics, pronunciation, grammar, the use of different pedagogical materials, and the re-evaluation of the methods used until that moment, they included also reading comprehension, and the use of literary texts like poetry and prose. After these reformations, the Ministry of Education and the Special Language Supervision Office presented the textbooks that would be used in the whole territory, the purpose was to ensure that the English education would be the same for all the students along the country. From Third to Fifth grades, they used the books “Método Hamilton,” and for Seventh and Eighth grades the books “Método Fries”. In the 1960’s the English programs experimented several modifications again, including an increase of the English lessons (hours) from 15 to 18 per month. (Dengo, 1995). By 1972 the English curriculum included to its objectives “to contribute to the development of the student by offering

him/her the opportunity to gain experience new knowledge, attitudes and skills in the expression and communication areas” (Vargas 1993). By 1987 the country experimented the techno-economic paradigm, based on science and information technologies, which implied a change in the English programs. This caused that the English programs were written in that language for the first time. (Saxe, 1999). By 1991 a group of English teachers traveled to Great Britain to receive a workshop about the design of English materials. After this, they designed the book series “Have Fun”, for seventh, eighth, and ninth grades. These books could be adapted to the curricular adequacies of each high school. By 1990 the English programs are implemented for the Diversified Education, Agricultural Colleges, and the Third Cycle. The last two used the English Books “English for a Changing World”, “Lado English Series”, and “Modern American English”; while the Diversified Education used the book “New Horizons in English” (Saxe, 1999).

In the XXI century more than one hundred foreign companies established their offices in Costa Rica. Therefore, the resurgence of the new English programs for elementary schools was born, according to the document “Educational Policy Towards the 21st century: Proposes and Realizations”. This document established that it was necessary to modify the curricula of the Costa Rican education, focusing on the technical preparation, teaching of computing, and a bilingual system; however, the first entities to comply with the orders were the universities, by adding at least seven courses related to learning the English language to the programs of different business careers, implementing six hours of English classes weekly, and two more hours of English laboratory. Regarding to the changes in schools and high schools, it was not until 1997 that the Ministry of Education

asks the English teachers to teach their classes in that language, and to implement dynamic activities during the lessons. Moreover, it was required to motivate students to communicate in English, and to improve the four English skills.

2.3 How Costa Rican Spanish Interference and Transfer Influence the English Standard Pronunciation Learning Process.

Definitely, it is a big challenge for every country to create English programs that allow the students to develop the four skills needed to achieve the best level in this foreign language. In the case of Costa Rica, the hardest skill to improve through the history has always been *speaking*; due to the fact that the English curriculum has focused more on the understanding of the language, leaving behind the oral expression area and its main aspects: pronunciation, accent, stress of words and special sounds (phonemes). Added to this, the particularities of our native language influences in the development of an English Standard Pronunciation. First of all, for this dissertation, it is important to clarify and to identify the Costa Rican Spanish characteristics, and the linguistic variables that hinder the development of the expected English pronunciation.

According to Jara (2006), the Costa Rican Spanish is spoken very fluent; however, each province of the country has its own particularities regarding to its accent and phonetics. For instance, people from Guanacaste speak a Spanish that sounds similar to the Nicaraguans, this is because of the influence and the closeness of Nicaragua to this specific

province. On the other hand, people from Limón are influenced by the Jamaicans; that is why in Costa Rica it is easy to hear different accents from different people along the country. Quesada (1996) explains that there are certain variations in the oral expression in the Central Valley; the author describes that there is a weakening in the pronunciation at the end of some words which end with a vowel, for example “*masa*”, “*pasto*”, and the blocking of a vowel sound in words ended with “*s*” such as “*pastas*” which would sound “*pasts*”. Quesada, who is a linguistic, also states that the Costa Rican Spanish differentiates from other Central American countries which official language is Spanish, in characteristics like the strongest pronunciation of the occlusive phonemes *d*, *l*, or *b* after *r*. As reported by Agüero (1960), Costa Ricans usually change the *r* sound for *chr* sound in specific words like “*tres*”, and that the *s* sound is pronounced in a stronger way in words ended with a syllable in which this consonant is the last letter. Also, they shorten sounds in some words, and they usually cannot pronounce letter *d* in words preceded by a vowel, for example “*usted*” would sound “*uste*”; therefore, they delete that ending sound. In addition, when a word ends with *s* and the next word to say begins with a vowel, letter *s* is changed into a *j* (/h/ English sound) sound. Last, Costa Rica is the only country in Central America in which people pronounce *ll* sound as a palatal semi consonant sound [dʒ] sound; the rest of the countries pronounce it as a *y* sound.

The English and Spanish languages differentiate one from each other in their syntax, phonology, and morphology. There are some sounds in English that are difficult for Costa Rican Spanish native speakers to pronounce because they do not exist in Spanish, or because they are pronounced different in English. Cala (1997) explained that there are nine diphthongs in the English language, and fourteen in Spanish, twenty-four consonants in

English and twenty in Spanish. Moreover, there are thirty-five sounds in Spanish and thirty-eight ways to write them; in English there are forty-four sounds and more than one thousand one-hundred ways to write them.

At this point, some interferences and transfers of the Costa Rican Spanish native language will be detailed in order to analyze how they affect the learning process and development of the English standard accent and pronunciation. Due to the differences between these languages, students could find challenging to pronounce certain sounds in English. Hassan (2014) states that systematic differences can be used to predict the students' difficulties in learning the foreign language, and that the student's mother tongue sound systems may interfere or show positive and negative transfers to the target language. According to Dulay (2016), *interference* is defined as "the automatic transfer, due to habit, of the surface structure of the first language onto the surface of the target language". On the other hand, Weinreich (1979) explains it as "the deviation from norms of either language which occurs in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language". Dulay (1982) states that interference is divided into psychological and sociolinguistic. The psychological interference relates to the learner's habits when learning something new; while sociolinguistic interference refers to the language interaction, the errors in the use of the foreign language, language switching, and language borrowing. Skinner (1992) states that interference can also have different terms, such as: language mixing, linguistic interference, and language transfer.

Transfer is defined as "the process of using L1 knowledge when learning a foreign language". Ramón (2009) mentions that transference is defined as the process of

transferring or taking some linguistic knowledge, rules, expressions, and lexicon from the native language (L1) to the target language (L2). Sajavaara (1986) describes transfer as the influence from old knowledge to new knowledge. Transfer can be either positive or negative. *Positive transfer* is when a pattern in the native language is identical to a pattern in the second language, which makes learning easier. *Negative transfer* is when a pattern in the first language is different from the pattern in the target language, which causes misunderstanding and/or mispronunciation. Brière (1968) asserted that for him all of the phonological errors are the consequence of the negative transferences. Corder (1973) assures that the phonological and phonetical mistakes made while learning a foreign language are explained as interferences of L1 on the L2; this kind of interference is called negative transfer. On the other hand, he also states that all the similarities between the L1 and L2 are helpful in the whole learning process, in this case this represents positive transfer. Selinker (1972), Chomsky (1959) and Ellis (1985) agreed that transfer can be categorized into four levels: words transfer (how words in L1 and L2 are similar and different), syntax transfer (it relates to the syntax structure or patterns of L1 and L2), culture transfer (speakers express themselves according to their own culture), and sounds transfer (this is the strongest level found in Spanish native speakers because it affects pronunciation). Flege (1995), Grosjean (1989) and Major (1992) assure that the phonetic interference occurs bidirectionally from L1 to L2, and from L2 to L1, and that the strength of the interference depends on the language dominance; therefore, the most affected one is L2. Ringbom (1987) mentions that what happens in the positive transfer is that learners relate the foreign language words to the native language ones which are close in pronunciation, consequently, this helps learners to remember the vocabulary. Lado (2010) mentions that interference affects learning of foreign accent, intonation, and rhythm.

According to Hurtado (1992), positive and negative transfers also affect the lexicological, morphological and syntactic areas; therefore, many Spanish speakers translate from Spanish to English literally the exact way in which they say the phrase in their mother tongue; a good example to evidence this is when you have the phrase “Hoy estás solo en casa” and the student’s respond is “Today you are only in the house”. Another example is the “false friends”; false friends are words in two or more languages that have similar structure and sound, but they convey in meaning, for instance; terrorífico = terrifying or estrechar (stretch).

Richards and Renandya (2002) state that a great percentage of the people who learn English has as their main objective to develop proficiency in speaking, and Hinkel (2005) mentions that speaking is the most complex skill to master. It is important to notice the fact that learners often speak with an accent that is similar to their mother tongue, and that they usually do not pay strict attention to the sound patterns, the stress of words and intonation.

Also, Valero (1980) points out that Spanish native speakers tend to substitute certain English sounds for the most approximate in Spanish, and since in Spanish the word sounds are close related to its orthography, students try to find a relation between the English written word and its sound.

The following are some of the main interferences and transfers found in Costa Rican native Spanish speakers:

Interference or transfer	Examples of mistakes in students
<p>1. Epenthesis: The addition of another vowel sound while pronouncing certain words. In this case, adding the short sound of letter e when pronouncing words that start with letter s when preceded by a consonant.</p>	<p>a) <u>s</u>chool: students pronounce it like “eschool”</p> <p>b) <u>s</u>mile is pronounced as “esmile”</p> <p>c) <u>s</u>care is pronounced as “escare”</p>
<p>2. Substitution of the phoneme /th/, which does not exist in Spanish.</p> <p>Voiceless /θ/ is substituted by letter /t/</p> <p>Voiced /ð/ is substituted by letter /d/</p>	<p>a) “think” is usually pronounced as “tink”</p> <p>b) “thanksgiving” is pronounced “tanksgiving”.</p> <p>c) “this” is pronounced as “dis”</p> <p>d) “weather” is pronounced as “weader”</p>
<p>3. The sound /z/ is usually substituted by the sound of letter /s/.</p> <p>This phoneme does not exist in Spanish.</p>	<p>a) “zebra” will be pronounced as “sebra”</p> <p>b) “gaze” is pronounced as “gase”</p> <p>c) “lizard” is usually pronounced as “lisard”</p>

<p>4. Letters /b/ and /v/ are usually pronounced both as /b/ sound by Costa Rican Spanish speakers.</p>	<p>These words will be pronounced exactly the same way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) bote & vote b) best & vest c) berry & very
<p>5. The initial sound of letter /y/ in words is pronounced as the English sound of letter /j/ in English.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) “yarn” is pronounced “jarn” b) “young” would be “joung” c) “your” will be pronounced as “jour”
<p>6. Applying the different pronunciation of the past tense /ed/ in words as /id/ /d/ & /t/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) “stopped” [stapt] would be pronounced by Costa Rican Spanish speakers as [staped] b) “lived” [livd] is usually pronounced [lived] c) “wanted” [wantid] would be pronounced [wanted]

Taken from: Dale, P & Poms, L. English Pronunciation Made Simple. 2005.

2.3.1 Stress, Rhythm and Intonation

In addition of the most common interferences and transfers present in students, there is also an issue with stress, rhythm, and intonation that usually influence the English pronunciation; these elements determine the student's English standard accent and pronunciation.

Stress is defined as the amount of volume that a speaker gives to a particular syllable or word while it is pronounced. In a word there are stressed and unstressed syllables; stress syllables are the ones that sound louder. The use of a correct stress is important to understand the meaning of the words; stress can change the meaning of a complete sentence. For example, a speaker could pronounce the word **désert** (noun; barren region) or **desért** (verb; to abandon) and transmit a completely different meaning. Some more examples are *récord* / *recórd* & *próject* / *project*. Stress might also cause misunderstanding or confusion to the person receiving the message, for instance in the sentence "*The teacher was cóntent*" the word is wrongly stressed, it seems like the speaker is meaning "items contained inside something else/ the topics covered in a course, etc."; but what the speaker was actually trying to express was that "the teacher was *contént*", which means "to be satisfied". Correctly applying the stress in the words will help the speaker sound more natural in the target language and contribute to show an English standard pronunciation. It is important to notice that English native speakers stress the content words (words that conduct meaning; ex. nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs), and no do stress function words like articles, conjunctions, helping verbs and prepositions. For instance, in the sentence "***Truth** is **stranger** than **fiction***", the bold words shown would be the ones stressed by an English native speaker. Nonetheless, it is necessary to mention that

sometimes a speaker might stress a specific word in a sentence to call attention to it or give a special meaning; for example, in the following sentences it is evident that the speaker is showing special importance on different words, which will cause to comprehend the information that the speaking is highlighting: a) “*I **brought** flowers this afternoon*” / “*I brought **flowers** this afternoon*”.

Rhythm is another important feature involved in the learning process. It is created by the strong stresses in a sentence, and it is determined by the number of stressed and not the number of syllables. In the English standard pronunciation, speakers speed up the stressed syllables and reduce the unstressed ones, this situation does not happen in other languages, where all vowels in the words are pronounced equally. One of the greatest mistakes that Costa Rican native Spanish speakers make is that they use their rhythm patterns while speaking English. This makes the speaker sound foreign, stress the wrong words in a sentence, or insert pauses incorrectly between words. A good tip for speakers to keep a good rhythm is to remember use contractions or reduced forms of some words, for example: “*You’re next in line*” / “*Steve hasn’t eaten*”. Also, some words and short sentences are blended together, for example “*How are you?*” will be pronounced “*Howarya?*” / “*bread and butter*” is usually pronounced “*bread ’n butter*”/ “*I want to take a break*” is pronounced by English native speakers as “*I wanna takeabreak*”. Another important aspect to take into account is to make the pauses appropriately in the sentence, due to the fact that they change meaning; for example: “*Who will help Karla?*” is different from “*Who will help, Karla?*” / “*John said the teacher is funny*” / “*John, said the teacher, is funny*”.

The third feature to deal with is intonation. **Intonation** is determined as the use of melody and the rise and fall of the voice when speaking, and it varies according to each language. Intonation patterns include pitch and are responsible for the melody, they are significant to convey meaning, in English the speaker can use the same words to make a statement or ask questions, if the intonation rises, then the speaker is asking a question; for example, the statement “*That’s **Lucy’s bag***” changes to a question when the speaker rises the intonation to the end of it “*That’s **Lucy’s bag?***”. Intonation can also show whether the speaker is confident, impatient, or doubtful. When the voice rises when it should fall, the speaker sounds doubtful or annoyed, or the statement can be understood as a question. On the other hand, when the voice stays level when it should change (rise or fall) the speaker sounds bored, uninterested, and he will be misunderstood (not clear whether the person is giving a statement or asking a question). Notice the difference in the pitch when pronouncing the following: “*Will you stay?*” (rise) “*No. I won’t*” (fall).

Applying correctly these three elements will aid the student to learn English standard patterns, which will help them develop the appropriate accent and also improve their pronunciation through constant practice. Students need to be aware of their limitations, transfers and interferences in order to work on the main barriers they face as native Spanish speakers.

2.4 English as a Foreign Language Learning: Focus on Pronunciation

As an introduction, it is important to clarify what “*English pronunciation*” is defined as. According to the linguistic view, pronunciation is defined as “the way in which an individual pronounces words, based on the basic units of sound used according to its language, and the phonemes in which those words are grouped. In case of the English language, two or more letters can be combined to produce different sounds. It is also influenced by sociolinguistic factors such as the place in which the individual lives currently, or the place in which he/she was born. (Cambridge University, 2017). On the other hand, the linguistic competence is defined as the “group of knowledge that allow to comprehend and produce an infinite number of sentences, grammatically correct” (Noam Chomsky, 1965).

Several studies from the foundational Cambridge Language Assessment in the investigation of books used for teaching English to foreign learners have discovered that the language components that have been taught mostly are grammar and vocabulary (Fulcher, 2003), and that there has been an absence of speaking proficiency activities; however, they also found speaking evaluation scales that have been applied inadequately. (Harding, 2013). Moreover, according to Canagarajah (2006), and Elder & Davies (2006) many standardized tests based on American programs appeared during the last decades in schools that teach English as a foreign language; its purpose was to define appropriate pronunciation instruments or proposals in order to guarantee the learners speak as similar as the native speakers (English standard pronunciation), but this situation has been analyzed to determine whether this is or not a good technique to measure the students’ proficiency and

improvement in this area. In addition, Stephen Krashen exposed his main five theories or hypothesis of the second language learning process. In his first hypothesis, he states that the best way to learn a foreign language is through natural communication, because this is the way in which native speakers learn their mother tongue. He also mentions that the basic grammar structures should be learned in the early period of the learning process, while complex grammar is supposed to be learned later in the process. Krashen also explains that the emotional variables such as anxiety, self-confidence, motivation, and stress influence and can negatively affect the learning part of the brain. Thus, students need to feel that they are able to make mistakes and take risks.

2.5 Techniques that could be applied in order to improve the English standard accent and pronunciation:

It is important to apply activities during the lesson that can help students improve their accent and pronunciation in order to sound more natural and get close to the English standard ones as expected. Furthermore, according to Anthony (1963), a *technique* refers to various activities that either teachers or learners perform in the classroom. They include all tasks and activities that are planned on purpose. They can be motivating in order to stimulate students to learn, and can also be demonstrating, inquiring, oral, constructing, reviewing, testing, reporting, or interviewing. Richards (2001) states that “a technique is a method, procedure or way something is done”.

According to my opinion, based on my experience, and other writers, the following techniques could be helpful for this purpose:

- Teaching students the short and long sounds of the vowels.
- Practicing word stress, rhythm, and intonation exercises.
- Modeling and practicing the English special sounds (phonemes).
- Listening to stories, audios and songs
- Developing communicative activities in the classroom (collaboration)
- Dictating words to students (previously studied) and practicing auto correction to keep the students aware of their progress and mistakes.
- Participating in oral activities like debates and giving opinions.
- Preparing and giving speeches.
- Practicing with minimal pairs.
- Practicing punctuation and pauses in reading.
- Practicing the correct articulation of the sounds and words.
- Applying listening exercises.
- The use of accurate and fair oral evaluation instruments (formative and summative)

2.5.1 Activities that could help improve the accent (stress, rhythm and intonation)

in L1 learners:

It is important to mention that in order to improve the accent: stress, rhythm and intonation, teachers have to apply learning activities that will focus on these aspects specifically. Mastering these points will help the learner improve his fluency, comprehension, and to be clearly comprehended. Davydov (1999) explains that “activities are aimed at the acquisition of new knowledge by the individual, conditioned by the need to apply it in everyday activities or to achieve some practical result, to get profit from the acquired knowledge”.

According to my experience and some other authors, the following activities will be helpful for the purpose previously explained:

- **Active listening:** When learners listen to native speakers’ speeches, audios, or watch videos, they notice how these people emphasize on certain words, so that it would be easier for the learner to imitate them, this will lead the students to intonate and stress words correctly.
- **Speaking and reading aloud:** A powerful tool for students to be aware of their pronunciation and mistakes is to speak aloud. They can repeat phrases after a native speaker gives a speech, but also to read aloud from books or articles. Also, recording themselves and listening to it can help students identify mistakes or weaknesses in order to improve. Another exercise that is useful for this purpose is to read aloud sentences in which the words that should be stressed are in bold letters.

- **Use of online resources:** Using interactive platforms or tools created for helping L2 speakers to improve their accent and pronunciation.
- **Learning phonetic symbols:** Learning phonetic symbols help the L2 learner to understand the sounds, and how to articulate in order to produce them correctly. It also helps the learner identify specific phonemes in several words and remember the pattern to be used in order to pronounce accurately.
- **Practicing tongue twisters** can help L2 learners to improve the articulation of the different phonemes.
- **Singing:** Singing is a great exercise to practice rhythm, intonation, and pronunciation.
- **Group discussions and debates:** Practicing speak in English with other learners will bring good opportunities to improve pronunciation, to communicate appropriately, and to boost the learner's confidence.
- **Immersion in the target language:** Watching movies, videos, documentaries, TV shows or music help the students to get immersed with native speakers.
- **Phonemic Awareness Activities:** Learning special sounds and decomposing words into syllables and sounds guide students to appropriate pronunciation and stress.

- **Using Language Learning Apps or software:** This will allow the student to listen to the correct pronunciation, stress, intonation, and rhythm of the words, and to repeat them in order to get feedback and identify mistakes.

2.5.2 Software Speech Solutions as a Tool for Improving English Standard Pronunciation and Accent.

Speech Solutions is a useful software that can be used as a tool with students in order to improve their English standard pronunciation and accent. As it was previously mentioned, this a technological tool that English teachers can download and install on the computer, it is a friendly program to use. According to the information provided on the platform, it an innovative and powerful language tool; and an interactive program which will allow you gain ability in speaking English.

Through this program, learners can hear different English sounds and understand how they are made by using different parts of the mouth that are involved such as tongue, lips and jaw. It also helps the learner understand the problems of the language (L1 and L2) by practicing listening and speaking. Learners can visualize how to produce each special sound by looking at the diagram. The software contains different points or areas to use:

1. Lessons: In this part learners can watch the mouth motions and how the air flows in order to make the sounds. It offers a side view and front view.

2. Exercises: It contains sample words, comparative words, listening discrimination, minimal pairs, and sentences to practice.
3. List of sounds: It has vowel sound combinations, consonant sounds, and cluster sounds.

This language tool can bring several benefits for the students, such as an understanding of how to produce the sounds, how to articulate correctly, it also helps the learner to memorize the different sounds, to improve the accent, to differentiate words and discriminate each sound, to practice intonation, stress and rhythm while reading sentences and to improve the spelling area, to avoid the interferences and transfers brought from L1 to L2, and to improve the listening skill.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Type of Investigation

This chapter will explain the methodology used in this research to apply the instruments that will help in the analysis of the results and recommendations obtained by the participants' experiences. This will be an important point to help understand the different challenges or difficulties that the fourth-grade students from Eco Centro Braulio Carrillo School face regarding the standard English accent and pronunciation.

Rebecca Hughes (2010) states that:

Many learners of a foreign language usually do not like or are afraid of speaking in the target language, and most of the time they exhibit a passive attitude in class, since they do not have the opportunity to express themselves naturally and spontaneously. (p. 98)

3.1.1 Purpose

The present research study will acknowledge the benefits of implementing English native accent and pronunciation patterns as a tool in improving English standard pronunciation learning in students from fourth grade at Eco Centro Braulio Carrillo School, who experience transfers, interferences and difficulties in their speaking skill, specifically in the pronunciation of different phonemes, their accent, intonation and stress.

Rebecca Hughes states:

“Speaking is a unique form of communication that is the basis of all human relationships and the primary channel for the projection and development of individual identity” (p. 97).

Moreover, it looks to suggest diverse techniques in order to be applied during the English lessons to help students improve their pronunciation and accent, based on a Standard English. In accordance with the objectives, the researcher will implement a questionnaire, and an evaluation instrument that will help collect results and propose recommendations at the end of the study. Therefore, it will be an applied type of research.

The type of applied research can be defined as,

The primary purpose of applied research is to generate actionable insights and solutions that have a direct impact on practical situations. It seeks to bridge the gap between theory and practice by taking existing knowledge and applying it in real-world contexts. Applied research is driven by the need to address specific challenges, make informed decisions, and drive innovation in various domains. Appinio (2024).

3.1.2 Temporal Dimension

In the case of this research, the purpose of applying this study is to analyze and understand the topic deeply by implementing different instruments to obtain data from

participants in order to share recommendations. The period of time in which the data will be collected for this study will be from late September to December 2024. Thus, it can be determined that this is transversal research because the study is going to be carried out in a period of about four months. The dissertation will be qualitative and quantitative. Barrantes (2014) explained that the transversal studies are called synchronic.

3.1.3 Framework

The size and range of the research is a macro type of framework for the study because it is carried out with participants from fourth grade from Eco Centro Braulio School.

3.1.3.1 Mega

For this research, a private academic school will be the subject of study. It is located in San Jerónimo, Moravia, San José, Costa Rica

3.1.3.2 Macro

According to the purpose of this dissertation, the instruments will be applied in one group of students taking English lessons.

3.1.3.3 Micro

15 students from fourth grade will be the participants for the sample of the research. They are between 10 and 11 years old.

3.1.4 Hypothesis

In this research study a hypothesis is proposed, where an independent and a dependent variable are established. Moreover, a conceptual definition is provided to the most significant words of the hypothesis.

Independent variable: The benefits of implementing English native accent and pronunciation patterns is an independent variable since it is going to be applied to the students.

Dependent variable: standard English pronunciation.

Hypothesis: Fourth grade students from Eco Centro Braulio Carrillo School will improve their English standard accent and pronunciation.

Conceptual Definitions:

1. Native accent: A way of speaking typical of a particular group of people and especially of the natives or residents of a region.
An individual's distinctive or characteristic inflection, tone, or choice of words.
(Merriam-Webster, 2024)
2. Pronunciation: The way in which a language or a particular word or sound is pronounced. (Oxford Dictionary, 2024)
3. Tool: Something that helps you in a particular activity. (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021)
4. English standard pronunciation: a) Conforming in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary to the usage of most educated native speakers, widely considered acceptable or correct. (Merriam-Webster, 2024)

b) The English that with respect to spelling, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary is substantially uniform though not devoid of regional differences, that is well established by usage in the formal and informal speech and writing of the educated, and that is widely recognized as acceptable wherever English is spoken and understood. (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2018).

3.1.5 Nature

In this case, the research is qualitative and quantitative (mixed data), taking into account the general and specific objectives to achieve. According to Hernández, Fernández and Baptista (2006), the qualitative approach is:

A group of systematic, and critic processes of research and it implies the collection and analysis of qualitative data, as well as its integration and joined discussion, to make inferences as product of all information gathered (meth information) and achieve a greater understanding of the phenomena under information. (p. 265).

Burns and Gove (2003) also states that the qualitative research is mostly associated with words, language and experiences rather than measurements, statistics, and numerical figures.

According to Taherdoost (2022), quantitative research is “the method of employing numerical values derived from observations to explain and describe the phenomena that the observations can reflect on them”. Also, he states that mixed-method methods “simply employ a combination of both qualitative and quantitative approaches based on the purpose

of the study and the nature of the research question. However, the focus can be on both methods equally or on one of them”.

3.1.6 Character

The character of the present research is descriptive since it details the elements studied according to the problem, and it analyzes its nature, and phenomena. Moreover, it describes the methodologies applied throughout the time, their causes, and consequences to the generations. The technique applied in order to collect the information is the interview to the professionals of the area previously described, and also observation instruments.

According to Tamayo (pg.35), the descriptive investigation “comprehends the description, recordings, analysis, and interpretation of the current nature, and the composition or process of the different phenomena. It focuses on the conclusions about a specific group of people in the present”.

3.1 Subjects and Information Sources

3.2.1 Subjects

In this section, the population to be studied is specified in the study, and the individuals are categorized. The two ways of categorizing the participants are the universe and the sample. For the sample, the researcher will work with fourth grade students from Eco Centro Braulio Carrillo School. For this investigation, the universe are all elementary students from the school which are not going to be studied as a whole; this is why a sample

is going to be taken. The sample will be the students from fourth grade; every student is going to be part of the investigation process.

3.2.2 Firsthand sources used in the research process

Table 1

Firsthand Sources Used in the Research Process

Author(s):	University or Organization:	Country:	Year:
Cabrera Mariscal, M.	Universidad de Monterrey	México	2014
Calvo Shadid, A. & Castillo Rivas, J.	Universidad de Costa Rica	Costa Rica	2014
Cordero Badilla, D. & Pizarro Chacón, G.	Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica	Costa Rica	2015
Córdoba Cubillo, P. Coto Keith, R. & Ramírez Salas, M.	Universidad de Costa Rica	Costa Rica	2005
Dale, P. & Poms, L	Pearson Education	United States	2005
Jara, C.	Universidad de Costa Rica	Costa Rica	2006

Marín Arroyo, Edwin	Universidad Tecnológica de Costa Rica	Costa Rica	2012
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Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

3.2.3 Secondhand Sources

Table 2

Secondhand Sources Used in the Research Process

Author(s):	Book Title:	Year:
Asher, J.	The Total Physical Response Approach to Second Language Learning. The Modern Language Journal.	1969
González, L.	Influencia Extranjera en el Desarrollo Científico y Educativo de Costa Rica. San José: Editorial Costa Rica.	1976
González	La Enseñanza de Idiomas Extranjeros Despertó ya el Interés en los Primeros Años de la República	1978
Richards, J. and Rogers, T.S.	Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching". New York: Cambridge University Press.	2011

Islam, R. & Akteruzzaman, M.	Interferences on L2 Speech Sounds in an EFL Context: A Study on the English Speakers.	2016
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Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

3.2.4 Thirdhand Sources

Table 3

Thirdhand Sources Used in the Research Process

Author(s):	Article:	Year:
Araya Araya, K. and Córdoba González, G.	Actualidades Investigativas en Educación. Universidad de Costa Rica.	2008
Purpura, J.	Assessing Communicative Language Ability.	2008
Zhangmin, W.	Review of the Influence of L1 on L2 Acquisition.	2014
Singleton, D, Simone E.	Second Language Pronunciation Assessment”. University of Pannonia, Hungary.	2017
Ilva, W. Aunurrahman, Sahrawi.	An Analysis of Mother Tongue Interference in English Pronunciation.	2021

Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

3.3 Sampling

3.3.1 Population:

The population consists of students from Eco Centro Braulio Carrillo School, which at the same time constitute the universe. Nevertheless, the whole population is great in scale, thus, a sample is taken to accomplish the objectives of this dissertation.

3.3.2 Sample

From all the population, the sample chosen was the fourth grade A students, due to their English level this population can bring up more accurate results.

3.3.3 Non- Probabilistic

The sample for this research is non-probabilistic since the population was chose based on the grade they are studying and their age. McCombes (2019), states that Non-probability sampling can include non-random selection based on convenience or other criteria, allowing you to lightly collect data.

3.4 Techniques and Instruments

The application of different instruments is essential to collect data. The instrument applied for the finality of this research are the Likert scale and observation sources.

Referring to the first objective, which is to determine how the Costa Rican native accent and pronunciation influences the learning process of an English standard

pronunciation, a pretest is applied. Through this instrument (Questionnaire I), the results obtained by students pronounce and read several words and sentences aloud. On a paper, a list of words and sentences are going to be read by the student, while the researcher evaluates the pronunciation of the different phonemes, accent, intonation, and rhythm. This first step is taken for a duration of four lessons.

The second instrument is related to the second objective, which is to identify the limitations of the Costa Rican accent and pronunciation while learning the English pronunciation, a Likert scale is going to be applied to the English teachers in order to prove this aspect. The purpose of this step is to collect the opinion of the English teachers about the possible limitations of the L1 while learning the L2 pronunciation.

The third instrument is related to the third objective, which is to identify techniques that could be implemented in order to improve the English pronunciation in students. To achieve this objective and show an improvement of these two aspects, a post test (Questionnaire II) is going to be applied after the students practiced the English standard accent and pronunciation by using the *Speech Solutions Software* in class. In this step, the researcher will use a second observation instrument in order to evaluate the words and sentences. Through this, the results obtained after the investigation process was applied are going to be clearly shown. The researcher collects the results and compares them with the pretest previously applied as the first step.

Lastly, the fourth and fifth instruments are related to the general objective, which is to determine the benefits of implementing English native accent and pronunciation patterns as a tool in improving English standard pronunciation the learning process. In this case, two

instruments will be applied. The first one is a Survey (Questionnaire III) which purpose is to know the opinion of the students about the improvement of their accent and pronunciation after using the software Speech Solutions and other activities. The second one is a journal. The purpose of this instrument is to record the activities applied during the investigation for this study, and to observe how students reacted to the usage of this tool and activities.

3.4.1 Operation of the Variables

Barrantes (1999) states that variables:

Involves three main procedures: conceptual, instrumental and operational definitions.

The conceptual definition describes the meaning in an objective term, being brief but precise. The instrumental definition motivates to explain how the variable is used. Finally, the operational definition describes the evaluation criteria and measurement of the information collected.

In the chart it is shown the general objective of the investigation and specifically the variable for each specific objective. Moreover, a conceptual definition, an instrumental definition, and an operational definition are provided.

Table 4

TITLE: THE BENEFITS OF IMPLEMENTING ENGLISH NATIVE ACCENT AND PRONUNCIATION PATTERNS AS A TOOL IN IMPROVING ENGLISH STANDARD PRONUNCIATION LEARNING IN STUDENTS FROM FOURTH GRADE AT ECO CENTRO BRAULIO CARRILLO SCHOOL IN SAN JERÓNIMO, MORAVIA, SAN JOSÉ, DURING THE III QUARTER, 2024.

Variables Chart

General Objective: To determine the benefits of implementing English native accent and pronunciation patterns as a tool in improving English standard pronunciation learning in students from fourth grade at Eco Centro Braulio Carrillo School in San Jerónimo, Moravia, San José, during the III Quarter, 2024.

Specific Objectives	Variable	Conceptual Definition	Instrumental Definition	Operational Definition
To determine how the Costa Rican native accent and pronunciation influences the learning process of an English standard pronunciation.	The Costa Rican native accent and pronunciation influence on the learning process of an English standard pronunciation.	Interference from the Costa Rican native accent and pronunciation influence the learning process of an English standard pronunciation learning	Instrument: Questionnaire I Technique: Pretest The pretest is directed at the students. It is going to show the results obtained after students pronounce and read several words and sentences aloud from a paper	In the Questionnaire I, the variable is valid if more than 60% of the words and sentences read by the students are mispronounced. This will evidence the influence of the L1 accent and pronunciation on the L2 learning process.

			<p>containing a list of words and sentences to be read by the student, while the researcher evaluates the pronunciation of the different phonemes, accent, intonation, and rhythm.</p>	
<p>To identify the limitations of the Costa Rican accent and pronunciation while learning the English pronunciation.</p>	<p>The limitations of the Costa Rican accent and pronunciation while learning the English pronunciation.</p>	<p>Limitations of the L1 on the pronunciation learning process of L2.</p>	<p>Instrument: Likert Scale. The Likert Scale is directed to the English Teachers. It is aimed to collect the opinion of the English teachers about the possible limitations of the</p>	<p>In the Likert Scale, the variable is valid through this instrument if the English teachers mark “Agree” in 70% of the items.</p>

			L1 while learning the L2 pronunciation.	
To identify techniques that could be implemented in order to improve the English pronunciation in students.	Techniques that could be implemented to improve the English pronunciation is students.	The results of the application of the Speech Solutions software on students after the investigation.	Instrument: Questionnaire II Technique: Post Test The results obtained from this instrument are going to be collected and compared with the pretest previously applied as the first step, in order to determine if students improved their pronunciation and accent.	In the Questionnaire II, the variable is valid if more than 60% of the words and sentences read by the students are pronounced correctly. This will evidence the improvement of the L2 accent and pronunciation after applying the tool <i>Speech Solutions Software</i> .

<p>To determine the benefits of implementing English native accent and pronunciation patterns as a tool in improving English standard pronunciation the learning process.</p>	<p>The benefits of implementing English native accent and pronunciation patterns as a tool in improving English standard pronunciation.</p>	<p>Benefits of English native accent and pronunciation for improving the English standard pronunciation.</p>	<p>Instrument: Questionnaire III Technique: Survey The Questionnaire is directed to the participants of the research. It is aimed to collect the opinion of the students for the improvement of their accent and pronunciation after using the software Speech Solutions and the other activities.</p>	<p>In the Questionnaire III, the variable is valid if more than 60% of the participants mark from 4 – 5 on the scale items. This will show that the students think they improved their accent and pronunciation after applying the tool <i>Speech Solutions Software</i> and the other activities.</p>
<p>To determine the benefits of implementing English native accent and</p>	<p>The benefits of implementing English native accent and</p>	<p>Benefits of English native accent and pronunciation for</p>	<p>Instrument: Journal Technique: Observation</p>	<p>In the Journal, the variable is valid if more than 60% of the recordings</p>

<p>pronunciation patterns as a tool in improving English standard pronunciation the learning process.</p>	<p>pronunciation patterns as a tool in improving English standard pronunciation.</p>	<p>improving the English standard pronunciation.</p>	<p>The Journal is going to be used to record the activities applied during the investigation for this study, and to observe how students reacted to the usage of this tool and activities.</p>	<p>evidence that the participants improved their accent and pronunciation through the observation process, while the tool <i>Speech Solutions Software</i> and the other activities were applied.</p>
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Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

In this chapter, the data collected is analyzed and shown graphically. It is important to mention that the purpose of the instruments applied was to gather relevant information about the study and the population, and that every instrument was made with the intention of fulfilling every specific objective of the research. In fact, every detail shown in this chapter is essential to show the main results of the investigation process.

In the research, there were used five instruments. The first instrument was the Questionnaire I, which consisted of collecting information as a pretest. This data is relevant because it shows the main interferences and transfers that students have regarding the pronunciation of specific phonemes, and in accent (intonation, stress, and rhythm).

The second instrument was a Likert scale. This tool is extremely useful for the researcher because it gathers anonymous opinion of the English teachers from the institution about how the Costa Rican native Spanish accent and pronunciation influence while learning the English standard pronunciation.

The third instrument was the Questionnaire II, which was taken as a post test. The application of this instrument was necessary at the end of the research to determine whether the students improved their accent and pronunciation after applying the tool *Speech Solutions Software* and other activities proposed.

The fourth instrument was the Questionnaire III, which was a survey directed at the students who were part of the investigation. This instrument was significant because it gathered the students' opinion after the software *Speech Solutions* and the other activities proposed were applied. Through this, the participants shared anonymous information about

their improvements in accent and pronunciation, feelings during and after using the different tools, and how their self-confidence changed.

Lastly, the fifth instrument was observation, which consisted in a journal.

Observations are extremely useful due to the fact that they allow the researcher to watch the students cautiously, and to record their progress in different aspects. Due to the nature of this instrument, which is a lot about interpretation, it is necessary to analyze it carefully.

4.1 ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' DATA:

4.1.1 Initial Observation

Graph 1

General Information of the 4-1 Class

Question	Yes	No
Students are noisy and constantly interrupt		✗
Students actively participate in an organized way	✓	
Students are motivated and invited to speak in English during the lesson	✓	
Students interact among them using the English language more than Spanish		✗
Students use correct grammar structures while communicating	✓	
Students need constant repetition and clarification from the teacher for understanding		✗
Students speak English more than Spanish during the class while participating	✓	
The class is equipped with technological devices to practice the listening and speaking skills	✓	
The teacher uses digital resources during the lesson (videos, audios, etc)	✓	

Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

The first entry observation was applied on to get information and details to know more the population and monitor their English skills; mainly listening and speaking, and also to observe their everyday interactions, participation, motivation, confidence, and challenges in the class and as a group.

At first, it was analyzed the number of students in the group 4-1. The group consisted of 15 students of which 7 were girls and 8 boys. This shows that the difference between girls and boys is 1 student, which means that it is balanced to gather the results regarding gender.

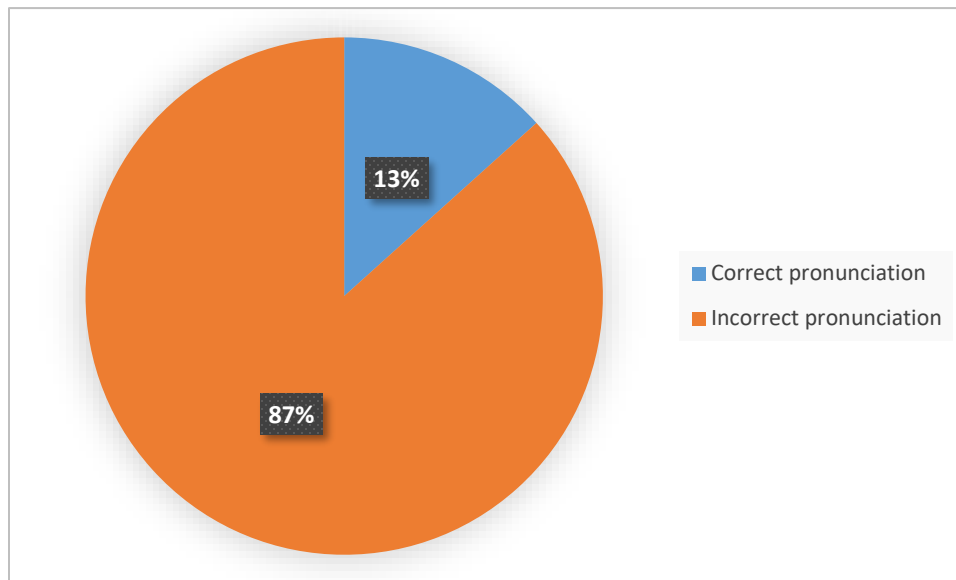
Then, the use of the English language in the class was observed since the project focuses on the speaking skill, and it is required a certain English level to carry out the investigation and get accurate results. In this aspect, the students showed an appropriate English level, and good use of it during the lessons, they actively participate and are motivated to use the target language, which benefits this investigation due to the fact that this skill is practiced every day, being the most relevant for the study.

Concerning the class, they seemed very to be participative, respectful of the class rules, very active and confident in their environment. Also, the teacher used digital resources to practice the listening/speaking skills, and the class was equipped with different technological devices (computer, video beam, speakers) needed to be used as a tool for this research, which meant that the students have the required resources for the application of the strategies that were going to be applied during the investigation process.

4.1.2 Pretest (Questionnaire I)

Graph 2

Pronunciation of the phoneme /th/

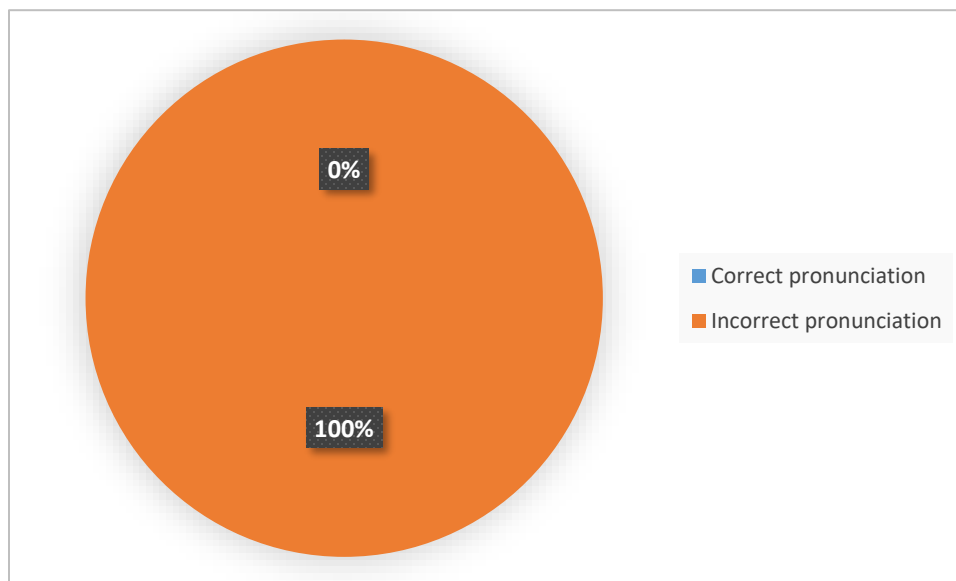


Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

In the graph above, the results gathered concerning the pronunciation of the phoneme /**th**/ in both forms: voiced and voiceless. Students were asked to read words containing this phoneme. It can be assured that only 13% of the students pronounced the phoneme correctly, while 87% did it incorrectly. Most of the students pronounced /t/ or /d/ instead of /th/ in the words presented.

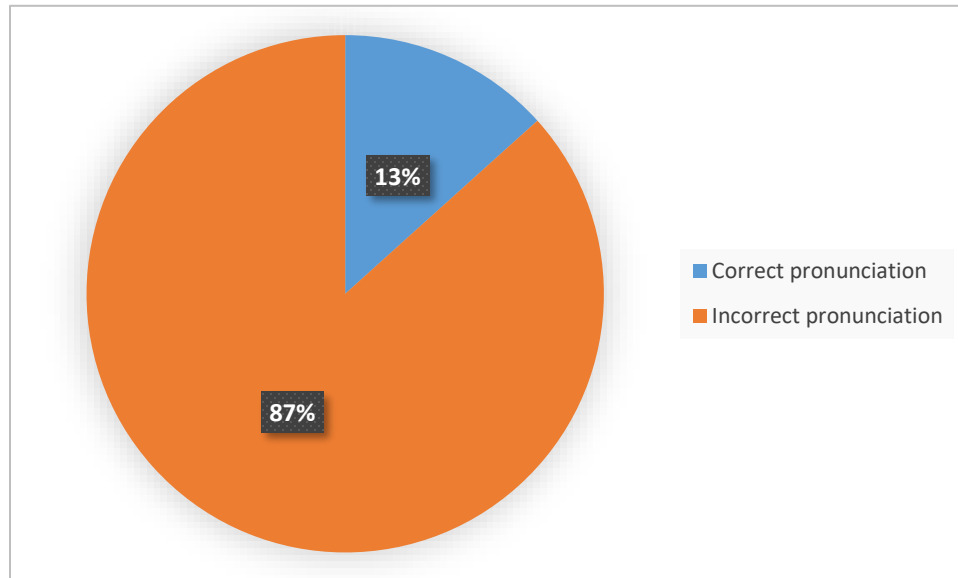
Graph 3

Pronunciation of the phoneme /z/



Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

According to the graph above, it can be evident that none of the students pronounced the phoneme /z/ correctly. This happens due to the transfer that is transmitted from the L1 (native Costa Rican Spanish) to the L2 (English), where the phoneme /z/ is pronounced the same as /s/ in all words. The English sound of letter /z/ does not exist in our Costa Rican native Spanish; thus, it is important to teach students how to articulate correctly to produce the accurate sound, and to continue practicing in order to master it.

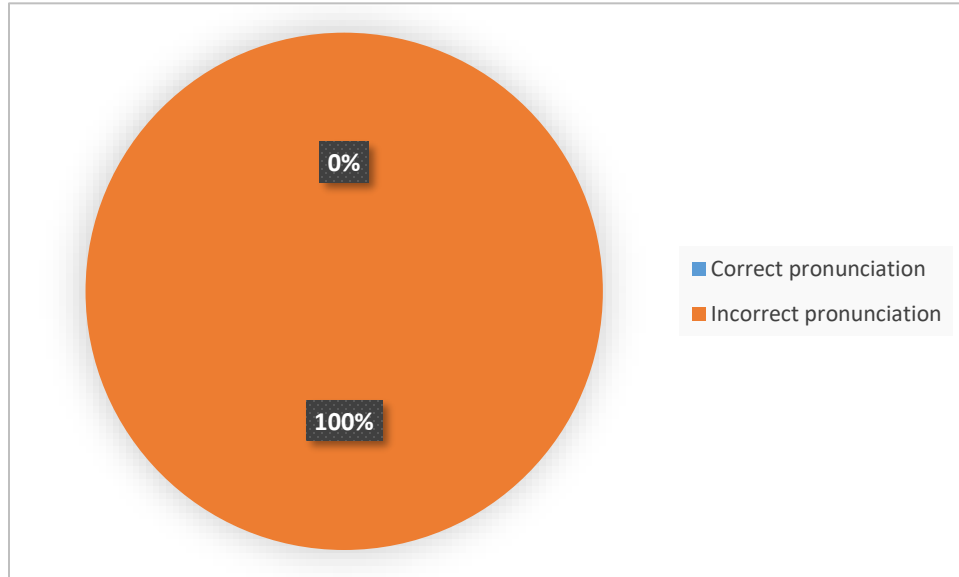
Graph 4*Pronunciation of the phoneme /v/*

Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

Regarding the graph above, the results demonstrate that only 13% of the students pronounced the phoneme /v/ correctly; on the other hand, it is shown that 87% of the students mispronounced it, which represents more than half of the population. During the pretest, students pronounced /v/ as /b/. It is important to notice that native Costa Rican Spanish speakers do not differentiate these sounds, pronouncing them both always as /b/, which also represents a transfer from the L1 on the L2.

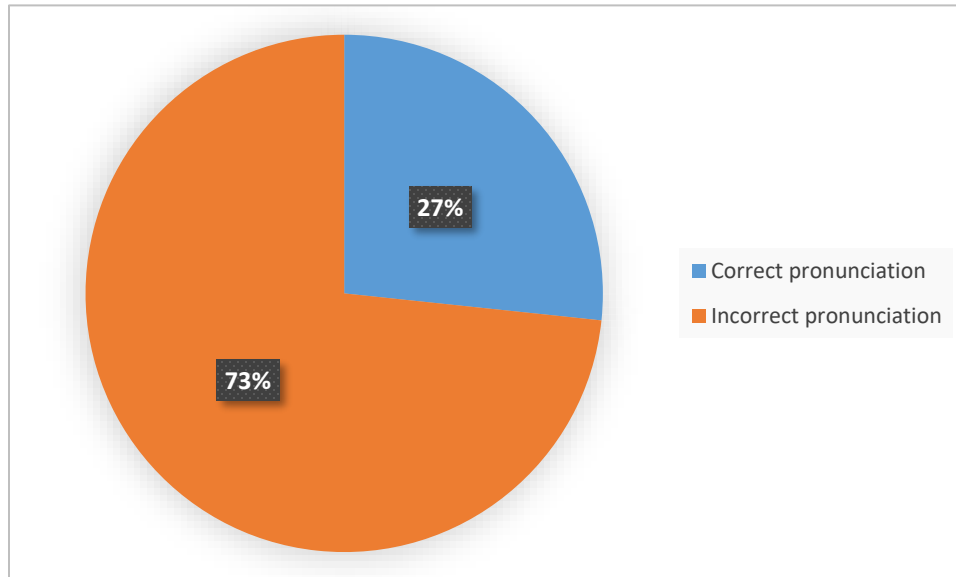
Graph 5

Pronunciation of the phoneme /ed/:



Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

According to graph 5, the results gathered that 100% of the students, which represents the whole population, mispronounced the phoneme /ed/. It is necessary to mention that a list of words containing /ed/ in its three pronunciation forms /t/, /d/, and /id/ were asked to be read. None of the students pronounced these words correctly, most of them kept saying /ed/ at the end of each word.

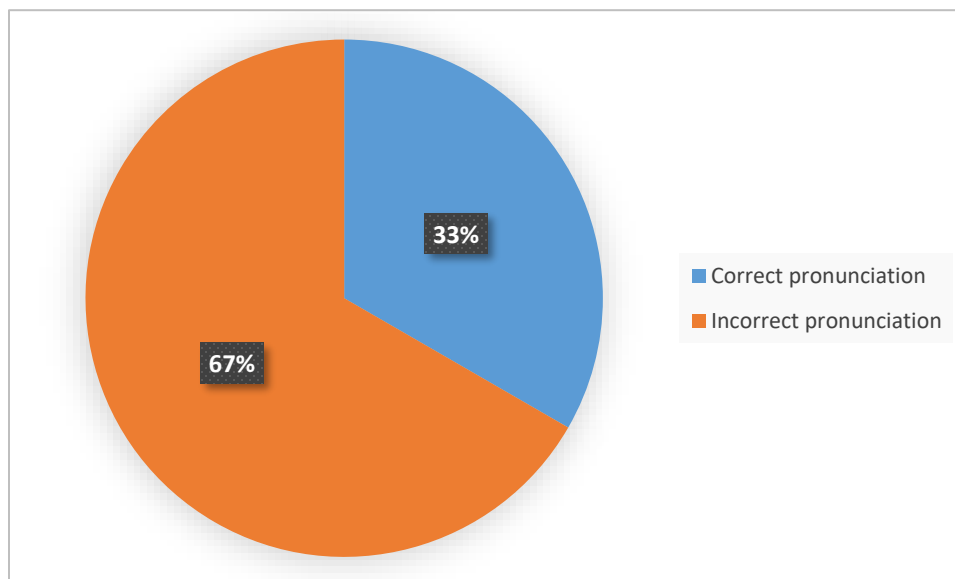
Graph 6*Pronunciation of the phoneme /y/ as initial sound*

Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

According to the graph above, it can be shown the results gotten regarding the pronunciation of the phoneme /y/ as initial sound. It is revealed that 27% of the students pronounced it correctly, while 73% of the students pronounced it as it is said in Spanish, which means that the major percentage of the students do not master it, due to the fact that in Spanish this phoneme is pronounced completely different when located at the beginning of a word.

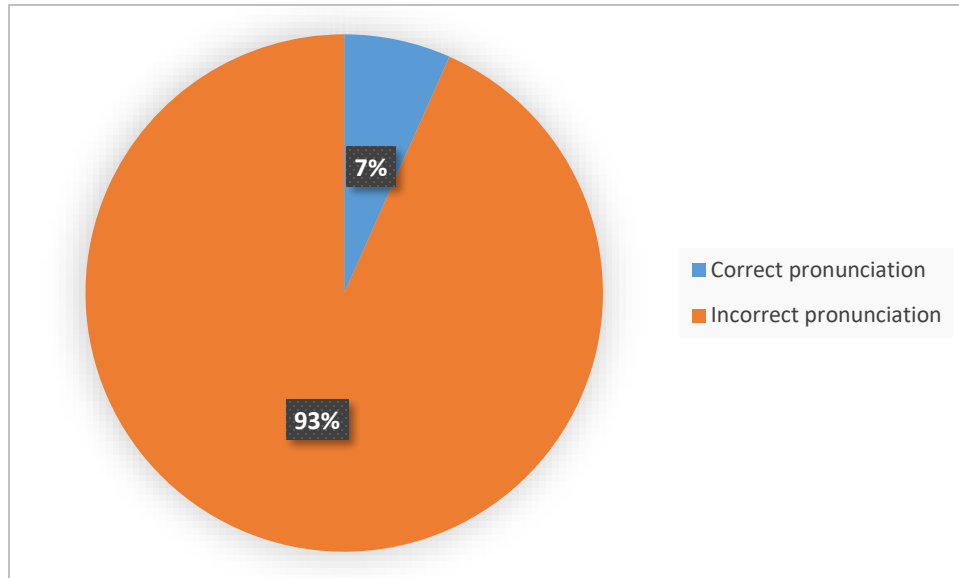
Graph 7

Pronunciation of the phoneme /s/ as initial sound, followed by a consonant



Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

Regarding the graph 7, it is visible that 33% of the students pronounced correctly the phoneme /s/ as initial sound, and 67% of them mispronounced it, which represents more than one half of the total population. This part of the participants added a letter “e” short vowel sound at the beginning of the word, saying “/eschool/” instead of “school”. This shows that this feature needs to be polished in order to develop an appropriate English standard pronunciation.

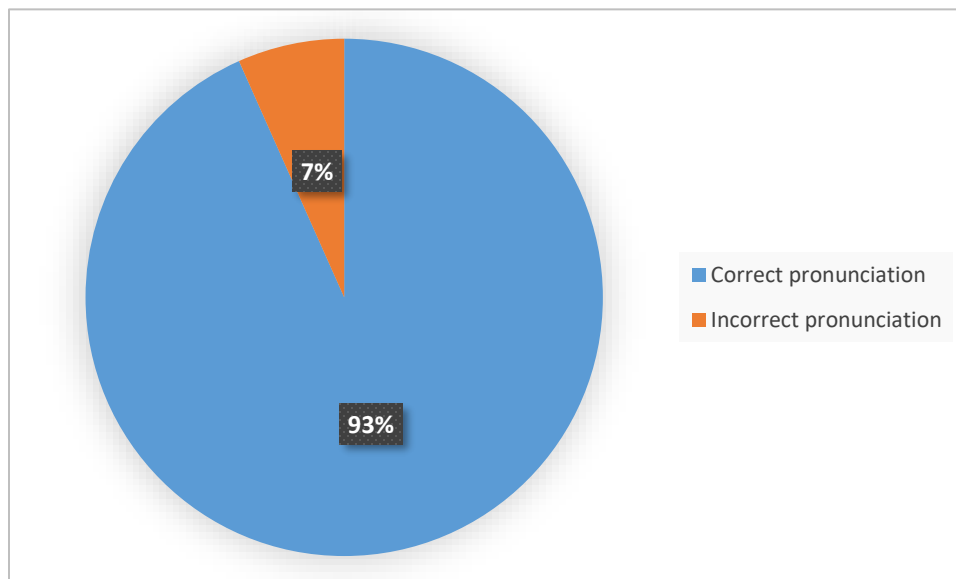
Graph 8*Pronunciation, stress and intonation when reading Questions*

Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

According to the graph previously presented, it is evident that most of the students did not pronounce, stress or intonate correctly while reading questions. This percentage shows that only 1 out of 15 students were capable to do it correctly. This reveals that it is necessary to help students understand where, when, and how to stress and intonate words while reading/asking questions.

Graph 9

*Pronunciation, stress and intonation when reading **Declarative sentences**.*

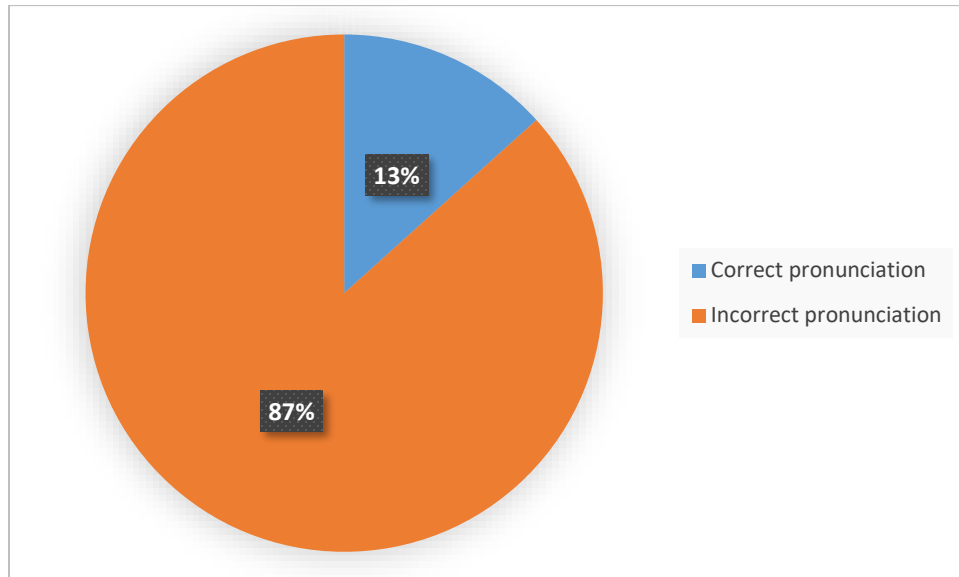


Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

Graph 9 shows the results of how students pronounced, stressed, and intoned while reading declarative sentences. The information shows that 93% of the students did it correctly, which represents a great part of the population. Only 7% of the participants struggled mainly with the pronunciation of some words.

Graph 10

*Pronunciation, stress and intonation when reading **Exclamatory sentences***



Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

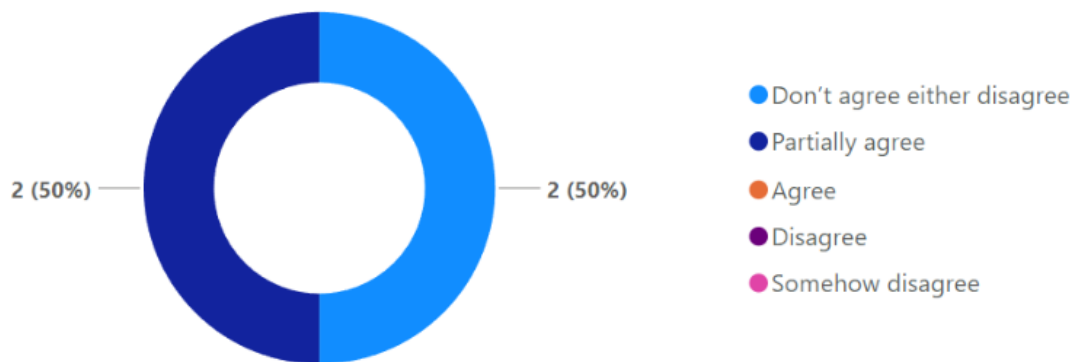
According to the graph above, it is revealed that only 13% of the students pronounced, stressed, and intonated correctly while reading exclamatory sentences. On the opposite side, 87% of the students did not know how to do it, even though they tried to stress the words besides the exclamation point. This evidences that students need to improve in these areas in order to achieve an English standard accent which will sound more natural.

4.1.3 Likert Scale

The opinion of the English teachers about how the Costa Rican native Spanish accent and pronunciation influence while learning the English standard pronunciation is described below in the following graphics.

Graph 11

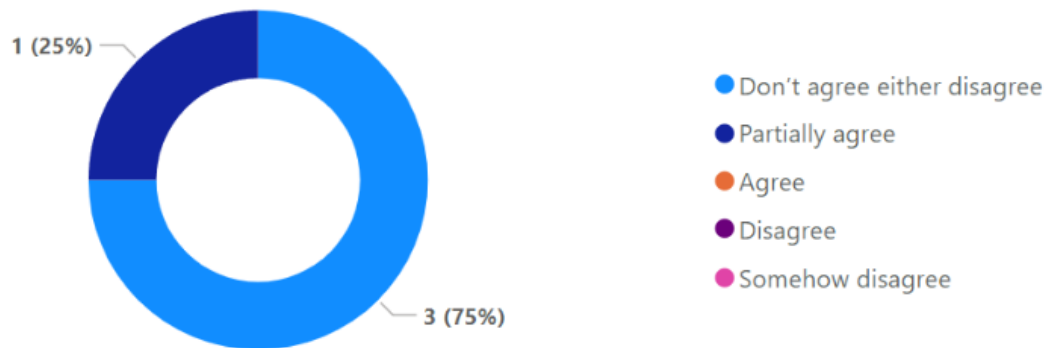
1. Speaking is the hardest skill for students to develop in English.



Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

Graph 12

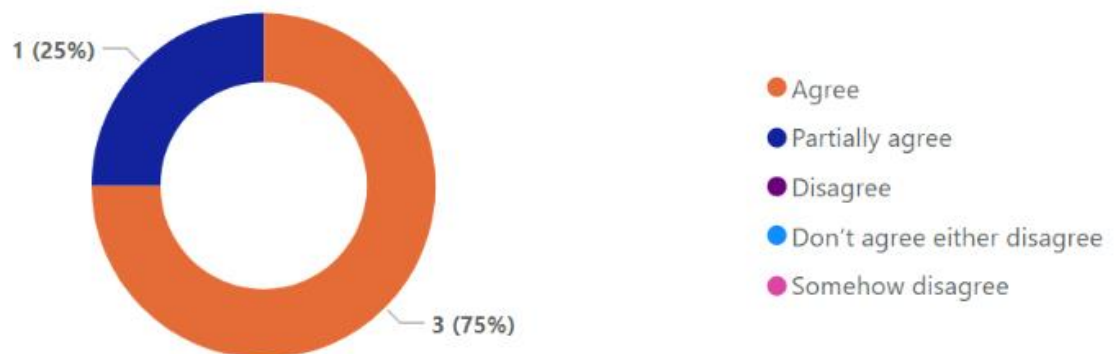
2. Speaking is the most challenging element to teach to students due the lack of accurate techniques to implement in class.



Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

Graph 13

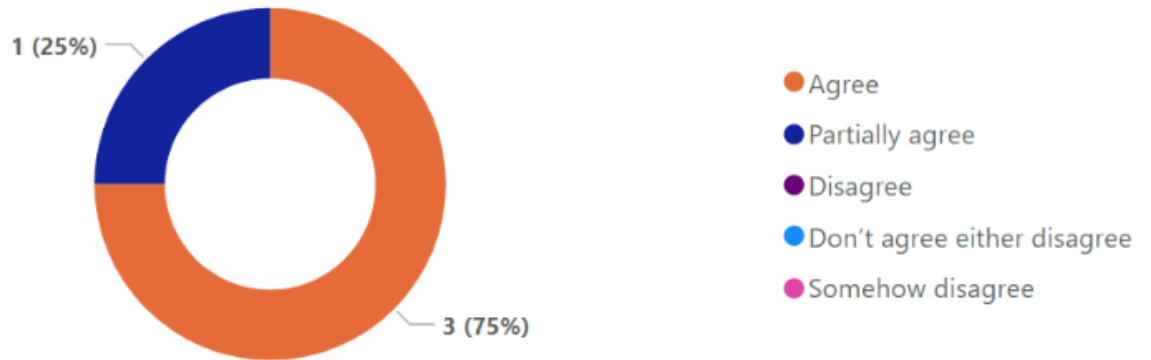
3. The native Costa Rican Spanish influence significantly in the learning process of the English standard pronunciation.



Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

Graph 14

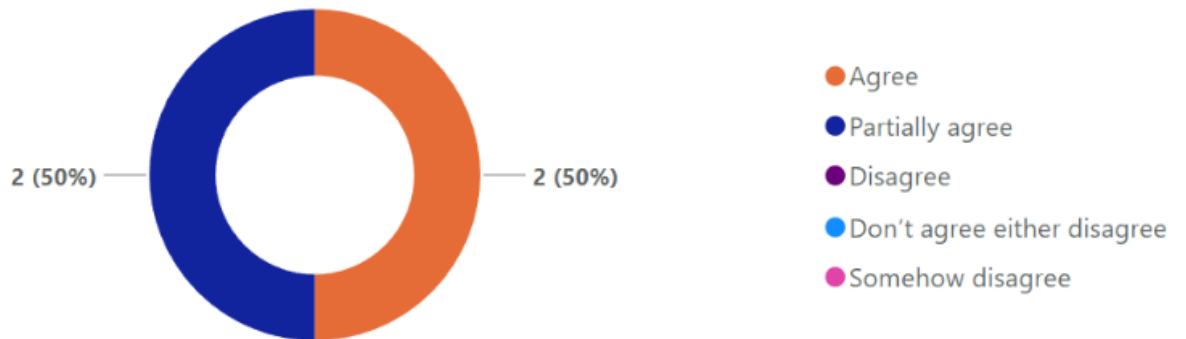
4. Students usually pronounce and accent English words or sentences as they do it in Spanish.



Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

Graph 15

5. The lack of several phonemes that exist in English and not in Spanish limits students to develop a correct English standard pronunciation.



Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

The graphs above show the results obtained in the Likert scale. In this scale, English teachers had the possibility to choose among five options according to their level of agreement on each statement. The purpose was to collect the opinion of the teachers about how the Costa Rican native Spanish accent and pronunciation influence while learning the English standard pronunciation.

The first statement shows information regarding if teachers consider that *speaking* is the hardest skill for students to develop in English; in this case, 50% of the teachers mentioned that they do not agree either disagree, and the other 50% indicated that they partially agree. Speaking is a skill that is developed hand-to-hand with the other English skills; therefore, teachers do not see it as the hardest one to perform necessarily.

The second statement asked teachers if they consider that *speaking* is the most challenging element to teach to students due to the lack of accurate techniques to implement in class. Concerning this statement, 75% of them mentioned that they do not agree either disagree, and 25% partially agreed. With this information teachers show that there are enough techniques to help students develop this skill.

The third statement states that the native Costa Rican Spanish influence significantly in the learning process of the English standard pronunciation. At this point, 75% of the teachers agreed with this, and 25% partially agreed. Both percentages show a high level of agreement, which shows that, in fact, it influences and affects the learning process of the English standard pronunciation, causing transfers and interferences on the foreign language.

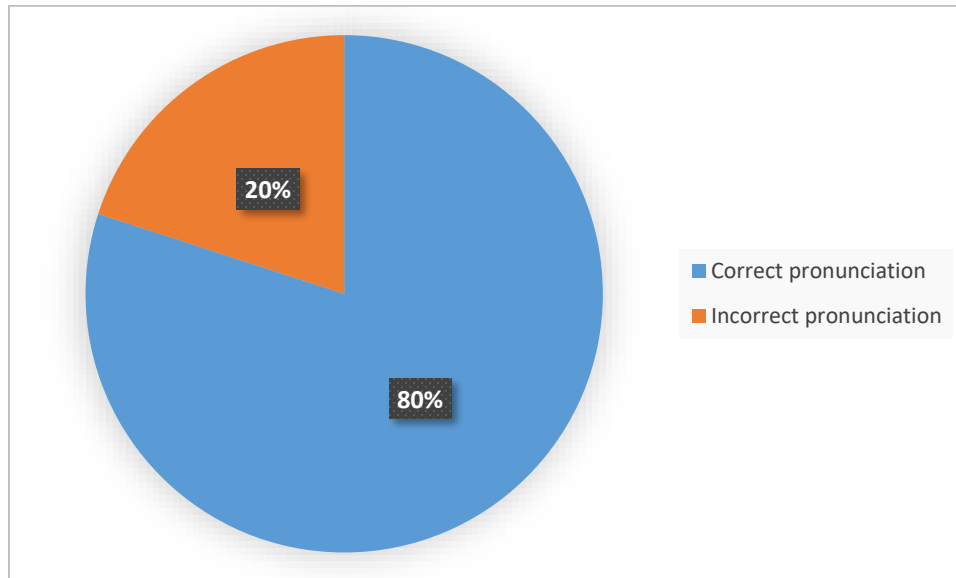
The fourth statement indicated that students usually pronounce and accent English words or sentences as they do it in Spanish. Concerning this assertion, 75% of the teachers agreed, and 25% partially agreed. This means that teachers notice and experience this fact in their classes; moreover, this evidence shows the interferences previously explained of the L1 on the L2.

Lastly, the fifth statement mentioned that the lack of several phonemes that exist in English and not in Spanish limits students to develop a correct English standard pronunciation. In this way, 50% of the teachers partially agreed and 50% agreed with this. This shows that most of the responses are affirmative for this assertion, reiterating that there is an evident impact or limitations in the development and the learning process of the English standard pronunciation due to the fact that students need to be trained and taught to articulate and produce the sounds correctly.

4.1.4 Post Test (Questionnaire II)

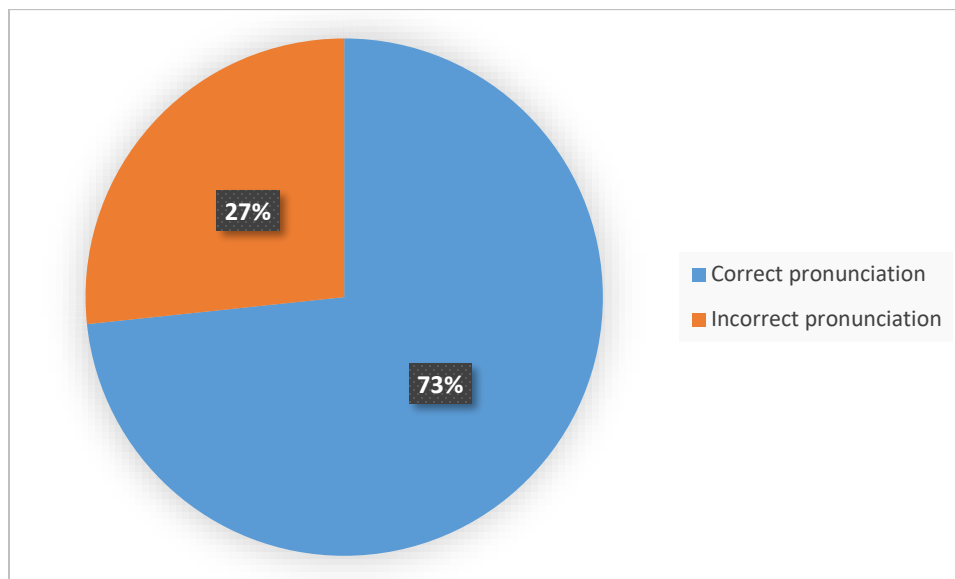
Graph 16

Pronunciation of the phoneme /th/



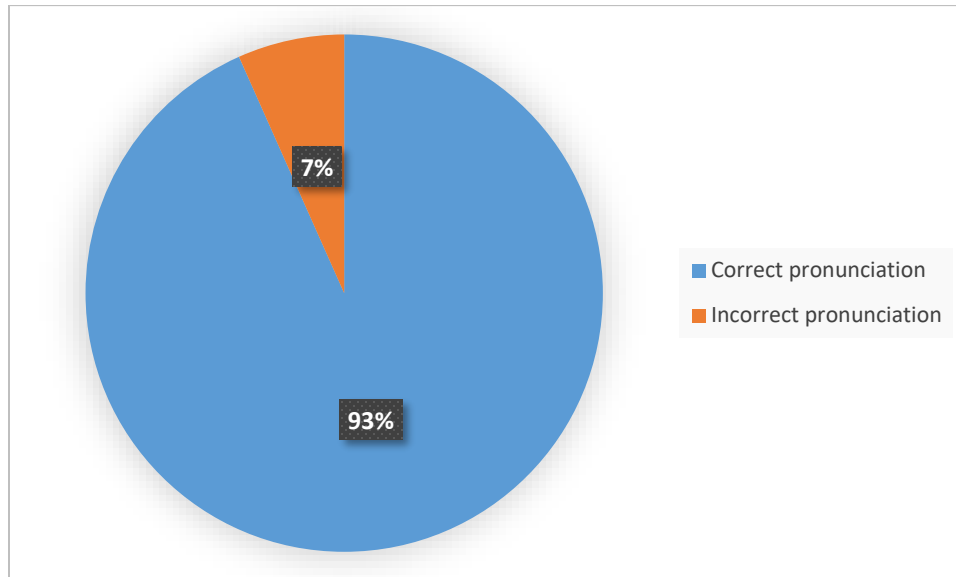
Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

In the graph above, it is shown that after the implementation of the tool Speech Solutions, and the activities to improve the accent, 80% of the students pronounced the /th/ in both forms: voiced and voiceless correctly, while only 20% of them mispronounced it.

Graph 17*Pronunciation of the phoneme /z/*

Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

According to the graph above, it is noticeable that 73% of the students pronounced the phoneme /z/ correctly, and that a few percentages of 27% mispronounced it. Compared to the first graph (pretest) students improved in this phoneme, taking into account that at that moment, none of the students pronounced it accurately.

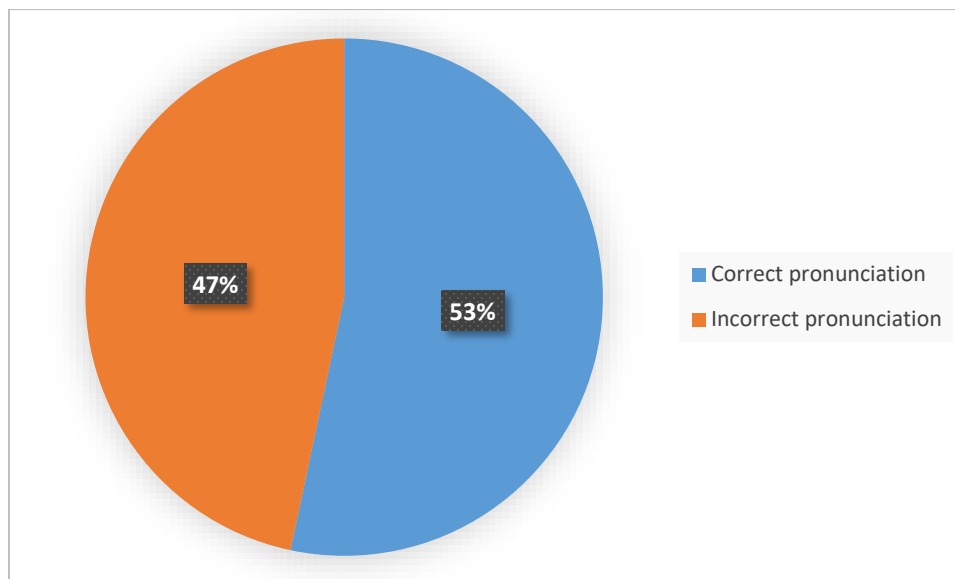
Graph 18*Pronunciation of the phoneme /v/*

Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

Regarding the graph above, the results demonstrate that the greatest percentage of 93% of the students pronounced the phoneme /v/ correctly; nonetheless, it is shown that 7% of them mispronounced it; yet the results show a major step forward.

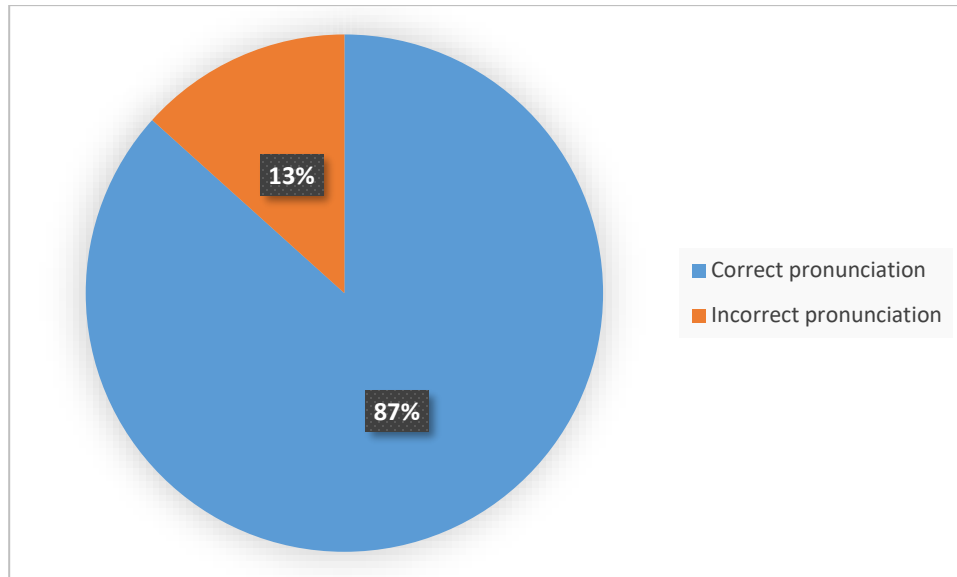
Graph 19

Pronunciation of the phoneme /ed/



Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

According to graph 15, the results gathered that 53% of the students pronounced correctly the phoneme /ed/. This percentage represents approximately half of the population that was part of the investigation. On the other hand, 47% of the students mispronounced the phoneme in its three forms of pronunciation: /t/, /d/, /id/. Although the number of students who still struggle with the pronunciation of this phoneme is big, it shows a significant progress for the group after implementing the tool Speech Solutions.

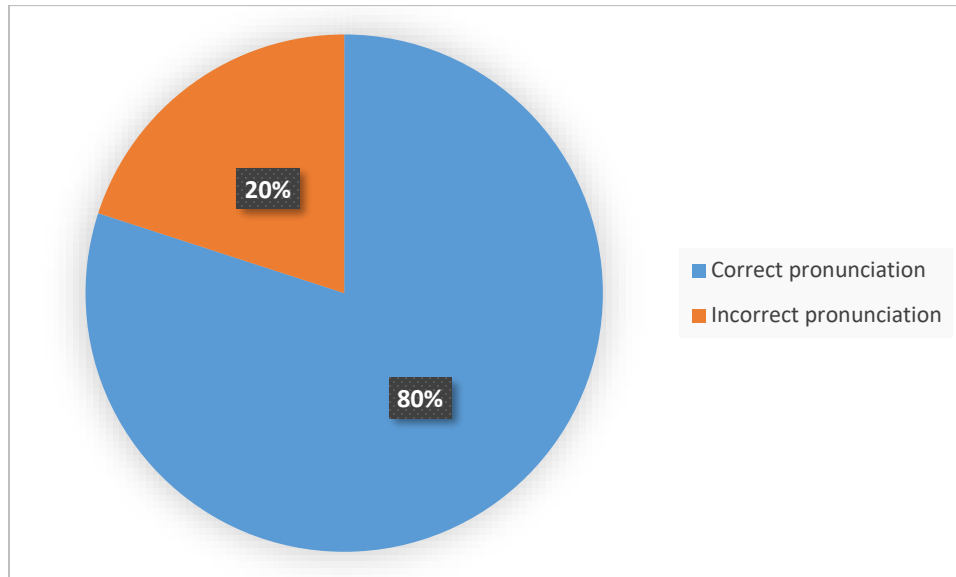
Graph 20*Pronunciation of the phoneme /y/ as initial sound*

Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

Regarding the graph above, the results gotten show that 87% of the students pronounced correctly the phoneme /y/ as initial sound. It is revealed that a smaller part of 13% of the students mispronounced it. This resultant also evidences a clear improvement during the process.

Graph 21

Pronunciation of the phoneme /s/ as initial sound, followed by a consonant

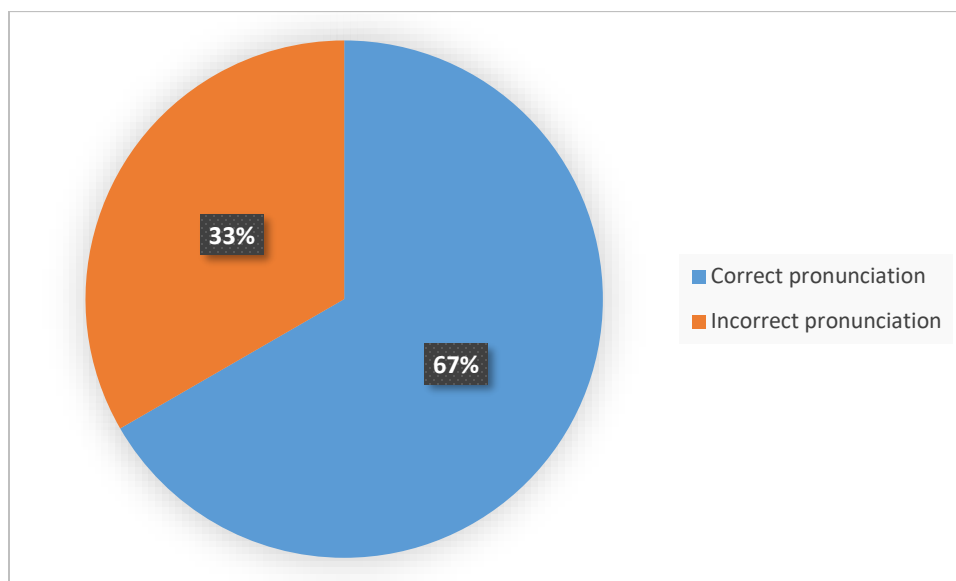


Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

According to the graph 17, it is revealed that 80% of the students pronounced correctly the phoneme /s/ as initial sound when followed by a consonant, and a minor percentage of 20% of them mispronounced it. It is also noticed a big change when the graph is compared to the pretest results.

Graph 22

Pronunciation, stress and intonation when reading Questions

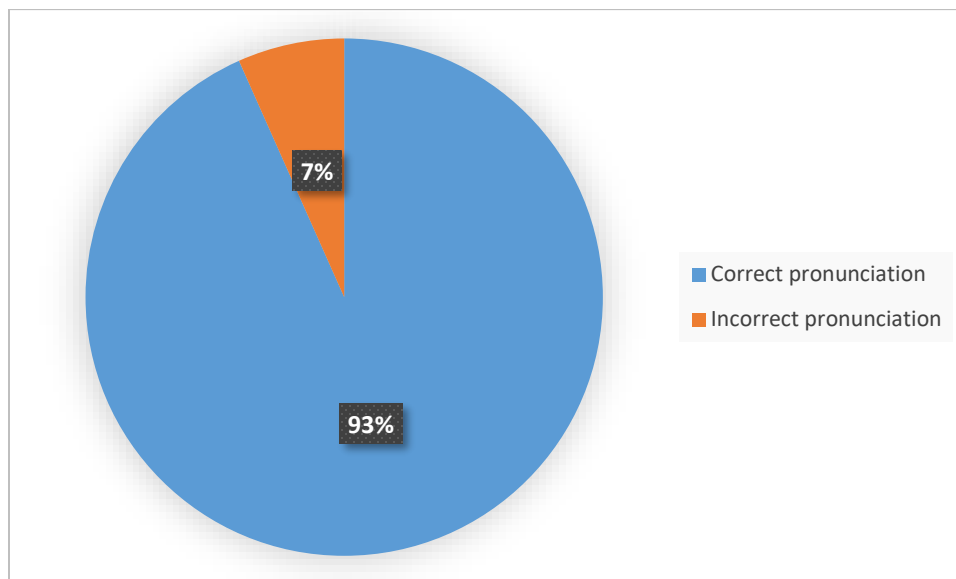


Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

Regarding to the graph previously presented, it is shown that there is a marked improvement from the first results obtained and the post test results, due to the fact that 67% of the students pronounced, stressed or intonated correctly while reading questions, and a 33% of them did not do it. The previous graph (8) showed that only 1 out of 15 students were capable of doing it correctly. The change is evident.

Graph 23

*Pronunciation, stress and intonation when reading **Declarative sentences***

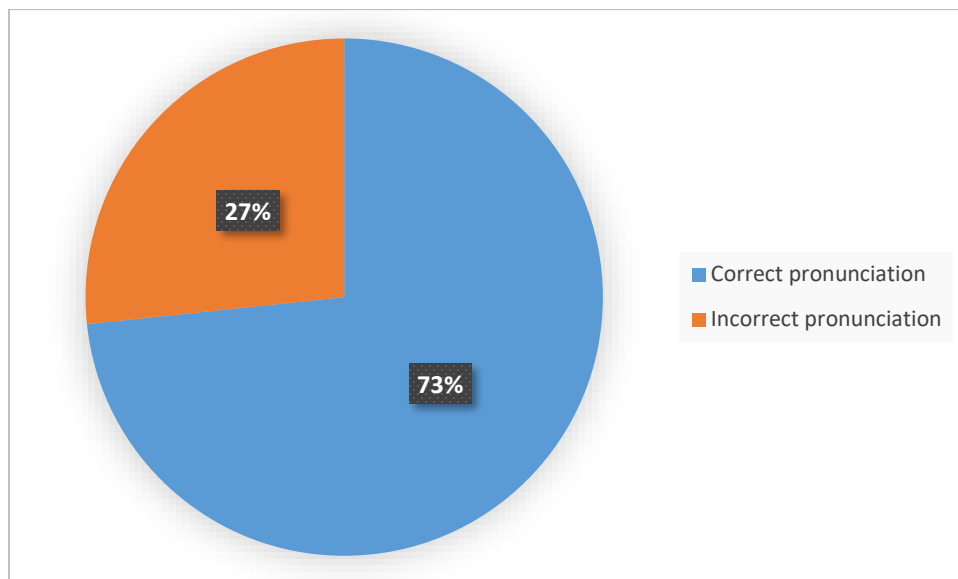


Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

Regarding graph 19, it shows the results of how students pronounced, stressed, and intonated while reading declarative sentences. It can be interpreted that 93% of the students did it correctly, and only 7% of the participants did it incorrectly. In this case and compared to the pretest graph (9) the results are exactly the same.

Graph 24

*Pronunciation, stress and intonation when reading **Exclamatory sentences***



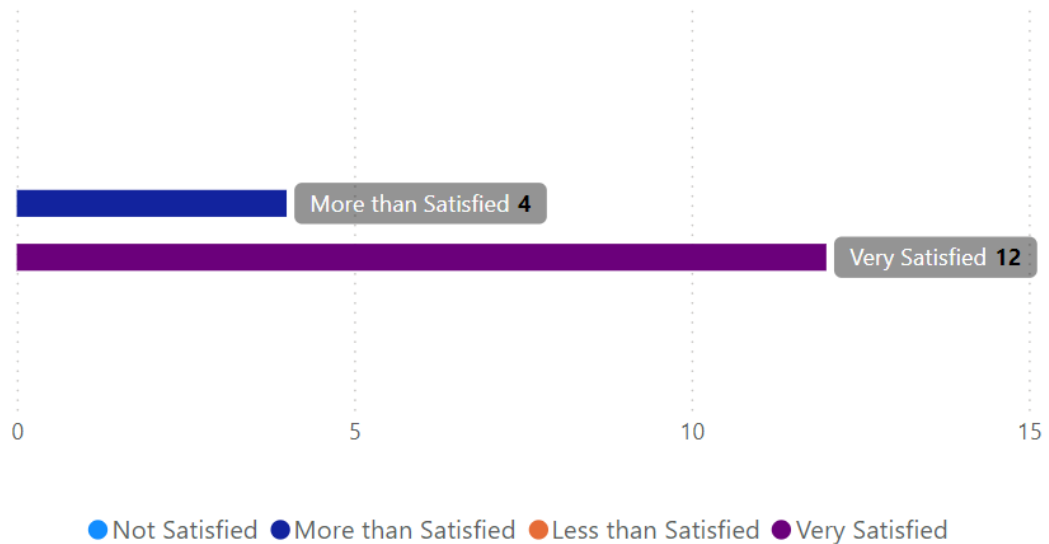
Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

According to graph the graph above, it is revealed that 73% of the students pronounced, stressed, and intonated correctly while reading exclamatory sentences, while 27% of them did it incorrectly. This evidence a substantial progress compared to the results gotten in the pretest, where most of the population showed inaccurate pronunciation, stress, and intonation in this particular type of sentence.

4.1.5 Survey (Questionnaire III)

Graph 25

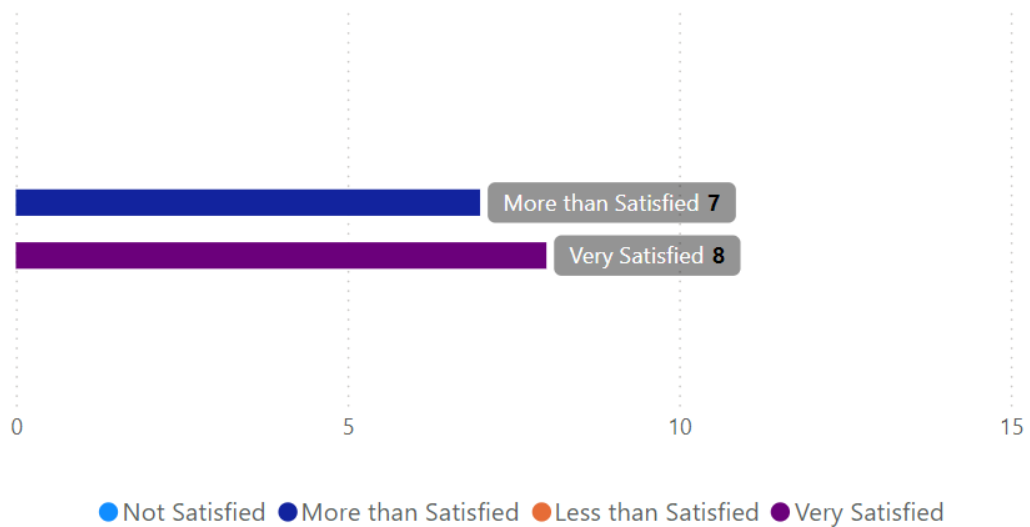
I would like my teacher to use more often the tool Speech Solutions, and to have activities like the ones previously applied to improve the English accent during the English lessons.



Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

Graph 26

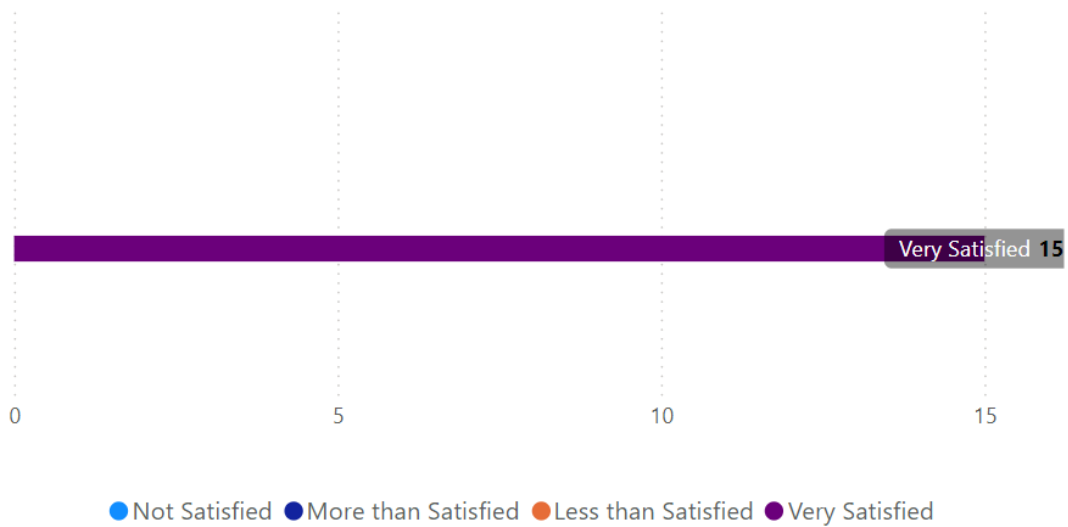
It was easier to communicate in English with my teacher and classmates after the application of the different activities to improve the accent and the usage of the software Speech Solutions.



Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

Graph 27

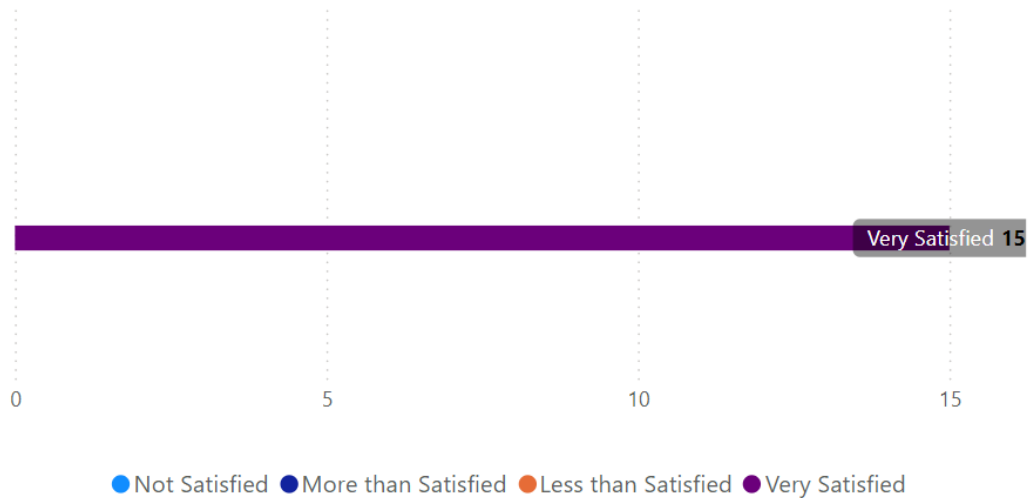
My pronunciation improved after the software Speech Solutions was applied during the English lessons.



Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

Graph 28

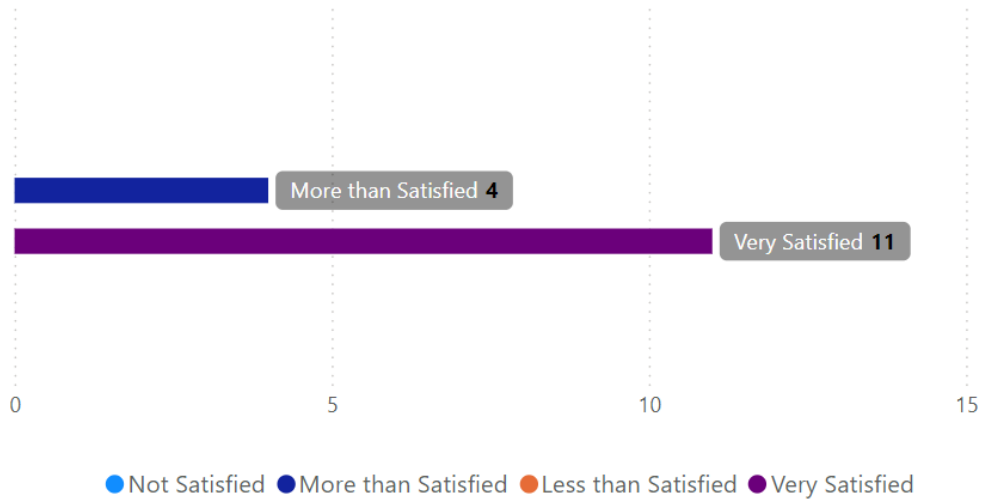
My spelling improved after the software Speech Solutions was applied during the English lessons.



Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

Graph 29

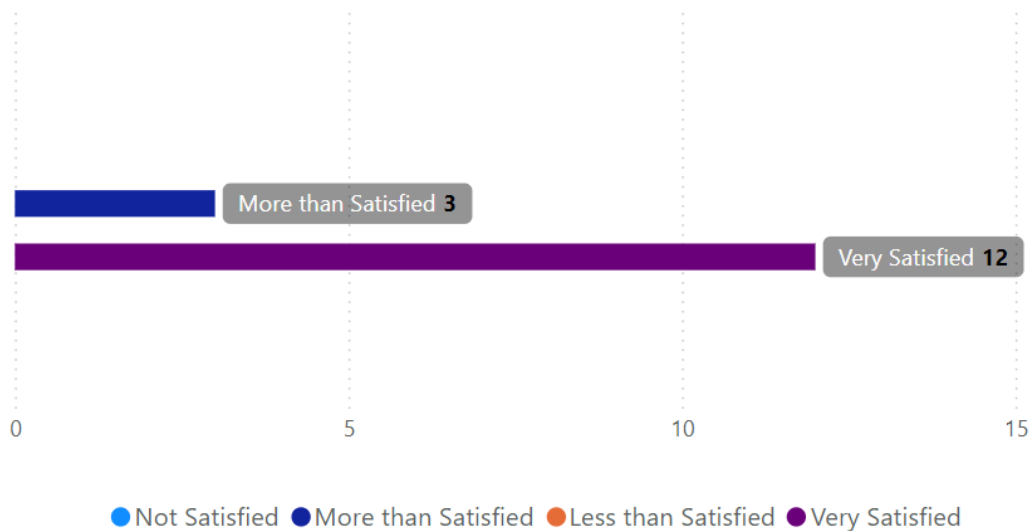
Practicing the different phonemes in advance by using the software Speech Solutions made me feel more confident while pronouncing the words.



Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

Graph 30

The different activities applied in class helped me improved my English accent (stress, intonation and rhythm).



Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

The previous graphs presented show the results obtained in the survey. In this questionnaire, students chose among five options according to their level of satisfaction regarding each statement. The purpose was to collect the students' opinion after the tool *Speech Solutions*, and other activities to improve accent (stress, rhythm, intonation) were implemented, where **5** means the highest score "very satisfied" and **1** means the lowest one "not satisfied", based on their personal experience and opinion.

The first statement shows information regarding if students consider that their pronunciation improved after the software *Speech solutions* was applied during the English lessons; in this case, 100% of the students marked on the score **5**. This shows that students firmly agree that this tool helped them improve their pronunciation.

The second statement asked students to tell if they consider that different activities applied in class helped them improve their English accent (stress, intonation and rhythm). Concerning this statement, 12 out of 15 students marked on the score **5**, and 3 out of 15 of them marked on the score **4**. With this information students convey that the activities applied brought a substantial improvement to this area.

The third statement inquires students if practicing the different phonemes in advance by using the software *Speech Solutions* made them feel more confident while pronouncing the words. On this occasion, 27% of the students marked on score **4**, and 73% of them marked on option **5**; they both have high scores, which means that they strongly believe they acquired more confidence in themselves regarding pronunciation after that.

The fourth statement interrogated students whether it was easier to communicate in English with their teacher and classmates after the application of the different activities to improve the accent, and the usage of the software *Speech Solutions*. Concerning this statement, 53% of the participants marked by the score **5**, and 47% of them marked on the score **4**. This shows that they experienced a refinement in their communication skills after they were exposed to the software and the different activities applied.

Then, the fifth statement questioned students whether they feel their spelling improved after the software *Speech Solutions* was applied during the English lessons. At this point, 100% of the students marked on the highest score (**5**). This shows that all of them achieved better spelling skills after the implementation of the software.

Lastly, the sixth statement examined if students would like their teacher to use more often the tool *Speech Solutions*, and to have activities like the ones previously applied to improve the English accent during the English lessons. In this way, 3 out of 15 students marked on the score **4**, while 12 out of 15 marked on the score **5**. This evidently shows that the students would like to use these tools more often to continue improving their speaking skill.

As a conclusion, the results of the survey are very positive in a general way, showing that the students mentioned they improved their speaking skills after being exposed to the implementation of the software *Speech Solutions* and the activities to improve their accent. Their confidence increased exponentially, which brought students to participate more and to feel more assured of their contributions during the lessons.

4.1.6 Journal (Observation)

Along with the investigation project, the researcher applied an observation instrument to record the students' progress during the implementation of the software Speech Solutions and the different activities to improve accent. At first, it was observed that most of the students seemed to be nervous and not sure of the pronunciation of certain phonemes, and that also most of them struggled with stress, rhythm and intonation. Some of the students even lowered their voices while reading the sentences, showing their hesitancy and shame. Later on, as days passed, and students were introduced to the software, they started to show more confidence, due to the fact that the software showed them how to move their mouth to produce the sounds, providing a front and side view of it. Students enjoyed repeating words and imitating the correct sounds of the different phonemes, although sometimes it was necessary to stop and review the phonemes.

Regarding the activities to improve the English accent, it was easier for students to stress, intonate, and rhyme the words correctly when they had bold words in the sentences. After implementing few activities, students began to feel more comfortable and they expressed they enjoyed practicing accent, also, they became more participative in class.

It is important to mention that students showed more difficulty while pronouncing words with the phoneme **-ed**, due to the three pronunciations it has. Even though the rules for pronouncing this phoneme were reviewed several times, students struggled in mastering them. Nevertheless, with more time to practice, students would have mastered this phoneme as they did with the previous ones.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

In this chapter, the conclusions of the research are explained and presented based on the theory, the different instruments applied, and the result analysis of each. The main purpose of this part is to conclude the benefits of implementing English native accent and pronunciation patterns as a tool in improving English standard pronunciation learning.

At this point, it is necessary to answer the question of the investigation to find out the purpose of the investigation. The question was: What are the benefits of implementing English native accent and pronunciation patterns as a tool in improving English standard pronunciation learning in students from fourth grade at Eco Centro Braulio Carrillo School in San Jerónimo, Moravia, San José, during the III Quarter, 2024?

Based on the theory consulted for this research, it is important to mention that the Costa Rican native Spanish causes students to have transfers and interferences while learning English as a foreign language. In this aspect students bring automatic transfer due to habit, or the structure of the L1 on the L2; this also happens because they bring the norms of the mother tongue to the L2 as a result of their familiarity with the L1, using the L1 knowledge to process the L2 language. Moreover, it is crucial to clarify that transfers can be positive or negative. Positive transfers happen when a pattern in the mother tongue is identical to a pattern in the second language, which makes learning easier. Negative transfers happen when a pattern in the first language is different from the pattern in the target language, which causes misunderstanding and/or mispronunciation. On the other hand, in the case of the interferences, they affect the foreign language's accent, intonation, and rhythm. Part of this investigation focuses on the phonetics interferences, which

depend on the language dominance (Spanish), being the foreign language (English) the affected one.

Moreover, according to the specific objectives, each of them is answered by the application and conclusion of the obtained results in Chapter IV.

- a) Regarding the first specific objective, which was “To determine how the Costa Rican native accent and pronunciation influences the learning process of an English standard pronunciation”, it was developed in the first and the third instruments: Questionnaire I – Pretest, and Questionnaire II Post Test, used in this investigation. The first instrument showed negative results, due to the fact that students did not master most of the phonemes presented. Also, they did not know how to stress and intonate sentences correctly in order to provide an accurate rhythm close to the English standard accent. The second instrument showed positive results, the students improved their pronunciation and accent (stress, rhythm and intonation) after being exposed to the software Speech Solutions, and activities implemented to enhance their English accent. It can be concluded that, with the execution of these tools, students could improve their speaking skill.

- b) According to the second objective “To identify the limitations of the Costa Rican accent and pronunciation while learning the English pronunciation”, in this instrument, teachers expressed their opinion based on certain statements presented about how the Costa Rican native Spanish accent and pronunciation influence while learning the English standard pronunciation through a Likert

scale. In this case, the results gathered showed that although teachers do not think that speaking is the hardest skill for students to develop, they agree that the native Costa Rican Spanish influence significantly in the learning process of the English standard pronunciation, and that students usually pronounce and accent English words or sentences as they do it in Spanish. In addition, they expressed that there is an impact or certain limitations in the learning process of the English standard pronunciation caused by the phonemes that do not exist in Spanish, while they do exist in English. In conclusion, the transfers and interferences of the mother tongue on the foreign language evidently affect its learning process and bring limitations for the development of the students.

- c) The third objective said, “To identify techniques that could be implemented in order to improve the English pronunciation in students”, it was developed through two instruments: Questionnaire III (survey) and an observation instrument (journal). The first instrument showed positive results. It was carried out after the researcher presented and used the software Speech Solutions in the class during twelve lessons. Students expressed their pronunciation improved, as well as their English accent. They also pointed out to the fact that their confidence increased, and that they would like the teacher to use tools like this more often. Overall, this evidence shows that students are open to experiment with new tools, and that they caused good impact on them. Regarding the observation instrument (journal), it was revealed that after applying the software and the different activities, students improved not only their pronunciation and accent, as mentioned before, but also their self-assurance

while communicating. The results also conclude that although they experienced and showed great progress, these techniques have to be applied as an everyday process for students to be proficient and to get better outcomes.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the results analysis of this investigation, some recommendations are included for future research. The objective is to present solutions to actions displayed in this study.

- a) It is recommended to identify the possible transfers and interferences that students bring from their mother tongue to the foreign language, and make students be aware of their limitations and the expectations.
- b) It is important to include activities and tools that help students improve their pronunciation, specifically the phonemes that they have to learn and imitate from the English language that do not exist in our native Costa Rican Spanish, as well as activities to aid students develop an English standard accent, focusing on stress, intonation, and rhythm. The techniques must be varied and implemented during the school year to obtain better results and notice significant progress.
- c) Ensure that the classes are equipped with the necessary technological resources you need to use software to work on pronunciation and accent. This includes a desktop computer, speakers, and internet connectivity, and updated pronunciation software licenses.

- d) English teachers should record the students' progress in a journal, in order to identify strengths and weaknesses, and to determine if it is necessary to review a specific phoneme or accent feature and reapply the techniques needed to master it.
- e) For future researchers it is recommended to analyze the features regarding their own local pronunciation and accent, due to the fact that even though in many countries Spanish is spoken as the native language, it varies from region to region, and each country has its own interferences and transfers according to its culture, historical context, and international influence.
- f) Since the investigation was carried out with students from a private school that already had an appropriate English level, it is recommended to analyze the time it would take to apply these activities and tools with students who have a lower level of knowledge of the English language, or who show lower communication skills in the language, since time could vary.
- g) Promote a culture of continuous improvement, allowing students to regularly complete self-assessment rubrics in order to motivate them to continue learning and participating.

CHAPTER VI: PROPOSAL

6.1 Name of the Proposal

For the proposal of this investigation, the title assigned is “Improving the English Accent and Pronunciation Through Innovative Resources”. This project encloses the implications during the research “The Benefits of Implementing English Native Accent and Pronunciation Patterns as a Tool in Improving English Standard Pronunciation Learning in Students from Fourth Grade at Eco Centro Braulio Carrillo School in San Jerónimo, Moravia, San José, During the III Quarter, 2024.”

6.2 Description

The proposal consists of developing a project with the fourth-grade students using the software Speech Solutions and implementing different activities to improve the English accent. The length of the project is 14 lessons of the English class.

The project will consist of a comparison on the way students pronounce and accent in English compared to how they do it after applying the software Speech Solutions and the activities to improve the accent. A pre-test and post-test can be applied in order to record the progress and contrast the results.

6.3 Place to be developed

It is important to clarify that the proposal is designed to be applied in any elementary school. In this case, it will be applied in San Jerónimo, Moravia at Eco Centro Braulio Carrillo School. The population is the fourth graders since they have

an appropriate English level. The institution has the technological resources recommended in this study.

6.4 Organization

Eco Centro Braulio Carrillo School is an institution which is looking to improve its bilingual programs. The institution compromises to apply the proposal project during the next school year.

6.5 Involved Population

The population for this project is the fourth-grade students. This school has only one group at this level, but it is more than enough to develop the proposal. The group has approximately 15 students. The project will be carried out during the school year 2025.

6.6 Objectives of the Proposal

6.6.1 General Objective

To demonstrate the benefits of implementing native accent and pronunciation tools with fourth grade students.

6.6.2 Specific Objectives

- a) To apply the software Speech Solutions during the English class to improve pronunciation.

- b) To apply activities to improve the English standard accent (stress, intonation and rhythm).
- c) To analyze the effectiveness of using these tools and techniques in the progress of the students.

6.7 Chronogram of Activities

Lessons	Activity/Schedule
1 & 2	Apply the pretest. Practice the phoneme / th / using the software <i>Speech Solutions</i> . Practice accent (stress, rhythm and intonation) by reading sentences with bold letters.
3 & 4	Practice the phoneme / v / using the software <i>Speech Solutions</i> . Practice accent (stress, rhythm and intonation) by reading tongue twisters.
5 & 6	Practice the phoneme initial / s / using the software <i>Speech Solutions</i> . Practice accent (stress, rhythm and intonation) by reading a dialogue in pairs.
7 & 8	Practice the phonemes initial / y / using the software <i>Speech Solutions</i> . Practice accent (stress, rhythm and intonation) by using listening-and-repeating exercises.
9 & 10	Practice the phonemes / z / using the software <i>Speech Solutions</i> . Practice accent (stress, rhythm and intonation) by singing two songs.
11 & 12	Practice the phonemes / -ed / using the software <i>Speech Solutions</i> . Practice accent (stress, rhythm and intonation) by reading a short story in groups.

13 & 14	<p>General review: practice the phonemes previously studied.</p> <p>Apply for the post test.</p>
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Source: Developed by María José Castillo Jiménez (2024)

6.8 Budget for its implementation

For the implementation of the project, there is no budget. Money is not taken into consideration.

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Señorita [Video] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dFp_b5DPIIo

[Seven Clouds] (2020) 0:00 / 3:19 • The Weeknd Blinding Lights (Lyrics) [Video]

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XwxLwG2_Sxk

[Fine English for Anyone] (2021) 0:00 / 12:41 • Listen and Repeat Practice | Speak English

Like a Native Speaker [Video] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3QjtKPVTq10>

Annexes

Annex 1

Pretest – Questionnaire I

The purpose of this pretest is to determine the way in which students pronounce the words and different phonemes that form each of them; and also, the accent (intonation, stress, rhythm) while reading each of the sentences aloud. The information gathered will be useful for educational purposes. The researcher will evaluate the students one by one as they participate in the pretest.

Part I. Say the following words aloud.

Word	Correct pronunciation	Incorrect pronunciation
1. think		
2. this		
3. quiz		
4. zebra		
5. vest		
6. seven		
7. stopped		
8. lived		
9. printed		

10. your		
11. yellow		
12. school		
13. smile		

Part II. Read the following sentences aloud.

Word	Correct pronunciation, stress and intonation	Incorrect pronunciation, stress and intonation
1. Didn't you hear the loud music all night?		
2. The present was opened.		
3. Sorry Mindy, I have to leave the class, NOW!		
4. Keep a record of your investments.		
5. Can you address this letter to Mr. González?		
6. I have good plans for tonight, eating pizza and dancing all night!		

Annex 2

Likert Scale

The purpose of this Likert Scale is to know the opinion of the English teachers from the school about how the Costa Rican native Spanish accent and pronunciation influence while learning the English standard pronunciation. The information will be used for educational purposes. The answers will be anonymous and confidential. Your collaboration is appreciated.

Read the items. Select one answer for each of them.

Item	Disagree	Somehow disagree	Don't agree either disagree	Partially agree	Agree
Speaking is the hardest skill for students to develop in English.					
Speaking is the most challenging element to teach to students due the lack of accurate techniques to implement in class.					
The native Costa Rican Spanish influence significantly in the learning process of the English standard pronunciation.					
Students usually pronounce and accent English words or sentences as they do it in Spanish.					
The lack of several phonemes that exist in English and not in Spanish limits students to develop a correct English standard pronunciation.					

Annex 3

Post Test – Questionnaire II

The purpose of this post test is to determine whether the students improved their accent and pronunciation after applying the tool Speech Solutions Software and other activities proposed. The information will be useful for educational purposes. The researcher will evaluate the students one by one as they participate in the post test.

Part I. Say the following words aloud.

Word	Correct pronunciation	Incorrect pronunciation
1. then		
2. thanksgiving		
3. lizard		
4. zebra		
5. river		
6. vest		
7. stopped		
8. loved		
9. wanted		
10. young		
11. yarn		
12. start		

13. school		
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Part II. Read the following sentences aloud.

Word	Correct pronunciation, stress and intonation	Incorrect pronunciation, stress and intonation
1. Is the letter in this envelope?		
2. The student will present a speech.		
3. Hurry up! Send the survey now!		
4. Please record her speech.		
5. Did you get her address?		
6. It was a great concert!		

Annex 4

Questionnaire III – Survey

The purpose of this questionnaire is to know the students' opinion after the software *Speech Solutions* was applied in order to improve their accent and pronunciation. The information will be useful for educational purposes. The information will be used for educational purposes. The answers will be anonymous and confidential. Your collaboration is appreciated.

Read the items. Select one answer for each of them according to the scale, where **5** means the highest score and **1** means the lowest one, based on your personal experience and opinion.

Item	1 Not satisfied	2 Less than satisfied	3 Satisfied	4 More than satisfied	5 Very satisfied
My pronunciation improved after the software <i>Speech Solutions</i> was applied during the English lessons.					
The different activities applied in class helped me improved my English accent (stress, intonation and rhythm).					
Practicing the different phonemes in advance by using the software <i>Speech Solutions</i> made me feel more confident while pronouncing the words.					
It was easier to communicate in English with my teacher and classmates after the application of the different activities to improve the accent and the usage of the software <i>Speech Solutions</i> .					

My spelling improved after the software <i>Speech Solutions</i> was applied during the English lessons.					
I would like my teacher to use more often the tool <i>Speech Solutions</i> , and to have activities like the ones previously applied to improve the English accent during the English lessons.					

Annex 5

Journal – Observation

The purpose of this journal is to record the activities applied during the investigation for this study. It is also going to be useful for determining whether students improved their accent and pronunciation after the software *Speech Solutions* was applied during the English lessons and how they reacted to the use of this tool and other activities implemented.

Date:	Time:	Activity implemented:	Observations:
November 6 th , 2024	80 minutes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students read a list of words with phonemes specified in this project, and some sentences. 2. Introduction to the tool Speech Solutions Software 	<p>Teacher monitors students' pronunciation, accent, stress, rhythm and intonation while students read words and sentences. Teacher notices that some students seem to be nervous or not sure of the pronunciation of certain phonemes. Most of the students struggle in stress, rhythm and intonation. They read the sentences the same no matter if they are declarative, questions, or exclamatory. Some students lower their voices while reading the sentences because they were not sure of their pronunciation and accent.</p>
November 7 th , 2024	80 minutes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Practicing the pronunciation of the phonemes th / v / initial y using Speech Solutions. 2. Activity “reading sentences with bold words” to practice accent (stress, rhythm & intonation) 	<p>At the beginning most of the students pronounced the voiceless th as /t/ and the voiced th as /d/. After practicing how to articulate correctly each phoneme, they started to pronounce accurately each word. Also, a great percentage of the students pronounced the v phoneme as /b/, and the y phoneme as /j/. The students were amazed with the digital tool because they realized how to</p>

			<p>articulate and move their mouth to make the correct sounds.</p> <p>The same happened with the second activity, students said it was easier to read and stress on the correct words by having the bold words.</p>
November 11 th , 2024	80 minutes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Practicing the pronunciation of the phoneme initial s/ th/ v/ y using Speech Solutions. 2. Activity “Reading tongue twisters” to practice accent (stress, rhythm & intonation) 	<p>This day students felt more comfortable while reading some words with the phonemes previously studied.</p> <p>They had fun reading tongue twisters, it was difficult for most of them.</p>
November 13 th , 2024	80 minutes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Practicing the pronunciation of the phonemes z, initial s/ th/ v/ y using Speech Solutions. 2. Activity “Reading a dialogue in pairs” to practice accent (stress, rhythm & intonation) 	<p>During this lesson students enjoyed reading words with the z phoneme. Before that they practiced the sound bees make.</p> <p>Students were a bit more confident while reading the dialogue in pairs (and one trio). Teacher was monitoring their accent and reminding them of the clues to stress and intonate as it was previously learned.</p>
November 14 th , 2024	80 minutes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Practicing the pronunciation of the phonemes b-v, z, initial s/ th/ v/ y using Speech Solutions. 2. Activity “Listening and repeating” (Speech Solutions) to practice accent (stress, rhythm & intonation) 	<p>Students were very participative in this class. They liked to listen and repeat. Sometimes teacher had to replay the audios until students achieved the goal. Some of the exercises were about listening discrimination, they had to identify the word that completed each sentence.</p>
November 18 th , 2024	80 minutes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Practicing the pronunciation of the phonemes -ed using Speech Solutions. 	<p>This day students practiced a lot how to pronounce the -ed phoneme, they struggled in most of the words. It was necessary to review the rules for the correct pronunciation several times.</p>

		2. Activity “ singing ” to practice accent (stress, rhythm & intonation)	It was hard for students to identify which of the 3 sounds they had to pronounce. They need to keep practicing. On the other hand, they enjoyed singing songs most of them already knew. The lyrics for each song were provided. Songs: 1. “Blinding Lights” (The Weekend) 2. “Señorita” (Camila Cabello)
November 20 th , 2024	80 minutes	1. Practicing the pronunciation of the phonemes studied (general review) using Speech Solutions. 2. Activity “ Reading a short story in groups ” to practice accent (stress, rhythm & intonation)	Students seemed to be more confident while pronouncing the words and reading the story. They expressed they improved their pronunciation.
November 21 st , 2024	80 minutes	1. Application of the Post Test. 2. Application of the Survey.	During the post-test students were confident and trusted more themselves because of what they have learned.

Annex 6

Activities implemented to improve accent.

#1- Reading sentences with bold words following the stress pattern.



Listen and repeat the sentences. Carefully pronounce the stress pattern differences between the boldfaced words in each sentence.

1. Please **recórd** the **récord**.
2. Please don't **desért** me in the **désert**.
3. We **projéct** that the **próject** will be good.
4. The sheik was **fifty** with **fifteén** wives!
5. His hairline began **recéding** **récently**.
6. The teacher was **contént** with the **cóntent** of the report.
7. He **objéct**s to the ugly **óbject**s.
8. I **mistrúst** **Míster** Smith.
9. She will **présent** you with a **présent**.
10. He will **contést** the results of the **cóntest**.

Taken from: Dale, P. and Poms, L. English Pronunciation Made Simple. Pearson Education Inc. 2005.

#2- Tongue twisters.

The thirty-three thieves thought that they thrilled the throne throughout Thursday.

How many yaks could a yak pack, pack if a yak pack could pack yaks?

Sue the sushi chef sued Sue the sous chef. So Sue the sous chef soon sued Sue the sushi chef. She sued so she should share her sushi.?

Taken from: <https://www.splashlearn.com/blog/best-tongue-twisters-for-kids/>

#3- Reading a dialogue



Listen to the dialogue. Pay careful attention to the sentence stress patterns used.

John: Anna, who was on the **phone**?

Anna: My old friend **Mary**.

John: **Mary Jones**?

Anna: **No. Mary Hall**.

John: I don't know **Mary Hall**. Where is she **from**?

Anna: She's from **Washington**.

John: Washington the **state** or Washington the **city**?

Anna: Washington, **D.C.**, our nation's **capital**.

John: Is that where she **lives**?

Anna: Yes, she still lives in the white **house**.

John: The **White House**? With the **president**?

Anna: No, **silly**. The white **house** on **First Street**.

John: What did she **want**?

Anna: She wants to **come** here.

John: Come **here**? **When**?

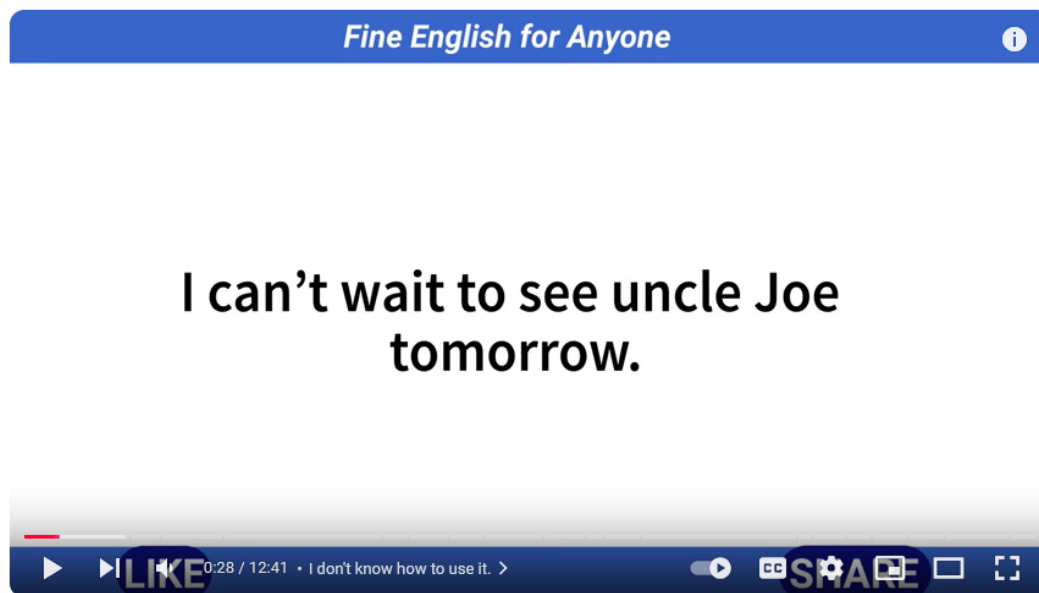
Anna: In a **week**. She's bringing her black **bird**, her **collie**, her **snakes**, her . . .

John: **Stop!** She's bringing a **zoo** to **our** house?

Anna: **No**, John. She's opening a **pet** store here in **town**.

Taken from: Dale, P. and Poms, L. English Pronunciation Made Simple. Pearson Education Inc. 2005.

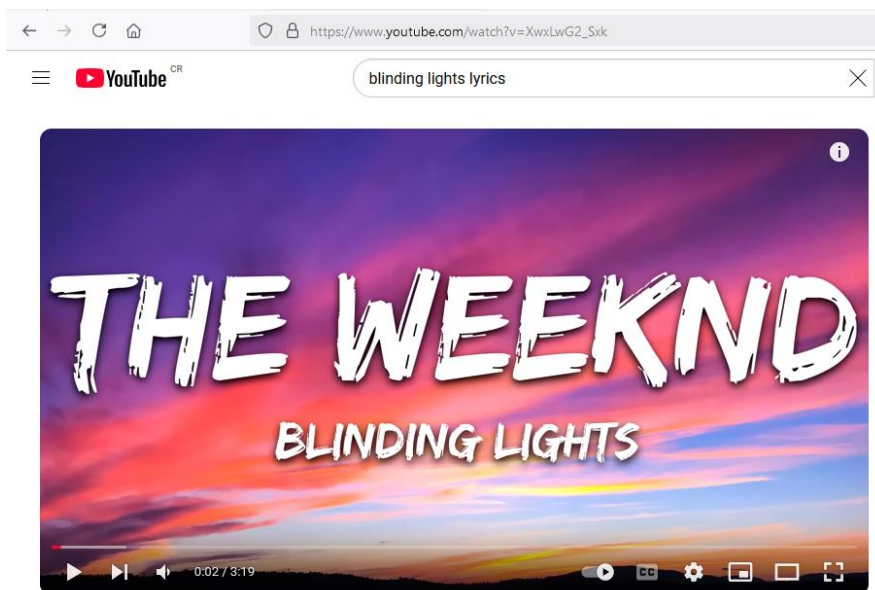
#4- Listening and repeating



Listen And Repeat Practice | Speak English Like A Native Speaker

Taken from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3QjtKPVTq10>

#4- Singing



The Weeknd - Blinding Lights (Lyrics)



Taken from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dFp_b5DPiIo

#5- Short story

There was a time when all the animals lived together as friends. One day they decided to have a meeting to elect a king.

READING COMPREHENSION FOR GRADE 4, 5 & 6 | PRACTICE READING THROUGH STORIES | STORIES WITH QUESTIONS

Taken from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cW3ac7rUIkM>

Annex 7

Speech Solutions software images

Lessons Exercises **SPEECH SOLUTIONS**

y

Side View Front View

Air Flow Legend

- Full Sound
- Released Sound
- Obstructed Sound
- Voice Box Not Used
- Voice Box Used

Click on the Help button for more detailed information on these symbols.

Side View Legend

Lessons Exercises **SPEECH SOLUTIONS**

iy

Front View

Vowel sounds			Consonant sounds		
1 iy	beat	19 p	pack	37 h	hack
2 I	bit	20 b	back	38 dʒ	jump
3 ey	bat	21 t	bank	39 tʃ	chum
4 E	bat	22 d	dad	40 ð	that
5 æ	bat	23 k	cap	41 θ	thank
6 ə	bat	24 g	gas		
7 u ^w	pool	25 m	man	Cluster sounds	
8 U	book	26 n	new	42 ər	three
9 o ^w	boat	27 ŋ	hang	43 kw	quack
10 ɔ	pot	28 f	fat	44 sp	spend
11 ay	bite	29 v	vest	45 sk	sky
12 oy	ball	30 l	love	46 st	nest
13 a ^w	plow	31 r	run	47 ld	mold
14 y	yam	32 w	win	48 lt	belt
15 ər	work	33 z	zoo	49 fs	laughs
16 ɔr	storm	34 s	sat	50 ks	masks
17 ar	hard	35 ʒ	pleasure	51 ts	lasts
18 ir	fear	36 s	shin	52 nz	hands

Air Flow Legend

- Full Sound
- Released Sound
- Obstructed Sound
- Voice Box Not Used
- Voice Box Used

Click on the Help button for more detailed information on these symbols.

Side View Legend

Lessons Exercises SPEECH SOLUTIONS

Sample words

their other breathe
 this whether smooth
 they either clothe
 those rather bathe
 then loathes seethe

Lessons Exercises SPEECH SOLUTIONS

Listening Discrimination

Sample words
 Comparative words
 Listening Discrimination
 Sentences



Do y /zipper?
 Are the it?
 I can see the baby is teasing/teething.
 After the accident, they soothed/sued him.
 The jockey was writhing/riding with his broken leg.

✓ Correct Choose which of the highlighted words the instructor says by clicking on it.
 ✗ Incorrect

Reset

Lessons Exercises SPEECH SOLUTIONS

Listening Discrimination

- The crowd seemed to be **faceless**/**faithless**.
- She just watched your **mouth**/**mouse** moving.
-  The birth/bird was interesting to watch.
-  Her health/help was important to us.
-  There were too many deaths/debts for the country to handle.

Correct Choose which of the highlighted words the instructor says by clicking on it.
 Incorrect

Reset

Annex 8

Photos

During the investigation some photos were taken for recording the students' progress.





