

Examining English pronunciation instruction in Galician Secondary Education textbooks

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Received: 2025-01-08 / Accepted: 2025-05-18

<https://doi.org/10.30827/portalin.vi45.32491>

Porta Linguarum ISSN paper edition: 1697-7467, ISSN digital edition: 2695-8244

ABSTRACT: The emphasis placed on English pronunciation instruction has varied with each new teaching methodology. Currently, it is receiving growing attention in the English as a Foreign Language classroom. Nevertheless, there is a lack of regulation in teaching this skill, and teachers may rely solely on the textbooks used in class for guidance. This raises the question of whether EFL textbooks provide the necessary materials for teaching English pronunciation. Nowadays, this is especially relevant in the region of Galicia (Spain), where notions of English phonetics are being assessed in the university entrance exam. The present research aims to discover whether coursebooks utilized in secondary high schools in Galicia offer an adequate source of pronunciation instruction. For this reason, 24 textbooks from both obligatory and post-obligatory secondary education are analysed in terms of the presence of pronunciation activities, their integration with the rest of contents, the elements covered, and the type of exercises featured. The findings suggest that there is still a lack of consistency among books, a prevalence of segmental instruction over suprasegmental, and a preference for listen-and-repeat activities over other types of tasks.

Keywords: EFL, analysis of textbooks, secondary education, pronunciation instruction.

La enseñanza de la pronunciación del inglés en Galicia: un análisis de libros de Enseñanza Secundaria

RESUMEN: La importancia dada a la enseñanza de la pronunciación del inglés ha fluctuado con cada nueva metodología de enseñanza. En la actualidad, se le está prestando más atención en el aula de inglés como lengua extranjera. Sin embargo, falta regulación respecto a la enseñanza de esta habilidad, y el profesorado puede recurrir al manual utilizado en el aula como única guía. La pregunta es, pues, si los manuales de inglés como lengua extranjera proporcionan los materiales suficientes para enseñar pronunciación del inglés. A día de hoy, esto es especialmente relevante en la región de Galicia (España), donde se evalúan nociones de fonética inglesa en el examen de acceso a la Universidad. El objetivo del presente estudio es determinar si los manuales utilizados en las escuelas de educación secundaria de Galicia son una fuente adecuada para la instrucción de la pronunciación. Para ello, se analizará la presencia de actividades de pronunciación, su integración con el resto de contenidos, los elementos que se tratan y el tipo de ejercicios incluidos en 24 manuales tanto de educación secundaria obligatoria como post-obligatoria. Los resultados muestran falta de consistencia entre libros, la prevalencia de la instrucción segmental sobre la suprasegmental, y la preferencia de actividades de escucha-y-repite.

Palabras clave: inglés como lengua extranjera, manuales, educación secundaria, enseñanza de la pronunciación.

1. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The importance of the pronunciation of a foreign language (FL) or a second language (L2) has been increasingly highlighted as one of the issues in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) (Levis, 2005). In the last decades, there has been a growth in the amount of research focused on the difficulties underlying the acquisition of a foreign phonology, and how these struggles can be overcome (see Pennington, 2021). However, it has been claimed that the teaching of pronunciation in the English as a Foreign Language (henceforth EFL) classroom is still a neglected area (Ketabi & Saeb, 2015; Pennington, 2021). Some scholars have argued that this disregard emerges from a lack of confidence from teachers which, at the same time, arises from the scarcity of regulations and adequate teaching materials.

The main objective of this study is, thus, to analyse the English pronunciation exercises in textbooks addressed to the EFL classroom in obligatory and post-obligatory secondary education in Galicia (Spain). This examination aims to identify the features present in the five most commonly used coursebook series, how these features are presented and overall, if there is a consistency across different textbook series and academic years. The results of this analysis have significant teaching implications, as the lack of guidelines and inconsistent materials further hinder the already challenging task of teaching pronunciation.

1.1. Pronunciation and English teaching

Age has always been a central point in the literature of SLA studies. Some scholars, like Long (2007), have claimed that achieving a native-like command of an L2/FL is not possible after a certain maturational age. In contrast, there are other researchers who have argued that this limitation is only related to specific language areas, such as the development of phonetics/phonology (Scovel, 1988).

The idea that age is closely linked to the acquisition of L2/FL phonology is biologically grounded. At birth, humans possess the ability to discriminate between the phonologies of different languages (Kuhl et al., 2008). Over time, the native phonetic input they are exposed to creates a repertoire of mental phonological categories (Leather, 1999) which becomes, to some extent, fixed in the brain. In his plenary talk at the AESLA conference in 2019, Fennell (UVa Online, 2019) explained that infants begin to attune to their L1 vowels at around six months of age, and to their consonants at around 12 months. Once these phonological categories are formed, non-native phonemes are no longer discriminated against native phonemes; therefore, the brain filters these foreign sounds and accepts them as exemplars of the closest native phonetic category (Best & Tyler, 2007; Flege, 1995; Kuhl et al., 2008). Several models and theories have focused on describing how these categories behave when foreign phonemes are involved, and there is consensus that the perception of an FL directly affects the production of that language. In other words, if a speaker is unable to differentiate foreign phonemes from their native phonemes, it is highly likely that they will struggle to produce that difference (see Best & Tyler, 2007; Flege, 1995; Kuhl et al., 2008).

1.1.1. Pronunciation difficulties for Galician/Spanish speakers of EFL

In the case of Galician/Spanish L1 speakers learning English as an FL, this difficulty to perceive and differentiate the phonemes of the English language is magnified by the tight relationship that exists between graphemes and phonemes in Galician/Spanish. The English language has 44 phonemes represented by 26 graphemes, whereas in Galician and Spanish, the correspondence between phonemes (27 and 24, respectively) and graphemes (23 and 27, respectively) is greater. Thus, Galician/Spanish L1 speakers are used to representing each phoneme with a single grapheme, with only a few exceptions. Hence, acquiring the phonology of English presents a double difficulty for the aforementioned learners, that of being able to differentiate those foreign sounds and creating new phonological categories for them, and that of learning to “break” the mental bond between graphemes and phonemes.

This seems to be especially challenging in the case of vowel sounds. In English, there are 12 vowel monophthongs and 8 diphthongs,¹ which contrast with the Galician 7 monophthongs and 14 diphthongs, or the Spanish 5 monophthongs, which can be combined into 14 diphthongs. Another divergence is that English vowel phonemes vary in duration (some are short, others long), a feature absent in the Galician and Spanish vocalic systems. These differences may result in an inaccurate perception of the L2 phonemes which, in turn, would lead to an inaccurate production, as explained above. For instance, the English vowel contrast /i:-ɪ/ might prove difficult for Galician/Spanish speakers, as those two phonemes could be interpreted as a single /i/ in both languages.

Regarding consonants, variation among these three languages is smaller. However, it is important to bear in mind that not all Galician and Spanish consonant phonemes correspond to an English phoneme, and *vice versa*. More specifically, some English phonemes, such as /dʒ/ or voiced fricatives, do not exist in either Spanish or Galician (see Estebas-Vilaplana 2009; 2019). Others differ from their Galician/Spanish counterpart in one dimension, like the point of articulation of /t/ (dental in Galician/Spanish but alveolar in English). Additionally, some phonemes exist in both languages but only as allophones of another phoneme (as is [z] in the word *desde* in Spanish).

Regardless of whether the focus is on vowels or consonants, the challenge still lies in the fact that unfamiliar phonemes are interpreted as acceptable exemplars of L1 phonemes. Nevertheless, some researchers have demonstrated that it is possible to overcome the aforementioned biological obstacle. For instance, it has been found that additional FL exposure alone has little effect on pronunciation development (Gallardo del Puerto et al. 2009; Rallo Fabra & Jacob, 2015). In a recent study on the possible effect of CLIL exposure on young learners’ oral performance, Azpilicueta-Martínez (2024) found no significant difference in the pronunciation—measured in intelligibility rates—of four different groups of young learners with different amounts of target language exposure. He concluded that improvements in this skill may depend more on pedagogical effectiveness and the quality of the input rather than

¹ It is common to find that English contains 12 monophthongs and 8 diphthongs, although it is now generally accepted that the inventory of English vowel phonemes includes 13 monophthongs and 7 diphthongs. This is because the vowel sound in SQUARE (Wells, 1982), which is currently treated as the monophthong /ɛ:/, was earlier considered to be a centring diphthong /eə/. The present study addresses the diphthong /eə/ because, in the coursebooks analysed, the shift from /eə/ to /ɛ:/ is yet to happen.

on quantity. This is supported by investigations which have proven that acquiring the pronunciation of an FL can be achieved through explicit pronunciation instruction and practice (see Aliaga-García & Mora, 2009; Gómez-Lacabex et al., 2008; Lengieris & Hazan, 2010). Therefore, including pronunciation instruction in the EFL classroom would be beneficial for developing this skill.

1.1.2. The teaching of pronunciation in the EFL classroom

Current research on the evolution of the emphasis placed on pronunciation in the EFL classroom agrees on three key points (see, for example, Ketabi & Saeb, 2015; Pennington, 2021). First, pronunciation has historically been a marginalised and feared area of FL teaching, with teachers showing reluctance due to a lack of training and materials (Gordon & Segura Arias, 2024; Grant, 2014; Thomson, 2013). Second, its inclusion in the EFL classroom has fluctuated with each teaching trend and, nowadays, it has regained importance. For instance, the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), the Direct Method (DM), and those derived from the Cognitive Approach neglected pronunciation (Ketabi & Saeb, 2015; Levis, 2005), whereas it was a central focus in oral approaches, such as the Audiolingual Method (Morley, 1991). Third, despite its renewed attention, pronunciation still lags behind other research areas, and there is a need for a deeper exploration of what to teach, how and when.

Nowadays, it is widely accepted that “intelligible pronunciation is an essential component of communicative competence” (Morley, 1991, p. 488). Thus, achieving intelligibility—in other words, being understood—is expected to be the primary focus of L2/FL learners, and much research is dedicated to identifying the factors that most impact speech intelligibility (Pennington, 2021). Equal importance should be given to both segmental and suprasegmental features (Ketabi & Saeb, 2015), and the use of phonetic symbols is encouraged (Mompean & Fouz-González, 2021). Regarding the nature of the type of instruction, whether implicit or explicit, research has pointed towards explicit instruction being more effective, especially when it focuses on the suprasegmental level (see Zhang & Yuan, 2020). Nevertheless, Luo et al. (2022) have discovered that a blended approach may produce greater development.

In the last decades, studies on pronunciation training have shown that certain methodologies or techniques can positively influence pronunciation development. For instance, research on high variability phonetic training (HVPT) has proven to help students improve both the perception and production of an FL (Barriuso & Hayes-Harb, 2018). Still, Barriuso and Hayes-Harb (2018) argue that how to implement HVPT with “real-world” students remains to be determined (however, for an example of HVPT applied in an incidental and multimodal setting using a video game, see Saito et al., 2022).

Multimodality was also a key aspect in Xi et al. (2020), who tested the use of hand gestures to assist the learning of Mandarin Chinese plosives and affricates. Their results pointed towards gesture training improving pronunciation, but only when the hand gesture mimicked the phonetic property of the represented phoneme (a fist-to-open-hand gesture to mimic air burst in the case of plosives, for instance). This goes in line with the findings in Li et al. (2023), who discussed the importance of prosody instruction. Through the use of embodied prosodic training in the form of hand gestures, the investigators found overall pronunciation development as well as improved accuracy in the pronunciation of front rounded vowels of L2 French by Catalan speakers. These studies seem to illustrate, as Xi

et al. (2020, p. 4) put it, that “language processing and language learning are multimodal in essence. Humans perceive speech through both auditory and visual information. Speech perception may be strongly affected by visual information from speech articulators.”

Other techniques which seem to promote the acquisition of an L2/FL pronunciation are related to imitation. Through shadowing, for instance, learners simultaneously imitate speech as it is being produced, a practice that has been shown to help nonnative speakers improve both their perception of native and non-native speech (Hamada, 2019). Imitation and self-imitation have also yielded beneficial results in speech production development (Kusz, 2022), as well as FL accent imitation within the L1, a technique which demonstrates that “the FL pronunciation feature that is acquired more successfully will be transferred more effectively in L1” (Rojczyk, 2015, p. 231). Imitating the FL accent in the L1 was efficient in the study by Everitt (2015), who measured VOT in Spanish learners of English imitating the English accent. Sypińska and Olender (2016) also used FL accent imitation to analyse phonetic awareness; they found this type of imitation to be an accurate measure “of how well L2 learners are able to reflect on and manipulate L2 phonetics” (p. 58) which, in turn, is related with L2 pronunciation performance.

The use of Computer Aided Pronunciation Training (CAPT) to support L2 pronunciation instruction has also been encouraged (Agarwal & Chakraborty, 2019). In their review of software tools to teach English pronunciation, Agarwal and Chakraborty (2019) argue that, despite the amount of CAPT programmes developed in the last decades which have yielded positive outcomes, L2 learners are generally unaware of their existence, and teachers question their effectiveness.

All in all, although research on pronunciation techniques is scarce (see, however, Kirkova-Nashkova, 2019 and Mora & Mora-Plaza, 2023), there appears to be consensus that variability, multimodality, and imitation are key aspects which should be implemented in the EFL classroom.

1.2. The teaching of English pronunciation in Galicia

The present study is set in the region of Galicia, in north-west Spain, which is a bilingual community where two languages co-exist: Galician and Spanish. There are two documents which help to regulate English instruction in secondary education in this area: The *Curriculo de la Educación Secundaria Obligatoria* (Decree 156/2022) and the *Curriculo del Bachillerato* (Decree 157/2022)—the curriculum for compulsory secondary education and upper secondary education, respectively. These documents provide a detailed description of the contents, main objectives, key competences and assessment criteria to follow in each subject at every year of obligatory secondary education (*Educación Secundaria Obligatoria*, henceforth *ESO*) and post-obligatory secondary education (henceforth *Bachillerato*).

Nevertheless, references to pronunciation are scarce, and those that exist lack details specific to each of the foreign languages offered (English, French, German, Italian and Portuguese). In other words, there are no precise guidelines for the teaching of speaking, particularly pronunciation, in the English language classroom. From a teacher’s perspective, it could be argued that the documents are vague in terms of what the learners are expected to know and be able to do at each stage of language development. This had already been reported by Calvo-Benzies

(2016) in relation to the previous *Currículo*. Thus, it seems that practitioners must rely on other materials and sources to determine what aspects to teach, how to teach them, and what to expect from students at the beginning and end of each academic year.

1.2.1. English pronunciation teaching materials

Given the lack of specificity in the official documents regarding the teaching of English pronunciation in the EFL classroom, teachers may end up relying on existing materials for their instruction. Research on how textbooks approach pronunciation content and exercises has been reported to be scant (Derwing et al., 2012; Calvo-Benzies, 2016; Lindade, 2022). In 2012, Derwing et al. analysed various aspects of the pronunciation activities found in 48 general-skills L2 textbooks. The results indicated striking variability in the number of activities, task types, and contents—with an overall focus on suprasegmental features. Other studies examining primary and secondary education EFL textbooks have also reported noticeable variability, as well as a prevalence of suprasegmental features (see Tergujeff, 2010 for research in the context of Finland and Topal, 2022 for Turkey).

In the context of Galicia, Calvo-Benzies (2016) explored this topic in her PhD dissertation about the teaching and learning of English pronunciation in this region, where she considered the views of teachers and students, as well as the materials. Her findings indicated that the number of pronunciation exercises in the analysed coursebooks was very low, with most activities being repetitive, focusing on perception (listen-and-repeat) and disregarding production—contrary to what the current teaching trends recommend (Messum & Young, 2021; Pennington, 2021).

Similarly, although with a focus on Portugal, the work by Lindade (2022) has brought a new contribution to the existing literature. His examination of 108 textbooks revealed that those from the school year 2021-22 also focused pronunciation instruction on perception (especially on listen-and-repeat exercises). Furthermore, half of the books examined failed to include pronunciation instruction whatsoever. Despite this, Lindade concluded that in the span of ten years, the number of textbooks where pronunciation is explicitly addressed has increased, which might be evidence of further growth in the future.

The inconsistencies reported in the previous studies are an indication that the teaching of English pronunciation needs further regularisation. Not only are there differences among the coursebooks analysed in terms of the number of exercises included in each unit or how the activities are presented, but also in the contents explored. Thus, two books aimed at students in the same year can present different pronunciation contents, suggesting that the editor decides what to teach and how to teach it. Then, it is up to teachers whether to use the proposed exercises.

1.2.2. The relevance of teaching English pronunciation in Galicia

In Spain, the most common route to university is through the university entrance exam. Each autonomous community designs its own exam, although they share some common features outlined by government regulations, such as the subjects that can be offered.

The exams vary depending on the educational law in effect and the competent authority responsible for them. The pandemic in the year 2020 carried difficulties for the organisation of the university entrance exam across the nation, and each autonomous community struggled to adapt to the situation. In Galicia, for example, the exams were modified in structure and contents. In the case of the English language, a new activity was included which involved

phonetics and phonology. Thus, on top of the increasing importance that pronunciation was gaining in the EFL classroom, in Galicia it gained additional relevance as one of the necessary skills to pass the exam which gives access to university.

It seems necessary to review the materials used in the *ESO* stage, given that it is the basis from which every student starts *Bachillerato*, the stage prior to university. The findings of research like Calvo-Benzies's (2016) remain relevant today but after a decade and a new Organic Law, the topic warrants reconsideration, as the outcome may differ.

2. THE STUDY

2.1. Aims and objectives

This study is motivated by the growing importance of teaching English pronunciation in the autonomous community of Galicia. Taking the lack of specific guidelines reported and the inconsistencies found in previous research into account, the present study aims to explore the most commonly used textbooks in Galician public secondary schools. The data collected will help to answer the following research questions:

1. Do the textbooks analysed feature pronunciation exercises? If so, how are these presented within the coursebooks' layout?
2. What pronunciation features are covered in each unit?
3. What types of pronunciation exercises are most common?
4. Is there consistency in the series of textbooks analysed across school years?

2.2. Sample of textbooks

A sample of textbooks was selected based on the most commonly used books in public schools across the autonomous community of Galicia during the 2023/2024 academic year. For this purpose, the information of the total of 210 public secondary schools was gathered². Some schools were discarded as they follow a new education model called "E-Dixgal" (Digital Education), which involves the use of online resources in most, if not all, subjects, but no printed textbooks.

After collecting the data from the public secondary schools, the manuals were arranged in order from most to least frequent. Only the book series consistently ranked among the top five most used series across all years of *ESO* or *Bachillerato* were selected for this study. Thus, this research will examine four different series of English textbooks employed at the two stages of secondary education, with a total of 24 textbooks evaluated:

- *ESO: Influence Today* (Holley & Pickering, 2022a, 2022b; MacBeth & Reily, 2022a, 2022b), *Network* (Devlin & Shaw, 2019a, 2019b, 2020a, 2020b), *On Track* (Styring & Tims, 2022a, 2022b, 2023a, 2023b) and *Options* (Marks & Scott, 2022a, 2022b, 2023a, 2023b).

² This information was taken from a list in the regional government's webpage (<https://www.edu.xunta.gal/centrose-educativos/ListaCentros.do>), which includes public, private, and charter schools.

- *Bachillerato: Key to Bachillerato* (Broadbent & Wetz, 2023; Howarth & Wetz, 2023), *Make the Grade* (Grant & Williams, 2018, 2019), *Mindset* (Grant & Edwards, 2020, 2021) and *Outlook* (Williams & Edwards, 2021, 2022).

The study focuses only on the student’s books, as data on the workbooks indicated that they were used only in some schools or even during specific academic years. Given this, an examination of the workbooks was discarded, as they were unlikely to produce fruitful results.

2.3. Features analysed

As this study focuses on pronunciation, the analysis of the textbooks only comprises exercises or contents related to this L2 skill. To organise the information, a database was created in Excel. The database included both basic information about the books (i.e. the name of the series, the publishing house, and the number of units) and specific data related to the pronunciation exercises and book contents. The database contains the following information, derived from the analysis of each individual unit: (i) the pronunciation feature(s) presented therein; (ii) the number of pronunciation exercises featured; (iii) the type of pronunciation exercises; and (iv) how the exercises were integrated into the unit. Pronunciation appendices attached to the coursebooks were also examined following the same guidelines as if they were regular units.

In order to simplify the data analysis process, the types of exercises were recorded using an adapted version of Calvo-Benzies’s (2016, pp. 843-847) model to classify pronunciation activities. Her classification includes a wider variety of exercises, some of which were merged in the present study for clarity. Moreover, only the codes corresponding to exercise types actually found in the books were adopted. Table 1 displays the different subtypes of exercises included in each broader category, along with their specific codes.

Table 1. *Classification of pronunciation exercises, adapted from Calvo-Benzies (2016, pp. 843-847)*

| TYPE OF EXERCISE | SUBTYPE | CODE |
|------------------------|--|----------------|
| Listening | Listen and repeat | LIST. 1 |
| | Listen and check | LIST. 2 |
| | Simple listening | LIST. 3 |
| | Listen and write = dictation | LIST. 4 |
| | Listen and discriminate/underline/mark/identify | LIST. 5 |
| | Listen and fill in the table | LIST. 6 |
| | Listen and complete with the missing words/spelling | LIST. 7 |
| Reading | Reading aloud = Read and repeat | READ. |
| Discrimination | Segmental: sounds and spelling | DISCRI. 1 |
| | Suprasegmental: Stress, intonation, rhythm, weak forms | DISCRI. 2 |
| Theoretical aspects | Questioning | THEOR. ASP. 1 |
| Phonetic transcription | Writing phonetic symbols (production) | PHON. TRANS. 1 |
| | Interpreting/reading phonetic symbols (perception) | PHON. TRANS. 2 |
| Production | Oral | PROD. |
| Translation | Translation | TRANS. |

It is important to clarify that following this type of classification may alter the final count of exercises. As Calvo-Benzies found in her thesis, one single activity may contain different types of exercises. For example, the same activity may require the student to (i) listen to three words and select the two which contain the same vowel sounds and (ii) listen and repeat. Thus, counting it as one single exercise might be misleading, given that it actually presents two different exercises (which would be coded as LIST. 5 and LIST. 1, respectively).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present section addresses the data obtained from the analyses of the textbooks and the findings are presented for each research question individually.

RQ1. Do the textbooks analysed feature pronunciation exercises? If so, how are these presented within the coursebooks' layout?

The first key issue in analysing the textbooks is whether they include pronunciation exercises and, if so, how many and how they are presented. Examination of the four most frequent books found in each year of *ESO* and *Bachillerato* revealed that, out of the 24 textbooks scrutinized, 18 (75%) had more than two activities per unit. Furthermore, there were two manuals (8.3%) with one or two activities per unit, and four (16.6%) with no activities targeting pronunciation whatsoever, which will not be assessed any further. These results are in line with Calvo-Benzies's (2016) findings, who had already observed that most of the textbooks under analysis displayed more than two activities per unit. Nevertheless, if the total amount of exercises is taken into consideration, the panorama shifts. In her examination of 15 coursebooks, Calvo-Benzies (p. 484) observed that the majority of them (11) featured between 21 and 40 pronunciation exercises in total. In the present study (see Table 2), however, 13 textbooks (54.2%) surpass that range, some almost reaching 100 exercises in a single book. This is an indication that pronunciation is gaining ground in the EFL classes, at least in terms of the materials used in the classroom.

Table 2. Total amount of pronunciation exercises per coursebook³

| ESO | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|------------|--------|------------|--------|------------|--------|------------|-------|
| TXTB | N.OF EX. | TXTB | N.OF EX. | TXTB | N.OF EX. | TXTB | N.OF EX. | TOTAL |
| Net. 1 | 59 (25.8%) | Net. 2 | 52 (22.6%) | Net. 3 | 59 (25.8%) | Net. 4 | 59 (25.8%) | 229 |
| Op. 1 | 47 (22.5%) | Op. 2 | 49 (23.4%) | Op. 3 | 56 (26.8%) | Op. 4 | 57 (27.3%) | 209 |
| I.T. 1 | 34 (24.7%) | I.T. 2 | 35 (25.4%) | I.T. 3 | 37 (26.8%) | I.T. 4 | 32 (23.1%) | 138 |
| BACHILLERATO | | | | | | | | |
| TXTB | N.OF EX. | TXTB | N.OF EX. | TOTAL | | | | |
| Out. 1 | 93 (57.1%) | Out. 2 | 70 (42.9%) | 163 | | | | |
| Mi. 1 | 93 (57.4%) | Mi. 2 | 69 (42.6%) | 162 | | | | |
| MtG 1 | 52 (58.4%) | MtG 2 | 37 (41.6%) | 89 | | | | |
| KtB 1 | 19 (59.4%) | KtB 2 | 13 (40.6%) | 32 | | | | |

As positive as the outcome might seem, it is important to reiterate that one of the series examined (*On Track*) failed to feature pronunciation contents and activities. In other words, one of the most frequent textbooks employed in the region of Galicia disregards pronunciation exercises and, thus, the teachers must decide what other resources to use in order to teach pronunciation (see Mora & Mora-Plaza, 2023, for a review on current methods and techniques).

Concerning the different ways in which each book presented the activities, once again there seems to be some variation among books and among publishing houses. For instance, all books published by *Burlington Books* (14; 58.3%, namely *Network*, *Options*, *Mindset*, *Outlook* and *Make the Grade*) outline the pronunciation contents in their Table of Contents (ToC), in the “Speaking” section. The *Macmillan* series (*Influence Today*) also includes these contents in the ToC, but in a specific “Pronunciation” section. In contrast, the *Oxford* books which contain exercises (*Key to Bachillerato*) do not feature any pronunciation lessons in the ToC.

In terms of how activities are integrated in each unit, only the *Options* series fully integrates them among others in sections like “Listen” or “Practise a dialogue”. It is more common to find these activities isolated, either in a box (as is the case in *Network*, *Make the Grade*, *Mindset* and *Outlook*), in their own “Pronunciation” section (like in *Key to Bachillerato*), or completely aside in the Appendix section, as observed in the *Influence Today* books. Except for *Key to Bachillerato 1* and *2*, in the rest of the books the Appendix section holds half of the activities or more. For instance, *Network 3* features a total of 39 activities, among which 33.3% (13) can be found in the body of the units, whereas the other 66.6% (26) appear in the *Pronunciation Appendix* section. In 1997, Jones predicted that, in the future, pronunciation would be taught along with other skills. The findings of the present study seem to contradict his prediction. Consistently isolating these activities

³ The names of the textbooks have been abbreviated in this table. ‘Net.’ stands for *Network*, ‘Op.’ for *Options* and ‘I.T.’ stands for *Influence Today*. The books of Bachillerato are ‘Out.’ (*Outlook*), ‘Mi.’ (*Mindset*), ‘MtG’ (*Make the Grade*) and ‘KtB’ (*Key to Bachillerato*).

reinforces the idea that pronunciation should be taught separately. However, as an essential component of oral production, it should be integrated with other linguistic areas. Moreover, as Underhill (2011) points out, pronunciation influences all language skills—both receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing)—highlighting the need for a more holistic approach to its instruction.

RQ2. What pronunciation features are covered in each unit?

The examination of the components of each book revealed a total of 81 different pronunciation lessons (67 segmental and 14 suprasegmental). Some lessons are similar since they cover the same phonemes but have been classified as different lessons. This wide variety of lessons stems from the emphasis on contrasting different phonemes. For instance, the phoneme /ɪ/ is contrasted with /i:/, /aɪ/, /i:/ and /aɪ/, /e/, and even /ə/ and /i:/, with each contrast forming its own distinct lesson.

Overall, there is a markedly higher focus on segmental contents than on suprasegmental aspects. Table 3 features the difference in the number of activities focusing on segmental or suprasegmental features. The fact that segmental features are addressed more frequently than suprasegmental features was already reported in previous research conducted in the Galician and Portuguese contexts (Calvo-Benzies, 2016; Lindade, 2022). Yet, studies carried out in other countries, such as those by Tergujeff (2010), Derwing et al. (2012), and Topal (2022) point towards the opposite trend.

Table 3. Overall number of activities and subtype of activities devoted to segmental and suprasegmental features

| FEATURE | N. OF ACTIVITIES |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Segmentals | 554 (77.5%) |
| Vowel phonemes | 258 (36.1%) |
| Consonant phonemes | 234 (32.7%) |
| Other | 62 (8.7%) |
| Suprasegmentals | 161 (22.5%) |
| Stress (word and sentence) | 50 (7%) |
| Intonation | 43 (6%) |
| Contractions | 27 (3.8%) |
| Weak forms | 25 (3.5%) |
| Linking words | 16 (2.2%) |
| Total | 715 |

Similarly, the studies by Calvo Benzies (2016) and Lindade (2022) also observed a stronger focus on vowel phonemes than on consonant phonemes. In contrast with this, the data analysed in this paper shows a greater balance between exercises targeting vowel phonemes (258; 36.1%) and exercises targeting consonant phonemes (234; 32.7%). The reason behind this is unclear, although it may derive from an increased awareness of the role of consonant

phonemes in effective communication, something which was already made apparent in the development of the Lingua Franca Core (Jenkins, 2000). Another aspect worth analysing would then be the different consonant and vocalic features examined in the books, which could provide further insights into this matter.

RQ3. What types of pronunciation exercises are the most common?

Moving on to the types of exercises, the inventory of the total number of subtypes of activities is provided in Table 4 below. The results show a prominent gap between the listening exercises, which account for 94.7% (969) of the total, and the other types of tasks, which together amount to a mere 5.3% (53): “phonetic transcription” (3.6%), “read aloud” (READ. 1; 0.7%), questions of theoretical aspects (0.5%), discrimination (0.2%), oral production (0.2%) and translation (0.1%), with 10 or fewer exercises each—except for “phonetic transcription”. As for the most frequently occurring listening subtypes, of the total 969 listening exercises recorded, 42.3% pertain to the category “listen and repeat” (LIST. 1). The next most frequent type of listening exercise is “listen and discriminate/underline/mark/identify” (LIST. 5), which accounts for 30.6% of the exercises. Lastly, 12.7% of the listening exercises entail “listen and check” (LIST. 2). At the other end of the scale, the frequency of listening exercises is merely anecdotal: “listen and fill in the table” (LIST. 6, 6.6%), “listen and complete with the missing words/spellings” (LIST. 7; 1%), “listen” (LIST. 3; 0.9%), and “dictation” (LIST. 4, 0.6%).

Table 4. *Number of exercises sorted by subtype*

| TYPE OF EXERCISE | SUBTYPE | N. OF EX | % |
|-------------------------------|---------------|----------|-------|
| Listening | LIST. 1 | 433 | 42.3% |
| | LIST. 2 | 131 | 12.7% |
| | LIST. 3 | 9 | 0.9% |
| | LIST. 4 | 6 | 0.6% |
| | LIST. 5 | 313 | 30.6% |
| | LIST. 6 | 67 | 6.6% |
| | LIST. 7 | 10 | 1% |
| Reading | READ. 1 | 7 | 0.7% |
| Discrimination | DISCRI. 1 | 1 | 0.1% |
| | DISCRI. 2 | 1 | 0.1% |
| Theoretical aspects | THEOR. ASP. 1 | 5 | 0.5% |
| Phonetic transcription | PHON TRANS. 1 | 13 | 1.3% |
| | PHON TRANS. 2 | 23 | 2.3% |
| Production | PROD. 1 | 2 | 0.2% |
| Translation | TRANS. | 1 | 0.1% |
| Total | | 1022 | 100% |

These results are, again, aligned with Calvo-Benzies's (2016) and Lindade's (2022) findings, who also observed a greater number of listen-and-repeat drills than of any other type of exercise. However, as Messum and Young (2021) stated, over-relying on listen-and-repeat strategies might be ineffective, given the challenge of accurately imitating articulatory movements based solely on auditory perception. Similarly, Xi et al. (2020) placed an emphasis on the importance of visual information for pronunciation training, which is missing from the materials analysed in the present study. While accurate perception can aid in developing accurate production, production must still be complemented with practice to achieve fluency in pronunciation. It could be argued that listen-and-repeat drills are related to imitation, which is beneficial for the development of FL/L2 pronunciation (e.g. Kusz, 2022). Nevertheless, recent studies indicate that pronunciation practice should offer variability (Barriuso & Hayes-Harb, 2018) as well as multimodality (Saito et al., 2022; Xi et al., 2020), something that the exercises described above seem to lack. Besides, current trends emphasise that pronunciation practice should be fostered through activities that encourage the use of communicative strategies (Pennington, 2021). It could be argued that listening to and repeating phonemes or isolated words does not align with the principles of the communicative approach.

RQ4. Is there consistency in the series of textbooks analysed across school years?

Finally, the last research question considered the consistency (or lack thereof) in the series of textbooks under analysis across school years. The results of the analysis of the units in each book, along with the number and type of exercises, indicate that there is a lack of consensus and continuity both within textbooks of the same school year and across books from the same series, in terms of content and exercise types.⁴ In *ESO*, the series *Network* offers a total of 229 exercises, a number which contrasts markedly with the 138 exercises reported in *Influence Today*, for example. Even more striking is the absence of pronunciation instruction the *On Track* series. Similarly, in *Bachillerato* there is an imbalance in the number of exercises featured across the different series. Depending on the textbook chosen, a learner can be exposed to as many as 163 exercises (*Outlook*) or as few as 32 (*Key to Bachillerato*).

There is a wide variety of lessons, yet the features covered in each school year seem to be arbitrary. As an illustration, the contrast /u:/-/ʊ/ is present in *Influence Today 2*, *Options 4*, *Mindset 1*, *Outlook 1* and *Make the Grade 1*. That is, the difference between /u:/ and /ʊ/ is only dealt with in one book from the second year of *ESO*, another from the fourth year, and in three textbooks from the first year of *Bachillerato*. In contrast, this content is absent in the books from the *Network* and *Key for Bachillerato* series. Two learners, then, might be exposed to different contents depending on the textbook series employed in their classes. Students who use *Network* and *Key for Bachillerato* would miss the lessons contrasting /u:/-/ʊ/ compared to the learners with access to other series. These findings suggest that there is a lack of consistency across coursebooks of the same academic year and within each series in terms of the lessons featured, the number of exercises and how these are presented; which, in turn, may put some students at an unfair disadvantage.

The reason behind this imbalance across textbooks can be traced to the lack of regulation in matters of pronunciation teaching. While there is research focused on the aspects

⁴ It should be noted that inferential statistics were not carried out in the analysis of consistency across textbooks and, as a result, the generalisability of these findings may be limited.

of the English language that might cause more difficulties for Spanish L1 speakers (see Estebas-Vilaplana 2009; 2019), and studies aimed at identifying the segmental and suprasegmental elements necessary to maintain communication flow and avoid misunderstandings, there is still a gap in regulation. No official document currently provides clear guidelines for approaching the teaching of English pronunciation in the EFL classroom. Textbooks seem to show greater consistency in their grammar contents; for example, two learners of the same school year will cover the same grammatical notions even if they use different manuals. The fact that this consistency has not been found in pronunciation exercises may indicate the lack of regulation in this area. It also highlights the need for phonological development to be stabilised as an important aspect of FL acquisition.

4. CONCLUSION

This study aimed at analysing the contents related to English pronunciation features in Galician textbooks which target obligatory and post-obligatory secondary education. Through the examination of 24 textbooks, several aspects were considered, such as how the previously mentioned contents are displayed in each book, the different lessons covered and the types of exercises employed.

The outcome of this study suggests that, compared to the study developed by Calvo-Benzies (2016), the number of exercises dedicated to teaching English pronunciation has increased. However, other aspects have remained stable, such as the inconsistencies in the display of activities, the higher frequency of segmental features compared to suprasegmental features, and the dominance of the “listen and repeat” exercise as the most common type.

Currently, in Galicia, there has been an increasing focus on the teaching of phonetics in EFL classrooms. Therefore, it is imperative to have adequate materials for the benefit of both teachers and learners. Given the findings described here, it could be argued that the materials available for phonetics instruction need improvement. There seems to be a lack of consistency across textbooks, and depending on the manuals chosen for the EFL class, it is possible for a learner to spend their entire secondary education without being exposed to certain phonetic features.

There seems to be a gap between the existing research on the acquisition of a foreign pronunciation—which promotes highly variable, multimodal training—, and its teaching practices, which still emphasise repeating only auditory cues. It is necessary, then, to bridge this by finding the missing link between phonological development research and its pedagogy. These two fields should work cooperatively, rather than separately. Textbook writers ought to be aware of the latest discoveries in teaching methodologies and effective exercises and implement them in their books. By doing so, teachers would benefit enormously from the available resources, enabling them to develop their methodology through the implementation of well-designed and up-to-date materials. Additionally, teachers need to be aware of these limitations and aim to compensate for them. For instance, if textbooks tend to prioritise segmental aspects, practitioners should try to integrate a focus on suprasegmentals in their teaching, as these are relevant features in communication. In doing so, teachers should be mindful of the differences between explicit, implicit and blended phonetic training, given that, in the case of suprasegmentals, it seems that explicit phonetic training yields positive results. Furthermore, the use of different software tools for CAPT could be implemented

both as in-class activities and as out-of-class practice, as well as materials and sources which offer HVPT, multimodality, and opportunities for shadowing and repetition.

This study opens some lines for future research. While the present research analyses the pronunciation focus of the most frequently used textbooks in Galician high schools, the mere inclusion of pronunciation contents and activities in a textbook does not necessarily mean that instructors make use of these resources. It would, therefore, be important to explore the extent to which teachers actually employ the pronunciation materials and incorporate pronunciation instruction in their lessons. Additionally, it would be important to investigate whether teachers use other resources or materials beyond those provided in the textbooks for teaching pronunciation. Gathering qualitative data on students' experiences with learning pronunciation could also shed light on how effective and engaging these practices are from their perspective. Another aspect worth investigating would concern the gaps found in the legislation analysed and whether these reflect a broader issue in curriculum design. As such, comparing these findings with other regions could provide insights into the impact of policy decisions. Finally, though adequate pronunciation is imperative for successful communication, some learners might have other short-term priorities, such as passing their university entrance exam. In this context, these students might focus more on preparing for the specific demands of their English tests rather than on comprehensive pronunciation training. Thus, future research should delve into the materials available in the textbooks to determine if they are appropriate to satisfactorily meet the level of English pronunciation exercises requested to access university in Galicia.

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