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Articulatory Phonetics in the First-Year Spanish Classroom

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The focus of this article is twofold: I reconsider the general question of the role of articulatory phonetics in the second language (L2) classroom and review the phonetics presentation in 10 recent first-year Spanish texts. Pronunciation has been accorded little importance within recent methodological approaches, although their stated goals of communication and intelligibility in fact require the incorporation of explicit phonetics instruction in the language classroom. Considering the first-year Spanish L2 classroom, I propose a phonetics program based on the notion of a learner’s dialect (cf. Bergen, 1974). I then measure the phonetics presentation of 10 Spanish textbooks against a learner’s dialect, and find that pronunciation sections are in most cases incomplete and inaccurate and provide for no self-monitoring or recycling. This article argues against the current trend reflected in these texts, which relegates pronunciation to the laboratory manual or eliminates it altogether.

INTRODUCTION

The teaching of phonetics in the second language (L2) classroom has been subject to varying pedagogical trends. In the Grammar/Translation method of the first part of this century, the focus was on reading and translation; the lack of emphasis on speaking meant that teaching pronunciation was viewed as ancillary and was rarely incorporated into the curriculum. Most texts from this period do include basic phonetic information, however, either at the beginning of the text or at the end, such as Armitage (1953), who explained this organization as follows:

A technical description of Spanish pronunciation and special drills in certain sounds does not necessarily need to precede the teaching of the lessons, and for that reason, the section called Pronunciación has been placed after the lessons and may be used according to the discretion of the teacher. (p. 440)

With the advent of the audiolingual method and the accompanying technology of language laboratories, pronunciation was accorded great importance. In the Modern Language Association’s (1973) Spanish textbook, Modern Spanish, Unit 1 is devoted exclusively to pronunciation and includes a great deal of technical information on the Spanish sound system and on phonology in general. The concepts of phoneme and allophone are presented, and even the differences in the suprasegmentals (e.g., rhythm, stress, intonation) are addressed. Under the heading “Stops,” the Spanish examples polo ‘polo,’ tú ‘you,’ and qué ‘what’ are contrasted with English polo, too, and Kay (p. 12). These examples are accompanied by a technical description that defines voiceless stops and then turns to a contrastive analysis:

All three of the English sounds /p, t, k/ are accompanied by a puff of air, enough to blow out a lighted match or move a sheet of paper held near the lips. In Spanish the sound is unaspirated. The aspiration that occurs after initial stops is automatic in English; it is part of our phonological system. It is therefore a difficult habit to break in acquiring a Spanish accent. (p. 12)

After this introductory chapter, pronunciation is addressed in every chapter until Unit 11 (of 27
units). The 10-page discussion on intonation in Unit 3 (which is also schematically represented in every dialogue in the text until Unit 7) is indicative of the importance accorded to pronunciation in this text.

PRONUNCIATION WITHIN RECENT METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

Within the communicative framework of the 1980s, phonetics was again de-emphasized. As Terrell (1989) noted, “Communicative approaches likewise have not known what to do with pronunciation” (p. 197). In keeping with Krashen’s learning/acquisition dichotomy, Terrell proposed that “good pronunciation habits will ultimately depend on the ability to attend to and process input” (p. 208). Trying to reconcile the difficulty that most adults have in acquiring phonology with the tenets of the Natural Approach, Terrell advocated the use of “advanced organizers” for beginners and “meaningful monitor activities” (that incorporate meaningful input) for more advanced students.1

Terrell (1989) modeled his “meaningful monitor activities,” after Celce-Murcia’s (1987) meaningful pronunciation activities. The basic idea is to use meaningful utterances that illustrate the target phonological contrast, as in the following paired exchange designed to target voiceless stops:

Student A: ¿Quieres comer/tomar coliflor/bróculi/carrne?
(Do you want to eat/have cauliflower/broccoli/meat?)
Student B: Sí, me gusta el/la coliflor/bróculi/carrne pero quisiera solamente un poco.
(Yes, I like cauliflower/broccoli/meat but I would like only a little.) (pp. 210-211)

In this exercise, “students are instructed to carefully monitor their production of /p, t, k/ without aspiration” (p. 212).

The discussion in Terrell (1989) is illustrative of the stepchild status of pronunciation within the communicative approach. It is interesting that Terrell never broached the question of why pronunciation should be taught explicitly, particularly given that he assumed Krashen’s input hypothesis and the crucial role of the affective filter. By advocating explicit instruction in the guise of advanced organizers, Terrell merely acknowledged the dichotomy between adult and child learners within the realm of pronunciation because, as he noted, whereas children acquire the phonology of a L2, adults rarely do. Even in his Stage 3 meaningful monitor activities, students are instructed to pay conscious attention to their pronunciation, which would seem to contradict the focus on meaning.

Research on the role that attitudinal factors play in the acquisition of L2 phonology is contradictory. Whereas Elliot (1995a) and Suter (1976) supported the notion that student interest plays an important role in ultimate attainment of pronunciation, Hammond and Flege (1989) presented evidence that speakers with the least empathy toward a language group (indeed, those with a hostile attitude) are the most adept at imitating native pronunciation. Hammond (1991), in a study of 282 English as a Second Language (ESL) students, found that among students with excellent or good English pronunciation, there was a strong correlation between disapproval of a foreign (in this case, Spanish) accent in English and their pronunciation proficiency. However, the results within the group of nonproficient students also showed strong disapproval of a Spanish accent in English, so that attitude alone is no guarantee of success.

Levac (1991), in a review of the presentation of phonetics in four communicative French textbooks, noted that in contrast to the stated goals of the communicative method, the words given for practice are unfamiliar to the students. From a linguistic standpoint, the presentation is inaccurate in many cases because the examples violate a given rule, as illustrated by this example from Walz and Piriou (1990) (as cited in Levac): “You use the /o/ sound when the word ends in a vowel sound, the /ɔ/ sound when a pronounced consonant follows” (p. 275). As Levac pointed out, the example given to illustrate this rule is the French word chose ‘thing,’ although it is an exception to the rule because it is pronounced [foz].

Many studies, noting the importance of suprasegmentals for communication, argue that teaching suprasegmentals must be emphasized in a communicative-based methodology.2 Wong (1985) argued that both communication and affective response can suffer when nonnative speakers lack mastery of suprasegmentals. For example, she noted that incorrect stress in English can seriously impede communication (e.g., “two more” for “tumor”) and nonnative (i.e., too even) rhythm can be “disruptive” (p. 228). Chen (1982) argued for the communicative importance of suprasegmentals, as well. For her, the emphasis of pronunciation should be on phonological contrasts (i.e., those contrasts conveying meaning differences) and suprasegmentals. Pennington (1989) argued in favor of emphasizing segments,
preferring instead a “top-down” approach that stresses “prosody, phonological fluency, voice quality, and gestures” (p. 20). With regard to phonological fluency, she followed Hieke (1985) in considering speech rate, length of runs, rate of articulation, and pauses.

Within the proficiency movement, pronunciation is only tangentially integrated. Where the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (1999) make reference to pronunciation, the focus is on intelligibility, which may be low for the Novice and even Intermediate levels. It is only at the Advanced Low level that the guidelines require the speaker to be understood by the general public. The issue of fluency is addressed in the description at the Intermediate Mid level, in which it is lacking (“. . . speech may contain pauses, reformulations and self-corrections. . .” [ACTFL, 1999]); in contrast to the Superior level, in which the speaker is “. . . able to communicate in the language with accuracy and fluency in order to participate fully and effectively in conversations on a variety of topics . . .” (ACTFL, 1999).

One obvious problem with the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines is the definition of fluency. It is clear that rate of speech alone cannot be the crucial defining quality of fluency because very rapid, nonnative speech can be virtually incomprehensible to a listener. Simões (1996) provided the following definition of fluency: “the number of accurately pronounced syllable nuclei in sequences of words found acceptable in Spanish discourse” (p. 87). For Simões, acceptable vocalic nuclei are those articulated “within the field of vowel dispersion” (p. 87). Although this definition would appear at first glance to refer solely to phonological contrast (i.e., the substitution of [e] for [i] would not be allowed, whereas the diphthongization of [e] to [æ] would be permissible), some phonetic variants (such as [a]) would also be rejected because the resultant vowels would not fall within the stated field of dispersion. Based on test results from applying this definition of fluency to L2 speakers of Spanish, Simões recommended that phonetics be covered in language curricula.

Although Simões’s (1996) definition would appear to be incomplete, in that it only targets the articulation of vowels, it is an attempt to flesh out the degree of accuracy that should be required from students, which is a controversial topic. Dansereau (1995) outlined a phonetics program for first-year French students, arguing that pronunciation should be taught because most oral interviewers take pronunciation into account when rating students, although only fluency and intelligibility are specifically outlined in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines. She noted that for beginning students, who have not mastered many grammatical structures, intelligibility is often a function of the accuracy of pronunciation.

Given their respective goals of intelligibility and fluency, both the communicative approach and the proficiency approach would seem, on the surface, to argue for a program that concentrates on phonological contrasts and not phonetic contrasts. In other words, the difference between /b/ and /d/, which serves to distinguish between such pairs as van [bán] ‘they go’ and dan [dán] ‘they give,’ would be stressed, but the difference between [b] and [β] would not be, because the substitution of one sound for the other would not result in a meaning difference. The crucial point here is that if a student pronounces *[áblan] for hablan ‘they speak’ instead of the correct [áßlan], he or she would be understood.

A program that focuses on phonological contrasts would also emphasize suprasegmentals because of their communicative function. The difference between a question and a statement (or an exclamation) in Spanish is a function of intonation and, therefore, would be emphasized. In Spanish, stress is phonemic, as illustrated by pairs such as hablo [áßlo] ‘I speak’ and habló [áßló] ‘he spoke,’ and therefore would be incorporated into a communicative/proficiency-oriented classroom.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PHONETICS IN THE L2 CLASSROOM

Although intelligibility and fluency are clearly important for L2 learners, there are several compelling reasons why pronunciation instruction should be an integral part of the L2 curriculum and should go beyond mere phonological contrasts. First, several recent studies (inter alia, Elliott, 1995b; Elliot, 1997; Murakawa, 1982; Neufeld & Schneiderman, 1980) provide support for the notion that formal phonological instruction results in improved student accuracy of pronunciation. The study in Elliot (1997) is particularly relevant to the present discussion because it dealt with Spanish. In a study of 66 undergraduate intermediate Spanish students, he found that input alone resulted in no improvement of student pronunciation, whereas explicit instruction (including contrastive reference to English sounds, allophonic distribution of sounds, and technical terms such as speech organs) yielded significant improvement in student pronunciation.
Although adult L2 learners seldom attain native-like pronunciation, Bongaerts (1999) reported the results of three studies of highly successful adult L2 learners. Two of these studies were of Dutch learners of English; one was of Dutch learners of French. The studies show that native-like attainment in pronunciation is possible for the exceptional adult L2 learner. What is important to note for the purpose of this article is that all learners who evinced a native-like accent had received extensive explicit training in the phonetics of the L2.

Second, from a sociolinguistic perspective, it is not the case that accented speech is neutrally received by the listener, a point made by several researchers. Oyama (1982a) summed it up in this way:

And although it is doubtful that perfection of pronunciation should be made the major goal of training, there are several reasons for serious attention to this question. The social penalty, first of all, that may be paid by accented speakers is sometimes serious. (p. 35)

This point was also made by Leahy (1980), who warned:

We who come in contact with foreign students every day tend to forget that there is a great deal of prejudice among less language-wise members of our society who tend to concentrate more on the way something is said than on the actual content of the message. If teachers are truly concerned with the well-being of their students, pronunciation should be one of their prime concerns. (p. 217)

Duppenthaler (1991) noted that listeners often assume that a speaker with a marked accent has inferior language ability and even mental ability, pointing out that this constitutes “a distinct disadvantage for those engaged in activities, such as political and business negotiations with English-speaking nationals, that require a high degree of mutual respect on the part of all concerned” (p. 33).

One must also take into account the fact that, as noted by Teslaar (1963) and Hammerly (1973), some errors are simply more irritating to the listener than others, oftentimes independent of intelligibility. In the case of Spanish, for example, an American retroflex /r/ would qualify as an irritating error, although it is unlikely that it would impede communication.

Third, a learner-centered approach must take into account the fact that learners themselves care about pronunciation, as shown by several studies (e.g., Brown, 1991; Morley, 1991; Nadásdy, 1993; Taylor, 1993; Yule & MacDonald, 1995). Poor pronunciation may have an inhibitory effect on the learner, as argued by Oyama (1982a) and Harlow and Muyskens (1994, p. 146). These authors claimed that students who are self-conscious about their accent in a L2 are less eager to participate in oral activities than students who are confident about their pronunciation.

Fourth, there is a clearly established link between accurate speech production and comprehension. Oyama (1973, 1982a, 1982b), in a series of studies of Italian L2 learners of English, showed that there was a significant correlation between the learners’ pronunciation of English and their ability to understand English sentences presented with background noise. Meador, Flege, and MacKay (1997), in a more extended study, replicated Oyama’s (1982a) results, finding that L2 speakers with the most native-like accent in English were able to comprehend English better than students whose pronunciation was less native-like. Phonetics instruction in the L2 classroom is, therefore, an essential ingredient in improving students’ comprehension.

Fifth, assuming that the criterion of intelligibility is accepted as a minimal pronunciation standard, it is clear that intelligibility cannot be defined independently of native-like pronunciation. In order to ensure students’ intelligibility, the goal must be native-like pronunciation. Although few nonnatives can achieve 100% accuracy at all times, it seems obvious that there can be no other possible goal. It would clearly be absurd, for example, to aim for 80% intelligibility. Moreover, students’ speech must be intelligible not only to foreign language teachers, but to native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with nonnative speakers, which requires a high level of general intelligibility (cf. ACTFL Advanced Mid level, ACTFL, 1999).

Arragon (1985) underscored the importance of phonetics for intelligibility when he remarked that if instructors focus their efforts solely on semantics and syntax in the language classroom:

...the “logic” of a programme of teaching excluding phonetics would seem to lead to the absurd conclusion that understanding by native speakers does not really matter so long as the learner is satisfied that his utterances are beautifully grammatical and semantically accurate. (p. 27)

This point is also made by Wipf (1985), who was puzzled by the lack of importance accorded to phonetics within the communicative framework:

This [lack of phonetics instruction] is ironic, since the comprehensibility of a message depends, to a
large degree, on the speaker’s mastery of the prosodic features of a language. Encounters with persons who have mastered the structure and lexicon of a second language, yet produce all but unintelligible speech due to inadequacies in pronunciation, are not rare. (p. 55)

Sixth, in order for communication to take place, this criterion of intelligibility must be bilateral; that is, native speech must also be intelligible to the learner. Therefore, the learner must be able to understand speech that reflects all optional and obligatory native phonological processes (cf. Zampini, 1994). Moreover, if students are expected to understand a wide range of native speech, they must be exposed to common dialectal differences.

Finally, pronunciation is important for independent reasons. Gathercole and Baddeley (1993) proposed a working model of short-term memory that directly links speed of articulation with short-term memory. It is well known that short-term memory in the L2 is more limited than in the first language (L1) (see Papagno & Vallar, 1992; Service, 1992). In a study of English schoolboys learning French, Cook (1996) reported evidence of a link between swift and accurate pronunciation of a language and the learner’s short-term memory. He argued that by improving students’ pronunciation ability, their working memory may increase and their general ability to process language may improve.

In this section, I have advocated the inclusion of phonetics in the modern communicative/proficiency-oriented classroom. I now turn to the practical implementation of a phonetics program in the classroom.

A PHONETICS PROGRAM FOR FIRST-YEAR SPANISH CLASSES

Assuming that pronunciation should be taught in the language classroom, the question remains as to how it should be taught. As stated earlier, there is a dichotomy between advocates of a Natural Approach, who argue that pronunciation develops naturally from communicative input, a position summarized by Purcell and Suter (1980, p. 285), who claimed that “teachers and classrooms have remarkably little to do with how well our [ESL] students pronounce English,” and by researchers who advocate explicit instruction, such as Elliot (1995b), Elliot (1997), Murakawa (1982), Neufeld and Schneideman (1980).

The approach that I advocate unifies communicative-experiential methodology and formal grammar pedagogy by being both form-focused and communicatively based (cf. Herschensohn, 1988, 1990, 1993). Specifically, I agree that suprasegmentals, given their communicative function, must be taught early in the course. If intelligibility is the goal, proper rhythm, stress, and intonation are clearly required. In the case of Spanish, syllabification, including the processes of synalephy (vowel linking across word boundaries) and syneresis (vowel linking within a word) must also be taught. Students should be taught, for example, that the preferred open syllable structure of Spanish applies across word boundaries as in los hombres hablan [lo s6m bre sâ b6lan] ‘the men talk,’ and that vowel fusion is found in sequences like la Havana [la b6 na].

Notwithstanding the importance of suprasegmentals, I argue that they cannot supplant the significance of the segments themselves because, as Estarellas (1972) noted, “if a listener is completely unprepared for the sequence of speech sounds that he hears, his ability to mimic the sound is greatly reduced” (p. 96). This point is also made by Lenneberg (1964) (as cited in Oyama, 1982a): “The sine qua non for reproduction is, therefore, the ability to recognize the patterns—which is tantamount to saying the reproduction presupposes prior learning of grammar” (p. 30).

It is also clear that some phonetic aspects are more important than others, a point that was made by Bergen (1974) and Stockwell and Bowen (1969). Bergen argued for a “learner’s dialect” (p. 480) that would focus on the major features of Spanish, such as phonemic contrasts, but also on some phonetic aspects such as vowel quality, unaspirated stops, avoidance of /v/, and so forth. Valdman (1993) made a similar argument for French, stating that although native phonetic mastery is unattainable for adult learners, the goal should be nonetheless to acquire “une prononciation non marquée” (an unmarked pronunciation), which he defines as “une prononciation qui permet de s’exprimer avec exactitude et qui ne choque pas l’oreille des locuteurs natifs” (a pronunciation that allows one to express oneself with exactitude and which doesn’t grate on the ear of native speakers) (pp. 2–3).

A Learner’s Dialect for First-Year Spanish

I adopt Bergen’s (1974) notion of an unmarked learner’s dialect for beginning Spanish students and propose that the following two phonetic topics be presented to first-year Spanish students, in addition to suprasegmentals and the
requisite detailed discussion of the alphabet and sound/letter correspondences.

**Tap [t] and Trilled [R].** Students should be taught to articulate the tap [t], which exists in English, but in a very limited environment, and is never spelled with the letter r. In American English, the sequences tt, dd, d, t, are articulated as a tap in intervocalic position following a stressed vowel, as illustrated by the pronunciation of the words ladder [lærdə] butter [bʌtə], and the expression pot of tea [pɔt tə]. The proper articulation of the trilled /R/ is invariably challenging for English speakers because it has no counterpart in English. Students need to be made aware of the phonological contrasts between tap /t/ and trilled /R/, as in pero /pero/ ‘but,’ and perro /peɾo/ ‘dog.’ Although they might not achieve total mastery of /R/, emphasis should be on avoidance of the retroflex American [ɾ], which may be negatively received by the listener.6

**Alveolar [l].** English has two lateral allophones, an alveolar lateral in syllable initial position, as in lamp [læmp], and a velar lateral found in syllable final position, as in all [aɬ]. Because Spanish lacks the latter, students should be taught to avoid the velar allophone.7

More useful and efficient than focus on isolated segments in the target language is focus on the phonological processes themselves. It is well documented that children learning a L1 acquire phonological processes (such as metathesis) and distinctive features (such as voicing), which greatly speed up and render more efficient the acquisition process (see Macken & Ferguson, 1987 for a review of relevant literature). As in the other components of the grammar, child phonology reflects a general process of rule formation. Research has shown a similar pattern in L2 acquisition, which reflects not only the negative transfer from the L1 predicted by the Contrastive Analysis model, but also evinces rule formation and development of phonological processes (see Hecht & Mulford, 1987; Taroné, 1987a; Wode, 1976). I propose that the following three phonological processes should be presented to students for production.

**Vowel Tension and Absence of Vowel Reduction.** There is no vowel that is identical in Spanish and English. Spanish vowels are articulated with great vowel tension and are maximally distinct (Quilis & Fernández, 1992). They are also relatively short in duration, and the lips take an extreme position, either very spread or very rounded. In English, although there is a series of tense vowels ((ɛj] say, [iʃ] me, [əʊ] know, [uə] you) and a series of lax vowels ((æ] at, (ɪ] it, (ʊ] book, (ɔ] more), the tense vowels lack the articulatory tension of their Spanish counterparts and, moreover, are all diphthongized in open syllables. Although the lax vowels are pure (i.e., not diphthongized), they have no counterpart in Spanish. Moreover, the English phonological process of reduction of unstressed vowels (typically to [ə] as in sofa or to [i] as in it) does not exist in Spanish, which can be illustrated by the contrastive pronunciation of Alabama in English [æləbəˈme] and in Spanish [alaβaˈma].

**Spirantization of Stops.** In Spanish, the phonetic environment determines whether the phonemes /b/, /d/, and /ɡ/ are realized as their stop allophones [b], [d], [g] or their fricative allophones [β], [ð], or [ɣ]. Generally speaking, the stop allophones are found only after a pause or a nasal; in all other environments, the fricative allophones are pronounced. It is often noted that in the case of [d] and [ð], there is a further complication in that the stop allophone is also realized after /l/. However, given that many native speakers also articulate the stop allophones [ɡ] and [b] in this environment (see Barrutia & Schwegler, 1994), I will alter my general statement to allow stops after laterals for the learner’s dialect.8

**Nasal Assimilation.** In Spanish, like English, there is a homorganic assimilation of nasals to the following consonant, as illustrated by the velar nasal in tengo [tɛŋɡo] ‘I have,’ and the dental nasal in dónde [dɔnde] ‘where.’ However, Spanish differs from English in that this assimilation applies to syllables across word boundaries, as can be seen in the bilabial nasal in un beso [ʊn bɛ so] ‘a kiss.’

**Teaching Dialectal Variation as an Aid to Comprehension**

Dialectal variation is particularly relevant in the Spanish classroom because, as Teschner (1996) noted, Spanish (unlike French, for example), is pluricentric in that there are several prestigious dialect centers of Spanish, including Mexico City, Madrid, Buenos Aires, Bogotá, and San Juan (p. 185). Students are likely to be exposed to Spanish from vastly different dialect areas either within the classroom setting from one semester to the next or in a natural setting outside the classroom. For this reason, popular third-year Spanish phonetics texts (Barrutia & Schwegler, 1994; Dalbor, 1997; Teschner, 1996), both present a model pronunciation loosely based on that of the so-
called *tierras altas* (highlands) and also provide an overview of the salient phonological features of Spanish dialects.

First-year Spanish students should, therefore, be exposed to Spanish dialectal variation, while being encouraged to maintain consistency in their own pronunciation. It is not unusual at higher levels to encounter students who have adopted widely divergent dialect features such as *distinción* from north-central Spain (a phonemic distinction between /θ/ and /s/) and the *zeismo* (the use of [ɔ] for ll and y) from Argentina. In order to avoid this mixing of dialectal features, it is imperative that instructors explain to students which features characterize a given dialect.

Like all dialects, Spanish dialects are characterized by a variety of phonological processes. In order to improve communication with speakers from different dialect areas, students should ideally be taught to recognize native speech that reflects the following three phonological processes.9

**Aspiration/Deletion of Syllable Final Consonants.** In many dialects of Spanish, particularly the so-called *tierras bajas*, or lowlands, consonants are weakened or deleted in syllable final position, yielding utterances like [lah mu hé re] or [la mu hé re] for *las mujeres* ‘the women,’ and [o tru sjón] for *obstrucción* ‘obstruction.’

**Distinción/Seseo.** In most dialects of Spanish, including southern Spain and Latin America, the spellings z, ce, ci, and s represent the phoneme /s/, a phenomenon known as *seseo*. However, in north-central Spain there is a phonemic distinction (known as *distinción*) between /θ/, represented orthographically as z, ce, or ci, and /s/, which is spelled with the letter s. Students should be exposed to both pronunciations, but should be encouraged to adopt the pronunciation typical of native speakers in their area.10

**Yeísmo/Zeísmo/Leísmo.** Within the dialects of Spanish, the graphemes ll and y may be realized in a variety of ways. The majority of dialects are *yeísta*, in that both spellings represent /j/. However, for the same spellings, speakers of the prestige dialect of the River Plate region (Argentina, Uruguay) would pronounce [ɔ] or [f], as this dialect is *zeísta*. Finally, *leísmo*, in which the digraph ll represents /ʎ/, and y represents /j/, is found in many parts of Northern and Central Spain.

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**Self-Monitoring and Recycling**

Another crucial component of pronunciation instruction in the curriculum is developing in the learner the ability to monitor his or her own pronunciation, as argued by Stevick (1982) and Crawford (1987). This self-monitoring has the added benefit of improving listening comprehension, because if a learner cannot distinguish between two sounds actively or passively, communication may be affected.

As a final consideration, I recommend that the practice of recycling, which many recent textbooks have recently begun to incorporate within their grammar and vocabulary presentation, be extended to pronunciation. Ideally, a phonetics presentation should be included in every chapter in the text, and many topics should be revisited. As an example, it is clearly unrealistic to assume that a single lesson on /θ/ would be sufficient to ensure mastery of this sound. An added advantage of incorporating the notion of phonological processes advocated above is that they extend to a variety of individual segments and allow naturally for recycling. For example, vowel tension is a topic that is relevant for the articulation of every vowel in Spanish and should be touched upon in a general sense in the presentation of each vowel.

**Classroom Implementation**

The blueprint for classroom implementation of the phonetics program outlined in this article centers on the learner’s dialect. My proposal includes general features of Spanish dialectal variation and allows for the recycling of sounds. In my view, two types of presentations should introduce a given phoneme or phonological process. First, explicit phonetics instruction of the process in question should be presented in nontechnical (but accurate) language. Although this kind of explicit phonological instruction may seem to be at odds with a communicative-experiential methodology, it is nonetheless effective, as illustrated by the studies cited. For beginning students, even Terrell (1989), a proponent of the Natural Approach, acknowledged the necessity for explicit phonological instruction.11

Consider as an example the phonological process of spirantization of stops discussed previously. The phonetics instruction in this case should take the form of a simple, nontechnical explanation of a stop versus a fricative. Students could be taught to equate the category stop with closure of two articulatory organs, using [b] and [β] as a starting
point. The discussion should include an overview of the distribution of stops and fricatives in Spanish, a concept that should be revisited several times during the course of the year.

Next, students should complete a series of listening comprehension exercises in which they identify the sound they have heard, for example stop [b] versus fricative [f] in the pairs boca ‘mouth’ and haba ‘bean,’ respectively. Although these exercises have been traditionally featured in some phonetics textbooks, they are rarely incorporated into first-year Spanish textbooks. It has long been accepted that perception must precede production for L1 acquisition (see Bever, 1981; Churchland, 1986; Edelman, 1989; Kuijpers, 1996). Recent research affirms the notion that perception must precede production for L2 acquisition, as well. Flege (1995) argued that for L2 learners to create new phonetic categories for L2 sounds (cf. Rochet, 1995), they must first perceive the cross-linguistic difference. A recent study of the pronunciation of English vowels by adult L2 learners by Flege, Bohn, and Jang (1997) confirmed the link between perception and accuracy in speech production. The results from their study show that only speakers who were able to perceive accurately the varied spectral quality of English vowels were also able to produce accurate English vowels. However, unlike L1 acquisition, L2 learners’ correct perception of sounds does not always lead to accurate production of sounds, as Flege (1999) noted.

Bongaerts’s (1999) study of highly successful adult Dutch L2 learners of English, discussed above, provides further support for the importance of perceptual training for L2 learners’ pronunciation. Of the participants in his study, those who had achieved native-like pronunciation had also received extensive training in the perception of speech sounds.

Finally, the third component of the program is the production of speech sounds, which must presuppose accurate perception. In early chapters, production exercises should include lists of words familiar to the student. Ideally, these words should be taken from dialogues or vocabulary presentation in the chapter in question, so that the speech production exercises are meaningful to the student (cf. Terrell, 1989). In later chapters, more complex utterances should be used, including tongue twisters or even proverbs (cf. Teschner, 1996). Complex utterances are essential for the introduction of many phonological processes in Spanish, such as nasal assimilation, that occur across word boundaries. As the year progresses, free conversation exercises that direct the student to concentrate on a particular sound or process should also be used. Such exercises provide the opportunity for students to integrate correct articulation of sounds into their informal speech, as recommended by Barrutia and Schwegler (1994), while allowing for additional recycling.

A REVIEW OF THE PRESENTATION OF PHONETICS IN FIRST-YEAR SPANISH TEXTS

Having established general guidelines for the presentation of phonetics in the preceding section, I now turn to the current situation in first-year Spanish texts. For the purposes of this discussion, I have reviewed the phonetics sections in 10 first-year textbooks, considering a wide range of books that vary in approach from the somewhat traditional Arriba [A] (Zayas-Bazán, Bacon, & Fernández, 1997), ¿Cómo se dice? [CSD] (Jarvis, Lebredo, & Mena-Ayllón, 1998), Poco a poco [PAP] (Hendrickson & Borrás, 1998), and Puntos de partida [PDP] (Knorre, Dorwick, Pérez-Gironés, Glass, & Villarreal, 1999), to the highly communicative focus of ¿Claro que sí! [CQS] (Garner, Rusch, & Domínguez, 1996), ¿Sabías qué? [SQ] (VanPatten, Lee, & Ballman, 1996), Dicho y hecho [DH] (Dawson & Dawson, 1997), and Tú dirás [TD] (Gutiérrez, Rosser, & Martinez-Lage, 1996). In addition, books with a cultural focus were also considered, such as Mosaicos [M] (Castells, Guzmán, Rush, & García, 1998) and Visión y voz [VV] (Galloway & Labarca, 1998).

It is troubling to report that the current trend among these textbooks is to give minimal coverage of phonetics. Of these 10 books, only 4 include phonetics sections in the textbook itself, and 1 text includes no mention of phonetics in either the lab manual or the textbook. These trends are shown in Table 1.

None of the books that I have considered covers phonetics throughout the text; most end their presentation early in the chapters that would be covered in the first semester. This tendency allows for no recycling and results in the omission of many crucial topics.12 Two books, CSD and PDP, do provide sections on phonetics throughout the lab manual, but I believe that it is crucial that phonetics be presented in the text itself throughout the book. In the lab presentation, because the instructor’s role is nonexistent, there is no monitoring of the student’s progress, except for dictation in certain texts, which is a passive exercise and is not directly related to production. None of these texts includes any other form of self-monitoring in the lab manual, such as listening discrimination (cf. the exercises in Valdman, 1995). Such exer-
TABLE 1
Phonetics in Selected First-Year Spanish Textbooks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textbook</th>
<th>Phonetics In Textbook</th>
<th>Phonetics In Lab Manual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arriba</td>
<td>Yes, in 6 out of 14 Chapters</td>
<td>Yes, in 6 out of 14 Chapters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¿Cómo se dice?</td>
<td>Yes, in 8 out of 18 Chapters</td>
<td>Yes, in all 18 Chaptersa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poco a poco</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes, in all 9 out of 18 Chapters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puntos de partida</td>
<td>Yes, in 7 out of 18 Chapters</td>
<td>Yes, in all 18 Chapters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¿Claro que sí?</td>
<td>Nob</td>
<td>Yes, in 17 out of 18 Chapters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¿Sabías qué?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dicho y hecho</td>
<td>Yes, in 5 out of 14 Chapters</td>
<td>Yes, in 10 out of 14 Chapters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tú dirás</td>
<td>Nob</td>
<td>Yes, in 7 out of 15 Chapters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosaicos</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes, in 11 out of 14 Chapters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visión y voz</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

aAfter Chapter 10, the pronunciation sections in the lab manual accompanying ¿Cómo se dice? consist of a series of sentences, with no explanation or common theme.
bPronunciation is mentioned in the Preface.

Cises are crucial in order to develop the students’ aural proficiency because many times they simply do not perceive the contrasts between pure and diphthongized vowels or velar [l] and alveolar [l].

Moreover, if phonetics instruction is crucial to meeting the goals within a communicative/proficiency-oriented classroom, it is obvious that coverage must be provided within the text itself. Not all programs require students to complete the lab manual, and as I have stated, it would be impossible to verify student work given the types of exercises that provide phonetics practice. If overt instruction has a role within the language classroom, then instructors can no more expect students to teach themselves the sound system independently, using only the lab manual, than expect them to master the subjunctive using only the workbook. Although the lab manual can and should provide further practice for students, it cannot supplant phonetics instruction in the classroom.

With regard to the coverage of phonetics within the 10 texts, I have identified the following general problems: (a) the coverage is incomplete; (b) the discussion is in many places inaccurate; (c) the avoidance of technical terms, many of which are imprecise, leads to the introduction of confusing terms; (d) the discussion refers to technical terms not previously introduced; (e) the illustration of sounds is through unusual words that are unknown to the student; (f) there is no recycling of material; and (g) students are not taught to monitor their own pronunciation.

Incomplete Coverage

I have outlined the sounds and processes that the learner’s dialect should ideally include. Table 2 provides a summary of the coverage of these phonetic features within the 10 textbooks.

As Table 2 indicates, none of the textbooks provides complete coverage of the features of the proposed learner’s dialect. Fewer than half of the texts make direct mention of the vowel quality of Spanish vowels, and only three mention that the English [ə] is to be avoided in Spanish. Only two texts mention that the Spanish [l] is alveolar in both syllable-initial and syllable final position, and half of the texts make no mention of unaspirated [t] in Spanish. Although all of the texts mention stress, particularly as it refers to the written accent, other suprasegmentals such as vowel linking, intonation, and syllabification are omitted in three of the eight texts. Only one text presents the rhythm of Spanish, and two mention nasal assimilation. In addition, the coverage of dialectal features is highly incomplete; only two texts present éismo, and none presents the common process of deletion/aspiration of syllable final consonants.

It is crucial that the instructor’s edition of the text provide a detailed presentation of phonetics for the benefit of the instructors, many of whom lack technical training in this area. This additional information could be presented either in the preface or in the margins of the texts. Of the 10 texts, only PDP provides any additional technical information in the instructor’s text.

Inaccuracies

Table 2 cannot illustrate the fact that in many instances where a topic is presented, the phonetics information provided to students in these texts is inaccurate. Inaccuracies were found in
TABLE 2
Phonetics Topics Covered in Selected First-Year Spanish Textbooks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Arriba</th>
<th>¿Cómo se dice</th>
<th>Poco a poco</th>
<th>Puntos de partida</th>
<th>¿Cómo qué sí!</th>
<th>Dicho y hecho</th>
<th>Tu dimin</th>
<th>Mestizos</th>
<th>Viñetas y voz</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alphabet; Sound-Letter Correspondences</td>
<td>T.L.*</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>T.L.</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stop/Fricative Alternation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[b] [B]</td>
<td>T.L.</td>
<td>T.L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[d] [ð]</td>
<td>T.L.</td>
<td>T.L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>T.L.</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[g] [γ]</td>
<td>T.L.</td>
<td>T.L</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>T.L.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liquids</td>
<td>[r]</td>
<td>T.L.</td>
<td>T.L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>T.L.</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[ɾ]</td>
<td>T.L.</td>
<td>T.L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>T.L.</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[l]</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>T.L</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaspirated Stops</td>
<td>[p]</td>
<td>T.L.</td>
<td>T.L</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[t]</td>
<td>T.L.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>T.L.</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[k]</td>
<td>T.L.</td>
<td>T.L</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vowel Tension*</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Vowel Reduction ([ə], [i])</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>T.L.</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasal Assimilation</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suprasegmentals</td>
<td>Syllabification</td>
<td>T.L.</td>
<td>T.L.</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhythm</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intonation</td>
<td>T.L.</td>
<td>T.L.</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>T.L.</td>
<td>T.L.</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>T.L.</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synaleph/Syneresis</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>T.L.</td>
<td>T.L.</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialectal Features</td>
<td>Deletion of Syllable-Final Consonants</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distinción/Seseo</td>
<td>T.L.</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yéismo/Lleismo/Žéismo</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*T = Textbook; L = Laboratory Manual.
*bRefers to explicit reference to pure, nondiphthongized vowels.

every text that was reviewed. One common error involved indicating to the student that nonequivalent English and Spanish sounds are, in fact, equivalent, as in "a is like the a in father, i is like the e in the English word me" (A, p. 8); "The Spanish e is pronounced like the e in they" (PAP, p. 10, lab manual); and "Before a, o, u or a consonant, e has the English k sound as in cat" (DH, p. 3). Students must be taught from the beginning that although the vocalic system in Spanish is a relatively simple one, no Spanish vowel has an identical English counterpart (cf. Dalbor, 1997), a point that can be stressed through listening discrimination exercises.

With regard to the stop/fricative alternation in Spanish, the stop allophones, as stated previously, only generally occur following a nasal or after a pause. Compare ¡Vén! [bén] 'Come!' and ¡No ven-
gas! [no βɛŋ gas] ‘Don’t come!’; in both instances the /b/ is word initial, but only in the first case is it realized as a stop, because it is utterance initial, as well. It is unfortunate that several texts incorrectly inform students that stops are pronounced at the beginning of a word, for example, that “Ipsan, it is pronounced like the Spanish word get: [g]. It is also pronounced this way at the beginning of a word, after a pause, or after the letter n” (PDP, lab manual p. 84); “The consonant d is pronounced two different ways in Spanish. When d appears at the beginning of a word or after n or l, it is produced by placing the tip of the tongue behind the back of the upper front teeth” (CQS, lab manual, p. 243); “In Spanish, the sound of b can be spelled with the letter b or v and is pronounced like the of Bill when it is the first letter of a word or after m or n” (TD, lab manual, p. 127).

Inaccuracies were discovered in statements referring to a variety of topics, including the following:

1. “¿Cómo estás? in natural speech is pronounced ¿Cómo estás?” (VV, lab manual, p. 21). Although glide formation [we] is possible in rapid speech, omission of the vowel [e] is not possible.
2. “Stressing words correctly will improve your intonation and help native speakers understand what you are saying” (PAP, lab manual, p. 172). Intonation is independent of stress.
3. “With the addition of the dieresis (¨), the u is pronounced” (DH, p. 4). It is pronounced, but as [w].
4. “In a breath group, if a word ends in a vowel and the following word begins in a vowel, the vowels join to form one syllable. Tú eres de la capital. (Tué-res de la ca-pí-tal)” (A, p. 39). A stressed vowel can never become a diphthong.
5. “When a strong and a weak vowel are combined in the same syllable, the strong vowel takes a slightly greater stress, for example, vuelvo” (CQS, lab manual, p. 283). The weak vowel in this case has no stress whatsoever, because it is realized as a semivowel.

Many texts overgeneralize dialectal features, informing students, for example, that distinción is characteristic of Spain in general: “In Spain, it [i.e., z] is pronounced like the th in the English word think” (A, p. 191); “In Spain, on the other hand, the consonants c and z followed by an e or an i are usually pronounced like the th in the English word thin” (CQS, lab manual p. 279). No mention is made in these texts of the large areas of Spain (including the entire region of Andalucía and the Canary Islands) in which [θ] is not used.

**Use of Imprecise, Confusing Terms**

Perhaps in order to avoid the difficulties that technical terms can pose to first-year students, many texts opt for less technical descriptions. However, the result can be confusing because the terms are imprecise and undefined. Many texts, in order to avoid using the terms stop and fricative, opt for terms like harder and softer, slight, or weak, for which the students have no frame of reference. For example, PDP informs students that “the [g] pronunciation actually has two forms, a harder [g] and a fricative [g] that sounds softer” (p. 223); DH tells students to “remember that in Spanish a d between vowels has a slight th sound as in brother” (p. 4); and CSD explains to students that “the Spanish b and v are pronounced exactly alike. Both sound like a weak English b as in the word Abe” (p. 91).

The nontechnical explanations can even unintentionally border on the humorous, as in the following from TD: “To pronounce the combination eu start with your lips spread, positioned to smile, as you pronounce the Spanish vowel e. Bring them slowly to a rounded position as though you were going to whistle. All this should be done in one smooth motion—in a single syllable” (p. 92); or, from M: “At the beginning of a syllable, the pronunciation of the Spanish and English l is very similar. A the end of a syllable, the Spanish l has the same pronunciation, while English l is quite different” (lab manual, p. 45).

I advocate a common sense approach to the use of technical terms. Although terms like syllephy would not be encouraged in a first-year text, some basic terms like stop and fricative should be used, but must be (repeatedly) defined for students.

**Use of Overly Technical Terms**

Although technical terms can be incorporated profitably in phonetics explanations, they must be accompanied by clear, nontechnical explanations. In my opinion, the following selections, culled from the 10 Spanish texts, would not be comprehensible to the uninitiated first-year Spanish student (overly technical terms are in italics): “Two successive weak vowels (i, u) or a combination of a strong vowel (a, e, or o) and a weak vowel (i or u) are pronounced as a single syllable forming a diphthong (un diptongo)” (PDP, p. 33); “Diphthongs are pronounced as a single
syllable” (DH, p. 2); “The pronunciation of the Spanish e is similar to the English e in they, but without the glide sound” (M, lab manual, p. 5). “Intonations in Spanish usually goes down in statements, information questions, and commands.” (CQS, lab manual p. 295); “The Spanish l is pronounced like the l in the English word lean. The tip of the tongue must touch the palate” (CSD, p. 190); “When a word begins with the letter r it is pronounced like a double trill, that is with a trill of the tongue” (VV, lab manual, p. 45). It has been my experience in phonetics courses that even third-year Spanish I.2 learners have no prior understanding of notions such as syllable, diphthong, glide, intonation, and trill and must be provided with detailed explanations.

Use of Unknown Words to Illustrate Sounds

Echoing the concern of Levac (1991) in her review of first-year French texts, I found that in some cases unfamiliar and uncommon words are used to illustrate phonetics concepts in the 10 first-year Spanish textbooks. Consider the following examples, which are not glossed in the texts in question: zafiro ‘sapphire’ (DH, p. 4); caldera ‘kettle’ (A, p. 114); emocionado ‘upset’ (M, lab manual, p. 73) recipiente ‘container’ (CQS, lab manual, p. 279), and jipijapa ‘fine woven straw’ (PDP, lab manual, p. 84). None of these words has been actively presented to students prior to being introduced as illustration of the pronunciation of the sound in question. In some cases, the words are not presented at all in the text.

No Recycling of Sounds

None of the texts has true recycling in the sense that a sound is first presented and then revisited regularly in the following chapters. There are a few exceptions to this omission in which isolated sounds are reviewed. PDP introduces stress in Chapters 2 and 3 and the topic is revisited in Chapter 16; CQS presents [d] and [ð] in Chapter 2 and reviews the sounds in Chapter 14, at which time a review of the voiceless stops [p], [t], and [k], first introduced in Chapter 6, is also provided. Explicit reference is made to recycling in DH; after a general presentation on the sound system of Spanish in the Preface, “pronunciation checks” are provided in Chapters 1 through 5. Although an attempt at recycling is made in DH, a closer examination of the pronunciation checks reveals that most of these tips refer, in fact, to sound-letter correspondence (e.g., ge, gi = [x], ll = [j], ce, ci = [s], nonrealization of the spelling [h]) and only a few isolated consonants ([θ], [ð], [r], [f]) are recycled. Moreover, given that the presentation of phonetics in this book ends in Chapter 5, it fails to meet the goal of recycling sounds throughout the text.

No Development of Self-Monitoring

A crucial element that helps students improve their pronunciation is developing in them the ability to monitor their own pronunciation. This can be done in a variety of ways, including listening discrimination exercises in which students indicate which sound they have heard (e.g., English [jj] or Spanish [j], Spanish [r] or Spanish [f]), as well as exercises in which students record their own speech and compare it to native speech, indicating any contrasts. Although A, PDP, and CSD provide in the margin a few isolated listening discrimination exercises for instructors to use in the classroom, none of the texts provides listening discrimination exercises in the lab manual itself. Such exercises, which should grow progressively more difficult, can be very profitably integrated into the lab program of a first-year text.

CONCLUSION

This article has presented a brief review of the history of phonetics instruction within the language classroom. Echoing Crawford (1987) and Strevens (1988), I have shown that in opposition to the stated goals of the communicative/profiency-oriented approaches, recently little emphasis has been placed on pronunciation in the classroom. Explicit phonetics instruction in the classroom is crucial in order to develop students’ intelligibility and communicative skills, as shown by several recent studies. My proposal is that first-year textbooks focus on presenting a learner’s dialect, which will provide students with an overview of the sound system of Spanish and heighten their awareness of important phonological processes in that language. As I have argued, this learner’s dialect should include exposure to common dialectal phonological processes in Spanish in order to facilitate communication.

The lack of importance accorded to pronunciation in recent years was apparent from my review of 10 popular first-year texts, which revealed that much improvement is needed in the area of pronunciation. Presentation of phonetics in first-year texts should encompass all-important aspects of the Spanish sound system, and sounds should be recycled throughout the text. Discussion should be in all cases accurate and should be
neither imprecise nor overly technical. I disagree with the common practice of relegating phonetics to the lab manual or, worse, avoiding the sound system altogether. Phonetics should be incorporated into the language classroom, using meaningful activities that develop the skills of self-monitoring as well as production.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Julia Hershensohn, Lucía Llorente, and Linda McManness for their helpful comments and suggestions on a draft of this article. Any remaining errors are my sole responsibility.

NOTES

1 There is conflicting research regarding child versus adult proficiency in the acquisition of phonology. Olson and Samuels (1982), in their study of Dutch learners, reported that both junior high and college-age participants scored significantly better than elementary-age children in German pronunciation. They concluded that the child's advantage in the L1 doesn't extend to the L2. However, several other studies, including Asher and García (1982), Carroll (1963), McLaughlin (1977), Misrachi and Denny (1979), and Tarone (1987b), have found a critical age for the native-like acquisition of phonology, perhaps as young as the age of six, although isolated exceptions have also been documented (cf. Bongaerts, 1999; Neufeld, 1980).

2 This is not a new idea. Stockwell and Bowen (1969) also ranked suprasegmentals first in their preferred pedagogical sequence of Spanish pronunciation.

3 He refers here to the phonetic manifestation of Spanish vowels based on Delattre (1965).

4 This argument was suggested to me by J. Hershensohn (personal communication, July 1, 1998).

5 More complex topics of vowel linking such as diphthong formation between words (e.g., estudiante historia [es tu d' ojs to rja] 'he studied history') should be left for more advanced classes.

6 Effective exercises that help students articulate /s/ can be found in Dalbor (1997) and Teschner (1996). These strategies include attempting the sound after /p/, articulating sequences like "batter up," and exhaling strongly while pronouncing [r].

7 It is less important, in my view, for students to articulate a dental rather than alveolar lateral, because the contrast is never phonological and would, therefore, never impede communication.

8 According to Barrutia and Schwegler (1994), this free variation is also found after [r]. Because this additional information would complicate, rather than simplify, the learner's dialect, I do not recommend that this fact be actively taught, although the teacher should not correct the stop allophone in this environment.

9 The suggested topics here represent a minimum of relevant dialectal processes. Students should be presented with any other process that characterizes the speech of native speakers in their area (e.g., rhotacism/lambdacism, velarization of syllable-final nasals, the deaffrication of [tʃ], etc.) For an overview of dialectal processes in Spanish, see Teschner (1996).

10 There is, in fact, a third possibility, namely ceceo, which is characteristic of parts of Southern Spain. In dialects with ceceo, the graphemes s, ñ, ñ, and z are represented by a sole phoneme, /θ/. I would recommend against exposing students to this dialectal possibility because of its low prestige within Spain.

11 An example of an advanced organizer is as follows: "The Spanish r sounds are either flaps or trills in which the tongue hits the roof of the mouth once (flap) or more times (trill). As you listen to input in Spanish, keep in mind that Spanish speakers never use the American r sound" (Terrell, 1989, pp. 210-211).

12 Of the texts that I have reviewed, only DH attempts to recycle certain points. In this text, pronunciation is provided in the preliminary chapter and is recycled in the first five chapters. I would advocate more complete coverage of phonetics spread out through the entire text. Sounds that have been presented should be recycled at set intervals.

13 For reasons of space, the information provided in Table 2 is incomplete. Some of the texts include additional phonetics information in appendixes or in margin notes. This information is not indicated in the table because the table includes only topics covered actively within the main body of the text. For example, CSD addresses additional phonetics topics in an Appendix. In a similar way, the alphabet is included in the text in Appendix A of PAP; no reference is made within the body of the text to sound/letter correspondences. PDP makes reference to distinción/sexo and léxico/léxico in margin notes in the instructor's edition, but not in the student text; these topics are covered in the lab manual.

In a few cases, concepts are mentioned in the lab manual, but they are not explained. For example, PDP uses the word rythm in the lab manual in Chapter 17 (p. 184), but no explanation is given and no exercises are provided. The lab manual accompanying M tells students in Chapter 4 that the English [l] is different from the Spanish [l] at the end of a syllable, but does not explain further.

14 Comparatively speaking, I found the least number of inaccuracies in M.

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