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THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION TO CHILDREN: A PROPOSAL BASED ON MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES AND *JOLLY PHONICS*

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Abstract

English learners have changed in the last decades and their needs regarding speaking and pronunciation have altered accordingly. Less centred on communication with native speakers, today's learners need to use English as a *Lingua Franca* to get in touch with people with whom they do not share the same mother tongue. Pronunciation shifted from an attempt to reach a native-like accent to focusing on an intelligible one, while keeping one's cultural identity if so desired. Young learners have more difficulties in understanding theoretical aspects related to pronunciation, but they show enthusiasm for interesting, new and fun activities that involve imitating models of pronunciation. Taking advantage of this enthusiasm, the present essay brings forward a methodological proposal for the treatment of pronunciation in activities designed for the celebration of English festivities, using the theory of multiple intelligences as a motivating underlying principle in accordance with CEFRL descriptors.

Keywords: pronunciation, *Lingua Franca*, multiple intelligences, young learners' English.

Resumen

Los aprendices de inglés han cambiado en las últimas décadas y sus necesidades con respecto al habla y la pronunciación se han modificado en consecuencia. Menos centrados en la comunicación con hablantes nativos, el alumnado de hoy en día necesita utilizar el inglés como *lingua franca* para ponerse en contacto con personas con las que no comparten la misma lengua materna. La pronunciación ha cambiado desde el intento de alcanzar un acento nativo a enfocarse en uno inteligible, manteniendo la identidad cultural de la persona si así lo desea. Los niños tienen más dificultades para comprender los aspectos teóricos relacionados con la pronunciación, pero muestran entusiasmo por actividades interesantes, nuevas y divertidas que implican imitar modelos de pronunciación. Aprovechando este entusiasmo, el presente trabajo plantea una propuesta metodológica para el tratamiento de la pronunciación en actividades diseñadas para la celebración de las festividades inglesas, utilizando la teoría de las inteligencias múltiples como principio subyacente motivador de acuerdo con los descriptores del MCERL.

Palabras clave: pronunciación, *lingua franca*, inteligencias múltiples, inglés para niños.

1. INTRODUCTION

In a world more connected than ever, there is great need for a common language that facilitates communication among people from different backgrounds. The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFRL) recognizes this need and with its proposals intends to overcome the barrier of languages providing a valuable common framework. In order to do so it offers basic common methodological guidelines and a unified basis for the description of evaluation indicators and content for languages that could be used for any of the languages spoken in the European Union, and which sets the basis for the teaching and learning of languages outside the EU.

One of the most widely spoken languages around the world nowadays is English. Throughout the world there is an increasing number of people who are studying it at ages younger than ever before. Already in the second edition of his well-known book *English as a Global Language*, David Crystal (2012: 6) said that more than 1.5 billion people spoke some English, and this number has not stopped increasing steadily since then. About 400 million people have English as their mother tongue or use it as their first language, according to the ethnologue. They live in what Kachru (1985) calls the “Inner Circle” countries, as for example the USA, Canada, the UK or Australia, etc. About other 300 to 500 million people live in the “Outer Circle”, where English tends to be used as a *lingua franca* for easier communication; this is the case of countries such as India, Pakistan or Nigeria. However, the most important number of English speakers live in what Kachru calls the “Expanding Circle”, in countries where English is not officially spoken, but it is used for communication purposes by people who do not speak the same mother tongue. The estimates here tend to be even more approximate than in the “Outer Circle”, with about an additional 750 million speakers internationally, according to Crystal’s numbers back in 2012.

With so many people around the world speaking English, we must agree with Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016: 1), who state that “English pronunciation has a great impact on learners’ successful communication”. Nevertheless, according to the mentioned authors, pronunciation is still ignored by an important number of teachers who seem keener on teaching grammar and vocabulary. Kelly points out that “The fact that pronunciation tends to suffer from neglect may not be due to teachers lacking interest in the subject but rather to a feeling of doubt as to how to teach it” (Kelly, 2000: 13). In addition, Harmer advises us against short-sightedness if we

think that some students seem to grasp pronunciation without much effort. There are still students who struggle when pronunciation is taught in passing, or not taught at all: “Pronunciation teaching not only makes students aware of different sounds and sound features (and what these mean) but can also improve their speaking immeasurably” (Harmer, 2015: 277). It also gives students more strategies in dealing with listening tasks or helps them understand when spoken to. “Concentrating on sounds, showing students where they are made in the mouth, making them aware of where stress falls in words and phrases and how intonation works” (Harmer, 2015: 277) can be of great help to students. It may support them to better understand and make themselves understood easily.

Richards and Schmidt (2002) define pronunciation as the way certain sounds are produced. “Pronunciation is a term used to capture all aspects of how we employ speech sounds for communicating”, according to Burns and Seidlhofer (2020: 247). One of the main issues in teaching the sounds of English is the lack of correspondence between letters and sounds. Teachers have struggled over the years to teach pronunciation without using the orthographic alphabet. One of the most useful solutions that has been found so far is the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), which has been updated regularly and of which different versions exist. Nonetheless, this option is still limited as far as Primary Education is concerned. Phonetics and phonology have opened new ways to the teaching of pronunciation. Concerned with “the study of the physical properties of sounds and their place and manner of articulation in the vocal tract” (Broughton et. al. 2002: 50), phonetics constitutes a tool of great importance in the teaching and learning of pronunciation. For example, in any description of the English sound system, speech sounds are categorized into consonants and vowels. According to Haycraft (1978: 58), “Awareness of this is useful as many mistakes made by learners are due to slight differences in sound production”.

However, the teaching of phonetics is not very straightforward in the case of young learners, for whom the use of so many different symbols can be overwhelming. Therefore, teachers have tried to find alternatives for these students. They commonly use chants, songs, drills, tongue-twisters, listening and imitating, etc. (Alvarado Castillo & Barrantes, 2015: 62), in order to provide students with good models of English and make them aware of pronunciation issues. Some of the tools used to teach native speakers of English how to read, namely phonics, seem to be useful for improving overall listening and speaking skills in the case of ESL and EFL students. The study of grapho-phonology, of which phonics is a clear example, deals with the relationship between the sound in the language and their written symbols. Many methods

have been developed in the last years hoping to help students decode written symbols in an easier way. Teachers have discovered that “in the early grades, when literacy is being established, phonics activities help children to link symbols (letters of the alphabet) with sound and to associate words as members of patterned families” (Britsch, 2016: 71). These activities can favour the acquisition of sounds that do not exist in one’s own mother tongue and improve pronunciation, as they focus on the connection between letters and sounds.

1.1. Objectives

The objectives to be attained in this paper are the following:

- To discuss the shift of perspective on pronunciation in the last decades.
- To review traditional ways of working on pronunciation and discuss specific problems for Spanish speakers.
- To analyse the different approaches used for teaching phonics.
- To analyse the benefits of using phonics for decoding texts and their implications for pronunciation.
- To analyse the relationship between literacy and multiple intelligences.
- To make a methodological proposal for the work on pronunciation with Pre-A1 and A1 CEFR level students which incorporates elements for the development of phonological and phonemic awareness using typical celebrations from English speaking countries as a framework.

1.2. Justification and Relevance

Learning a second language is a difficult task at any age and even more so when the students are young learners. Their needs and interests are different to those of older students, therefore new ways of drawing their attention and involving them in motivating activities are necessary. As we will see in this essay, one of the most problematic aspects when dealing with English as a second or foreign language is pronunciation. The aim of this paper is to design a proposal for working on pronunciation with young learners. However, instead of adopting traditional methods for teaching and learning pronunciation, this paper will try to offer a new perspective using the theory of multiple intelligences in an attempt to embed cultural elements from English speaking countries with strategies frequently used to work on literacy and reading and trying to set up a framework that can be used with students of different ages, using

motivating activities in line with the CEFRL descriptors and using what students already know as a fundament for increased learning. As such, scaffolding is an underlying principle in this paper.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Pronunciation has always been a hot topic for debate among language specialists and the opinions regarding the best way to teach it have changed throughout the years. In this section I will discuss how the perspective on pronunciation has shifted from imitating native-like pronunciation to the English as a *Lingua Franca* approach and the implications of this change, it will analyse the relevance of pronunciation in nowadays teaching in the case of Spanish speakers and how phonics and reading can contribute to the improvement of pronunciation in young learners, using as a fundament the theory of multiple intelligences.

2.1. Traditional methods and current approaches in teaching pronunciation

A long distance has been covered since the audiolingual method, based on drilling and the aim to achieve perfect, native-like pronunciation in the 60's, up to now. The teaching of pronunciation went sometimes to extremes and moved quite suddenly from a focus on perfect accent to the absolute lack of pronunciation training at the height of the Communicative Language teaching approach. Grant (2014: 14-17) offers a broader perspective on how pronunciation has been tackled in the last 40 years. Minimal pairs, drilling or emphasis on segmental features are just a few of the things that even though still present in teaching nowadays, have been modified in order to address present needs. "Pronunciation goals are now more realistic and achievable", states Grant. "The majority of present-day teachers have abandoned the goal of perfect, native-like speech in favour of clear, fluent speech that is intelligible to the listener" (2014: 16). Besides, the shift from learning English as a Second Language (or English as a Foreign Language) to English as a *Lingua Franca*, which will be further addressed in this paper, has made clearer the need for new objectives in pronunciation.

The *Companion* Volume with New Descriptors, a newer refined version of the original CEFRL, emphasises the need for a shift in descriptions that inform the creation of standards away from native speaker norms towards an acceptance of any accent, with a focus on intelligibility. In the Phonological Scale Revision Process Report, North and Piccardo (2016) suggest that the context and learners' needs should be taken into greater consideration. They should be valued much more than some idealized models even at the level of textbooks and

curricula. There is a need for explicit pronunciation instruction that addresses the specific features that may produce a break in communication.

2.2. English as a Lingua Franca and its implications in the teaching of pronunciation in the last decades

As Jenkins (2014: 10) points out, the users of the English language are commonly divided into speakers of English as a Native Language (ENL), as a Second Language (ESL), or as a Foreign Language (EFL). However, according to this author, we should mention a fourth group of speakers, namely those who use English as a *Lingua Franca* (ELF henceforward), i.e. people who use English in communication with non-native English speakers whose first language is other than their own (Jenkins, 2014: 11), although this variety is used by them, by extension, also when these speakers communicate with English Native Speakers, which, according to the estimates seen above, is less likely to happen. She defines ELF as “English as it is used as a contact language among speakers from different first languages” (Jenkins, 2014: 44). Another definition mentioned in Jenkins (2014: 44) is that of Seidlhofer, according to whom ELF is “any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option” (2011: 7). Additionally, Walker (2010: 6) defines ELF as the common language for speakers whose mother tongues are different.

In the case of ESL and EFL learners, as Walker (2010: 5) highlights, it has been traditionally assumed that all learners’ aim is to learn English so that they can communicate with speakers from the Inner Circle. Therefore, their goal in pronunciation should be to achieve a native-like accent. However, in the case of ELF, considering the fact that the speakers have no intention to communicate with native speakers of English, this need of getting to manage a native-like accent is less important. Nevertheless, given the fact that speakers of English as a *Lingua Franca* come from such different social and cultural backgrounds, it is important to avoid the danger of lack of understanding. They do need to understand each other, so it is worth mentioning the fundamental aspects that help avoiding breaks in communication.

2.2.1. Intelligibility

Tracey Derwing and Murray Munro consider that in order to be understood, a speaker needs to use an accent that is intelligible, credible and personal. They sustain that speech is intelligible when “listeners can understand the speaker’s intended message” (2015: 1). In a

publication of 1995 these researchers, who defined intelligibility as “the extent to which a speaker’s message is actually understood by a listener” (Munro & Derwing 1995: 76), demonstrated that a heavy accent does not necessarily interfere with intelligibility (1995: 92). Directly connected to intelligibility is comprehensibility, i.e., the amount of listener effort that is necessary to understand a message. Therefore, more in-depth investigation is needed in order to establish more accurately what speech features may cause problems in intelligibility and which of them do not affect it. Moreover, it is important to know what aspects of intelligibility and comprehensibility can be improved through proper and sustained pronunciation instruction.

2.2.2. Credibility

Derwing and Munro (2015: 2) have also discussed how accented speech may have a negative impact upon listeners. They sustain that even though a speech may be perfectly intelligible, it may be negatively perceived by listeners when the accent used is strong. Sometimes these speakers may be considered less credible or less prepared in their field, thus receiving a discriminatory treatment. This idea has been widely discussed by Rosina Lippi-Green in her book *English with an Accent* (1997). This author considers that “language is more than a tool for communication of facts between two or more persons. It is the most salient way we have of establishing and advertising our social identities” (1997: 5). She exemplifies how accented language can help discriminate through multiple examples taken from legal actions in the USA. This author states that “any individual who takes on the task of learning a second or third language in adulthood will have some degree of L2 accent, the degree of which is not readily predictable and will not correlate, overall, to education, intelligence or motivation” (1997: 221). Unfortunately, a great deal of the accents considered less than acceptable are judged not so much in terms of lack of intelligibility but rather in terms of a lack of prestige or bring about negative reactions triggered by social experiences. Linguists do not favour the idea that some accents are superior to others, but there is still much work to do in order to change this impression engrained in social memory.

2.2.3. Identity

There are some very important aspects to consider when dealing with identity. On the one hand, as Derwing and Munro (2015: 132) put it, “it is through language that we express our own selves”. Along the same line, Walker (2010: 13) suggests that “whatever accent we have, native speaker or non-native speaker, standard or regional, it is a part of our identity, and for some people losing their accents is the same as losing part of their identity”. Therefore, some

people may aim to acquire a native like accent of American English or British English, but in the process, they may be perceived as if they are trying to lose their own identity. Mugglestone considers that having an accent acts “as a marker of group membership and as a signal of solidarity” (2003: 43) and states that “each utterance (...) becomes in effect an act of identity” (2003: 57). Therefore, our accent can “identify us not just as individuals, but also as members of a particular group” (Walker, 2010: 13). For some speakers, especially when they are adolescents, this need to assert one’s identity can be very strong, and they may feel threatened by a focus on native-like pronunciation. Instead, they may “need their L1 accent in order to re-affirm their membership to peer group” (Walker, 2010: 13).

2.3. The Importance of Proper Pronunciation

“For some people, good pronunciation means being able to speak exactly as a native speaker and there are, indeed, some students who aspire to this”, argues Harmer (2015: 277). However, with the wide range of different English varieties in pronunciation, it is a difficult task for the teacher to decide on the most appropriate accent. Moreover, Brewster, Ellis and Girard highlight the idea that the teacher plays a determinant role in teaching pronunciation either directly or implicitly by providing a model to imitate for his/her students. They sustain that “children’s pronunciation will only be as good as the models they hear”. Accordingly, they suggest that “teachers need to achieve a reasonable level of intelligibility”, since the main goal in pronunciation teaching is “to ensure that speech is good enough to be understood by native speakers, even though there may be signs of a foreign accent” (2002: 80). Beyond that, however, we should add that an ESL or EFL speaker’s speech is even more frequently heard by other ESL or EFL speakers, and attaining mutual intelligibility in these situations is also necessary.

“The primary goal of teaching pronunciation must now be to make learners intelligible to the greatest number of people possible, and not just to the native speakers of the language”, states Walker (2010: 19). This can be a complicated issue, as two main goals must be fulfilled when dealing with English as a *Lingua Franca*. On the one hand, mutual intelligibility must be ensured, no matter what mother tongue the speakers may have (Harmer, 2015: 278). On the other hand, if speakers of ELF so decide, they should be able to maintain features of their native language, while being perfectly credible and intelligible (Walker, 2010: 19).

Research on the main aspects of pronunciation has not yet decided on those aspects of pronunciation which have an impact on intelligibility and credibility. Authors like Walker

(2010: 133) and Jennifer Jenkins (2002: 97) concur that vowel length is important for understanding. That means that short vowel sounds and long vowel sounds are an important aspect of accent. In contrast to vowel length, most linguists consider that vowel quality, i.e., using a vowel from one's own native language instead of an English vowel, is less important for intelligibility. However, research on this topic is still ongoing. Deterding (2013: 64) states that "one should remember that variation in vowel quality is widespread in English in the world. Therefore, speakers can deal with shifts in vowel quality relatively easily". Each language has certain peculiarities that may affect the production of utterances in the second language. Traditionally, these peculiarities have been viewed as a sign of incomplete acquisition of a good accent. As a consequence, one of the teaching aims has been for a long while that of trying to eliminate any sign of a foreign or non-native accent in learners' speech. The mother tongue has been considered the main responsible for any "interference" or transfer from the first language to the target one. Moreover, the teaching practice has focused more on what the native speaker is able to accomplish and the pitfalls of foreign language learners. However, this trend changes in an ELF approach, as Walker (2010: 100) states. Far from an "obstacle to good pronunciation", it becomes a "resource that learners and teachers can take advantage of as they work towards ELF competence". In conclusion, finding similar pronunciation patterns becomes a challenge that could motivate learners in their struggle to improve pronunciation. They do not focus anymore so much on what they cannot accomplish, but on those sounds that are similar, and then move on to those which are particularly challenging to utter.

2.4. Spanish speakers and pronunciation issues

In the case of Spanish speakers, some pronunciation issues can be identified. One of the most problematic aspects for Spanish learners of English is vowel length. There are only five vowels in the Spanish language and while some sounds are formed similarly to the English ones, their length can be difficult to manage. Spanish vowels are longer than the short English vowels, and shorter than the long ones. Therefore, the differences between the pairs of short and long vowels can be very difficult to grasp for Spanish speakers. The Spanish sound /i/, for example, is too long for the vowel sound in *sit*, and too short for the vowel sound in *see*. The same happens in words like *pot/port* or *pull/pool*. Spanish speakers also have a certain difficulty telling the difference between sounds like /æ/, /ʌ/ or /ɑ:/ and tend to substitute all of them with the Spanish vowel sound /a/ in words like *cat*, *cut* or *car*. The schwa sound, present in many unstressed syllables, does not exist as such in Spanish (so words like *closer*, *about*, *little*, can

be difficult to pronounce) and neither does the similar long sound in “turn”, “girl” and in the strong form of “her”.

Not only can vowels be difficult for Spanish learners. Consonants can be quite tricky at times, too. Even though there are some consonants that have equivalent sounds in both languages, there are still some consonant sounds that may lead to lack of intelligibility, and the most confusing ones are /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/ and /tʃ/, /dʒ/, /ʒ/ and /j/, according to Walker (2010: 130). The Spanish /s/ sound is usually quite similar to the English one (except in some accents, where it is closer to /ʃ/). However, as the sound /z/ does not exist as such in Spanish, people may substitute it with /s/. The /ʃ/ sound is usually substituted by /s/ or /tʃ/. Problems may also appear in the case of the /h/ sound, whose graphological equivalent is not pronounced at all in Spanish, so that it may be often substituted by the stronger Spanish /x/ in words like *pareja*, *dejar*. Another phoneme that does not exist in Spanish is /ʒ/. The /w/ sound does exist in Spanish in words like *huevo* or *hueco*. However, as it frequently appears in initial position preceded by the /g/ sound, in words like *guapa*, *guardar*, some speakers tend to substitute the /w/ sound with the equivalent Spanish /gw/, which causes frequent misunderstanding between words like *wood/would* – *good*. Another important issue for Spanish speakers in particular is the /b/ - /v/ distinction. Most speakers use the same sound for both phonemes, which may lead to confusion between words like *vote* – *boat*, *van* – *ban*, *vest* – *best*, *vet* - *bet*. Something similar happens in the case of the sounds /dʒ/ and /j/, with speakers confusing words like *jaw* – *your*, *jet* – *yet*, *jot* – *yacht*, *joke* – *yoke*.

Consonant clusters are a very complex aspect in terms of pronunciation. A very common practice in Spanish speakers is adding an epenthetic extra *e* sound in initial position to /s/ + consonant clusters. However, this is not commonly an important issue when dealing with intelligibility. Things are different, though, in regard to middle or final clusters, where the most common practice is the deletion of some sounds. Then words like *nest* and *next* may sound like *nes*, or past forms of regular verbs like *asked* or *worked* sound like the present tense forms. In such cases, a dropping of some of these sounds (the /t/ in *nest* and *next*, the /k/ in *asked* and *worked*) is common in most forms of English internationally, but a similar omission of other sounds (the /k/ in *next*, the final /t/ in both past tense forms) would be a problem.

There are more elements than the ones mentioned here that can pose problems to Spanish speakers. Difficulties may arise too in terms of nuclear stress placement, with people placing nuclear stress on a different syllable and thus creating confusion to understand the

intended word. As English is a stress-timed language, this implies speakers placing more stress on syllables at approximately regular intervals, whereas unstressed syllables are shortened to fit the remaining space. On the contrary, the Spanish language is a syllable-timed language, where syllables take approximately the same amount of time. In conclusion, Spanish speakers are prone to producing unstressed syllables with the same duration as they would in the case of stressed syllables.

While some of the difficulties signalled above are still in debate, and the best solution to them has not been found yet, a possible answer to some of these issues seems to come from a different area altogether. It may come from teaching small children to read following a synthetic phonic approach.

2.5. Phonics and reading

Debates around the topic of literacy and the best way of teaching children how to decode written texts have been going on for the last decades. While most people seem to agree that teaching phonics is a good method to introduce students in the study of sounds, as shown in reports like the *Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading* (Rose, 2006) in England and the similar review undertaken in Australia *Teaching Reading: Report and Recommendations* in 2005, not many agree on the best way of doing this. The problem seems to lie between synthetic phonics and analytic phonics. Both are methods used in teaching young students to read, but while synthetic phonics starts with the teaching of phonemes (sounds) and their association with particular graphemes (letters), analytic phonics goes from the whole words to identifying patterns in the word. In the case of analytic phonics children are given a list of words with a common pattern and they are encouraged to identify phonemes in whole words and then segment them. If they are given words like *sit, sip, sin, sun*, they should see that all the words start with the same sound, the phoneme *s-*. If they are given words like *pan, tan, ran, can*, children should notice that all these words include the *-an* rime.

What both synthetic and analytic programmes seem to agree upon is that phonological awareness is a fundamental skill for children, as it is closely related to their reading and spelling success in the classroom. Simply put, the phonological awareness “is a multilevel skill of breaking down words into smaller units” (Gillon, 2004: 4). It includes the ability to recognize phonological patterns such as rhyme and alliteration, to perceive individual words in a sentence, to identify multiple phonemes within speech and the awareness of syllables and phonemes within words. In order to develop phonological awareness skills, young learners should be

involved in syllable awareness activities, rhyme awareness and production, alliteration, identification and sorting of beginning sounds, onset and rime segmentation, blending and segmenting and manipulating sounds. Phonemic awareness is a subset of skills that involves the ability to hear, identify and manipulate individual phonemes in speech and the awareness that language is composed of small sounds called phonemes (Adams et al., 1998: 1), which lies at the basis of reading programmes. Cunningham et al. (1998: 3) state that “phonemic awareness refers to an understanding about the smallest units of sound that make up the speech stream: phonemes. Phonological awareness encompasses larger units of sound, such as syllables, onsets and rimes”. Brice & Brice (2009: 209) mention several factors and the underlying theories that influence phonemic awareness. They analyse the motor speech theory, the interlanguage phonology theory, contrastive analysis and the speech learning model, and the acoustic difference theory, and overall, the way each of these theories influence phonemic awareness. The motor speech theory developed by Liberman and Mattingly in 1985 states that the ability to perceive elements in speech is closely related to the ability to produce them, that is, students will be able to identify phonemes that they are able to produce, and they will lack this ability in the case of phonemes they cannot utter. The interlanguage phonology theory deals with the way first language phonology influences and interacts with the second language phonology. The related contrastive analysis hypothesis implies that errors in the second language can be traced back to the students’ first language; it tries to explain errors by comparing the two languages. Flege & Eefting (1987) suggest that sounds that are very similar in the two languages are harder to acquire in the second language, in contrast to new phonemes. Following their explanation, the English /v/ would be easier to produce than the English /d/ versus the Spanish /d/, because the English /v/ phoneme is very different when compared to its Spanish equivalent phoneme. The acoustic difference theory offers another possible explanation for students’ difficulties in pronouncing sounds; according to this theory, when languages have slightly different voicing features, the differences in the way sounds are uttered between the two languages may result in “difficulties in the perception and discrimination of phonemes necessary for phonological awareness and beginning reading” (Brice & Brice, 2009: 2013).

For the sake of clarity in this paper, we will focus more on the synthetic phonics method. In the case of synthetic phonics, young students are gradually introduced to the phonemes or sounds and their representation in the form of graphemes. They begin with hearing the phonemes in a spoken word and then blending the sounds orally to create a word. For example, when they see the word *sun*, they sound out the three phonemes /s/, /ʌ/, /n/ and then blend them

together to obtain the word *sun*. Segmenting is another important skill, through which children learn how to segment words into individual phonemes.

Synthetic phonics programmes may introduce sounds in a different sequence, but they all have some common features and include approximately 40 sounds in a systematic manner. They usually start with learning the letter sounds, then go on to distinguishing between vowels and consonants, recognizing initial and final sounds in a word, and reading CVC or CCVC words (Lewis & Ellis, 2006). The first stage in the system, namely learning the letter sounds, is considered to be of great relevance in this essay. As these programmes were designed for native speakers, they are interested in the correlation letter – sound. However, in the case of Spanish speakers, for example, some of the sounds do not exist in their native language, therefore, learning a sound becomes a very important activity. Not only is learning a sound useful in order to recognize its corresponding letter, but it also implies learning how to produce the sound, how to blend it with other phonemes so as to create a meaningful word. Therefore, in the following section we are going to have a brief look at one of the most methods most widely used for teaching children how to read, and we will focus on their strategy for teaching sounds, in order to analyse its relevance for second language learners.

2.6. Jolly Phonics

Jolly Phonics is a popular method for teaching children how to read and write using a synthetic phonics approach. This method was first published in 1992 and it was created by Sue Lloyd, a teacher at a primary school in Suffolk. It avoids using letter names and it is focused on teaching the sounds made by the letters. The sounds are not organized alphabetically, but they follow a predetermined sequence, in order to form the highest number of common words possible.

The method recommends teachers to use a series of eight steps when teaching the sounds. The first step is represented by the story, which gives context to the sound that is going to be taught. The second step means action. While saying the sound, the teacher makes an action meant to help children remember that sound. Usually, the action is closely related with the story and includes a key word or a key character in the story. For example, the action for the /s/ sound imitates the movement of a snake, the /p/ sound is the action made for blowing candles on a cake, the /e/ sound tries to replicate the action of breaking an egg, the /g/ sound imitates the movement of water when draining from the sink, etc. The third step involves the introduction of the sound by means of flashcards. Students are asked to say the sound and make the action

each time they see the flashcard. The fourth step is the formation of the letter, which requires the writing of the letter using different means: writing in the air, on the desk, on each other's back, on one's arm, etc. Step five is blending, which means that students are taught to say the sounds individually and then blend them together to read words. Step six implies sounding, and at this step students are asked to name the words they see on flashcards. The seventh step involves dictation. Directed to native speakers of English, this step assumes that only words already seen by the children would be dictated. However, in the case of non-native speakers, this requirement becomes compulsory, as students may not even know other words except for those presented by the teacher in the classroom. Therefore, students must be taught beforehand the words they are expected to write. Step eight aims to bring some fun into the classroom and presents each sound by means of a song which also requires for movement and singing along, thus it is perfect for kinaesthetic learners or for musical intelligence (Gardner, 1983).

The *Jolly Phonics* method comprises 42 sounds organized in 7 groups, with six sounds per group, as follows:

Group 1: s, a, t, p, i, n

Group 2: ck, e, h, r, m, d

Group 3: g, o, u, l, f, b

Group 4: ai, j, oa, ie, ee, or

Group 5: z, w, ng, v, short oo, long oo

Group 6: y, x, ch, sh, voiced th, unvoiced th

Group 7: qu, ou, oi, ue, er, ar

The first group is considered to include the easiest sounds; however, the first sound can prove especially difficult for Spanish speakers, nonetheless without influencing intelligibility from an ELF point of view (Walker 2010: 133). As Spanish students do not have a consonant cluster beginning with the s- sound in their native language, much care should be taken so that they do not add an extra e- sound before the s sound. Even though this sound can be quite easy in CVC words, not the same will happen in CCVC(C) words like *snake*, *spots*, included in the story corresponding to sound /s/. /t/ and /p/ can also be difficult at the beginning of stressed syllables, as the Spanish sounds, in contrast to the English ones, are never aspirated. This aspect can be problematic for understanding; therefore, a lot of practice is required in order to learn

these sounds correctly. An interesting manner of learning how to utter sounds correctly could be the one suggested by Adrian Underhill (2011), who recommends learners to use the position of a sound easy to produce as a starting point to perform a more difficult one later. Practice for young learners and exercises that involve saying, sounding, blending and segmenting words with specific sounds can be of extreme importance for an adequate acquisition of proper English pronunciation.

The second group in the *Jolly Phonics* method includes the /h/ sound, with no equivalent phoneme in Spanish, and the /r/ sound, which is quite different, but with no apparent influence on ELF intelligibility. The /h/ is quite easy to produce for Spanish speakers once they learn how to do it. However, it is important to draw their attention to the fact that the corresponding grapheme /h/ is rarely silent in English, in contrast to what happens in Spanish. The silent grapheme is present in a few words like *hour*, *honour*, *heir*, etc., but otherwise the sound is usually pronounced.

As for group number three, the most difficult sound to produce for young Spanish speakers is the /ʌ/ sound, in words like *sun*. This may happen not because the sound is particularly difficult, but because of the graphology of the Spanish /u/ sound and its interference with L2 learning.

Other sounds difficult to pronounce can be found in groups four, /dʒ/, five, /z/, six, /ʃ/ or in group seven, /ɜ:r/ or /ɑ:r/. All these sounds can lead to misunderstanding if replaced with others, as they do not have a perfect correspondent sound in the Spanish language. Authors like Walker (2010: 133) give practical examples of Spanish words that contain sounds very close to the English target sounds. These words can be used to model the target pronunciation if great difficulties are noticed during sounding practice. In conclusion, learning how to produce the target sound, a key step in *Jolly Phonics*, becomes a compulsory step in acquiring a correct pronunciation in the case of second language learners.

The *Jolly Phonics* method includes a variety of materials, all meant to give students the opportunity for more practice. There are books that can be used in class by pupils and teachers, there are big books with the stories, phonics software, flashcards, tricky words, DVDs, audios, posters, etc.

2.7. Types of texts and their role in the reading process

An important part of the method is the decodable readers, a series of around one hundred books destined to help children put into practice their learning. The decodable readers include sounds that the youngsters have already learned, organized in different levels of complexity and colour coded accordingly. Nevertheless, studies like those conducted by Jenkins et al. (2004) or Mesmer (2005) show no significant differences between students who mostly read decodable books and students who read leveled texts (books organized in levels of difficulty from easy books to longer, more complex texts). The research conducted by Murray et al. (2014) suggests that the best books are the ones that contain a high number of decodable content words, and at the same time include high frequency words (or sight words) that are repeated often throughout the printed text. When dealing with decodable readers and their assets and pitfalls, the main drawback in the case of ESL or EFL students may be the fact that many of the words used in the books are not very relevant for their lives, therefore, they may not be pleasant and useful to read. Words like *bib*, *bid*, *bap*, *sap*, although easy to decode, may prove very confusing for L2 students. On the other hand, typical words used to illustrate the first groups of sounds like *sat*, *mat*, *pat*, *cat* do not seem to inspire great books. We may find texts like the following ones (Hiebert & Fisher, 2016): “Cam sat on the mat. A man sat on the mat. Nat sat on the mat. Pam sat on the mat. A tan cat sat on the mat. Spat!” For some readers these texts can prove unimaginative and even boring. Therefore, in order to help these students enjoy reading, we should likely focus more on texts that offer a good balance of decodable words with repeated patterns and highly frequent words. At the same time, these texts should include good visual information that may play an important part in grasping meaning. In Krashen’s view, a rich and contextualized input is a fundamental aspect for the acquisition of a foreign language. Therefore, following the same idea, texts should not include only decodable words that children have seen, but go a bit forward and offer challenges slightly above the students’ current level. Lewis & Ellis (2006: 102) consider that “if we are not to confine children to artificial texts with a restricted range of words, our phonics teaching has to reflect other patterns in addition to the one-to-one phoneme–grapheme correspondences of the ‘c-a-t’ or ‘ch-i-p’ variety”. That is even more important in the case of second language learners, who rely heavily on context to make sense of the texts. Besides, the same authors mention the fact that in some cases, students do not possess the phonological awareness necessary for understanding a synthetic phonics system, and thus, are unable to understand the letter – sound correspondence. In these cases, decodable readers will prove useless and frustrating for the students, who would probably

benefit more from nursery rhymes, tongue twisters, word plays in stories, rhymes and repetitions, poems, or riddles. “Exposure to intensive programmes aimed at teaching explicit phoneme manipulation may only serve to discourage children who have not grasped the phonological insight that spoken language can be broken up into units like syllables and onsets and rime” (Lewis & Ellis, 2006: 13). Moreover, authors like Bowey (2002) and Goswami (2002) suggest that the phonological skills are acquired in different stages, moving from large units at earlier ages towards smaller units as they grow. Their studies consider that syllables, onset and rimes are the first to be identified, while phonemes come later. As such, it might be a good idea to focus on onset and rimes first, with more emphasis on initial consonantal sounds (onsets), as they are easier to perceive. Nevertheless, when dealing with such an important topic, teachers should use all the assets they can, including research on how the brain works, how students learn and how we can support them in their contact with the foreign language.

2.8. The theory of multiple intelligences in ESL

When Howard Gardner (1983) published the theory of multiple intelligences (henceforth MI theory), a world of possibilities was opened to educators worldwide. Gardner’s perspective on intelligence has made people see that students are different in their way of thinking, in terms of intelligence, in preferences and strengths. The theory of multiple intelligences has revolutionized the teaching and learning processes and it has shown respect for personal differences and appraising for the multiples way of teaching and assessing learning. It has also proven that important changes can be seen in students when they learn following an approach based on the MI theory, not only in their native language, but also when dealing with foreign languages.

Ghamrawi’s study (2014: 42) shows that students who learn English following approaches inspired in the MI theory learn fewer words than students who follow traditional approaches in learning a foreign language. However, the results of the study suggest that students following the MI theory have higher retention skills. In consequence, the impact of this theory in learning a foreign language and the possible benefits that it brings to the diversity present in today’s schools are worth considering.

2.8.1. *Eight ways of being intelligent*

Born as a reaction against the concept of a single, general intelligence, measured by means of a standardized test and contemplated by an individual’s intelligence quotient (or IQ),

developed by Binet and his team at the beginning of the 20th century, Gardner's theory supports the existence of eight types of intelligence which influence the way people acquire and process information. Even though it has often been challenged, this theory has managed to draw teachers' attention all around the world. In contrast with other intelligence theories that generally measure logical-mathematical or linguistic skills, the theory of multiple intelligences considers that a person's intelligence cannot be measured exclusively by cognitive tests, but a human being's capacities should be considered from multiple perspectives. As such, this theory empowers educators and gives them more freedom and more possibilities to intervene in their work with the participants in the educational process. "These intelligences, which do not always reveal themselves in paper-and-pencil tests, can serve as a basis for more effective educational methods" (Gardner, 1998: 19).

The MI theory sustains that all students have potential, they are all intelligent, but their intelligence manifests itself in different ways. All children are similar in some respects, but they are extremely different in others, too. Nevertheless, Gardner does not accept the idea of describing individuals or groups as representatives for one or another intelligence. From his point of view, a person or a group of individuals can show a combination of certain specific intelligences influenced by factors present in their lives at a certain moment. As such, they may have their intelligence influenced by their economic situation, their historical perspective or even by education and learning, thus intelligence is seen as something fluid and changing. In his book *Frames of Mind* (1983), Gardener describes intelligence as the capacity to solve problems or to create products of value in one or more cultures. Years later, in *Intelligences Reframed* he offers a new definition, according to which the intelligences are "a biopsychological potential to process information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or create products that are of value in a culture" (1999: 33).

The human mind learns in multiple ways, and the intelligences, talents, capacities, and skills of each person are so diverse that the need for balance between the assessment and the educational practice is more obvious than ever, so that students can demonstrate the knowledge they possess in various ways, and not only by means of a test, usually mainly focused on linguistic and logical-mathematical skills. According to Gardner (2006: 176), the efforts made in this area up to now have been insignificant and have been used more frequently to highlight a person's disabilities than to show his or her strengths. However, the MI theory opens a new range of possibilities so that students can show their knowledge in different ways.

2.8.2. Multiple intelligences and ways to activate them

A brief description of each intelligence and several ideas about manners to activate them, recompiled from authors like Armstrong (2002, 2009) and Hoerr et al. (2010), are included in this section. They show us how we can take the theory into the everyday practices in the classroom and how to identify different intelligences in our students.

The linguistic intelligence (word smart) is characteristic for students who love reading, writing stories, who play with crosswords, word games, use dictionaries, etc. In order to activate this type of intelligence the teacher can use textbooks, diverse worksheets and books, stories, word games, brainstorming, diaries, debates, silent reading or reading aloud, individually or in a group. Projects based on elaborating a story or a newspaper, making an audio story, a video, etc. are interesting to develop in class, always according to the pupil's age and linguistic competence.

The logical-mathematical intelligence (logic smart) is a characteristic for students who love writing encoded messages, creating, or solving puzzles, sudokus, mind maps, etc. These tools can prove to be of great help in the ESL classroom, as students can investigate small situations, discover mysteries, solve problems, etc. We often tend to consider numbers as representatives for logical-mathematical activities developed in order to activate this intelligence. However, any activity that involves classifying, analysing and making inferences is appropriate for this kind of students.

The visual-spatial intelligence (picture smart) is typical for those who enjoy reading diagrams and maps, looking for a way out from labyrinths, using pictures, videos, graphics and diagrams, graphical organizers, studying works of art, colours, drawings, etc. These students are highly aware of the space that surrounds them. They can be great when playing Pictionary, using graphical symbols, drawings, timelines, etc. It is good for them to be exposed to various spatial experiences. In order to help students with strong visual-spatial capacities, teachers could use drawings and visual cues. For example, Steiner (in Armstrong 2003: 44) suggests introducing the alphabet through pictorial methods. Thus, /s/ could be introduced by using the image of a snake or the /m/ by using the image of the shape of a mouth. Introducing letters or sounds as visual flashcards may be of help in the case of students with good visual abilities.

The bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence (body smart) can be identified in students who use their body to express themselves, the ones who love hands-on learning, and enjoy touching objects, moving, improvising, playing with Legos or Tangram. Manual activities are suitable

for these students. They enjoy cooking, working in the garden, getting involved in games and competitions, theatre plays, mime, role-plays. Their answers may be bodily answers, such as movements, tastes, sounds, etc., not only verbal. They like to accompany their words with gestures or to create a succession of movements to represent a short story. Using letters made of various materials, different colours and textures is also a bodily-kinaesthetic activity that is likely to be very appreciated by children. By touching the physical grapheme, they may remember with more ease the sound it represents. If the grapheme is made of different texture, then there is a strong possibility that students will include that sound in their repertoire.

Naturalistic intelligence (nature smart) is typical for students who love long walks in nature, who find pleasure in taking care of animals and plants and are interested in the environment. In order to activate this intelligence, we can offer them videos or films about nature, we can use tools like the telescope, the binoculars, the microscope, or give them the possibility to take care of plants and little animals in the classroom. A simple window with a view towards the exterior can be an excellent motivation to initiate a speaking or a writing activity with this type of students.

Musical intelligence (music smart) is a characteristic of students who show preference for rhythms and sounds and love music in various aspects of their lives. They usually enjoy verses, rhymes, songs, audios. They feel inspired and work well while listening to music or they memorize concepts more easily if they sing them, they chant them or they mumble them. Music tends to help these students relax or concentrate on a task. It can also be useful as a manner to change from a sequence of activities to another. Students with musical intelligence may feel very motivated if they have the option of creating their own song, chant or rap with the vocabulary they study or with a certain sound. They may benefit greatly from playing with rhymes and nursery songs focused on a certain sound.

The interpersonal intelligence (people smart) is closely related to the manner in which the classes are set up. It implies positive interaction and collaboration between students like, for example, peer instruction, debates, group projects, etc. Throughout their school stage students learn how to coexist, how to share things, how to work and play together. They also learn how to invent new situations and how to solve the conflicts that may appear. In order to give students more tools to solve potential problematic situations, we can offer them boardgames and role-plays, we can invent stories that involve people and social relationships, diverse situations and behaviour issues.

The intrapersonal intelligence (self smart) is very present in those students who prefer individual activities to being in a group, who need a quiet space and show a great ability for working on their own and are able to choose between different options. In these students' case we can do tic-tac-toe activities, write diaries, etc. We can also give them the possibility to reflect individually on a topic before sharing with others or research a topic on their own. It is important to talk to these students and help them identify their emotions and feelings towards the foreign language.

The activities we plan for the classroom must be meaningful for the students so that they can develop their learning to learn competence. This way we increase the likelihood of students becoming involved in the classroom in activities that go hand in hand with their intelligence profile and we can help them develop their full potential. In Armstrong's view, "the best way to approach curriculum development using the theory of multiple intelligences is by thinking about how we can translate the material to be taught from one intelligence to another" (Armstrong 2009: 64). Therefore, teachers should think about the way to translate a concept from a linguistic system like English not into Spanish, but into the language of other intelligences, into images, into physical or musical expressions, logical symbols or concepts, social interactions, or intrapersonal associations.

3. METHODOLOGICAL PROPOSAL

The aim of this proposal is to offer children a series of motivating activities by means of which to activate their multiple intelligences and develop their phonological and phonemic awareness. The activities are meant to support students in their attempts to identify rhymes and alliterations in literary texts, to work on phonological and phonemic awareness by recognizing onsets, rimes, syllables and individual phonemes in selected words, beginning and/or ending sounds, word families, etc. until they are able to recognize and utter sounds with relative ease.

They have been chosen in order to address the needs of young learners. The descriptors used by the CEFRL to describe the Pre-A1 and A1 level, for students from 7 to 10 years of age, were considered in the election of these activities. The "can-do" CEFRL descriptors considered when selecting the activities are the following ones, selected and adapted from the listening and reading sets:

- For Listening/Spoken reception: students can understand a simple, short story with illustrations, can follow a short story when listening or looking at it several times (Szabo, 2018: 24).
- For Reading: Students can recognise and read out a few familiar words and phrases, e.g. from stories and rhymes, can read and understand the words in illustrated books and magazines, where the pictures help them understand even unknown words, can read short songs and rhymes when seeing pictures along with it, e.g. songs and rhymes from a children's book (Szabo, 2018: 27).
- For spoken production: Students can recite some songs, poems, and rhymes they like (Szabo, 2018: 32).

Specific objectives will be mentioned in each of the three proposed mini projects. They are mainly related to the aspects discussed in this essay, are easy to adapt and serve for orientation purposes for the teacher. The activities are designed around three important cultural events: Halloween, Christmas, and Easter, but more important festivities like New Year, Valentine's Day, Saint Patrick, etc. could be added. These celebrations are already well known in Spanish speaking environments and were chosen so as to motivate students and make them more enthusiastic in their learning. The sounds used in each mini project are not necessarily extensively treated in each set of activities, but rather serve as an extra pretext for motivation. If they are now known yet, they can be introduced at the beginning of each mini project as explained further below. Otherwise, they can be quickly reviewed and then used in the activities. The suggested activities can be used for different sounds, not only the ones presented here.

3.1. H is for Halloween

Justification: Halloween has transformed into an almost global celebration in the last years, so students are very familiar with the characters it involves. Even though they already have plenty of information about it, children still wait impatiently for "trick or treat" activities, for costumes or for candies. As such, this is a wonderful opportunity for teachers to introduce or review words and sounds that can be related to this celebration.

By the end of this project, the students should be able to:

- Identify sounds in initial positions in different texts.
- Identify word families in a given text with the help of the teacher
- Identify words that rhyme in poems like "Halloween Fun", by Ada Clark.

- Perform the poem “Halloween Fun” using bodily-kinaesthetic means.
- Pronounce different alliterations and undertake actions related with the Halloween vocabulary.
- Blend and segment CVC words in a story.

The activities that follow can be used at various ages and they can be adapted to fit different needs. If students are not familiar with the /h/ phoneme, we can introduce it following a strategy similar to the one described in *Jolly Phonics*: story, gesture, forming the grapheme, flashcards, blending and segmenting, song. It is important that students know how to produce the sound and make the gesture that accompanies it, which is in the case of /h/ holding a hand in front of the mouth panting as if you were out of breath and saying *h, h, h*. Sometimes it may be difficult for students to grasp the way to produce it, so doing some intensive work out for a few minutes may result in genuinely panting and realizing how easy it is to utter the sound. We can also use some glasses and pretend we are trying to breathe on the lens in order to clean them afterwards. These strategies may help students utter the sound correctly and avoid the stronger /x/ Spanish phoneme present in words like *abeja*.

- Phonological awareness

The vocabulary specific for Halloween gives us the possibility to play with plenty of sounds in initial position. Therefore, we can assign each student a Halloween character and make them identify orally the first phoneme. By doing this, they will work on their phonological awareness, which means they should be able to identify the initial sound in each word. E.g., /z/ in *zombie*, /m/ in *mummy*, /h/ in *Halloween*, /p/ in *pumpkin*, /s/ in *skeleton*, /g/ in *ghost*. We can put flashcards with the first phoneme on a pile and students have to race and find their phoneme, thus using their linguistic intelligence in decoding the right phonemes, their kinaesthetic one in moving around, and their interpersonal intelligence by interacting with other people. We could double the number of cards so that we have pairs of characters, and the students should make the specific gesture for each initial phoneme in order to find their pair. We can also set up a race, with phonemes in place of numbers placed on the front and back of participants, an appropriate activity for kinaesthetic learners.

The vocabulary used for Halloween allows us to use creative alliterations, which are also useful for the development of phonological awareness and appealing to word smart and music smart students. We can find alliterations in books, we can introduce them in texts we read, imagine games to play or ask students to create them themselves. Some ideas of

alliterations that could be used are *headless horseman, wacky werewolf, capped cat, black bat, plump pumpkins, sticky sweets, spooky skeleton, slithering snake, moody monster, wicked witch, giggling ghost, haunted house, happy Halloween*. More advanced students can create longer alliterations or use them to invent a story that they can read out loud, with people in the audience having to guess the repeating sound. They can also invent their own tongue twisters for a specific sound and then have a competition to see who can pronounce them faster without making any mistakes.

Students may be given a list of words typically used on Halloween: *bat, cat, rat, hat* and invited to cut the first sound and then analyse with the help of a magnifying glass the remaining parts of the word, as true scientist would. This way we can activate their naturalist intelligence. It would be a good idea to print the words on colour coded papers, so that students end up with four different pieces of coloured paper with the same rime printed on each of them, *-at*. If they are in an initial stage of decoding then they will realize that these words belong to the same *-at* family and will be able to read words like *sat, mat, pat*, etc. In this manner, students can discover on their own how onset and rime work in a word and use this knowledge in future readings.

Another important aspect for phonological awareness is syllables. For logic and people smart students we can set up a competition where teams have to compete in classifying words according to the number of syllables. They can first chant the words stomping like a monster, flapping their arms like the wings of a bat or rattling like a skeleton for each syllable, and then use this information to complete the game. Each team has to put a visual flashcard with the word in the correct column (one, two, three syllables), at the same time saying out loud the syllables. For example: *pump-kin, skel-e-ton, witch, pi-rate, ghost, zom-bie, were-wolf, etc.*

Sometimes poems are not only musical in structure or interesting from a linguistic point of view. From the perspective of the English teacher, verses are even more appealing if they allow us to represent their meaning with gestures. The following poem, written by Ada Clark, is such an example, an interesting activity to do in the classroom.

Halloween Fun

*We like to go on Halloween
All up and down our street,
Dressed up like ghosts and witches bad,
And frighten those we meet.
I like the lively jack o' lanterns*

*That wink and blink at me.
The screeching bats and creeping cats
Are funny as can be.
I like to eat the pumpkin pies
That mother makes – yum, yum!
Oh, I'm so very glad each year,
When Halloween has come!*

Besides identifying rhymes in the stanzas, like *street-meet*, *me-be*, *yum-come*, reading and appreciating the rhythm and playing with the words and their musicality, students can use this poem to perform a series of gestures to accompany the verses and reflect the meaning. With a poem like this we can involve word smart, body smart, musical smart, interpersonal and intrapersonal students and have a great moment while taking the ghosts and witches in the poem up and down a road, blinking and winking with jack o' lanterns or showing emotions when eating mother's pies and sweets for Halloween.

Movement can be very motivating for the whole class, not only for kinaesthetic learners. We should just imagine two rows of students and a teacher giving them orders: *fly like a bat*, *jump like a cat*, *float like a ghost*, *creep like a cat*, *roll like a pumpkin*, *fly like a witch*, *crawl like a spider*. Now this activity is transformed into a race and the same students are in the playground or in the gym and have to compete while doing the activity asked by the teacher. They have to reach the other side while moving their arms repeating *fly like a bat*; rolling on the floor and repeating *roll like a pumpkin*; jumping while saying *jump like a cat*, *fly like a witch*, *stomp like a monster*, etc. They will not only feel keen on repeating the structures but will enjoy the activities and in all likelihood perform them again at home with their families to show them what great fun learning English and speaking it is.

When space is more limited, we can just spread some flashcards around the classroom and encourage students to find something beginning with /b/ like the initial sound in *bat*, /l/ like in *lollipop*, /w/ like the first sound in *witch*, /p/ in *pumpkin*, etc. Then they will have to present their flashcards and say the first sound: *This is pumpkin. It starts with a /p/.* *This is ghost. It starts with a /g/.* With a little twist we can transform any common activity we do in the classroom into a motivating pronunciation one, while involving different intelligences.

- Phonemic awareness

Room on the broom, a picture book written by the beloved author Julia Donaldson, is a wonderful choice for a Halloween reading aloud. Besides the interest that the story of the friendly and quite clumsy witch that keeps losing her things, due to different natural phenomena like wind or rain (a good pretext to review the weather) and her good animal friends can generate, we can use this story to work on phonemic awareness. As previously discussed in this paper, phonemic awareness involves the ability of hearing and manipulating phonemes in speech, one of the most difficult steps on the phonological hierarchy. Knowing this we can use the opportunity of a storytelling to help students become aware of phonemes in words they hear and do some blending. In a book like *Room on the broom* we find plenty of simple CVC words that allow us to do that. We can simply stop on a page and draw students' attention to a meaningful word like *cat*, *dog*, *hat*. We first show them the picture in the book and model what we expect them to do. We can use our fingers for the kinaesthetic learners to separate the word into phonemes and make them guess what word we are trying to read, deliberately using a left to right progression. Therefore, on our left hand, we start with the first sound on the left moving to the last sound on the right and utter each phoneme stretching it slightly, to blend the word *c-a-t* for example. After saying the sounds, we make a blending motion with the right hand moving from the first sound on the left to the last sound on the right like in print and help students to see that *c-a-t* makes *cat*, or *d-o-g* makes *dog*. We can repeat this activity with many words in the book. We can use it also for words that do not have the same number of sounds and letters in the case of more advanced students in words like *w-i-tch* to make them aware of the difference between sounds and letters. It is best not to stop the story very often, in order not to make it meaningless by using too many pauses, but use this technique every two pages for example, so that students can enjoy the plot. After the reading we can do a post-reading activity that involves writing very simple CVC words from the story and playing with them. For example, we can play with phonemes by deleting the sound *c* in *cat* and replacing it with a *h* and see what happens or explain the word *bog* and then delete the sound *b* and replace it with *d*. Students can therefore observe that by substituting one sound in a word we can obtain a different word with different meaning, from *cat* to *hat* and from *bog* to *dog*. Of course, seeing the corresponding short film can only give more opportunities to enjoy the story and listen to the pronunciation of English natives. It is also a great way to cater for visual intelligence.

A follow-up activity can involve forming simple words using objects usually seen in a physical education classroom. We can use the hula hoops to place one letter of a CVC word in

each hula hoop. Then students have to jump in each one saying the individual phonemes and then blending them together to form the word. Once the students have done this activity it will be quite easy to move on to writing simple CVC words that students are already able to produce, like the mentioned words in the story. This gives students lots of confidence in their literacy skills.

3.2. J is for Jolly Christmas

Justification: Christmas is one of people's favourite moments throughout the year. It creates in everyone a feeling of joy, celebration and an enthusiastic atmosphere that students of all ages find enticing. As teachers we can use this for our learners' benefit and involve them in meaningful activities that can help them develop even more. Expressions like *jolly Christmas*, very popular in music related to Christmas for example, are a perfect opportunity to focus on this sound that can be quite tricky for Spanish speakers.

By the end of this project, the students should be able to:

- Play with rhythm and rhymes in a given text.
- Identify sounds in initial position.
- Discriminate between the /j/ and /dʒ/ sound.
- Use different materials to write words.

We can start this mini project focused on Christmas with the reading of the book *Peanut Butter and Jelly, a play rhyme*. Apart from including the /dʒ/ sound in *jelly* that we want to focus on, this book is also very interesting because of the cultural element it brings with it and its simple and repetitive structure. It includes verbs related to cooking that can be extremely useful and motivating to use around Christmas. It also offers us the opportunity to deal with silent graphemes in words like *knead*, *knife*, to play with the rhythm, to use sequencers like *first*, *then*, *next* in a natural way and last but not least, for more advanced students, to focus on connected speech in some of the lines. E. g. *crack 'em, mash 'em, pick 'em, squish 'em*.

Using the vocabulary in the book *Peanut Butter and Jelly* we can invite students to participate in different activities, each designed to cater for different multiple intelligences. As previously explained, we can use the *Jolly Phonics* method to introduce each sound we want to work with, before initiating these activities. Once the learners know how to utter the sound, they need to identify it in different words and positions and next, they can take their learning forward and discriminate between different sounds.

To work on a single initial sound like the /dʒ/ sound we can make a Sound Soup where all the ingredients start with the same sound or contain it in the middle or at the end, depending on the level of difficulty we want to use. Students have a basket with ingredients, and they must prepare a soup in a recipient where they have to add the words starting with the target sound, for example. They can add foods like *jam, jelly, jellybeans*. For even greater fun and more motivation we can add different words with the same sound and from time to time stir the soup and see what ingredients they have added. If we find a *jumper* or *joystick* in the soup, we can make very exaggerated gestures and ask loudly if they can eat that. *Have you got a jumper in your soup? Is there a joystick in your pot?* Students can also play a chain game while preparing the soup: *I am making a sound soup and I add jelly*. The next student has to add a new word with the target sound: *I am making a sound soup and I add jelly and jam. I am making a sound soup and I add jelly, jam and a jellyfish, etc.*

We can play a little bit more with discriminating sounds like /j/ and /dʒ/, which we know can be easily confused by some Spanish speakers. Therefore, we can play with words like *jam – yam, yoke – joke, your – jaw*, in minimal pairs. First, students need to be able to hear an individual sound and then to perceive the difference between two different target sounds. As such, teachers should make sure students are able to hear the sound /dʒ/ in *jam* or the sound /j/ in *yellow*. To do that we can write on the board a list of words for each sound. We may add an extra sound, like /tʃ/. We will have something like the following list:

<i>jam</i>	<i>chair</i>	<i>year</i>
<i>jelly</i>	<i>church</i>	<i>yellow</i>
<i>joke</i>	<i>choke</i>	<i>yoke</i>
<i>jingle</i>	<i>chick</i>	<i>yes</i>

The teacher organizes a *Jolly* race and has two rows of students competing one pair of students at a time. The first two in line have to read the first word corresponding to the gesture the teacher makes. For example, the teacher makes the *Jolly* gesture for the sound /tʃ/ and the first student to read the word *chair* wins one point. Then the teacher makes the gesture for /dʒ/ and the student who reads the word *jam* gets one point. The word that was correctly read is erased from the board and we continue with another gesture until all the words are gone and all the students have had their chance to play.

In order to motivate those students who learn by creating new things we can make some Christmas postcards. We will give them some cardboard and string of different colours and they can choose a special message for their families using the target sounds. After practising the message orally, they can paste the words on the cardboard. When building their words the students will have to use only string, pipe cleaners or whatever material that can be modelled to imitate writing.

As Christmas is near and we know that children love Santa, the reindeer and all stories and legends related to this celebration, we can make pronunciation fun by putting some emotion into words. We can ask students to say different words by using Santa's voice, using the Grinch's voice, to pretend they are cold when reading or whatever other situations and characters we can imagine.

Moreover, as most of the students love chatting and chanting, we can introduce some more rhythm and music in the classroom by using jazz chants, which allow us to work on the rhythm and stress in words.

3.3. Ea is for Easter

Justification: The last on our list of celebrations is Easter, and our aim in this case is to work on the /i:/ sound and its alternative graphemes /ee/ and /ea/. The text chosen for this festivity is *We are going on an egg hunt*, a book that offers the possibility to deal with another important element in the development of phonological awareness, onomatopoeia.

Objectives to be attained by students at the end of this project:

- To identify and reproduce onomatopoeia in a text
- To make connections between the onomatopoeia and the animal that produces it
- To identify words with the /i:/ sound in different words
- To utter correctly and memorize words related to spring
- To play linguistic games following a model offered by the teacher

We are going on an egg hunt contains a colourful, repetitive, and fun story where students are invited to go on an egg hunt. On their way they encounter chicks, lambs, bees and ducks, so they can learn various animal sounds in English and at the same time practise sounds like /tʃ/ in *chick*, /i:/ and /z/ in *bees*, /ʌ/ in *ducks*, or observe the silent /b/ grapheme in *lambs*. Once students have enjoyed the book, we can take them outside and whisper to each student the sound they are supposed to make. We can pick the sounds in the book or introduce more

familiar animal sounds. Next, students will have to make their animal's sound until they find all the students with the same sound and become a team. For more fun we can blindfold them for this activity. As a follow-up activity we can utter a series of onomatopoeia and then omit one of the sounds. The students should guess which animal is missing.

Spring vocabulary gives us plenty of opportunities to focus on long /i:/ sounds in words such as *leaves, Easter, easter bunny, beak, east, peas, beans, season, tree*, etc. Advanced students can learn about alternatives and the fact that the same sound can be represented in writing in various ways. Having some lessons in the playground can be of great help for naturalist learners. We can play a 'Simon says' game with movements. We draw a line at the end of the playground and ask the students to identify words that have the long /i:/ sound. If the students are correct, they can move one step forward. If they are wrong, they move one step backwards. If the teacher says a word that does not contain the target sound and the students identify the error, they can also move one step forward. The game ends when all the children have crossed the finish line.

We can imitate hungry animals and play a game using our target sounds. One of these activities is 'Hungry for /i:/', where students are told that they are on a special diet, and they can only eat things containing the /i:/ sound in middle position. They will have a mystery box and without looking will extract one by one the objects hidden inside. For word and visual smart people, using flashcards can prove a good idea, however, in the case of naturalist and kinaesthetic learners, using toys that imitate real objects or animals can be great fun and a very good opportunity for improving vocabulary and pronunciation. They can keep the words they identify correctly as containing the /i:/ sound but should discard the others.

Tongue twisters are commonly used by children to challenge their peers to quickly say a series of words with repeating sounds. We can invent some tongue twisters or look for ready-made ones for our musical and linguistic learners. Example: *Each Easter Eduard eats eighteen Easter eggs.*

We may set up a parking lot for logic smart and visual people. In turns, students receive a flashcard in the form of a car with a visual flashcard or a word written on it, which they have to identify and say out loud and then "park" it in the proper parking lot. Each parking lot will have an identifying tag, so that students know where to place their sound. We may also use a hopscotch game and take our students jumping the sounds, racing for a specific sound, or saying

a sound before each movement. In the end, when learning is combined with movement, sound and play, students always see phonics and pronunciation as an enjoyable activity.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this essay it has been proven that although pronunciation does not imply learning to speak almost exclusively with native speakers anymore, but with a much broader community, it is still paramount to give out students the tools they need to communicate successfully. They should be free to keep their identity while being intelligible and maintaining their credibility, as discussed in previous parts of this essay. Each community of speakers has its own peculiarities when communicating in a foreign language, and this essay has focused on some of the difficulties encountered by Spanish speakers. While phonetics is an interesting option for older students, it is not easy to put into practice with young learners, that is why an intent has been made for a methodological proposal for the improvement of pronunciation using phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics and the theory of multiple intelligences as motivating underlying principles.

Armstrong states that literacy is a whole-brain activity and the sum of all of the eight intelligences (2003: 19-20). He advocates that the printed images and letters in a book are identified by using the spatial intelligence. Those visual images must be matched with sounds in order to read, so the correspondence grapheme – sound must be made. As such, Armstrong demonstrates that up to a certain level all the multiple intelligences are involved in the reading of a word. Sounds are blended together and have a rhythm, an intrinsic musicality that can remind us of the nature sounds, and they can be represented by means of graphemes. The bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence is also present, as it involves the student bringing information from one's own body. As the word is read it becomes an image in the mind, so the visual-spatial intelligence is used. It can also trigger an emotional reaction; therefore, it has to do with the intrapersonal intelligence. Once words are organized in sentences and sentences in longer texts, we employ the logical-mathematical intelligence. When trying to decipher the meaning of texts and how people act in them, we use the interpersonal intelligence.

In Armstrong's view the biggest problem when teaching literacy is not the method used, nor choosing between analytic or synthetic phonics, but whether we will teach literacy and let students struggle with symbols they find difficult to grasp or "whether we're going to take positive steps towards the ultimate goal of making words come alive for all students" (2003:21). This idea of making words come alive and filling them with meaning is fundamental for second

or foreign language learners. If we think about how to “translate” a sound into different intelligences, we will discover new motivating manners of planning our classes in such a way that all students get involved and feel enthusiastic about uttering individual sounds, saying and reading whole words. They have to deal with so many aspects when learning a language that our task is to give them all the support we can. Such support can be provided by working with sounds from different perspectives, using more than one course of action and surprising students with activities designed to cater for all the intelligences in new, less predictable settings.

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