The Situation of English Pronunciation in Primary Education Classrooms in Spain

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This study arises from the need to approach the current reality of English pronunciation in primary education classrooms in Spain. Nowadays, English pronunciation is still not given importance for the development of students' communicative competence. Thus, pronunciation is not sufficiently valued, and therefore, we can detect certain deficiencies in the oral expressions of our students. The main objective of this study was to investigate the situation of pronunciation in primary education in Spain. The hypothesis we planned was whether pronunciation was given appropriate importance and had sufficient presence in the classroom. We conducted a quantitative method being framed within what is known in educational research as a non-experimental or ex-post-facto design, defined as that which is carried out without the researcher deliberately manipulating the independent variables. The instrument used was a personal questionnaire delivered to 55 English teachers, of whom 32 responded, in primary education from Granada in Spain. From the data obtained from the teachers participating in the study, we can conclude that although teachers consider oral expression as one of the main skills to be worked on in the classroom, they do not consider pronunciation to have a direct and significant relationship with improving it.

Keywords: English teachers, questionnaire, pronunciation, primary education, quantitative study

INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation, which includes stress, sounds, intonation and comprehensibility of meanings, is essential for optimal oral communication (Nguyen, 2023). Thus, pronunciation plays a very important role in the social lives of learners and is closely related to the idea of belonging to a group and the concept of personal identity. However, pronunciation has often been relegated to the background of English language teaching, particularly in Primary Education. Although the communicative approach has changed its objectives, English language teaching still has a literacy base and pronunciation is often neglected in the classroom.

In many cases, teachers do not know how to integrate pronunciation into their lessons, and lack the methods, strategies, and training to teach them to students. Consequently,

teachers base their classes on the development of other skills, such as reading or writing, and often neglect pronunciation, which is a key element for good communication. In this way, we can detect certain deficiencies in the oral expressions of students who consider pronunciation to be one of the most problematic areas in language acquisition (Robillos, 2023b).

Traditionally, many English teachers in Spain have spent time teaching grammar and vocabulary, neglecting the communicative skills on which good oral communication is based. Thus, various studies have suggested that, in general, teachers feel unprepared to teach pronunciation because of their lack of knowledge or experience in English phonetics (Barrera, 2009; Fernández, 2009).

According to Usó (2008), English language learners face critical problems in developing their listening skills because teaching has traditionally focused on grammar, reading, and vocabulary. Listening and speaking skills are not relevant in many textbooks and teachers do not consider them in their lessons. Therefore, we can deduce that little attention has been paid to communicative competence in English teaching in Primary Education in Spain.

In the present study, we examined the place of pronunciation in English classes in Primary Education in Spain, and analysed the main strategies used by teachers when teaching pronunciation. We chose this topic because we believe that despite the importance of phonetics in English language learning, pronunciation teaching remains a pending subject in Primary Education classrooms in our country.

Despite the innovations and changes implemented in foreign language learning and the importance currently placed on the communicative approach, pronunciation has not yet been found in the classroom. As highlighted above, this may be partly because teachers do not know how to integrate it into their classes, and partly because they do not have appropriate tools to introduce it into the classroom. Moreover, there is no teaching method in the market that specifically considers the development of pronunciation among Primary Education students (Beramendi & Cosentino, 2019).

As a result, pupils often have much better knowledge of written language than of spoken language. However, successful communication largely depends on correct pronunciation, sound distinction, and intelligible pronunciation, which are essential aspects of communicative competence. In addition, Spanish lacks English sounds. Therefore, adequate learning of the production and perception of these sounds ensures smooth and unimpeded communication.

The difference in sounds between the different languages (English has 12 vowel sounds and Spanish has only five) makes it necessary to promote the importance of pronunciation in the classroom. The aim of teaching and learning foreign languages is to ensure that learners can communicate smoothly in the language. Thus, the correct perception and emission of sounds is essential to ensure that students can communicate fluently and without impediments.

Consequently, the general objectives of this study were to investigate the present situation of English pronunciation in Spanish primary education classrooms and to

determine the methodology teachers use to teach pronunciation. To achieve these objectives, we also aimed to establish the importance given to phonetics in the classroom, investigate the training of foreign language teachers in phonetics, and define the methods and strategies used by teachers in the teaching of phonics.

Theoretical Framework

Despite its key role in spoken communication, the history of pronunciation is relatively short. For a long time, pronunciation has remained in the shadows of foreign language teaching, and although the teaching of foreign languages has evolved and incorporated new approaches, it has hardly changed in recent decades.

Pavón (2020) pointed to the paucity of research and articles on pronunciation for teachers, and the scant attention paid to it in textbooks. As a result, many teachers have higher levels of grammar and vocabulary training than pronunciation. Cortina (2011) highlighted that many teachers are not adequately trained to teach pronunciation because of the neglect of pronunciation. In this respect, she pointed out that many teachers do not teach pronunciation because they lack confidence, skills, and knowledge.

According to Gómez (2017), the teaching of pronunciation was irrelevant in the Grammar-Translation Method (18th century) and did not become relevant until the 20th century with the emergence of the Direct Method in the 1920s, reaching its peak with the Audio-lingual Method in the 1940s. However, in the late 1960s and during the 1970s and the 1980s, there was a debate about whether pronunciation could be taught explicitly, with the result that many programmes devoted less time and attention to it (Hewings, 2017).

In 1886, phonologists such as Henry Sweet and Wilhelm Viëtor claimed that teachers, as well as their students, should be well-trained in pronunciation. Furthermore, they believe that phonetic research should focus on language teaching (Kreidler, 2014). In the early 20th century, the Direct Method worked on pronunciation through intuition and imitation. This method was developed by Maximilian Berlitz and Gouin Francoise. Students imitated models provided by the teacher or audiovisual media, until they approached the pronunciation of the speaker as closely as possible. Thus, the aim of this method is to help learners pronounce the target language correctly and fluently (Silverio, 2018).

During the 1940s, the audio-lingual method was developed by Charles Fries and Robert Lado, two of its main representatives. The origin of this method is related to the Second World War, when the American Army needed speakers who could learn several languages in a very short time. An example of the techniques used to teach pronunciation awareness is minimal pairs, pairs of words that differ in a single sound in the same position, which are used for both listening practice and guided oral production (Robillos, 2023a).

In the early 1980s, two new approaches, the Natural Approach, and the Communicative Approach, addressed the importance of pronunciation in very different ways. The Natural Approach is very similar to that used when learning the mother tongue. It is a

subconscious process based on intuition that places little emphasis on formal rules and grammar, believing that learners acquire a language through experience. Sauveur, an early pioneer of the method in Boston, based on intensive oral interaction in the target language, using questions to stimulate language use.

Nowadays, the Communicative Approach, the most frequently used approach in foreign language teaching, emphasises the communicative value of language and aims to improve learners' communicative competence (Roach, 2010). This approach considers that the methods used previously are not valid because they are based on segmental aspects and elements related to the voicing and articulation of phonemes, including vowel and consonant sounds. The communicative approach aims to improve communication competence by balancing fluency with accuracy. Therefore, suprasegmental aspects which convey information that is not contained in phonemes but affects more of a segment, such as stress, rhythm, and intonation, have become more important (Knasanah & Anggoro, 2022).

Therefore, it is essential that English teachers always keep in mind that the main function of language is to use it as a means of communication. Consequently, teachers should focus on the practice of oral skills, including the importance of pronunciation as a vehicle for understanding the spoken part of the language, especially from an early age (Kelly, 2010).

The role of teaching foreign language pronunciation at an early age has been hotly debated in recent years (Anh et al., 2022; Yürük, 2020; Gómez & Sánchez, 2016). Beginning with its role in the communicative context, pronunciation has been revealed as one of the fundamental elements in creating comprehensible discourse for interlocutors, even in basic communicative situations.

Pronunciation is considered essential in language acquisition, which has led to its inclusion in foreign language programmes. Moreover, it plays a central role in the earliest stages of foreign language learning because sound is closely related to others' perceptions of sociocultural identity (Cortina, 2011). However, reality shows that the teaching of pronunciation in Spain is still one of the aspects that seems to be relegated to the background of foreign language teaching (Silverio, 2018). Pronunciation teaching seems to be neglected in courses with no strategic planning, predefined timing, or specific pre-designed objectives.

The fact that pronunciation is perceived as an uncontrollable feature of language proficiency causes many teachers to view the role of pronunciation teaching as relatively unimportant, preferring to focus on other didactic aspects. Thus, in the face of normally very dense curricula, the teacher opts for the immediate resolution of occasional difficulty. On the other hand, teachers are manifestly unable to explain to their students the reasons why they should work on improving pronunciation when learning a foreign language. The need to improve pronunciation is still neglected in foreign language teaching.

In Primary Education, the traditional absence of this skill within the specific curriculum of each year has increased these drawbacks, which has been reflected for many years in

all aspects of pedagogy. Traditionally, no specific objectives have been used to determine priorities for pronunciation teaching or the teaching methodologies to be used in the classroom.

Moreover, Primary Education textbooks have hardly included activities for this purpose, as it has not been one of the fundamental requirements of the curriculum, so that teachers have had little in the way of additional materials or resources with which to develop or supplement their training. There have been no specific assessment criteria for pronunciation, no assessable learning standards, and the few mentions of phonological aspects in course content have tended to treat them in isolation (Pavón, 2020).

Fortunately, the inclusion of aspects of phonetics, rhythm, accentuation, and intonation in Royal Decree 95/2022 on 1st March, which establishes the minimum teaching standards for Primary Education in Spain following the approval of the LOMCE, and the attitudinal shift in English teaching towards a more communicative approach, is increasing the presence of pronunciation in English classrooms in Primary Education schools.

Pronunciation is beginning to be introduced at this educational stage not only to serve as a linguistic basis for the future development of oral skills, but also because the period before the age of 12 is the right time to consolidate the phonic components of the foreign language according to Lenneberg's (1967) critical period hypothesis.

METHOD

The present study posed the following research question: "Is pronunciation given enough importance in primary education classes in Spain nowadays?" To answer this question, a questionnaire was distributed to 55 primary school English teachers, 32 of whom responded, from a Spanish city.

The review of the theoretical framework that we have conducted has shown us that there is deep concern about the situation of pronunciation in Primary Education in Spain. Hence, this study aims to clarify this situation as it is an unresolved issue at present. To this end, we describe the methodological design, number of teachers involved, instrument used, and procedure for data collection and analysis.

Methodological Design

The quantitative approach is based on analysing an objective reality using numerical measurements and statistical analysis. Therefore, our research is quantitative in nature and is framed within what is known in educational research as a non-experimental or *ex-post-facto* design, defined as that which is carried out without the researcher deliberately manipulating the independent variables. There was no intervention on the independent variables, as both and their effects had already occurred. The researcher starts the study by observing the dependent variables, the phenomena as they occur in a context in a natural way and records their measurements to subsequently analyse them (Cadena et al., 2017).

Non-experimental empirical studies have different designs. Based on the classification of Arnal et al. (1994), we chose a descriptive design because it allows us to describe a phenomenon, analyse its structure, and look for relationships between the characteristics that define it through a survey or questionnaire aimed at describing a situation. Among the four types of descriptive methods listed by Colás & Buendía (1998), the survey or questionnaire method aims to describe a given situation.

In our research, we approach a descriptive study using a questionnaire, and descriptive and inferential analysis techniques for the different sample sizes considered in the study. Because of the characteristics of our research and the object of study, we chose a quantitative descriptive research design, given that the aim is to systematically detail the facts or characteristics of an area of interest in an objective and verifiable manner. With this research methodology, we want to respond to our objectives both in descriptive terms and in terms of the relationship and comparison between variables after the systematic collection of information, according to a previously established design that ensures the rigour of the information obtained, as explained below.

Participants

According to Hernández Sampieri et al. (2014), the population is defined as the set of all units of study. An appropriate probability sample allows a small part of the population to be obtained with a reliable measure of the whole population, since all members of the population have the same possibilities, and the results can be generalised to a population. The data on the population and participants can be checked in the following table.

Table 1
Participants

Primary Education Teachers	English teachers	Respondents	Percentage
150	55	32	58.2%

The percentage of respondents guaranteed guaranteeing the minimum size required with a margin of error of 2.5% and fulfilling the requirements of representativeness to continue the research. We did not apply Fischer & Navarro's (1997) formula for the selection of the sample, since the criterion was not one of inclusion, but rather, the questionnaire was sent to all English teachers to obtain a significant sample.

However, as Gómez-Nuñez et al. (2020) state, the number of participants is not linked to their representativeness, but to the potential information they can offer. In fact, the sample we provide is justified by the quality of the data obtained beyond the participation of more than half of the teaching staff. Table 2 shows the distribution of the 32 teachers participating in this study.

Table 2
Distribution of participants

Respondents	Female	Male	Age	Teaching experience
32	22 (68.8%)	10 (31.2%)	23-48	2-18

Data collection instruments

Selecting the correct research instrument helped us obtain the information necessary to achieve the objectives set out at the beginning. In this research, the instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire defined by García Córdoba as "a system of rational questions, ordered in a coherent way, both from a logical and psychological point of view, expressed in a simple and understandable language" (2015, p. 29). This tool allows the collection of specific, objective, and quantifiable information directly from people who are in the focus of interest and can be applied to several people who are geographically distant and simultaneously. The instrument was validated by five experts following Lawshe's content validity ratio (CVR). As Colás & Buendía (1998) pointed out, the questionnaire aims to determine what respondents do or think using written questions that can be answered without the presence of the interviewer.

For the present research, a questionnaire conducted through the Google Form platform was administered to teachers to determine their perspectives on the role of pronunciation in their classes. The use of this type of research instrument, through an online platform, has made it possible to disseminate the questionnaire more quickly and facilitate its resolution. The same questionnaire was sent to all the teachers to conduct the research. As Mendoza & Ramírez (2020) stated, the use of the same research instruments validates the results and avoids distortions in their interpretation.

The questionnaire was designed in three distinct phases. In the first phase, the items to be included in the questionnaire were designed to make different decisions regarding the relationship between the different questions and each of the dimensions to be determined. This initial phase included many questions distributed across the eight dimensions.

The second phase tested the characteristics of the questionnaire and the external validity of the instrument. For this purpose, validation was conducted by five experts in the field, focusing mainly on the content of the questions, clarity and wording, appropriateness of the terms used, relevance of the items to the dimensions studied, and the location of the questions in the questionnaire. The experts analysed the initial questionnaire and submitted critical analysis, contributions, and suggestions.

In the third and final phase of the questionnaire design, an analysis of the different contributions of experts was conducted. Based on their suggestions and contributions, appropriate changes were made to the instrument, which was finally structured into six dimensions with a total of 15 closed questions following the CVR model. These questions were divided into six dimensions: 1) teacher profile, 2) the skills to which teachers attach the most importance in the classroom, 3) the time they devoted to pronunciation in class, 4) teacher training, 5) the methodology they used to teach phonetics, and 6) the teacher's perception of the students' pronunciation. The questionnaire offered two types of response options: closed dichotomous with only a choice of two answers (yes or no), and closed categorised, which presented a series of alternatives from which the respondent could choose one or, where appropriate, several alternatives.

To prevent the possible negative effects of the questionnaire application, questions of different typologies were used. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to check the internal consistency of the questionnaire, which yielded a value of 0.9. As Thorndike (1997) pointed out, obtaining a value of 0.9 is considered good, so we can say that the questionnaire has a high internal consistency and high reliability, so its measurements are stable and consistent as shown in table 1.

Table 3
Reliability of the questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
0.9	15

Although the results obtained are presented in the following section, the dimension matrix of the teacher questionnaire is presented below, showing both the indicators and questions referring to each dimension listed above.

Table 4
Matrix of dimensions of the teachers' questionnaire

Dimensions	Indicators	Questions
Teacher profile	Age Years of experience Number of students per class Type of school	Block A: General Content
Skills given more importance	Grammar Vocabulary Reading Comprehension Writing Speaking Pronunciation	1 – 2 – 8
Time spent on pronunciation	Frequency phonetics is taught Time spent in class	5 – 6
Teacher training	Teacher training during the degree Teacher's perception of their training	3 – 7
Methodology used to teach phonetics	Importance of segmental/suprasegmental aspects Inclusion of promotion exercises in books Methodology for correcting pronunciation in class Activities used to teach pronunciation Inclusion of pronunciation exercises in tests Pronunciation as integrated, practical or reactive lessons	9 – 10 – 11 – 12 – 13 – 14 – 15
Teacher's perception of student pronunciation	Very good Good Fair Poor	4

Data collection procedure and analysis

The procedure for data collection and analysis consisted of three phases, following the indications of Souza et al. (2017): the exploratory phase, the fieldwork phase, and the information processing phase. The exploratory phase is preliminary research conducted to clarify the research procedure to constitute the fieldwork. In this phase, we delimited

the problem and objectives of our research and developed a theoretical and methodological study. Furthermore, we chose the instrument to be used and established a timetable for its application, as well as the participants.

The second phase was based entirely on the available fieldwork. Here, we put into practice the theoretical construction elaborated in the previous phase, with the necessary time for data collection. The second phase was conducted by distributing the questionnaire to all English teachers. The data collection procedure for the questionnaire involved emailing 55 Primary Education teachers, of whom 32 English teachers answered. We asked them to complete the questionnaire within one week. However, the final turnaround time for the questionnaire was approximately two and a half weeks, which was longer than expected.

Finally, the third phase concerned the evaluation, understanding, and interpretation of the empirical data, articulated with the theory on which we based our study. This last phase was conducted after obtaining all the data, always guaranteeing the anonymity of the participants because following the ethical code is crucial in any research.

Data analysis was performed using Microsoft Excel, a statistical data processing software offered by Microsoft. Separate sheets were used for each questionnaire. The procedure followed was to prepare Excel sheets, enter the data from each questionnaire, and then process the data statistically. For our study, we used only descriptive techniques to obtain the response percentages for each question.

FINDINGS

We now present the results derived from the analysis of the teachers' questionnaire used for the research, analysing each question separately. For each question, beyond the quantitative data, we also included information about the different options given to the teachers, and the number of options that they could choose in each case.

The first question determined which skill teachers considered the most important. In this question, teachers could include more than one out of six answers. As shown in table 3, although 27 teachers considered speaking the most important skill (84.4%), only 11 thought that pronunciation should be a priority in English language teaching (34.4%). Thus, pronunciation is relegated to the fourth place, behind vocabulary (22 teachers, 69%), grammar (18 teachers, 56.2%), and reading comprehension (13 teachers, 40.6%), which are still considered priority skills in English language teaching. Finally, five teachers considered written expression to be the most important skill (16%).

Table 5
Which skill do you consider the most important?

Oral Expression	Vocabulary	Grammar	Reading Comprehension	Pronunciation	Written Expression
84.4	69	56.2	40.6	34.4	16

The second question aimed to determine which skills teachers preferred to skip if they did not have sufficient time in class. Again, the teachers could provide more than one

answer. As shown in table 4, the options chosen by most teachers were written expression (18 teachers, 56.2%) and pronunciation (11 teachers, 34.4%). Grammar was chosen by six teachers (18.8%), and two skills, vocabulary and reading comprehension, were chosen by three teachers each (9.4%). Finally, only one teacher responded oral expression (3.1%). In conclusion, it seems that teachers did not consider pronunciation to have a direct influence on the development of speaking.

Table 6
Which skill do you consider the most important?

Written Expression	Pronunciation	Grammar	Vocabulary	Reading Comprehension	Oral Expression
56.2	34.4	18.8	9.4	9.4	3.1

The third question was a yes/no answer, with only one possible answer. Regarding whether teachers considered pronunciation important, the results showed that most teachers answered affirmatively (31 teachers, 96.9%). However, only one teacher provided a negative answer (3.1%). Nonetheless, as mentioned above, teachers considered pronunciation, together with written expression, to be avoided in the case of lack of time in class.

Regarding the fourth question, another yes/no question, we determined whether the teachers thought that they had learnt the correct methodology to teach phonetics during the degree. Only 14 teachers (43.7%) surveyed claimed to have learnt to teach phonetics during their studies. Thus, 18 teachers (56.3%) considered that they had not received adequate training to teach phonetics in the classroom during their degree, an aspect which needs to be improved.

The fifth question required either a positive or negative answer. We asked them if they believed that they had received appropriate training in teaching phonetics in the classroom. Although we could see that only 43.7% of teachers claimed to have received training in pronunciation during their studies, 65.6% of the respondents (21 teachers) considered themselves adequately trained to teach phonetics in a Primary Education classroom. In contrast, 11 teachers (34.4%) thought that they did not receive adequate phonetic training.

The next question aimed to determine the teachers' opinions about their students' pronunciation, ranging from very good to bad, and being only possible to choose one answer. As shown in table 5, only one teacher thought that their students' pronunciation was very good (3.1%). Most teachers thought that their students' pronunciation was good (17 teachers, 53.2%). However, on the other hand, 13 teachers thought their students' pronunciation was fair (40.6%) and another teacher said that it was bad (3.1%).

Table 7
What do you consider your students' pronunciation to be like?

Very good	Good	Fair	Bad
3.1	53.2	40.6	3.1

The seventh question determined the frequency with which teachers taught pronunciation in their classes. Three different options were offered (always, sometimes, and never), but they could choose only one option. Although the results of the questionnaire indicated that there were no teachers who did not teach pronunciation in class, only 12 teachers (37.5%) said that they taught pronunciation regularly in their classes, whereas 20 teachers (62.5%) said that they sometimes taught pronunciation.

The eighth question assessed the amount of time teachers spent teaching pronunciation in class. They were given six different options (three positive and three negative), of which they had to choose one: less than five minutes daily, less than five minutes weekly, less than five minutes per unit, more than five minutes daily, more than five minutes weekly, and more than five minutes per unit. As shown in table 6, the results showed that 11 teachers (34.4%) devoted more than five minutes per unit to teaching pronunciation. Five teachers (15.6%) devoted more than five minutes weekly, and eight teachers (25%) more than five minutes daily. On the negative side, only one teacher (3.1%) devoted less than five minutes weekly to teaching pronunciation, and seven teachers (21.9%) devoted less than five minutes daily. No teacher claimed to devote less than five minutes per unit to teaching pronunciation.

Table 8
How much time do you devote to teaching pronunciation in class?

Less than 5' daily	Less than 5' weekly	Less than 5' per unit	More than 5' daily	More than 5' weekly	More than 5' per unit
21.9	3.1	0	25	15.6	34.4

The ninth question asked what aspects of pronunciation teachers preferred to work on in class. They were given three possible options: segmental elements (vowels and consonants), suprasegmental elements (stress, rhythm, and intonation), and both: however, they could only choose one option. Regarding this question, most teachers (19 teachers, 59.4%) considered that they focused on both segmental and suprasegmental aspects when teaching pronunciation. Nine teachers (28.1%) affirmed that they focused only on vowel and consonant sounds (segmental elements), whereas four teachers (12.5%) preferred to focus on aspects such as stress, rhythm, and intonation (suprasegmental elements).

Table 9
What aspects of pronunciation do you prefer to work on?

Segmental	Suprasegmental	Both
28.1	12.5	59.4

The next question asked about the presence of pronunciation activities in the textbook that they normally used in class. Again, they could only respond affirmatively or negatively. Most respondents (24 teachers, 75%) said that the textbooks they used in their classrooms did not include pronunciation activities, compared to eight teachers (25%) who said that the textbooks they used included pronunciation activities.

The eleventh question aimed to determine how often teachers included pronunciation activities in their exams. They were given three possible answers, of which they had to choose one: always, sometimes, or never. None of the teachers claimed that they always

included pronunciation activities on their exams. Fifteen teachers (46.9%) said that they sometimes assessed pronunciation on exams, and 17 (53.1%) said that they sometimes did.

The following question determined what types of activities teachers usually conduct in class to teach pronunciation. This time we gave them six different options: listen and repeat, songs, reading texts aloud, sound discrimination, rhymes, and tongue twisters. Obviously, they could choose only one answer. The two activities that teachers preferred to use to teach pronunciation were songs and listening and repetition exercises (nine teachers each, 28.1%). Five teachers (15.6%) read texts aloud in class, and four teachers (12.5%) used rhymes to teach pronunciation. The two least used activities used by teachers were sound discrimination (three teachers, 9.4%), and tongue twisters (two teachers, 6.3%).

Table 10
What types of activities do you usually do to teach pronunciation?

Listen & Repeat	Songs	Reading texts	Rhymes	Sound discrimination	Tongue twisters
28.1	28.1	15.6	12.5	9.4	6.3

The thirteenth question determined how and when teachers corrected the students' pronunciation in class. They were given four different alternatives, choosing only one: I don't interrupt them when they are speaking, so I wait for them to finish; I correct mispronounced words and students repeat them back; I correct them on the spot; or I only correct errors that may cause confusion. When correcting students in class, 14 teachers reported that either they did not interrupt them when they were speaking, so they waited for them to finish, or they corrected mispronounced words and students had to repeat them back (43.8%, respectively). Three teachers (9.4%) corrected them on the spot, and only one teacher corrected errors that caused confusion.

The last but one question asked about the methodology they used in class to teach pronunciation, with three possible alternatives: integrated, reactive, and practical lessons. They could choose only one option. Most teachers (24 respondents, 75%) claimed to teach integrated lessons, in which pronunciation was seen as a component of the lesson. Seven teachers (21.9%) used to teach reactive lessons, reacting to difficulties in terms of learners' perceptions or productions, which had more to do with phonetic corrections. And only one teacher used practical lessons, as shown in table 9.

Table 11
How do you conduct your pronunciation classes?

Integrated	Reactive	Practical
75	21.9	3.1

Finally, the last question investigated the general attitude that teachers held in class when they had to teach pronunciation. In this case, we offered them five different options, choosing only one: the textbook does not include pronunciation activities; students get bored; others; I don't have the time to teach pronunciation; or I don't know how to teach pronunciation. The first two options were those with the largest number of teachers (eight teachers each, 25%), and the last option was that with the least number

(four teachers, 12.5%). In between, they chose others, and did not have time (six respondents, 18.7% respectively).

Table 12
What is your attitude towards teaching pronunciation in class?

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5
25	25	18.7	18.7	12.5

DISCUSSION

Most teachers maintain that communication is the main purpose of second language learning, and yet most of them agree that written expression is the main skill to be avoided in cases of lack of time. Although the teachers surveyed felt that speaking was the most important skill for learning a foreign language, surprisingly they did not consider pronunciation equally important. This implies that they did not associate correct pronunciation with the ability to express themselves well orally. According to He & Luo (2023), the mastery of pronunciation by foreign language learners can promote the improvement of foreign language oral skills.

Furthermore, after studying the results, we can affirm that, together with oral expression, grammar and vocabulary continue to play a key role in English language teaching, ahead of skills such as pronunciation and listening comprehension. These results agree with Sepulveda et al.'s study (2018). From the analysis of the results, we were struck by the fact that teachers attached great importance to speaking, but not so much to pronunciation, a skill which, together with writing, they preferred to avoid if they were short of time. However, many teachers considered pronunciation to be very important in language teaching since acquiring accurate pronunciation in the foreign language is vital for successful communication skills (Wahyuni, 2022).

Another aspect we can highlight from the results obtained is the fact that, although many of the teachers surveyed felt that they did not learn active methodologies to teach phonetics properly in class, they felt that they had received the necessary training to teach English pronunciation as Guisarre (2018) pointed out.

Despite the importance of teachers' attachment to pronunciation, most of them only sometimes taught it in class. This was reflected in the amount of time they spent teaching pronunciation in class, although a large proportion of respondents said they spent more than five minutes per unit. Perhaps because of this, most of them considered their students' pronunciation good or acceptable. According to Nguyen, learners should be assessed by the stress of word, intonation, intelligibility, and clear individual sounds (Nguyen, 2023).

Most of the teachers surveyed stated that they taught both segmental (vowels and consonants) and suprasegmental (stress, rhythm, and intonation) elements despite the handicap that most textbooks used in class did not include specific pronunciation activities. And the types of activities they used to work on pronunciation varied widely, although listening to and repeating activities and songs dominated. We need to foster pronunciation in children under 12 because that is considered the most age-efficient in learning good pronunciation as Wahyuni (2022) stated. Children achieve a near-native

speaker's accuracy in pronunciation when they have been given the opportunity to learn the foreign language and have been provided with adequate exposure to the target language.

In short, despite the importance that teachers supposedly attached to pronunciation, most teachers admitted that they never used pronunciation activities to assess their students. Perhaps because of this, a large proportion of teachers corrected mispronounced words in class after the students had finished speaking. Finally, we can conclude that the most common excuse used by teachers for not practising pronunciation in class was that either the textbook did not include pronunciation activities, or the students were bored with pronunciation activities.

CONCLUSION

Pronunciation has often been relegated to the background of English language teaching, particularly in primary education, because teachers do not know how to integrate it into their classes. They preferred teaching grammar and vocabulary, while neglecting the oral skills. In this study, we have determined the place of pronunciation in English classes in primary education in Spain and analysed the main strategies used by teachers when teaching pronunciation because, despite the changes implemented and the importance currently given to the communicative approach, pronunciation practice has not yet been found in the classroom.

Our research question was whether pronunciation is given sufficient importance in primary education classes in our country. To answer this question, a questionnaire was distributed to 55 primary school English teachers, 32 of whom responded, from a Spanish city. This represented 58.2% of the total, thereby guaranteeing the minimum required size. This information was intended to be useful in understanding the situation of English pronunciation in primary school classrooms in our country and to improve the effectiveness of instruction.

As we demonstrated in the theoretical framework, we analysed the situation of English pronunciation in primary education today. It is probably one of the most difficult aspects of English language learning to master, but it is also, unfortunately, one of the subjects that teachers least like to teach in their English classes. Consequently, it has been timely to reflect on the importance of applying techniques and tools from a communicative approach, since pronunciation is the fundamental support in the acquisition of the linguistic skills necessary for effective speech communication.

As a final reflection, we can conclude that, despite the importance of the communicative approach, pronunciation still does not find its place in the classroom and plays a secondary role in skills such as grammar and vocabulary. Once the research is completed, and the results and conclusions are known, new questions arise that could lead to further research. In this respect, we have been particularly struck by the fact that teachers consider speaking to be the main skill to be developed in our students, but do not consider pronunciation to be important for improving this skill. The implications of this study mean that future research could focus on studying the relationship between students' speaking and speaking pronunciation.

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