

## ABSTRACT

Minimizing Transfer: Including Spanish Phonetics and Phonology in Curricula for  
Beginner and Intermediate University Students of Spanish

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This thesis explores the ways in which certain types of linguistic transfer, specifically phonetic and phonological, impact the second language acquisition process of university students whose target language is Spanish. Included are pedagogical implications for future curricula that include the fundamental phonetic and phonological aspects of Spanish that should be taught to foster proper pronunciation starting at the beginning level. Four prominent Spanish textbooks are analyzed on their approach to teaching phonetics and phonology, including segmentals and suprasegmentals, intonation and dialectal variation, as well as their overall methodology concerning the instruction of skills to develop a native-like pronunciation in the target language.

Minimizing Transfer: Including Spanish Phonetics and Phonology in Curricula for  
Beginner and Intermediate University Students of Spanish

by

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A Thesis

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## DEDICATION

To my mother, from whom my knowledge emanates.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Linguistics can be defined as the discipline examining the structure of human language, and it is perhaps one of the most complicated behaviors on the planet. The faculty of language has tremendously influenced the documentation of world history, cultural evolution, and the vast diversity of the human race. Furthermore, language has contributed to developments and innovations in science and technology, the ability to develop aesthetic and artistic appreciation, and perhaps most predominantly, an enormous variety of interpersonal communication methods that facilitate the transformation of the modern world. Language study is therefore an intellectually challenging endeavor that involves the unraveling of extraordinarily complex enigmas, many of which are responsible for characteristics of the human species. Language constitutes a window through which human beings are able to observe, describe, and discover the multifaceted structure of the human mind.

Considering language as a cognitive function, the principle of linguistic relativity suggests that the structures of a language impact how its speakers interpret their surroundings, construct their worldview and perceive and conceive reality.<sup>1</sup> The phonemic hypothesis proposes the existence of a certain number of distinctive sounds in a given language, including phonemes and allophones. Thus, the acquisition of a second

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<sup>1</sup> Often referred to as the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, although the two of them never formally proposed nor authored a hypothesis surrounding their ideas about language. (Brown and Lenneberg).

language involves a cognitive shift in learners' minds that must be inspired and instigated by the instruction of linguistic elements of the target language, including but not limited to basic phonetics, phonology, morphology and syntax. Throughout the process of second language acquisition (SLA), especially at the beginner and intermediate levels, the native language (L1) serves as a base and guide for learning the second language (L2). This study focuses on the acquisition of Spanish as a second language among English-speaking university-aged adults, more specifically on the instruction of phonetic and phonological properties in beginner and intermediate courses. Given that students are typically introduced to Spanish pronunciation during the beginner course, certain elements of pronunciation, including but not limited to phonetics and phonology, should be a well-established part of the curriculum, both properly instructed and corrected so as to avoid the early fossilization of pronunciation errors. The objective was to observe the second language acquisition process among adults, analyze various second language methods to teaching pronunciation, and finally to analyze four popular Spanish textbooks for post-secondary educative purposes and their respective approaches to the instruction of pronunciation.

In Chapter Two of this thesis, a literature review is presented that details the field of second language acquisition, distinguishes between linguistic transfer and cross-linguistic influences, defines phonetics and phonology and how these systems function in Spanish, and examines a modern-day approach to teaching pronunciation by highlighting pedagogical errors and suggesting pronunciation instruction parameters for the following chapter's analytical method. Such parameters stem from standards set forth by the

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, or *ACTFL*, which aim to establish universal standards for language proficiency.

Chapter Three outlines the methodology of the analysis, presents the research questions that guided the analysis, defines search terms utilized within the research, and establishes the criteria for the following chapter's textbook analysis.

Chapter Four contains the analysis of four prominent textbooks and their approach to pronunciation instruction, which includes *Vistas 5<sup>th</sup> edition*, *Puntos de partida 9<sup>th</sup> edition*, *Plazas 4<sup>th</sup> edition*, and *Facetas 3<sup>rd</sup> edition*. This chapter includes specific textual examples that demonstrate the inclusion or exclusion of five specific elements suggested by *ACTFL* as crucial elements to second language acquisition pedagogy.

Chapter Five concludes the thesis by defining the limitations of the current study, its potential implications and pedagogical applications to the field of SLA, and hypothesizes future research that would be useful by providing empirical data on the specific linguistic features of Spanish that inhibit native English speakers from achieving pronunciation proficiency.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

The previous chapter introduced the thesis topic and outlined its structure. This chapter examines the field of second language acquisition, linguistic transfer and cross-linguistic influences, the instruction of pronunciation throughout the various methods of SLA pedagogy, defines phonetics and phonology with an emphasis on Spanish phonetics, and the ACTFL standards which are regarded as the authority on SLA proficiency practices.

#### *Second Language Acquisition (SLA)*

“Language is undoubtedly the most important—and perhaps at the same time, most mysterious—accomplishment of human beings” (Dalbor 5). As a necessary function of human interaction, communication in the first language develops in children without formal instruction and education, whereas adults learning a second language must be properly instructed in order to develop adequate communication skills in L2. Prior to understanding the broad field of second language acquisition, one must first define the terms first language and second language. The mother tongue, or first language (L1) is the language learned since birth, whereas the second language (L2) is the language learned after the L1, whether during childhood, adolescence or adulthood (Koike and Klee 3-4).

Within the field of second language acquisition (SLA) in the past century, there have been two main periods of thought, the behaviorist era and the post-behaviorist era

(Van Patten and Williams 17). Behaviorism is a theory borrowed from psychology that attempts to explain human and animal behavior without reference to mental events or internal processes, but rather focuses on external and environmental factors. Regarding both first and second language acquisition, this theory postulates the use of structural descriptions of language, repeated imitation of correct models, positive reinforcement of accurate imitations and correction of inaccurate imitation, and an overall active participation by the learner as crucial elements of the learning process. Moreover, “the acquisition of L2 was seen as the acquisition of a new set of habits, a process that was obstructed by first language (L1) habits which must be overcome in order for SLA to be successful” (Van Patten and Williams 20).<sup>1</sup> Instruction was often focused on forming habits, and L1 was often considered a principle source of the difficulties faced and errors made by learners of L2, from which arises the implication that certain differences between languages directly correlate to the difficulty of learning those aspects of a language. Van Patten and Williams note that “where the L1 and L2 differ only slightly, relatively little difficulty would be expected and where the contrast between the two languages is greater, greater difficulty and more errors would be predicted” (21). Pedagogical applications in the behaviorist tradition thus included, “provision of correct models, massive repetition without learner reflection, avoidance of error and provision of

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<sup>1</sup> According to Van Patten and Williams, “Obviously, SLA is not always immediately, or even ultimately, successful. This lack of success was blamed in part on *transfer*, an important construct in SLA at that time, one with direct behaviorist roots. Transfer was said to occur when habits from the L1 were used in attempting to produce the L2. Transfer could have either beneficial or negative consequences, depending on the distance between the L1 and L2” (20-21). For more on transfer and its distinction with cross-linguistic influences, see Odlin 26-30.

appropriate feedback” (21). Behaviorist research aimed to describe what was directly observable, not necessarily the processes behind these phenomena.

Subsequent researchers found several flaws with behaviorism, as there existed little empirical research and virtually no intrinsic evidence for the behaviorist explanation of SLA. Noam Chomsky’s theory of language states that humans are uniquely endowed with a specific and innate mental faculty for language acquisition called the language acquisition device (LAD), or a linguistic competence that allows human beings to develop language skills and facilitate communication with other humans (Hualde et al. 12). Thus, Chomsky would argue that the study of human language is the study of a distinctively human cognitive trait pertaining to no other species. Within this cognitive competence that dwells within the human brain, grammar is theoretically perfect; in contrast, performance, or the utterance actually produced by humans, is the use of one’s competence and can be grammatically flawed. Chomsky’s concepts appear related to Ferdinand de Saussure’s dichotomy between *langue*, the system of signals used by a community of speakers, and *parole*, the concrete use of the language (Hualde et al. 9). Lenneberg’s critical period hypothesis, although related to the acquisition of L1, suggests that after puberty, it becomes much more challenging for individuals to fully grasp the phonetic and phonological patterns in the L2.<sup>2</sup> Linguists have recently focused on the

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<sup>2</sup> “Todos sabemos que es mucho más difícil aprender una segunda lengua durante la madurez que una lengua maternal durante la infancia. Los adultos raras veces dominan una segunda lengua que han aprendido desde la pubertad, especialmente la fonética y la fonología de la nueva lengua.” (Hualde et al. 28).

“It is known that it is much more difficult to learn a second language during adulthood than a native language during childhood. Adults rarely master a second language that they have learned since puberty, especially the phonetics and phonology of the second language” (Trans. Dustin Lyles.) This thesis focuses on adult learners of Spanish L2 specifically due to Lenneberg’s hypothesis. Given that for children the

question “How does a student learn a language?” and have arrived at countless theories, of which two will be detailed in this section. According to Koike and Klee, the three types of theories to answer this question are those concerning input, those related to cognitive linguistics, and lastly those that consider language production a product of one’s social and interactive context (30).

One strong critic of behaviorism, Stephen Krashen, proposed the fundamental Monitor Theory in 1982, which has had an enduring impact on SLA as the first theory developed specifically for this field with pedagogical applications (Van Patten and Williams 25). Krashen’s Monitor Theory combines five interrelated hypotheses that rely upon various key constructs and concepts that are inferred rather than directly observable. The five hypotheses are as follows: the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, the Monitor Hypothesis, the Natural Order Hypothesis, the Input Hypothesis, and the Affective Filter Hypothesis.

The first hypothesis proposed by Krashen remains essential to the entire theory, as it posits the distinction between acquisition and learning as two separate ways of achieving knowledge that are stored separately once gained. For Krashen, *acquisition* takes place naturally and emerges spontaneously beyond awareness while students engage in normal interaction in the L2, wherein the focus is on meaning rather than the instruction or intention to learn. In contrast, *learning* involves gaining explicit knowledge about a language such as its rules and patterns, and is a conscious and intentional process, and “occurs when the L2 is object but not necessarily the medium of instruction” (Van

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process of language acquisition is often innate and requires less effort, there is an added difficulty faced by adult university students in acquiring Spanish phonetics and phonology as an L2.



Patten and Williams 26). Krashen proposes that these systems, the *acquired* and the *learned*, do not interact once stored in the brain:

In other words, knowledge that is learned may not be converted into acquired knowledge via some kind of practice and become available for spontaneous use. For this reason, Monitor Theory is referred to as *non-interface* model. This is why learners may “know” the rules—that is, they may be able to articulate them but may nevertheless be unable to use them in spontaneous production. Conversely, a learner may use a structure accurately and spontaneously yet be unable to verbalize the rule for its use. Thus in Monitor Theory even if learners formally study the grammar rules<sup>3</sup>, they will not be able to draw on that knowledge in spontaneous communication because it has not been acquired. For this reason, Krashen argues, the effects of formal instruction on SLA, including feedback on errors, are peripheral, suggesting that such pedagogical approaches should be abandoned in favor of one based on the provision of copious input. The acquisition—learning distinction is the central hypothesis in Monitor Theory (quoted in Van Patten and Williams 26).

Within Krashen’s Monitor Hypothesis, learned knowledge bears less importance as its primary function is editing acquired knowledge during language production, and therefore there is little utility in allotting vast amounts of class time to developing learned knowledge in the L2 (Van Patten and Williams 27). Considering the notion that difficulties arise from the differences between languages, the Natural Order Hypothesis suggests the existence of hierarchy of skills in the L2 that must be taught in such an order that they naturally build upon themselves and slowly increase in difficulty as the instruction progresses. The Natural Order Hypothesis appears especially relevant to SLA at the beginner and intermediate levels, which often initiate the inception of L2 instruction and form the foundation of future acquired knowledge.<sup>4</sup> Considering

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<sup>3</sup> See Van Patten and Williams, 25-27.

<sup>4</sup> Krashen cites a study by Larsen-Freeman (1975) as evidence for both Monitor Theory and the Natural Order Hypothesis, in which the researchers studied the

Krashen's hypothesis, it follows that basic principles of phonology should be instructed at the beginner levels prior to expecting students to be able to produce natural sounds in L2.<sup>5</sup>

According to Krashen's Input Hypothesis, "humans acquire language in only one way—by understanding messages in the L2, or as Krashen says, by receiving *comprehensible input*, which contains language slightly beyond the current level of the learner's internalized language" (VanPatten and Williams 27). Krashen asserts that the higher the level of *comprehensible input* from the instructor, the more efficient the L2 acquisition will be achieved. Within this theory, Krashen identifies two central constructs: *i*, or the learner's current level of proficiency and *i+1*, or the level just beyond the learner's current level. The latter construct proves most reliable for SLA, as students should be provided a level of *input* that is just beyond their current level in order to foster the development of their interlanguage (Koike and Klee 30). Provided that the instructor speaks with adequate speed and clarity, "learners will naturally assess and use what they need, allowing acquisition to take place spontaneously as long as they are exposed to

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acquisition of grammatical morphemes by adult ESL Learners. For more information on the Larsen-Freeman study, see VanPatten and Williams 29-33.

<sup>5</sup> According to MacDonald (2002), pronunciation lacks a central and integrated role in ESL pedagogical practices in the USA and Australia, and conversely Carbó et al. (2003) suggest a similar lack of instruction of pronunciation in Spanish as L2. With this in mind, I propose that beginner curriculum should include basic phonetics and phonology as a precursor to both understanding natives' spoken language and the production of accurate sounds in the target language. Some current textbooks (See Chapter Four analysis of *Vistas* 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, *Puntos de partida* 9<sup>th</sup> edition and *Plazas* 4<sup>th</sup> edition) contain inadequate instruction of this material to the students' detriment.

rich and comprehensible input. This is most likely to occur when communication focuses on the meaning rather than on form<sup>6</sup>” (VanPatten and Williams 28).

Although critics widely accept that input plays a vital role in SLA, there remains contention about the type of input, the factors that influence the input that make it more easily internalized, as well as the cognitive processes that are instigated by the acquisition of a second language (Koike and Klee 30). Within the classroom setting, “It is not sufficient for input to be available; learners must somehow take in this data and process it” (Williams 6). Gass (1997) and Schmidt (2001) affirm the belief that in order for language acquisition to take place, the learner must attend to input. Furthermore, the fact that students are capable of producing utterances that have not been prompted by the input suggests the existence of factors and processes that are derived independently of input. One major weakness of Krashen’s hypothesis is found in the minuscule consideration given to *output*, or production in the target language. Some critics argue that “forcing learners to produce before they are ready can inhibit the acquisition process by taking learner’s focus away from comprehension and production of input” (VanPatten and Williams 28). This notion leads to fifth hypothesis of Monitor Theory, which

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<sup>6</sup> In contrast to Krashen’s assertion, more recent critics of the Communicative Method have hypothesized the value and benefit of students focusing their attention on grammatical form in order to acquire the L2. (VanPatten 1989; Schmidt 1990; Gass and Varonis 1994). The term *focus on form* originated from Long (1991), which he used to describe “a brief, usually instructional focus on linguistic features embedded in meaningful communication” (quoted in Williams 1). Other critics also propose the benefits of form-focused instruction, defined by Ellis (2001) as, “any planned or incidental instructional activity that is intended to induce learners to pay attention to linguistic form” (quoted in Williams 1). In order to instruct and foster accurate pronunciation in university-level Spanish courses, form-focused instruction certainly plays a more vital role than Krashen would suggest.

suggests that students must be in a receptive and comfortable environment in order to acquire a language.

This final construct posited by Krashen is the Affective Filter, which links the classroom setting to an emotional barrier often tied to feelings of anxiety that derive from acquiring a second language (Koike and Klee 11). “Learners who are comfortable and have a positive attitude toward language learning have their filters set low, allowing unfettered access to comprehensible input. In contrast, a stressful environment, one in which learners are forced to produce before they feel ready raises the affective filter, blocking the learners’ process of input” (Van Patten and Williams 28). Thus, instructors should aim to lower the affective filter in order to foster a positive learning environment in which students theoretically acquire more of the L2 in the context of the class. One example of this theory in practice suggested by Krashen is the period of silence in which students are allowed to choose the moment they begin to produce sounds and words in the target language.<sup>7</sup> Together, Krashen’s five hypotheses remain fundamental to the field of SLA and although they offer invaluable pedagogical applications that remain pertinent,

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<sup>7</sup> According to Koike and Klee “Un ejemplo de una técnica que se usa para bajar el filtro afectivo es dejar que el estudiante mismo escoja el momento de comenzar a producir sonidos en la L2 (el periodo de silencio—o sea, permitir que el estudiante guarde silencio hasta que esté listo para hablar). Durante ese periodo de silencio, el estudiante responde físicamente a los mandatos o simplemente responde sí o no a las preguntas del maestro. Solo cuando el estudiante desee hablar se le ha de pedir que hable.”

“One example of a technique used to lower the affective filter is to allow students themselves to choose the moment in which they produce sounds in L2 (the silent period, or rather, permit students to remain silent until they are ready to speak). During this silent period, the students physically responds to commands or simply responds yes or no to the teacher’s questions. Only once the students desire to speak should they be asked to do so” (Koike and Klee 11-12. Trans. Dustin Lyles.)

more recent critics and linguists have either rejected or expanded upon Krashen's hypotheses.

Considering the hypothesis regarding developmental stages, Krashen's Monitor Theory proposes a natural order in which components of L2 should be taught to foster second language acquisition. Evidence suggests that native language (L1) serves as a base and guide for learning the second language (L2), in both beginner and intermediate learners who are children and adults (Krashen 1983). From this natural order hypothesis and error analyses in the 1970s arose Brown's (1987) contrastive analysis, in which he presents a hierarchy of difficulty of English's speakers acquisition of certain elements of Spanish (L2)<sup>8</sup>. Although many errors committed by beginning students are due to transfer, Brown's evidence suggests that not all errors are due to linguistic transfer, but rather denote the existence of other processes such as simplification or overgeneralization that play a role in the acquisition of the target language (Koike and Klee 26). For example, in the sentence “\*Maria bonita,” it would be impossible to attribute the lack of the copulative verb “ser” to a transfer from English. Rather, there are other errors made by beginning students that include the simplification of an L1 rule or pattern or hypercorrection of an L2 form that they believe to be correct. For example, a beginning Spanish L2 student might say “\*sabo, sabes, sabe sabemos, sabéis, saben” instead of the irregular *yo* form “sé,” or perhaps express the first person preterite tense as “explicó” due to many other first person verb forms ending in *o*. Other processes include the One-to-One Principle in which students erroneously believe every new morpheme acquired

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<sup>8</sup> As noted by Lafford (2000), researchers began analyzing errors made by L2 Spanish students in the 1970s, often referred to as error analysis. The data from these studies suggest that certain errors are not always derived from a contrast between L1 and L2, as Brown posited in his contrastive analysis.

through input has only one meaning and one function. One example that illustrates this concept is the acquisition of the direct object pronoun lo, which the student then associates with every instance in which one would use it in English (Koike and Klee 39).

Other studies resulting from error analyses of the 1960s and 1970s showed the prevalence of certain types of errors throughout the process acquisition of virtually any second language (Odlin 19). During these decades, there was also a fervent rejection of behavioral approaches to learning within the wider fields of psychology and linguistics (Van Patten and Williams 23). Researchers Dulay and Burt (1974) term these occurrences developmental errors, and posit the existence of developmental sequences, or stages of development, in the SLA process. The methodology of their studies of accuracy order tests assumes: “(1) that learners have reached a particular developmental stage if they make few or no errors with particular types of structures; and (2) that the more frequent particular errors are, the further learners are from attaining a particular stage” (quoted in Odlin 20). Another theory that was initiated by Selinker (1972), but was made more popular by Krashen is the existence of an interlanguage, or intermediate grammar that represents different stages of the grammatical formation of L2. In other words, learners begin with no knowledge of L2, and continuously acquire more and more knowledge with greater exposure to input, processing and interaction with the target language. It is perhaps more beneficial to see the development of the interlanguage as the addition and expansion of various threads of knowledge that are connected to preexisting information, rather than as a straight line from zero knowledge to full proficiency (Koike and Klee 12). One crucial concept that must be considered when teaching adults is that these students do not begin at zero, but rather have already mastered at least one native

language that serves as a foundation upon which the second language is acquired (Koike and Klee 13). Another issue that complicates the instruction of a second language is that, “Much mainstream SLA research investigates L2 learners at intermediate, advanced or even native-like levels of proficiency. There has been far less attention to the initial stage of L2 acquisition” (Carroll and Windsor 58).

Brown (1987) hypothesizes the existence of a hierarchy of difficulty native English speakers face when learning Spanish as an L2. The hierarchy suggests that students will face more difficulty acquiring those elements of L2 that differ greatly from or do not exist in L1. Through the use of contrastive analysis, Brown’s study suggests that easier elements of L2 to acquire are those that correspond to a similar element of L1. For example, English speakers will face greater difficulty with certain elements of Spanish such as *ser vs estar*, the subjunctive mood and the preterite tense versus the imperfect tense because these distinctions do not explicitly exist in English. Conversely, students will face less difficulty acquiring elements of the target language that are similar, such as cognate words, (like <hospital>, or “hospital,” and tenses like the pluperfect, <había comido> or “he had eaten” (Koike and Klee 26-27). Table 2.1 demonstrates Brown’s (1987) Hierarchy of Difficulty as follows:

Table 2.1 Brown's Hierarchy of Difficulty

| Difficulty        | Level | Category            | Example<br>(Eng. → Spa.)   |
|-------------------|-------|---------------------|--|
| Easiest           | 0     | Transfer            | <i>hospital, animal</i><br><i>he had lived/había vivido</i>  |
|                   | 1     | Coalescence         | <i>his/her/their</i> → <i>su</i>   |
|                   | 2     | Subdifferentiation  | <i>auxiliary do</i> → $\emptyset$  |
|                   | 3     | Reinterpretation    | <i>indefinite article required</i> →<br>variable use depending on the<br>meaning (Juan es (un)<br>médico).                             |
|                   | 4     | Overdifferentiation | <i>definite article not required</i><br>→ required use in certain<br>contexts ( <i>Man is mortal./El</i><br><i>hombre es mortal.</i> ) |
| Most<br>difficult | 5     | Division            | <i>to be</i> → <i>ser, estar</i>   |

As Table 2.1 suggests, there exists ample evidence suggesting that students, including native English speakers learning Spanish as L2, depend heavily upon their L1 knowledge while encountering L2. Although transfer does not represent an exhaustive explanation of every error made by students while acquiring a second language, these phenomena certainly tend to facilitate the process of understanding L2 and play a fundamental role at the beginning of the SLA process. The next section more closely examines linguistic transfer, its definition and the ways in which it influences second language acquisition.



### *Linguistic Transfer and Cross-Linguistic Influence (CLI)*

Whereas the previous section touched on several hypotheses related to the acquisition of a second language, the current section details the more concrete evidence of processes that occur during the production of L2. “When a monolingual learns a chronologically true L2, the only base language that may influence the L2 is the L1” (Bardel 116). Thus, when knowledge or structures from L1 are employed in L2, the resulting error or utterance in the target language is known as a transfer, of which there are multiple types: phonetic transfer, lexical transfer, syntactic transfer and pragmatic transfer (Koike and Klee 38-39). In the first few years of life, the human language learning mechanism optimizes its representations of first language from the cumulative sample of first language input, thus rendering the initial state of SLA one that is already tuned and committed to the L1. Thus, transfer phenomena pervade SLA (Ellis 83). Ample evidence suggests that certain students, especially those whose L1 is English and L2 is Spanish, rely heavily upon the L1 while encountering and learning L2 (Koike and Klee 26). Furthermore, the fewer differences between L1 and L2, the less transfer that is likely to occur. The difficult task of understanding the L2 can be facilitated by the use of positive transfer and similarities between the language, especially between fairly two similar languages, such as English and Spanish (Koike and Klee 26). However, students do not always transfer the entirety of their L1 knowledge to the L2.

Odlin establishes a more concrete definition of transfer as “the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired” (27). In order to further define transfer, some of the erroneous assumptions regarding linguistic transfer are challenged

by the argument: “Transfer is not simply a consequence of habit formation,” an idea which originally stemmed from the behaviorist notion of transfer that “often implied the extinction of earlier habits, whereas the acquisition of a second language need not (and often does not) lead to any replacement of the learner’s primary language” (Odlin 25). Rather, learners of a second language build upon the base knowledge of their mother tongue and acquire new skills and rules for the use of L2. Many critics argue that there exists a certain negative connotation<sup>9</sup> surrounding the term *transfer* that originated from its conventional association within the behaviorist tradition, in which “the degree of difficulty of L2 learning was believed to merely depend on the similarities and differences of the two languages in question: positive transfer was predicted to occur when patterns were similar in the L1 and the L2, which would result in a correct utterance while negative transfer would occur when patterns are different, causing errors in language production” (Callies 130). Selinker defines a third category, neutral transfer, as “process that occurs whenever there is no statistically significant predominance in the native language of either of two linguistic entities, one alternative linguistic entity being a non-error since it occurs with an experimentally established norm of that foreign language and the other being an error since it deviates from that norm” (Selinker 51). It is for this reason that more recently published studies utilize the term *cross-linguistic*

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<sup>9</sup> Throughout Odlin’s chapter on the study of transfer, the term “cross-linguistic influence” is considered to have a less negative connotation within the field of SLA. Odlin also notes that “In contrast to grammatical transfer, transfer affecting second language pronunciation has been less controversial—even though empirical studies have identified many of the same problems in contrastive analyses of phonetics and phonology that have been evident in analyses of morphology and syntax (e.g., Johansson 1973). Too often in polemics on transfer, the evidence from research not only on pronunciation but also on discourse and vocabulary is either taken for granted or is simply ignored (Odlin 23).

*influence*, which “was originally proposed by Sharwood Smith and Kellerman (1986) as opposed to transfer, the latter having taken on negative connotation from studies of L1 interference in the foreign language learning process” (Bardel 116). It is interesting to note that Callies assigns the verbatim definition Odlin uses for transfer, yet merely calls it cross-linguistic influence so as to avoid the perceived negative connotation (Callies 130).

In order to further define the term transfer, Odlin notes several erroneous assumptions about this phenomenon. Odlin first posits that transfer is not merely an interference, which is a widely used term that seems “applicable in the description of some aspects of second language performance, such as phonetic inaccuracies that resemble sounds in the learner’s native language” (Odlin 26). Nevertheless, some influences of the native language can prove helpful, specifically when there are few differences between the two languages. Odlin refutes Krashen’s assertion that transfer is simply a falling back on the native language when new knowledge in the L2 is lacking. According to Krashen, “Use of an L1 rule...is not real progress. It may merely be a production strategy that cannot help with acquisition” (Krashen 1983:148). As Odlin points out, there are many problematic implications with this assertion, since it tends to ignore the advantages possessed by speakers of some languages when encountering a new language that may be similar to their L1. “For example, the similarities in vocabulary, writing systems, and other aspects of English and Spanish reduce the amount that may be utterly new in English for Spanish speakers in comparison with, say, Arabic speakers” (Odlin 27). Furthermore, Krashen implies that native language influence is always manifested in some transparent L1 rule, when in fact these influences can interact such that “sometimes there is no neat correspondence between learner’s native language

patterns and their attempts to use the target language” (Odlin 27). Additionally, Krashen’s claim that transfer is a mere “production strategy” fails to recognize that certain cross-linguistic influences can be beneficial in certain areas of comprehension, like reading, writing and sometimes speaking. Lastly, transfer is not always the result of influence from the native language, evident through the fact that when individuals know two languages, knowledge of both may affect the acquisition of a third. In such an instance, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to determine the exact influences in multilingual situations. Although scholars do not always agree on a succinct definition of transfer, it is certain that the “influence arises from a learner’s conscious or unconscious judgment that something in the native language (most typically) and something in the target language are similar, if not the same. The conditions that trigger judgments of similarity or identity however remain incompletely understood” (Odlin 27-28).

Odlin alludes to the problematic nature of arriving at a definitive description of transfer:

A fully adequate definition of transfer seems unattainable without adequate definitions of many other terms, such as *strategy*, *process*, and *simplification*. Such definitions may presuppose an account of bilingualism that accurately characterizes relations between transfer, overgeneralization, simplification and other second language behaviors. An adequate account of bilingualism would in turn have to include an accurate neurological model of language since, presumably, the influence of one language on another has something to do with the storage of two knowledge systems within the same brain (Albert and Obler 1979). Thus, one might plausibly argue that a fully adequate definition of transfer presupposes a fully adequate definition of language (Odlin 28).

Selinker (1972) includes transfer among the five central psycholinguistic processes characteristic of interlanguage, although it was the work of Kellerman (1977, 1983, 1986) that ultimately initiated a re-evaluation of transfer as a cognitive process in which

learners are seen as active decision-makers on what linguistic structures may be transferable into the L2 (Callies 130). Nevertheless, it can be concluded that “certain types of learners do resort to transfer as a strategy of second language use” although it is “only one of a number of explanations for specific aspects of interlanguages. In most cases, convergence of strategies...is the most adequate explanation” because, “as in real life, linguistic phenomena can hardly have only one parent” (Meisel 44). Additionally, Broselow concludes that “language transfer does play a significant role in second language acquisition, as certain systematic errors can be directly attributed to the use by language learners of a phonological rule in the production of second language forms.” (279). Regarding phonological transfer, Broselow names epenthesis, or the insertion of a sound that does not belong, as the most likely to be transferred. Pronunciation errors in L2 are not always derived from transfer, and thus it must be considered that “universal principles of phonological patterning play a role in accounting for the errors of language learners” Broselow (279).

### *Phonetics and Phonology*

There exists somewhat of a psychological aspect regarding the reception of sounds in the sense that the same sound can be perceived in a certain way by speakers of one language and a different way by speakers of another. Sounds are represented by three widely varying systems that function together to form a language: orthography, phonetics and phonology (Morgan 79-80). Orthography is a system whose function is to write the language and unlike the natural acquisition of a spoken native language, must be studied and practiced in order to be acquired. Although the orthographic elements of Spanish, letters, do not necessarily equate to a singular sound, letters in Spanish typically represent

one sound, with certain limited exceptions. Some letters correspond to more than one sound, such as the <c> in the Spanish words <cero> and <caro>, other letters correspond to two sounds, like the <x> in <taxi> that corresponds to both /k/ and /s/, and yet other letters can correspond to no sound whatsoever, like the <h> in Spanish which is never pronounced in spoken language. Silent letters such as the Spanish <h> reinforce Dalbor's notion that "Writing cannot possibly be synonymous with language...[as] the majority of the inhabitants of the earth can neither read nor write (for a variety of reasons), yet they all speak languages as complicated, sophisticated, beautiful and logical as English and Spanish" (Dalbor 8). Therefore, audibly produced sounds are of more importance and significance in human communication than a writing system. Nevertheless, Spanish orthography plays a much more significant role in word pronunciation than the more arbitrary English system. Regarding the relation of English and Spanish orthographic systems in relation to second language acquisition:

Pedagogical practice reflects the fact that the more similar writing systems of two languages are, the less time learners will need to develop basic encoding and decoding skills. Spanish and English, for example, are extremely similar in their writing systems, whereas Chinese and English are not. Textbooks that introduce Spanish to English speakers therefore need not—and generally do not—devote much space to the writing system of the target language. The Spanish writing system does show some differences from English in spelling and handwriting conventions, but what differences do exist are differences between alphabetic systems. While such differences can present occasional spelling difficulties, the similarities that arise from two languages having essentially the same alphabet are great, and often considerably reduce the time needed to become literate in the target language. A similarity in writing systems doubtlessly can reduce the amount of time needed to learn to encode and decode written symbols in a second language. The differences between the Spanish and English spelling systems are not like to lead to symmetrical patterns of difficulty. The letter-phoneme correspondences in Spanish are far more straightforward than the correspondences in English are, and it seems improbable that spelling in Spanish will prove as difficult for

English speakers as spelling in English will for Spanish speakers (Odlin 125-127).<sup>10</sup>

“Both phonology and phonetics have the aim of describing and explaining the sound pattern of human language...and are necessary to understand language as a means of communication between people” (Pierrehumbert 375). Phonetics is the study of the qualities of individual sounds, their production by the human vocal mechanism, how they are transmitted as sound waves and how they are interpreted by the listener (Dalbor 10). “The starting point for linguistic phonetic theory is the fact that language in its most basic, universal and productive form has sound as its physical medium. The hallmarks of phonetic representation follow from the fact that sounds, as well as articulatory gestures and events in peripheral auditory processing, are observables in the physical world that can be recorded...like activation and motion of the articulators and movements of the basilar membrane” (Pierrehumbert 377). Through the use of articulatory phonetics, it is possible to predict which Spanish sounds will be problematic for English speakers, explain why students may make certain errors, and isolate these problems for analysis and practice so as to achieve ultimate mastery of the Spanish sound system (Dalbor 10).<sup>11</sup> The ultimate goal of a student sincerely motivated to learn Spanish should be to achieve a near-native accent, which is theoretically possible for adult learners despite the process

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<sup>10</sup> See Table 2.4 for more regarding the relationship between phonemes and orthographic letters in Spanish.

<sup>11</sup> Innovative phonetician Kenneth L. Pike points out that “The articulatory technic and its analysis of marginal sounds are helpful in teaching [because] ...students find it difficult to learn isolated facts and data which do not fit into a system. The late Dr. Edward Sapir applied this principle to phonetics when he said that it was easier for a student to learn five hundred new sounds than five. Many sounds of speech can only be seen in a system when they are compared with marginal and non-speech sounds; an articulatory classification best answers this need” (Pike 24).

being more difficult and nuanced for adults learners than for children (Dalbor 10). Although there exists no universal orthographic alphabet, there does exist an international phonetic alphabet, or IPA, the symbols of which correspond to specific sounds organized by the way in which they are pronounced, without reference to a specific language. “Most of the sounds of Spanish, and other languages, can be represented using the IPA. This is a useful tool for helping learners focus on specific sounds rather than just letters” (Morin 348). Due to their international nature, any individual that learns the IPA could theoretically pronounce words written with these symbols regardless of their native language. Considering the fact that the phonetic alphabet is international, and the Spanish alphabet, or that of any other language for that matter, is not, there exist many differences between the respective representations of each. For example: <hablar> is the orthographic representation using letters of the verb *to talk*, whereas [a.ˈβlar] is the same verb using phonetic symbols (Morgan 80).

Phonology is the study of the ways in which speakers of a language mentally organize sounds in order to create words, and thus represents a more abstract conceptualization of sounds. Unlike phonetics, phonological systems are not universal because speakers of different languages perceive and shape their phonetic repertoire in various ways in accordance with their language system. The basic elements of phonological systems, called phonemes, are sounds that serve a contrastive function within a language (Hualde et al. 46). Whereas phonetic representations of sounds are denoted by brackets, for example [a.ˈβlar], phonological representations appear between forward slashes, for example /a.ˈβlar/ (Morgan 80). “The starting point for phonological representation is the phonological principle underlying lexical inventories. Human



languages do not use some arbitrary collection of noises to convey word meanings. Instead, a large number of words is created by combining a small number of elements, which are themselves meaningless. This principle is classically expressed as “the phonemic principle” and is one of the central ideas of structuralist linguistics” (Pierrehumbert 376). For example, in the word <pan> in Spanish, there are three distinct phonemes: /p/, /a/, and /n/. Two words that differ in only one sound and have different meanings are called minimal pairs, like /pan/ and /van/ or /peso/ and /beso/, whose contrastive distribution determine the various phonemes in a language.

When considering the native pronunciation of the word <dedo>, whose phonemic representation is /dédo/, one notices that the first <d> is pronounced differently than the second one. While pronouncing the first <d>, the tip of the tongue touches the upper teeth, which impedes the flow of air and is therefore considered a occlusive sound. However, the second <d>, the tip of the tongue only approaches the upper teeth without maintaining full contact, and thus its articulation is considered an approximate, for example in the Spanish word [ˈde.ðo]. Therefore, despite the difference in the two articulations, native Spanish speakers perceive them as the same sound and are not conscious of their varied pronunciation. The term allophone refers to the concrete sounds produced by individuals that constitute variants of a single phoneme. In this way, the Spanish phoneme /d/ has an occlusive allophone [d̪] and an approximate allophone [ð] (Hualde et al. 49-50).

Adapted from the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), Figure 2.1 below presents the phonological chart of Spanish that shows the 19 consonant phonemes, 24 including vowels /a e i o u/:

|                   | bilabial | labio-dental | inter-dental | dental  | alveolar | alveo-palatal | palatal | velar   | uvular  | glottal |
|-------------------|----------|--------------|--------------|---------|----------|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                   | son/son  | son/son      | son/son      | son/son | son/son  | son/son       | son/son | son/son | son/son | son/son |
| occlusive         | p b      |              |              | t d     |          |               |         | k g     |         |         |
| approximate       |          |              |              |         |          |               |         |         |         |         |
| fricative         |          | f            | (θ)          |         | s        |               | j       | x       |         |         |
| affricate         |          |              |              |         |          | tʃ            |         |         |         |         |
| nasal             | m        |              |              |         | n        |               | ɲ       |         |         |         |
| lateral           |          |              |              |         | l        |               | (ʎ)     |         |         |         |
| vibrante simple   |          |              |              |         | r        |               |         |         |         |         |
| vibrante múltiple |          |              |              |         | r        |               |         |         |         |         |

Figure 2.1 Spanish Phonological Chart

It should be noted that the phonemes in parenthesis are dialectal variants that mainly occur in Spain, whereas there are a total of 22 phonemes that occur in Latin America. Furthermore, allophones do not appear on the phonological chart because only phonemes are represented there. Figure 2.2 presents the Spanish phonetic chart including all allophones of the phonemes:

|                  | bilabial | labio-dental | inter-dental | dental  | alveolar | alveo-palatal | palatal | velar   | uvular  | glottal |
|------------------|----------|--------------|--------------|---------|----------|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                  | son/son  | son/son      | son/son      | son/son | son/son  | son/son       | son/son | son/son | son/son | son/son |
| occlusive        | p b      |              |              | ɸ ɸ̄    |          |               |         | k g     |         |         |
| approximant      | β        |              | ð            |         |          |               | j       | ɣ       |         |         |
| fricative        |          | f            | θ            |         | s        | ʃ ʒ           | ç j     | x       | χ ʁ     | h       |
| affricate        |          |              |              |         |          | tʃ ɟʒ         | ʝ       |         |         |         |
| nasal            | m        | ɱ            |              | ɲ       | n        |               | ɲ       | ŋ       |         |         |
| lateral          |          |              |              |         | l        |               | ʎ       |         |         |         |
| vibrant simple   |          |              |              |         | r        |               |         |         |         |         |
| vibrant multiple |          |              |              |         | r        |               |         |         |         |         |

Figure 2.2 Spanish Phonetic Chart

Native speakers only tend to notice phonemic contrasts between relevant sounds in their own language that distinguish one word from another. Indeed, some allophonic differences in one language can be phonemic in another language. For example, the English words <dough> and <though> have respectively similar pronunciations to the first and second <d> in the Spanish word <dedo>. Although in English this contrast is phonemic, in Spanish this contrast is represented by two variant allophones, respectively [d] and [ð], of a single phoneme, /d/. On the other hand, the English phoneme /d/ has an allophone in words such as <butter> and <pedal> that is very similar to the Spanish consonant [r], as in <aro> or <muro> that in Spanish is an independent phoneme, /r/ (Hualde et al. 51). Table 2.2 demonstrates certain phonemic contrasts in English and Spanish:

Table 2.2 Phonemic Contrasts in English and Spanish

| Feature    | Spanish            |        | English                |         |
|------------|--------------------|--------|------------------------|---------|
| Phonemes   | /d/                | /r/    | /d/                    | /ð/     |
| Allophones | [d] [ð]            | [r]    | [d] [r]                | [ð]     |
| Examples   | <i>cada</i> /káda/ | [káða] | <i>dough, doe</i> /do/ | [doʊ]   |
|            | <i>anda</i> /ánda/ | [ánda] | <i>though</i> /ðo/     | [ðoʊ]   |
|            | <i>aro</i> /aro/   | [áro]  | <i>lady</i> /ledi/     | [leɪri] |

According to phonetician Kenneth L. Pike, “the most basic, characteristic and universal division made in phonetic classification is that of consonant and vowel” (Pike 66). While articulating consonants, one produces an obstruction or impediment of the air flow from the lungs, and conversely while articulating vowels no such obstruction of the air flow occurs (Morgan 90). Consonant sounds are classified by three main parameters,

which are manner of articulation (the nature of the obstruction), point of articulation (the place of obstruction within the mouth cavity), and finally the activation or lack thereof of the vocal folds during the production of the consonant sound (Morgan 144). More specifically, “Vowels and consonants are known as segmental sounds, small segments in the stream of speech. Some of them can be modified in several important ways by other sound systems, known as suprasegmentals, or features overlaid on the individual sound segments. Those modifications are also referred to as intonational or prosodic features, and they create the melody of the language” (Dalbor 31). Regarding the formal instruction of vowel sounds, Jones asserts that “The value of the cardinal vowels cannot be learnt from written descriptions: they should be learnt by oral instruction from a teacher who knows them” (Jones 140). Indeed “one of the functions of the teacher is to act as a model of pronunciation” (Jones 45, 47 quoted in Pike 23). Although Jones’ research primarily focuses on the acquisition of English phonemes, his conclusion could certainly be applied to the rather strict phonetic system of Spanish that can be less forgiving of alternative pronunciations than English. Written technical descriptions often prove fruitless in comparison to the combination of oral production in the target language by a knowledgeable instructor and technical descriptions of where the tongue should be positioned in the mouth when pronouncing sounds.

The Spanish vowel system is much more straightforward and phonetic than that of English, especially considering that there are only five vowel sounds in Spanish compared to more than twenty in English for the same orthographic vowels, <a e i o u>. Despite Spanish’s simpler vowel structure, vowel sounds tend to present a difficulty in the second language acquisition process for English speakers who often rely heavily upon

their native language to produce vowel sounds in the target language. Articulation of phonological transfer from English is difficult for native Spanish speakers to understand and can often impede communication. As previously noted, during the production of vowel sounds, air passes freely without obstruction; however, the passage of air can be modified by movement of the tongue, which can move either vertically and horizontally. According to the movement of the tongue within the mouth, Spanish vowels can be classified vertically as either high, middle or low, and horizontally as either front, central or back. Table 2.2 presents the five vocalic phonemes in Spanish:

Table 2.3 Classification of Spanish Vowels

| Position in mouth | front       | central | back    |
|-------------------|-------------|---------|---------|
| high              | i           |         | u       |
| middle            | e           |         | o       |
| low               |             | a       |         |
|                   | not rounded |         | rounded |

Spanish and English share very few similarities regarding the pronunciation of vowels, despite their identical orthographic representations. If one compares the Spanish words <sí>, <su>, <sé>, <lo> with the English words <sea>, <Sue>, <say>, <low>, it can be noted that Spanish vowels maintain a certain tension unlike their diphthongized English counterparts. Phonetically speaking, Spanish vowel sounds are very tense which adds to their tense quality (Morgan 91). One process that complicates Spanish pronunciation for English speakers is called vowel reduction, a common phenomenon wherein vowels in the unstressed syllable of a word are often, yet inconsistently, produced as the schwa [ə] (or “uh”). However, unlike English and other languages with close relation to Spanish such as Portuguese and Catalán, Spanish vowels maintain their

timbre even in non-accentuated syllables. For example, the word <casa> is pronounced [kása], not with a reduced vowel as in [kásə] (Hualde et al 88). Another difference between these respective phonemic systems is the rounding of the lips when pronouncing the back vowels in Spanish, which does not occur in English. Theoretically, the acquisition of Spanish vowel sounds for native English speakers should be straightforward and less complex than English's vowel system. However, vowels tend to present a major difficulty for university students who rely heavily upon their L1 phonological system when pronouncing sounds in the target language (Morgan 88). The SLA process is further complicated by the lack of instruction about this fundamental characteristic of the Spanish language. In order to achieve a more native-like pronunciation of Spanish vowel sounds, English speakers must avoid diphthongization of single vowels, avoid reducing vowel in unstressed syllables and finally avoid the excessive lengthening of stressed vowels (Morgan 92). In addition, the [a] in Spanish is central, unlike the [a] of English which is a back vowel. Table 2.4 demonstrates the relationship between Spanish phonemes and their orthographic correspondence:

Table 2.4 Spanish Phonemes and their Orthographic Correspondence

| Phonemes | Letters     | Example   |
|----------|-------------|---|
| /a/      | a           | <i>pasa</i> /pása/  |
| /e/      | e           | <i>pesa</i> /pesa/  |
| /i/      | i, y        | <i>pisa</i> /pisa/, <i>pan y vino</i> /pán i bíno/          |
| /o/      | o           | <i>sopa</i> /sópa/  |
| /u/      | u           | <i>duna</i> /dúna/  |
| /p/      | p           | <i>pino</i> /píno/  |
| /b/      | b, v        | <i>boca</i> /bóka/, <i>vaca</i> /báka/                      |
| /t/      | t           | <i>tos</i> /tós/  |
| /d/      | d           | <i>dos</i> /dós/  |
| /k/      | c, qu, k    | <i>casa</i> /kása/, <i>queso</i> /késo/, <i>kilo</i> /kílo/ |
| /g/      | g, gu(e, i) | <i>gato</i> /gáto/, <i>guiño</i> /gíño/                     |
| /tʃ/     | ch          | <i>chapa</i> /tʃápa/  |

Table 2.4 Continued

| Phonemes          | Letters       | Example   |
|-------------------|---------------|---|
| /j/               | y, ll         | <i>yeso</i> /jéso/, <i>llano</i> /jáno/                                     |
| /f/               | f             | <i>foca</i> /fóka/  |
| /s/               | s, c(e, i), z | <i>saco</i> /sáko/, <i>cena</i> /séna/, <i>azul</i> /asúl/                  |
| /x/               | j, g(e, i), x | <i>jota</i> /xóta/, <i>gente</i> /xénte/, <i>mexicano</i>                   |
| /m/               | m             | <i>mapa</i> /mápa/  |
| /n/               | n             | <i>nota</i> /nóta/  |
| /ɲ/               | ñ             | <i>año</i> /áño/  |
| /l/               | l             | <i>palo</i> /pálo/  |
| /r/               | rr, r         | <i>carro</i> /karo/, <i>honra</i> /ónra/ <sup>12</sup> , <i>rato</i> /ráto/ |
| /θ/ <sup>13</sup> | z, c(e,i)     | <i>zapato</i> /θapáto/, <i>escena</i> /esθéna/                              |
| /j/               | y             | <i>vaya</i> /bája/  |
| /ʎ/ <sup>14</sup> | ll            | <i>valla</i> /báʎa/   |

One consideration regarding the acquisition of a new phonetic and phonological system, such as native English speakers learning Spanish as an L2, is the role of transfer when producing sounds in the target language.

Native language influence is an important factor in the acquisition of target language phonetics and phonology. The importance of transfer is evident in specific pronunciation contrasts and also in research comparing the overall pronunciation strategy of speakers of different native languages. As with syntax and other language subsystems, transfer is not the only factor affecting the ease or difficulty of reproducing target language sounds. (Odlin 115)

Phonological transfer plays an especially significant role with words that are orthographically identical or otherwise similar to the word in L2, a phenomenon that frequently occurs between English and Spanish:

A word that phonologically resembles an L1 word (cognate words) will activate that word, leading to faster responses on a word recognition task

<sup>12</sup> The letter <h> in Spanish does not represent a phoneme.

<sup>13</sup> Dialectal variation that occurs in northern and central Spain.

<sup>14</sup> Dialectal variation that occurs in some regions in Spain, parts of the Andes region and Paraguay (Hualde et al. 49).

(Carroll 2012). Participants are also more accurate in identifying target words on a forced-choice word identification task when those words are cognate. Shoemaker and Rast (2013) report similar results. Thus, the organization of the L1 lexicon plays a crucial role in segmenting continuous speech in real time. Our production data will provide evidence that it also plays a crucial role in forming the initial representations of the L2 that get stored in long-term memory, representations that presumably will form the basis for the incremental acquisition of the target system's consonants and vowels. (Carroll and Windsor 59-60)

Thus, an individual's working L1 lexicon could prove an obstructive influence during the second language acquisition process because students may be inclined to apply the rules of their L1 phonological system to pronounce an L2 word. One example of phonological transfer due to cognates would be the English word <idea>, or [ai.'diə], and its identical Spanish counterpart <idea>, or [i.'de.a]. Individuals who speak English are more likely to have difficulty accurately producing cognates using the L2 phonological system, and thus, could be inhibited in their second language acquisition process. "Much research supports promoting an awareness of sound/spelling relationships to help minimize the influence of spelling on pronunciation" (e.g. Elliot (1997); Morley (1994); Zampini (1994). While it cannot be said that there exists a perfect one-to-one correspondence between graphemes and the phonemes they can represent in Spanish, "it is true that the sound/spelling relationships in Spanish are less arbitrary than in English" (Morin 348).

According to Brière 1968, "A cross-linguistic comparison of sounds in two languages should include descriptions of phonetics as well as phonology of the native and target languages" (quoted in Odlin 113). "Although cross-linguistic differences in phonetics and phonology have important consequences for perception and comprehension, the most salient consequences of linguistic differences are production errors which result in pronunciation patterns that diverge from those found in the target



language” (Odlin 115). For example, “Flege and Hammond (1982) studied the ‘Spanish accents’ imitated by native speakers of English and determined that the sounds English speakers produced were often approximations of Spanish vowels and consonants” (quoted in Odlin 114-15). Other types of evidence, such as the identification of differing accents, suggests that despite the perceptual confusion resulting from major differences in phonemic inventories, individuals are able to recognize foreign language sounds (Odlin 115).<sup>15</sup> It can be said with certainty that “individuals differ in their perceptual acuity, and it may be that only individuals with especially high phonetic sensitivity will be able to overcome most of the inhibiting influence of phonological patterns in the native language (Odlin 115). Therefore, it could be argued that Spanish phonetics and phonology should be included in the beginning level course in order to minimize the cross-linguistic influences stemming from the native language, as well as to develop students’ acuity with the production of native-like sounds in the target language. Specific elements of the Spanish language that should be included are segmentals, suprasegmentals, intonational or prosodic features and dialectal variation.

According to an error taxonomy devised by Moulton (1962), the range of four types of segmental errors are recognized as: phonemic errors, phonetic errors, allophonic errors and distributional errors. Phonemic errors arise when the phonemic inventories of two languages differ, whereas phonetic errors within Moulton’s classification involve cases of cross-linguistic equivalence at the phonemic but not the phonetic level. Allophonic errors can arise in cases of interlingual identifications of phonemes in two languages, meaning when the phonemes of two languages are similar or different. A

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<sup>15</sup> “Ioup (1984) found that native speakers of English could identify groups of non-native speakers simply on the basis of their pronunciation” (quoted in Odlin 115).

particular sound or allophone that is a manifestation of a native language phoneme is not always an accepted manifestation of a corresponding target language phoneme. Although sometimes seemingly similar to allophonic errors, distributional errors may involve a combination of sounds and are dependent upon the position of a sound within a word or syllable. These transfer errors often occur when there are distributional differences in the sounds of two languages (Odlin 116-117).

### *Pedagogical Approaches to Teaching Pronunciation*

Pronunciation is an essential element of second language acquisition, as it establishes the ability to produce and understand spoken language and fosters communication between learners and native speakers. Despite the emphasis it should be given within SLA curricula, “for too long conventional wisdom has maintained that pronunciation is not important, students will pick it up on their own, you can’t teach it anyway, and teachers lack training” (Morley 1994, quoted in Morin 343). At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Grammar/Translation method’s focus on translation and reading activities often coincided with an inadequate approach to teaching pronunciation. Although some texts from this era would include basic phonetic information, its instruction and implementation was left to the discretion of the teacher (Arteaga 339)<sup>16</sup>. Once the audiolingual method was popularized in the 1960s and 1970s, the vast array of technology accompanying this method of pedagogy afforded great

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<sup>16</sup> “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 Pronunciation has been placed after the lessons and may be used according to the discretion of the teacher” (Armitage 440 quoted in Arteaga 2000 p. 339).

importance to pronunciation.<sup>17</sup> In the next decade, pronunciation was less emphasized in the communicative framework of the Natural Approach popularized by Krashen (1983) and Terrell (1989), who once hypothesized that, “good pronunciation habits will ultimately depend of the ability to attend to and process input” (quoted in Arteaga 340). Terrell proposed the addition of “meaningful monitor activities,” in which meaningful utterances are used to demonstrate target phonological contrasts and students are asked to monitor their own production of sounds<sup>18</sup>. According to Arteaga:

The discussion in Terrell (1989) is illustrative of the stepchild status of pronunciation within the communicative approach...in 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 the 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 (Arteaga 340).

Furthermore, Terrell argues that “In recent years, Krashen’s ‘second language acquisition theory’ has had a profound influence on the teaching of English as a second language and

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<sup>17</sup> Arteaga points out that “In the Modern Language Association’s (1973) 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 suprasegments (e.g. rhythm, stress, intonation) are addressed. 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 an indication of the importance accorded to pronunciation in this text (Arteaga 339-340).

<sup>18</sup> “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” (Arteaga 340).

to a lesser extent on the teaching of foreign languages” (Terrell 1989: 207). Despite this rather positive view of Krashen, others have been more critical of the treatment pronunciation was given with the ascendancy of Communicative Language Teaching and the Natural Approach (Jones 1997: 103). According to Jones, arguments against explicitly teaching pronunciation “rely on the assumptions that it is almost impossible for adults to acquire native-like foreign language pronunciation after the critical period, and that pronunciation is an acquired skill, not affected by pronunciation practice and explicit instruction” (Morin 344).<sup>19</sup>

Arteaga also points out that the learner’s attitude could play a role in the acquisition of L2 phonology, however research in this field remains contradictory. Although Suter (1976) supported the notion that student interest plays a crucial role in the ultimate acquisition of pronunciation, Hammond and Flege (1989) “presented evidence that speakers with the least empathy towards a language group (indeed, those with a hostile attitude) are the most adept at imitating native pronunciation” (Arteaga 340). The conclusions reached by Hammond and Flege were somewhat problematic in the sense that students’ attitude toward the language did not always guarantee proficiency in the L2. Additionally, several studies propose the importance of instructing suprasegmentals within a communicative-based methodology. Wong (1985) argued that both

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<sup>19</sup> “It is largely believed that Lenneberg’s hypothesized critical period for second language (L2) acquisition affects phonological acquisition more than the acquisition of morphology, syntax, morphosyntax or the lexicon” (Scovel 1981 quoted in Morin 344). Regarding the critical period and the acquisition of pronunciation, Tahta, Wood & Lowenthal (1981) argue that “an accent-free L2 is virtually certain if acquisition begins before puberty, somewhat unlikely in acquisition begins in early adolescence, and highly unlikely if acquisition begins in late adolescence and adulthood” (p.363 quoted in Morin 345). These remarks suggest the benefits of implementing phonetics and phonology in SLA curricula at the university-level, or late adolescence and adulthood.

communication and affective response can suffer when nonnative speakers lack mastery of suprasegmentals, and Chen (1982) also proposes a curriculum that emphasizes phonological contrasts that convey a difference in meaning and suprasegmentals.

According to Arteaga:

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 1997; 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 (Arteaga 341).

Arteaga indicates that although adult L2 learners seldom attain native-like pronunciation, Bongeaerts (1999) reported the results of three studies that show that native-like attainment in pronunciation is possible for the exceptional adult L2 learner because “all learners who evinced a native-like accent had received extensive explicit training in the phonetics of the L2” (Arteaga 342). Thus, although the comprehensive acquisition of L2 phonology may be somewhat elusive and indefinable from individual to individual, the formal instruction of L2 phonetics and phonology certainly facilitates and enriches the process of second language acquisition.

Many researchers from a sociolinguistic perspective find value in the instruction of pronunciation due to the fact that accented, or otherwise marked, speech is rarely neutrally received by the native listener. On the contrary, it can often be a hindrance to proper communication, or at the very least could cause the nonnative speaker to be

subject to certain prejudices due to their lack of native-like pronunciation. As Oyama (1982) postulates: “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, quoted in Arteaga 342). Leahy (1980) makes a similar point:

We who come into contact with foreign students everyday 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, quoted in Arteaga 342).

Duppenthaler (1991) suggests 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, quoted in Arteaga 342). Given the rather rigid phonological system of vowels and consonants in Spanish, one could argue the social penalty is even greater for native English speakers whose enunciation in Spanish is marked to the native ear by the often incorrect, approximate pronunciation of sounds. Other factors also affect native speakers’ perception of nonnative speakers’ utterances:

Cultural differences can be found in the social acceptability of differential intonational patterns. As Dalbor explains: “...using your English intonation while speaking Spanish...can distort or complete changed your intended meaning; make you sound annoyed, ingratiating, or disinterested when you don’t mean to; or project impressions of you as an individual that may not be accurate and not all the ones you intended to project (1997, p. 70)” (quoted in Morin 347).

Therefore, the potential communicative misunderstandings that could arise as a result of such errors practically demand the inclusion of such elements in a university-level L2 classroom. The development of proper pronunciation in the Spanish L2 classroom cannot be emphasized enough.

Although the instruction of proper pronunciation should be an integral and crucial component of second language curricula, “much research points to the continued neglect of Spanish pronunciation instruction in the university-level communicative foreign language classroom” (Morin 342). Lord (2005) described research on second-language phonological instruction as still being “in its infancy,” citing only a handful of studies that focus on how to teach pronunciation in communicative language classes by providing sample activities and suggestions (quoted in Morin 344). Lord also points out a series of problems that continue to persist, which are:

Spanish foreign language pronunciation is not an area that has been extensively investigated. Spanish pronunciation is rarely if ever taught in introductory classes; some textbooks present, at most, cursory descriptions of how to articulate some basic sounds, and in the best cases, students do not take a Spanish phonetics and phonology class until their third or fourth semester (Morin 344).

This neglect has direct implications for teacher preparation, especially in light of the *ACTFL Program Standards for the Preparation for Foreign Language Teachers* (2002), which call for foreign language teachers who “understand the rules of the sound system of the target language, can describe how target language sounds are articulated, are able to describe target language phonological features, and can diagnose their own target language pronunciation problems and those of their students” (Morin 342). Thus, the phenomenon of students needing to be instructed pronunciation, phonetics and phonology coincides with inadequate teacher preparation. Morin further postulates:

“Only teachers who have a certain knowledge base can make students aware of differences and similarities between the sound and writing systems of their own language and target language, describe Spanish language phonological features, diagnose their own and their students’ pronunciation problems in Spanish, discuss regional variation, or make students aware of what is communicated by different intonational patterns in Spanish and English” (Morin 347).

Many studies show that word recognition is language specific, and that knowledge of a specific sound system shapes the perception of non-native phonetic and phonological distinctions. “For example, non-native listeners exposed to a novel language have difficulty categorizing and discriminating phonetic contrasts that are not distinctive in their L1” (Carroll and Windsor 54).<sup>20</sup> Carroll and Windsor continue:

Despite such strong evidence for L1 effects on perception and production, L1 knowledge is not a straightjacket preventing adults from becoming proficient users of an L2. However, the relationship between L1 knowledge, amount of exposure and phonetic and phonological learning is anything but clear. Even on first exposure to L1, after minimal amounts of input and no prior practice, adults can segment novel sound forms and attempt to produce novel L2 sounds. How learners progress from this state to a target-like pronunciation is not well understood. It is known that, even after substantial amounts of exposure to an L2, the amount of daily L1 language use of an L2 learner plays a role in the development of native-like ability to distinguish L2 vowels and consonants (Carroll and Windsor 54-55).

Thus, L1 knowledge can play an inhibitive role in adults who are learning and developing a new phonological knowledge of L2. Although the exact relationship between L1 knowledge and exposure to the L2 sound system is unclear, researchers seem certain that explicit instruction of these systems has a positive impact on the overall acquisition of the target language.

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<sup>20</sup> See Lisker & Abramson (1967), Werker and Tees (1984), among others. Carroll and Windsor make the distinction that “Contrastiveness turns out not to be a good predictor of the ability to perceive phonetic distinctions; non-native listeners can detect some L2 contrasts even better than listeners who have the contrast as part of their L1 phonological repertoire” (Carroll and Windsor 54).



“Depending on the second language in question, pronunciation teaching typically covers any or all of the following: consonant and vowel sounds, changes to these sounds in the stream of connected speech, word stress patterns, rhythm, and intonation—what might be described as the nuts and bolts of pronunciation instruction” (Jenkins 109). Although many published pronunciation resources such as textbooks and teachers’ handbooks focus almost exclusively on these aspects of pronunciation instruction, many modern day Spanish textbooks for university-aged students often fail to include these fundamentals. Pedagogical developments on recent findings in pronunciation research fall into two main categories: those concerned with issues of context and those that relate to technological advances.<sup>21</sup> Morin finds other reasons for the current neglect of Spanish pronunciation instruction to be no mystery; the findings of research such as Morley (1994) and MacDonald (2002) for ESL pronunciation in the United States, and Carbó et al. (2003) for pronunciation instruction in Spanish as an L2 classes in Spain, can be equally applied to foreign language Spanish pronunciation instruction in the United States at all levels (Morin 343). Morley (1994) points out that despite the renewed interest in pronunciation teaching due to factors such as recognition of learner problems and unmet learner needs, modern pedagogy is still lacking in many areas.

Morley argues that pronunciation is important, first, because poor pronunciation can make a nonnative speaker unintelligible to native speakers, leading to a complete breakdown in communication, ineffectual speech performance, negative judgments about personal qualities, negative or apprehensive native-listener reactions, and pejorative stereotyping. Second, nonnative speakers who are not comfortably intelligible avoid the

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<sup>21</sup> “The first group comprises both discourse and sociolinguistic context (the latter including related sociopsychological factors), and the second comprises both new pedagogic possibilities and the potential to challenge earlier claims that has not been supported by empirical evidence.” For more on this research, see Jenkins 110-120.

very speaking activities that provide opportunities for learning and practice. (quoted in Morin 345)

MacDonald (2002) specifies additional problems, such as the fact that pronunciation is not given a central and integrated position in ESL curricula, the lack of incentive for teachers to expand their knowledge and skills regarding pronunciation, and the scarcity of “suitable teaching and learning materials” combined with the “absence of skills and assessment framework” (Morin 344). It could be the case that students do not receive adequate “input in elementary Spanish classes to develop on their own adequate phonological and phonetic representations of speech sounds. In addition, pronunciation involved the acquisition of both segmental and suprasegmental features like pronunciation” (Morin 345). Rather than instructors simply not wanting to instruct such crucial features of the language, Whitley (1993) suggests “the transmission of communicative language teaching from scholars to teachers has been hampered in part by inadequate teacher training” (quoted in Morin 345). Furthermore, researchers Harlow and Muyskens (1994) show that there exists a discrepancy among student and instructor goals in regards to pronunciation. Although “students ranked speaking, vocabulary and pronunciation as the top three most effective activities (out of 19), instructors ranked pronunciation 13<sup>th</sup> overall” (quoted in Morin 345). Thus, it would appear as though pronunciation is a priority for students of a second language, but learners “do not pick it up on their own satisfactorily enough to develop into intelligible, confident oral communicators” (Morin 345). As Whitley and others have noted, the problem often results from teacher inadequacy, due to the fact that “teachers often feel that they couldn’t teach it even if they wanted to because they do not have the training, and, all too often, teacher trainers continue to give short shrift to pronunciation teaching due to their

own lack of background in this area” (345). a Several series of standards have been developed in order to homogenize foreign language instruction, and ideally address some of the discrepancies and inadequacies found in second language acquisition.

*The Standards for Foreign Language Learning and ACTFL Standards*

The *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (National Standards, 1999) are organized into five goal areas—Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, Communities—each one containing content standards and sample progress indicators. Although these standards were designed for primary and secondary education, with progress indicators for grades four, eight and twelve, they are highly regarded in post-secondary education as pillars of SLA pedagogy. Standard 4 (Comparisons) dictates that, “Students report differences and similarities between the sound and writing systems of their own language and the language being learned” (1999, 59). Sample progress indicators for the Communication standard include “Students interpret gestures, intonation and other visual or auditory clues in Spanish-language visual media such as videos, films and television programs” (1999, 442). Grade eight sample progress indicator “Students demonstrate awareness that English and Spanish have sound distinctions that they must master to communicate meaning (pero/perro, continuo/continúo/continuó)” (1999, 453). Grade twelve includes the sample progress indicator that “Students compare the social acceptability of words, idioms and vocal inflections in English and Spanish” (1999, 456). Although these standards were developed for primary and secondary education, these standards could theoretically be applied to post-secondary education; collectively, they serve the purpose of

demonstrating the inadequacies of university-level curricula's approach to pronunciation instruction.

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, or *ACTFL*, standards dictate that teachers must, at the very least, have an understanding of the following content areas and ideally the ability to instruct them:

1. The letters of Spanish, the sounds of Spanish, and sound/spelling relationships (Standard 4.1);
2. Segmentals: consonant and vowel features, including semivowels and semiconsonants (Standard 4.1);
3. Suprasegmentals: syllable structure of the word and the sentence, oral and written accents and sentence stress and unstress, considerations of rhythm and intonation (Standards 1.2, 4.1, 4.2),<sup>22</sup>
4. Dialectal variation (Standards 1.2, 4.1, 4.2) (quoted in Morin 347).

According to Morin, pronunciation problems can be classified in three ways: (1) those that impede communication; (2) those that, without impeding communication, make the process more difficult and (3) those that are not native-like, but do not make communication more difficult (Morin 348). She further explains the characteristics of each type of pronunciation error:

Teachers should be able to distinguish between phonological and phonetic errors. Errors that impede communication generally involve phonological errors, that is, errors in which one sound is exchanged (e.g. [p]eso [weight] vs. [b]eso [kiss]), changing the meaning of the word. The most common of these are /t/ vs /r/ (e.g. pero [but] vs. perro [dog], /n/ and /ɲ/ (e.g. at the risk of causing offense, the often heard ¿Cuántos anos tienes?, where the student means ¿Cuántos años tienes?, and the failure to clearly distinguish between /a/ and /o/, or /a/ and /e/, often substituting the schwa sound /ə/ so common in English in unstressed syllables but nonexistent in most varies

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<sup>22</sup> “Knowledge of the suprasegmentals described in 3, above, will lead to more successful interpreting of spoken language. Learners will be better able to identify word boundaries and avoid misinterpretations (e.g. *a ver* “let’s see” vs. *haber* “there is/are”), to interpret the message conveyed by stress patterns that may affect meaning (e.g. hablo /á-blo/ [I speak] vs. *habló* /a-bló/ [s/he spoke], and to interpret intonational patterns that may differ from those of the native language (L1)” (Morin 347).

of Spanish. Errors that do not impede communication but make the process more difficult are phonetic errors. These affect the pronunciation but do not alter the meaning of the word (e.g. \*a[z]úcar vs a[s]úcar [sugar], \*de[d]o vs. de[ð]o [finger], \*soc[aje]dad vs. soc[je]dad [society] (Morin 348).

One could argue that it is reasonable to include extensive instruction of these principles into syllabi at the university level, as Elliot (1997) did for his study. Correa (2011) suggests an innovative way to incorporate phonetics and phonology instruction into the classroom through the use of analogies and metaphors to represent more abstract ideas. For example, Correa includes the use of a cookie cutter and a cookie to respectively explain phonemes and allophones, or the use of coins to represent minimal pairs (364). According to Morin, “Teachers who meet the ACTFL program standards should understand and be able to explain the phonemic and allophonic characteristics of the Spanish sound system. But they also need to differentiate between what they need to know and what they need to teach” (Morin 348-349). Moreover, instructors should be aware of these fundamental elements of the target language, but should also exercise discretion in what exactly they teach so as not to overwhelm or confuse beginning students. Regardless, these fundamental elements of the Spanish language should be instructed in order to foster a native-like pronunciation in the Spanish L2 classroom and beyond.

This chapter reviewed the field of second language acquisition, citing fundamental theorists such as Chomsky, Lenneberg, Pike and Krashen, whose collective contributions have established and broadened the field of SLA and its modern-day applications. Given the inevitable dependence on L1 while learning L2, this chapter also examined linguistic transfer and cross-linguistic influences and the potential impediments

they present to students at the beginning level. It was noted that phonological transfer is among the most common and unfavorable types of transfer, especially for native English speakers learning Spanish as an L2. Phonetics and phonology were then defined both in general terms and more specifically concerning Spanish's phonetic and phonological systems, such as the fundamental characteristics of Spanish vowels and consonants. Recent pedagogical approaches to teaching pronunciation were outlined and described in relation to a series of standards developed for SLA. The last section of this chapter defined the *ACTFL* Standards that apply specifically to Spanish, which form the basis for the next chapter's methodological analysis of prominent Spanish textbooks.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

The previous chapter discussed the literature associated with second language acquisition, cognitive linguistics, language transfer, cross-linguistic influences, the *ACTFL* pedagogical standards, and Spanish phonetics and phonology. This chapter outlines the methodology of the analysis of beginning textbooks *Vistas 5<sup>th</sup> edition*, *Puntos de partida 9<sup>th</sup> edition* and *Plazas 4<sup>th</sup> edition* as well as the intermediate textbook *Facetas 3<sup>rd</sup> edition*, focusing on their respective approaches to the instruction of pronunciation, phonetics and phonology or lack thereof.

#### *The Present Study*

Few studies analyze approaches to pronunciation instruction in Spanish textbooks at the post-secondary level, and those that do exist do not analyze the textbooks presented in this study.<sup>1</sup> Although progress has been made from the era of the Audiolingual Method, textbooks tend to lack the incorporation of current pronunciation teaching techniques generally advocated by researchers and practitioners in the instructed SLA field. As Morin notes, such textbooks also fail to comply with the *ACTFL* standards set forth in order to ensure the proper SLA instruction that fosters and encourages a comprehensive knowledge of the L2. “It has been suggested that the field of later language development has recently become a topic of expanding interest, although traditionally research still largely emphasizes language acquisition of toddlers and young

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<sup>1</sup>See Morin (2007) and Arteaga (2000).

children (0-6). For educational purposes, though, the development of languages beyond early childhood is of equal significance as it contributes substantially to academic and vocational success throughout the lifespan” (Duarte 222). Despite the equal significance of language studies beyond childhood, relatively little information is based on actual methodological analysis on whether Spanish textbooks are maintained and updated to follow trends in pronunciation instruction and ensure adequate development of adult language skills. This dearth of information is rather surprising considering the popularity of the Spanish language in post-secondary education, and “dozens of Spanish textbooks, particularly at the beginning level, that are available in the United States and the strong market that Spanish learners represent for both textbook authors and publishers in the country” (Fernández 160). The present study seeks to fill this gap and to inform the discipline about how pronunciation instruction is currently conceptualized and applied in materials used by a large number of instructors and students.

The research questions that guided the study are:

1. What are the approaches to pronunciation instruction in recent university-level, beginning and intermediate L2 Spanish textbooks?
2. Do these approaches reflect current perspectives by providing adequate pronunciation instruction as outlined by *ACTFL* Standards?

### *Textbook Analysis*

Recent editions of four prominent textbooks of beginning and intermediate Spanish were selected to analyze their approaches to pronunciation instruction. The criteria for selection were partially based on the number of editions the textbooks had, a high number of which indicated their popularity, a relatively well-established reputation,



and continuous selection by Spanish instructors. In order to answer the research questions, the analysis of each textbook was carried out in two parts. The first part identified the instructional features presented to teach Spanish pronunciation, according to the standards set for by *ACTFL*. The second part was a qualitative analysis of each textbook's adherence to these standards to answer the second research question.

*Vistas* is a textbook designed for the first-year introductory Spanish course consisting of eighteen chapters. *Vistas* does not include phonetic and phonological descriptions of Spanish consonants and vowels, but rather uses a less structured method of arbitrarily describing some sounds with few contrasts with their English counterparts. The authors of *Vistas* indiscriminately split the instruction of pronunciation into a one-page section of multiple chapters entitled "Pronunciación" in the first half of the book and "Ortografía" in the latter half. Chapter One's presentation of the Spanish alphabet, despite including the name of each letter and an example word in Spanish, notably excludes any indication of how each letter should be pronounced properly in Spanish. *Vistas* then waits until Chapter Two to introduce Spanish vowels, the language's most fundamental and distinct phonetic element separating it from English, which begins with the description, "Spanish vowels are never silent; they are always pronounced in a short, crisp way without the glide sounds used in English" (Blanco and Donley 47). Chapter Three further characterizes vowels <a>, <e> and <o> as strong vowels and <i> and <u> as weak vowels, and gives an introduction to linking syllables between words, or synalepha, as well as diphthongs, which according to the textbook is a combination of either two weak vowels and one strong, or a strong and weak vowel that is pronounced as one syllable (Blanco and Donley 85). Chapter 4 presents an introduction to word stress

and accent marks, which details some of the accentuation rules of Spanish and includes a small explanation of diphthongs and monosyllables (Blanco and Donley 123). Chapter Five informs the reader that the Spanish <b> and <v> are pronounced the same in Spanish (Blanco and Donley 161). Chapter 6 focuses on the “hard sound or soft sound” of the Spanish d and t (Blanco and Donley 197). Chapter 7 is concerned with the Spanish consonant r, which unlike English, has a phonetic distinction between [r] and [r] (Blanco and Donley 233). Chapter Eight compares Spanish consonants <ll>, <ñ>, <c> and <z> to English words with similar pronunciations, with one mention of Spain’s dialectal variation *ceceo* (Blanco and Donley 271). The final chapter with a section focused primarily on pronunciation is Chapter Nine, which focuses on letters <h>, <j>, and <g>, with no mention of the dialectal variation found in Spain or Latin America (Blanco and Donley 307).

The sections entitled “Ortografía” in the latter half of the book explain some concepts related to pronunciation, such as accent marks and accented syllables in Chapter Ten, the accentuation of similar words in Spanish like <sí> and <si> in Chapter Eleven, capitalization patterns in Spanish, punctuation marks and abbreviation in Chapters Twelve, Thirteen and Fourteen, respectively. The final chapters include a review of letters <b> and <v>, as well as <y>, <ll> and <h>, with a focus on the orthography of these letters rather than the pronunciation. Chapter Seventeen explains “Las trampas ortográficas,” or some common spelling mistakes in Spanish concerned with two similar sounding words or orthographically similar word pairs wherein one has a written accent mark and the other does not, such as <compro> and <compró>. However, this chapter notably fails to mention the pronunciation difference between these types of word pairs,

which is one of the reasons for the written accent mark. The final chapter presents neologisms and words borrowed from English and other languages. Overall, *Vistas* 5<sup>th</sup> edition demonstrates the lack of focus on pronunciation instruction in beginner Spanish textbooks designed for university students.

*Puntos de partida* 9<sup>th</sup> edition, also a beginning Spanish textbook, has nineteen chapters, including the preliminary chapter. Pronunciation instruction spans chapters 1 through 4, beginning with a presentation of Spanish vowels in Chapter One that aims to compare and contrast Spanish vowel sounds to their English counterparts, but like *Vistas*, erroneously presents the Spanish [e] sound as the glide [ej] in the English word <they> (Dorwick et al. 18). Chapter Two presents both diphthongs and linking, classifies the strong vowels and weak vowels of Spanish, and also briefly introduces the differences between Spanish and English intonation patterns. Stress and written accent marks are divided into two parts across Chapters Three and Four, with the former explaining the orthographic accent and accentuation patterns of *palabras llanas* and *palabras agudas*, and the latter reviewing these types and introducing *palabras esdrújulas*. Chapter Four's pronunciation section also explains the hiatus that occurs when a weak vowel receives the stress in a diphthong, the diacritic accent mark that separates certain monosyllabic words from others, and also separates some example words into individual syllables to practice pronunciation. Although the effort to stress the importance of Spanish pronunciation to overall proficiency in the language is noteworthy and begins in the first chapter of the textbook, *Puntos de partida* curtails its instruction of pronunciation and dedicates very few pages to such a fundamental concept.

*Plazas 4<sup>th</sup> edition* is a beginner Spanish textbook divided into fifteen chapters, each one of which outlines specific communicative goals at the start of each chapter and aims to accomplish these goals with the information and activities provided. However, each communicative goal conspicuously omits any mention of pronunciation instruction, phonetic or phonological aspects of the Spanish language such as vowel and consonant sounds or intonation and stress patterns, and even fails to include the Spanish alphabet. This repeated omission throughout all fifteen chapters of the textbook begs the question of how the authors intend to comply with the standards outlined in *ACTFL* to foster proper pronunciation by the explicit instruction of fundamental concepts, including segmentals, or vowels and consonant sounds, suprasegmentals, such as the syllable structure words and sentences, oral and written accent marks that detail sentence stress and lack thereof, considerations of rhythm and intonation and dialectal variations. *Plazas 4<sup>th</sup> edition* exemplifies the neglect modern-day beginning Spanish textbooks demonstrate through their failure to instruct Spanish phonetics, phonology and general pronunciation patterns.

*Facetas 3<sup>rd</sup> edition* is an intermediate Spanish textbook consisting of six chapters, designed to be used in one-semester intermediate courses at the university level. Perhaps due to the fact that this intermediate textbook is a continuation of the *Vistas* introductory textbook or the assumption that only beginner levels need pronunciation instruction, *Facetas* altogether lacks the instruction of pronunciation concepts, such as phonetics, phonology, suprasegmentals and dialectal variation. This exclusion results in the failure to standardize students' pronunciation habits and establish a common knowledge base, which is especially problematic when considering the wide variety of Spanish instruction

received by students from various origins, Spanish instructors and possible pronunciation errors that have become fossilized by the lack of input, instruction and correction. Although perhaps one could argue that pronunciation should have been covered in beginner courses and textbooks and thus merits exclusion from the intermediate level, it follows from the great difficulty in achieving a native-like pronunciation faced by adult learners of Spanish L2 and the lack of pronunciation instruction demonstrated in the three aforementioned beginner textbooks that *Facetas* should ideally include explicit pronunciation instruction. Without such instruction, pronunciation standards become nonexistent and the difficulty faced by these students to communicate appropriately in Spanish immeasurably increases and intensifies, particularly regarding understanding dialects and not sounding like a non-native or a monolingual.

#### *Research Method*

In order to answer each research question, the analysis was carried out in two parts. The first part identified the instructional features presented to teach pronunciation, such as the possible inclusion of explicit information like phonetics and phonology, segmentals, or consonant and vowel features, including semivowels and semiconsonants, suprasegmentals, such as syllabification, orthographic accent mark considerations of rhythm and intonation, and finally dialectal variation. In order to establish a methodological and calculated analysis of each textbook's approach to phonetics and phonology instruction, the following criteria, adopted from the *ACTFL Standards* (1999) and quoted from Arteaga (2000) will be measured:

1. Provides the explicit instruction of the letters and sounds of Spanish, the sound/spelling relationships, phonetic and phonological systems of the

Spanish language, how they differ from English sounds and the distribution and assimilation that occurs in rapid speech.

2. Explicit instruction on Spanish segmentals, which are consonant and vowel features, including semivowels and semiconsonants. The Spanish vowel system is much simpler and more succinct than English, and the characteristics of each vowel should be included.
3. Explicit instruction on suprasegmentals, such as syllabification, orthographic accent marks, considerations of rhythm and intonation, all of which contribute to the larger communicative goal of understanding native-spoken Spanish and achieving a native-like accent.
4. Dialectal variation is mentioned when relevant, either presented through alternative vocabulary words that vary by country or the pronunciation habits of various regions of the Spanish-speaking community. This is crucial to developing fluency in Spanish as an L2, and aids in the cultural aspect of SLA.
5. Provides oral output activities that include engaging content and tasks conducive to practicing and acquiring proper pronunciation in the target language.

Each textbook was analyzed by the inclusion or exclusion of the five aforementioned fundamental aspects of pronunciation instruction, as outlined by the *ACTFL* Standards.

The evaluation scale for each textbook was scored as follows:

*Nonexistent.* The textbook either does not include the appropriate feature or its inclusion is so minor that its usefulness cannot be evaluated.

*Poor.* The textbook does include some mention of the feature, but is not thorough or contains an inaccurate or disorganized presentation.

*Fair.* The textbook includes the feature, and its explanation is somewhat adequate and free of factual errors. The feature could be more thoroughly presented, and be given with clearer explanations and more concrete examples.

*Appropriate.* The textbook includes a thorough, informative presentation of the feature, with explanations for both the student and professor. The text uses technical terms to describe linguistic concepts and presents them in a straightforward, well-organized way.

*Excellent.* The textbook clearly presents the feature using its technical terminology, detailed explanations and dynamic activities that implement the feature.

The analysis of each textbook employed Table 3.1 and a subsequent explanation to answer the first research question regarding the approaches each textbook utilizes to instruct pronunciation. The second research question is then addressed at the end of each section to determine each textbook's adherence to the standards set forth by *ACTFL*. Table 3.1 demonstrates the criteria and evaluation scale of the analysis:

Table 3.1 Evaluation Criteria for Textbook Analysis

| Criteria   | Nonexistent | Poor | Fair | Appropriate | Excellent |
|--|-------------|------|------|-------------|-----------|
| 1. Letters and sounds of Spanish, as well as sound/spelling relationships (phonetics, phonology and orthography) |             |      |      |             |           |
| 2. Segmentals (vowels, consonants, semiconsonants and semivowels)  |             |      |      |             |           |
| 3. Suprasegmentals (syllabification, orthographic accents, rhythm and intonation)                                |             |      |      |             |           |
| 4. Dialectal variation (phonetic/phonological contrasts, or lexical variations among dialects)                   |             |      |      |             |           |
| 5. Oral output activities to practice pronunciation with input from instructor                                   |             |      |      |             |           |



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Analysis

The previous chapter discussed the methodology of the current study, the research questions and search terms that guided the research, and finally detailed the criteria by which the textbook analysis was conducted. This chapter presents the analysis of four prominent Spanish textbooks designed for university-level courses, *Vistas 5<sup>th</sup> edition*, *Puntos de partida 9<sup>th</sup> edition*, *Plazas 4<sup>th</sup> edition*, and *Facetas 3<sup>rd</sup> edition*. The research questions that guided this analysis are as follows:

1. What are the approaches to pronunciation instruction in recent university-level, beginning and intermediate L2 Spanish textbooks?
2. Do these approaches reflect current perspectives by providing adequate pronunciation instruction as outlined by *ACTFL* Standards?

#### *Textbook Analysis*

Each textbook was analyzed according to the criteria established by Table 3.1, which were adapted from *ACTFL* Standards. The analysis of each textbook begins with the evaluative measures, followed by a detailed explanation of the evaluation and textual evidence to support the evaluation. The table containing the criteria answers the first research question, whereas the second research question is addressed after the subsequent explanation.

### *Vistas 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*

*Vistas 5<sup>th</sup> edition* is a beginner Spanish textbook divided into eighteen chapters, the former nine of which specifically focus on pronunciation while the latter focus on orthography. Although its presentation of pronunciation concepts remains inadequate, *Vistas* contains perhaps the most dedicated and thorough approach including key phonetic and phonological concepts aiming to foster native-like pronunciation within this analysis. Table 4.1 details the evaluative analysis of *Vistas 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*:

Table 4.1 *Vistas 5<sup>th</sup> Edition* Evaluation

| Criteria   | Nonexistent | Poor | Fair | Appropriate | Excellent |
|--|-------------|------|------|-------------|-----------|
| 1. Letters and sounds of Spanish, as well as sound/spelling relationships (phonetics, phonology and orthography) |             |      | ●    |             |           |
| 2. Segmentals (vowels, consonants, semiconsonants and semivowels)  |             |      | ●    |             |           |
| 3. Suprasegmentals (syllabification, orthographic accents, rhythm and intonation)                                |             | ●    |      |             |           |
| 4. Dialectal variation (phonetic/phonological contrasts, or lexical variations among dialects)                   |             | ●    |      |             |           |
| 5. Oral output activities to practice pronunciation with input from instructor                                   |             | ●    |      |             |           |

The first criterion of the evaluation concerns the letters and sounds of Spanish, as well as the sound and spelling relationships, for which *Vistas* ranked Fair. Chapter One's presentation of the Spanish alphabet, despite including the name of each letter and an

example word in Spanish, excludes any indication of how each letter should be pronounced properly in Spanish.<sup>2</sup> This textbook at least presents the alphabet and the names of each letter, which is more than some other textbooks include. However, its presentation notably lacks any mention of phonetics or phonology, which would help beginning students to conceptualize the Spanish sound system and its differences from English. *Vistas* makes a habit of excluding technical terms, particularly those related to phonetics and phonology, which is to the detriment of students who are obligated to use this textbook in their university Spanish courses. Students at this level would theoretically be able to understand and comprehend such technical terms, and it seems as though their exclusion from the text creates a sense of ambiguity. For example, when articulating a sound that has a different point of articulation than a similar sound in English, the inclusion of such technical terms would prove beneficial to the acquisition of pronunciation.

In accordance with the second evaluative criterion, *Vistas* inexplicably delays the instruction of Spanish vowels, the language's most fundamental and distinct phonetic element separating it from English, until Chapter Two. The presentation of vowel sounds in *Vistas* begins with the description, "Spanish vowels are never silent; they are always pronounced in a short, crisp way without the glide sounds used in English" (Blanco and Donley 47). Not only are the words "short and crisp" an arbitrary way to describe the pronunciation of Spanish vowels, it is also improbable that a university-aged beginner L2 Spanish student, to whom phonetics and phonology has not been introduced, knows the meaning of "glide sounds" and how they are used in English unless they are first given

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<sup>2</sup> See Table 2.4 for an example representation of Spanish letters, phonemes and example words, which more thoroughly demonstrates this fundamental concept.

the definition and an example. The text also erroneously presents each vowel alongside an English word that suggests its similarity to the vowel sound in English. For example, the Spanish vowel <e> is misrepresented as a glide [ej] in the following excerpt from the text, “The letter <e> is pronounced like the <e> in <they>, but shorter” (Blanco and Donley 47). The Spanish vowel /u/ is presented alongside the English word <room>, despite the fact that Spanish, unlike English, requires the full rounding of the lips in order to produce that particular vowel sound. Additionally, the text presents obscure, cartoon illustrations of how the mouth should look when pronouncing each vowel. An approach similar to Morgan’s in *Sonidos en contexto* which presents both illustrations of the buccal cavity and actual photos of a native Spanish speaker while pronouncing each vowel would be more useful to students rather than these confusing illustrations.<sup>3</sup>

Regarding the presentation of consonants, Chapter Five informs the reader that the Spanish <b> and <v> are phonetically identical in Spanish, and also details the phonological difference between the bilabial occlusive [b] and the bilabial approximant [β] in regard to their assimilation to nasals [m] and [n] (Blanco and Donley 161).<sup>4</sup> There is no reason not to include the phonological description of these consonants and their distribution in more specific terms. Rather, the book describes that “There is no difference in pronunciation between the Spanish letters <b> and <v>. However, each letter can be pronounced two different ways, depending on which letters appear next to them. <B> and <v> are pronounced like the English hard <b> when they appear either as

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<sup>3</sup> For a more complete visual representation of how the mouth should be shaped while pronouncing Spanish vowels, see Morgan’s illustrations and photos of a Spaniard adolescent while enunciating the vowels in Appendix A (Morgan 90-91).

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that a phonological explanation is not utilized in the book, which includes ambiguous terms such as “hard b” and “soft b” (Blanco and Donley 161).

the first letter of a word, at the beginning of a phrase, or after <m> and <n>” (Blanco and Donley 161). According to the text, a hard <b> is produced by “tightly closing the lips and stopping the flow of air” and the soft <b> is produced by “keeping the lips slightly open” (Blanco and Donley 161). It should be noted that the text aims to coordinate each allophone by color-coding them within the example word in Spanish, however it fails to inform the reader which color represents which allophone. Nevertheless, the terms “hard” and “soft” <b> seem ambiguous and indistinguishable, especially considering the existence of technical terms “bilabial stop” and “bilabial approximant” that adequately describe the difference between the two sounds and could be used when describing phonological assimilation.

Continuing this trend, Chapter Six features the “hard sound or soft sound” of the Spanish <d> and <ɰ> (Blanco and Donley 197). Once again, rather than explaining the only phonological difference between these two sounds, that /t/ is voiced while /d/ is unvoiced, *Vistas* instead uses arcane terms that distract the learner into pondering the difference in meaning between “hard” and “soft” rather than understanding the concept being instructed. The text even equates the “hard” and “soft” sound quality of <b> and <v> to that of <d>, despite their respective dissimilarities in pronunciation and distribution.<sup>5</sup> Instead, the text could have defined phonemes /d/ and /t/, the allophone [ð] as an interdental approximant, and the distribution of /d/ before [[ɫ] and [ɲ], as in *hondo* [oɲdo]. Once again, it should be noted that the text aims to coordinate the colors of each allophone within an example word in Spanish, yet fails to inform the reader which color

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<sup>5</sup> According to the text, “Like b and v, the Spanish d can have a hard sound or a soft sound, depending on which letters appear next to it” (Blanco and Donley 197). Given that the pronunciation of these consonants are in no way similar, the use of more specific, technical terms would be more useful and informative.

represents which allophone. The text does correctly distinguish the Spanish /t/ from its English counterpart, saying “When pronouncing the Spanish <t>, the tongue should touch the back of the upper teeth, not the roof of the mouth. Unlike the English <t>, no air is expelled from the mouth” (Blanco and Donley 197). Overall, the first year student might remain confused about the differences between the dental consonants /d/ and /t/, especially considering the lack of familiar comparative example words in their native language to compare with the target language. Chapter Seven is concerned with the Spanish consonants <r> and <rr>, which unlike English, have a phonetic distinction between [r] and [r̄], respectively (Blanco and Donley 233). The text describes the former as a weak trill, and the latter as a strong trilled sound “that English speakers often produce when they imitate the sound of a motor” (Blanco and Donley 233). Regarding this phonetic distinction, the text does mention that “Between vowels, the difference between the strong trilled <rr> and the weak <r> is very important, as a mispronunciation could lead to confusion between two different sounds” (Blanco and Donley 233).

The third evaluative criterion concerns the instruction of suprasegmentals, or syllabification, orthographic accents, rhythm and intonation. Beginning with a simple description of Spanish vowels in the previous chapter, Chapter Three further characterizes the vowels <a>, <e> and <o> as strong vowels and <i> and <u> as weak vowels. This chapter also gives an introduction to linking syllables between words, or synalepha, as well as diphthongs, which according to the textbook is a combination of either two weak vowels and one strong, or a strong and weak vowel that is pronounced as one syllable (Blanco and Donley 85). However, the book fails to demonstrate the significance of these rules in the process of syllabification, which is crucial to

understanding prosodic accent and the natural stress of words in Spanish addressed in the next chapter. Chapter Four presents an introduction to word stress and accent marks, which details some Spanish accentuation rules, and includes a short definition of diphthongs and monosyllables (Blanco and Donley 123). Once again, the book fails to demonstrate how diphthongs across word boundaries and monosyllables impact the syllabification of Spanish words, a concept which often presents difficulty for native English speakers due to its absence from the English language.

Concerning the fourth criterion, the instruction of dialectal variation, *Vistas* does mention some aspects of various dialects, but overall features a poor presentation of this fundamental concept. Chapter Eight compares Spanish consonants ll, ñ, c and z to English words with similar pronunciations, with one mention of Spain's dialectal variation called *ceceo*, or the use of the interdental approximant [θ] before consonants <z> and <c> in certain orthographic environment. According to the text, "In parts of Spain, <z> and <c> before <e> or <i> are pronounced like the <th> in <think>" (Blanco and Donley 271). However, when describing the orthographic <ll>, the text fails to mention the dialectal variation of this widely varying consonant /j/ that often distinguishes one dialect of Spanish from another. For example, the Spanish word <llaves> would be pronounced [ˈja.βes] in Argentina and Uruguay, [ˈdʒa.βes] in Colombia, [ˈja.βes] in Mexico and [ˈɫa.βes] in certain regions of Spain. This inadequacy continues in Chapter Nine, the final chapter with a section focused primarily on pronunciation which focuses on letters <h>, <j>, and <g>. The text makes no mention of the dialectal variation between Spain's use of the uvular fricative [χ], and Latin America's use of the velar fricative [x] (Blanco and Donley 307). This chapter would

have been the ideal moment to explain the phenomenon called aspiration, or the use of the glottal fricative [h] that occurs in many dialects of the Caribbean, some parts of Mexico and southern Spain. As a whole, *Vistas* contains a relatively poor presentation of dialectal variation, which remains a crucial aspect of the multifaceted Spanish language and an instrument through which the culture of various Spanish-speaking countries could be conferred.

The fifth criterion of the analysis focuses on output activities that require students to produce sounds in the target language, and hear feedback and input from the instructor. Throughout the book's approach to pronunciation instruction, *Vistas* includes many more input activities in which the professor says words and sentences aloud than output activities, or those in which the students produce the sounds themselves. When output activities do occur in the instructor's manual, they often include working in small groups to pronounce words and phrases in the target language, and do not foster evaluation and correction by the instructor. At the beginning level, correcting errors is a crucial element to proper pronunciation instruction so as to avoid the fossilization of errors at an early stage of SLA. While group work can also be an essential element of the first-year Spanish classroom, pronunciation output activities in which students with imperfect pronunciation evaluate one another practically nullify the effectiveness of the activity.

Although *Vistas* includes a seemingly adequate presentation of the five evaluative criteria utilized in the analysis, it is also incomplete. Students using this textbook remain unaware of the existence of Spanish phonetics and phonology, the exact characterizations of vowels and consonant sounds, syllabification, rhythm, intonation and dialectal variation. Instructors using this edition are provided relatively few activities to guide



students' pronunciation, and could possibly become frustrated by the repetitive inclusion of arbitrary terms to describe sounds that possess accurate, precise phonological descriptions. At the beginning of this analysis, *Vistas* was initially considered to be one of the worst representations available regarding Spanish pronunciation instruction; despite its conspicuous exclusion of various key concepts, it was later discovered that this textbook includes one of the best presentations of Spanish pronunciation within the current study. Subsequent analyses of beginner and intermediate level textbooks will demonstrate the superiority of *Vistas* within this thesis. In response to the second research question, which asks, "Do these approaches reflect current perspectives by providing adequate pronunciation instruction as outlined by *ACTFL* Standards?", the answer is no. Current perspectives mandate that all criteria are thoroughly presented in their entirety, yet *Vistas* notably excludes several fundamental features that collectively contribute to students' acquisition of Spanish as a second language.

#### *Puntos de partida 9<sup>th</sup> Edition*

*Puntos de partida 9<sup>th</sup> edition*, also a beginning Spanish textbook, has nineteen chapters, including the preliminary chapter. Although the effort to stress the importance of Spanish pronunciation to overall proficiency in the language is noteworthy and begins in the first chapter of the textbook, *Puntos de partida* curtails its instruction of pronunciation in Chapter Four and dedicates very few pages to such a fundamental concept. Table 4.2 details the evaluative analysis of *Puntos de Partida 9<sup>th</sup> Edition*:

Table 4.2 Puntos de partida Evaluation

| Criteria   | Nonexistent | Poor | Fair | Appropriate | Excellent |
|--|-------------|------|------|-------------|-----------|
| 1. Letters and sounds of Spanish, as well as sound/spelling relationships (phonetics, phonology and orthography) |             | •    |      |             |           |
| 2. Segmentals (vowels, consonants, semiconsonants and semivowels)  |             | •    |      |             |           |
| 3. Suprasegmentals (syllabification, orthographic accents, rhythm and intonation)                                |             |      | •    |             |           |
| 4. Dialectal variation (phonetic/phonological contrasts, or lexical variations among dialects)                   | •           |      |      |             |           |
| 5. Oral output activities to practice pronunciation with input from instructor                                   |             |      |      | •           |           |

Regarding the first criterion, *Puntos de partida* presents the Spanish alphabet early on in the first chapter with a table presenting Spanish's 27 orthographic letters, their corresponding names in Spanish, and a total of three example words for each letter (Dorwick et al. 7). The instructor's notes mention the Real Academia Española's decision to eliminate <ch> and <ll> as letters from the alphabet, which seems beneficial to inform students of the existence of an authority that decides such changes to the Spanish language. This section also details the various name changes the letters have experienced over time, such as <y> now being called "ye" and <w> being called "doble uve" (Dorwick et al. 7). One beneficial activity that aides in the conceptualization of English and Spanish as different languages with their own respective sound systems is Activity B

in which students are given several U.S. cities originating from Spanish such as Florida, Las Vegas, Texas and Montana, and then told to spell them aloud using the names of Spanish letters (Dorwick et al. 8). This activity could help students understand some fundamental differences between English and Spanish pronunciation, although no such differences between the respective pronunciations are explicitly given. Most notably absent from the presentation of Spanish letters in *Puntos de partida* is any mention of phonetics or phonology, which collectively form the fundamental basis of the language's sound system; thus, this textbook received a Poor score within the first evaluative criterion.

The second evaluative benchmark includes segmentals, or vowel and consonant sounds. *Puntos de partida* begins by noting the “very close relationship between the way Spanish is written and the way it is pronounced” which makes it “relatively easy to learn the basics of Spanish spelling and pronunciation” (Dorwick et al. 18). The most fundamental advice given in this section is the following description:

Many Spanish sounds do not have an exact equivalent in English, so you can't always trust English to be your guide to Spanish pronunciation. Even words that are spelled the same in both languages are usually pronounced quite differently. English vowels can have many different pronunciations or may be silent. Spanish vowels are always pronounced, and they are almost always pronounced in the same way. They are always short and tense. They are never drawn out with a [u] or [i] glide as in English: [lo] ≠ [low]; [de] ≠ [day]. (Dorwick et al. 18).

This section seems helpful due to its comparison of English and Spanish vowels, although only two Spanish vowels were compared and contrasted with English. The text should say written vowels in English can be silent, as spoken English vowels are never silent. Unlike *Vistas*, this textbook commences the presentation of Spanish vowels in the first chapter by comparing and contrasting Spanish vowel sounds to their English

counterpart. However, similarly to *Vistas*, the text erroneously presents the Spanish [e] sound as the glide [ej] in the English word <they> (Dorwick et al. 18). The text does mention that [e] is pronounced like <they> “but without the [i] glide”; perhaps another English word without a glide could have been chosen as an illustrative example, such as the Canadian <eh>, or [e]. Equivalently, according to the text the letter [o] is “pronounced like the [o] in <home>, but without the [u] glide” (Dorwick et al. 18). One Once more, English words should be chosen that actually resemble their Spanish counterparts, like the <oh> or [o] from Minnesota or North Dakota, rather than giving an erroneous example and later qualifying it to imply the accuracy of the example word. One positive aspect of this section can be found in a small graphic that mentions the English schwa [ə], or “uh” sound, that according to the text “is how most unstressed vowels are pronounced in English...but does not exist in Spanish” (Dorwick et al. 18). Albeit beneficial to make students aware of this phonological tendency of English, the authors fail to mention vowel reduction to [ə] as a phenomenon typically committed by English speakers when producing Spanish vowels, and thus appears somewhat arbitrary and indiscriminate. Concerning Spanish consonants, notably absent are any phonological descriptions whatsoever that can cause the pronunciation of certain consonants to differ depending on the specific context of their placement within a word or sentence. For these reasons, *Puntos de partida* received a Poor rating for this standard.

Regarding the third criterion which includes suprasegmentals, or syllabification, orthographic accents, rhythm and intonation, Chapter Two presents both diphthongs and linking by first classifying the strong and weak vowels of Spanish. However, [i] and [u] are not always “weak,” or unstressed, and is thus misleading. The text defines diphthongs

as “A combination of two vowel sounds in one syllable,” and later informs the reader that “two successive weak vowels ([i] and [u]) or a combination of a strong ([a], [e], [o]) and weak vowel are pronounced as one syllable” (Dorwick et al. 31). The text also defines the linking phenomenon that occurs somewhat differently in Spanish than in English by explaining, “When words are combined to form phrases, clauses and sentences, they are linked together in pronunciation. In spoken Spanish, it is often difficult to hear the word boundaries—that is, where one word ends and another begins” (Dorwick et al. 31). Although this description could help students conceptualize this fundamental concept to Spanish pronunciation, only one potentially helpful activity is given in the text to demonstrate this concept while both concrete examples of this phenomenon and instances in which it would occur are conspicuously excluded from the text. Chapter Three momentarily introduces the differences between Spanish and English intonation patterns using interrogative words. The text encourages the student to “Remember to drop your voice at the end of a question that begins with a Spanish interrogative word, the opposite of what happens in English, where the voice usually rises at the end of such questions.” (Dorwick et al. 30). Two example sentences comparing the opposite intonation patterns in English and Spanish are then presented that include arrows to indicate what the rise or fall of the voice. While this section is seemingly informative regarding interrogative sentences, it lacks any explanation of the many other intonation differences between English and Spanish.

Divided between Chapters Three and Four, the final pronunciation section details stress and written accent marks, with the first part explaining the orthographic accent and accentuation patterns of *palabras llanas* and *palabras agudas*, and the latter reviewing

these types and introducing *palabras esdrújulas*. Chapter Three's section helps students understand the natural stress of words that carry no orthographic accent by defining *palabras llanas* as "words ending in a vowel, -n, or -s" and *palabras agudas* as "words ending in consonants other than -n or -s" (Dorwick et al. 65). The technical presentation of these types of words is admirable, including the five example words given beneath each section that are broken down into syllables with the stressed syllable highlighted in red text. Chapter Four's pronunciation section reviews the previously stated natural stress rules, and then presents several words that break these rules, such as <lápiz> and <café>, and thus carry a written accent mark. The text then explains the third type of natural stress by stating, "All words that are stressed on the third-to-last syllable (la antepenúltima sílaba) must have a written accent mark, regardless of which letter they end in. These are called *palabras esdrújulas*" (Dorwick et al. 105). Chapter Four also illustrates the hiatus that occurs when a weak vowel receives the stress within a diphthong, such as <judío> or <policía>, and then describes the diacritic accent mark that separates certain monosyllabic words from others, such as <sí> and <si> or <él> and <el> (Dorwick et al. 106). Finally, several example words are divided into individual syllables to practice pronunciation. Overall, the third criterion of the analysis received a Fair rating due its inclusion of several key concepts like orthographic accent marks, rhythm and intonation, as well as its commended use of technical terms to describe many of these concepts. However, the blatant exclusion of the rules of Spanish syllabification, which is a syllable-timed language, and any mention of other types of intonation differences between English and Spanish are to the students' detriment and thus merit the rating of Fair.

Concerning the fourth criterion, the instruction of dialectal variation, *Puntos de partida* mentions negligible concrete examples of dialectal variation in Spanish, and therefore cannot be evaluated as if there were such explanations. The only mention of such cultural distinctions can be found in Chapter One's presentation of a map of the Spanish-speaking world, wherein the text momentarily and vaguely alludes to the existence of dialectal variations:

Like all languages spoken by a large number of people, modern Spanish varies from region to region. The Spanish of Madrid is different from that spoken in Mexico City, Buenos Aires, or Los Angeles. Although these differences are most noticeable in pronunciation ("accent"), they are also found in vocabulary and special expressions used in different areas of the world. But the majority of structures and vocabulary are common to the many varieties of Spanish. (Dorwick et al. 10).

Although the text does seemingly mention that various countries tend to pronounce words in different ways, it simultaneously implies that these differences are insignificant by the assertion that the majority of structures and vocabulary are common to the many varieties of Spanish and the subsequent exclusion of concrete examples from Spanish-speaking countries. Somewhat ironically, the exclusive concrete examples given are anglicized words used in the United States, such as <elevador> instead of <ascensor>, <aplicación> for <solicitud>, <bonche> rather than <montón>, <lonche> for <almuerzo>, and <grados> instead of <notas> (Dorwick et al. 11). Any attempt to equate the various dialects of Spanish is inadequate and demonstrates the authors' fundamental disinterest in the Spanish language and its cultural, linguistic variety. For this reason, *Puntos de Partida* received a rating of Nonexistent.

The fifth criterion of the analysis focuses on output activities that compel students to produce sounds in the target language, and hear feedback and input from the instructor.

*Puntos de Partida* contains an appropriate incorporation of both input and output activities to reinforce the pronunciation objective being instructed. Many sections include “Preliminary Exercises” to guide the instructor while demonstrating the pronunciation task at hand. In the first chapter, an activity using minimal pairs between English words and a phonologically similar Spanish word involves both input and output. This activity has the instructor pronounce both the English and Spanish word aloud, and then students must decide to which language the word belongs. The minimal pairs include English words such as <me, Fay, ace, cone, tea, low, dose, sea> and compares them to Spanish words <mi, fe, es, con, ti, lo, dos, sí> respectively (Dorwick et al. 18). As a preliminary exercise, this activity introduces the Spanish vowel sounds in an interesting way, and is effective in that it requires students to think about the juxtaposition of sounds in their native language and target language. After introducing the Spanish vowels, the Práctica A activity then has students repeat a series of words in the target language that individually reinforce Spanish vowel sounds. For example, to demonstrate the vowel [a], this activity has students repeat after the instructor words like <hasta, tal, nada, mañana, natural>, and for vowel [e] words such as <me, qué, Pérez, rebelde, excelente> (Dorwick et al. 18). The effectiveness of this activity is exemplified by its inclusion of both input and output to demonstrate the difference between English and Spanish vowels.

Another effective activity is found in Chapter Two’s presentation of linking that occurs in Spanish. Práctica C has students first listen to the instructor’s pronunciation of a set of sentences that emphasize the absence of glottal stops in Spanish and the concept of synalepha, or the linking of vowel sounds between words. Using the same sentences, the activity then makes students, “Practice saying each phrase or sentence as if it were one



long word, pronounced without a pause” (Dorwick et al. 31). This activity helps students understand this crucial pronunciation difference between their native language and the target language. In the third chapter’s presentation of stress and written accent marks, there are two activities included that aim to demonstrate the concept of spoken stress, both of which are quite constructive. After explaining the rules of natural stress in Spanish, *Práctica A* has students classify a series of words that are already broken down into individual syllables as either a “palabra llana” or “palabra aguda” and then pronounce the word (Dorwick et al. 65). The subsequent activity, *Práctica B*, then has students underline the stressed vowel in a series of words that are also divided into syllables without classifying it as one type or the other, but does not have students pronounce the words after indicating the natural stress. Collectively, these activities effectively demonstrate the predictable pattern of natural stress in Spanish, which is both a crucial concept to Spanish pronunciation and absent from the English language. Another effective pronunciation activity involving both input and output can be found within Chapter Three. While the text demonstrates the demonyms, or words indicating nationality, the instructor’s notes include a helpful pronunciation suggestion to emphasize the correct pronunciation of certain consonants. According to the text, “This list of nationality adjectives provides a good opportunity to focus on the pronunciation of the following letters and letter combinations: <c> + vowels (hard c and soft c), <ch>, the letter <ñ>, and <gu> + vowels” (Dorwick et al. 70). Example words like <costarricense, chileno/a, hondureño, guatemalteco> are given to demonstrate the varied pronunciation of these consonants, respectively. Although this demonstration is the only explanation of various consonantal pronunciations within the text, it is effective in combination with the subsequent activity

that has students determine the demonym of various people. Perhaps more activities of this type could be included to reinforce the pronunciation of those Spanish consonants that differ greatly from English.

Altogether, *Puntos de partida* contains a somewhat adequate presentation of the five evaluative criteria utilized in the analysis, except the fourth criterion that is completely excluded. Students using this textbook receive incomplete instruction regarding the relationship between letters and sounds, Spanish phonetics and phonology, the exact characterizations of vowels and consonant sounds, syllabification, rhythm, intonation and dialectal variation. The most beneficial aspect of this textbook is its rather extensive presentation of output and input activities that guide students' pronunciation. In response to the second research question, which asks, "Do these approaches reflect current perspectives by providing adequate pronunciation instruction as outlined by ACTFL Standards?", the answer is in some ways yes, and in others no. Current perspectives mandate that all criteria are thoroughly presented in their entirety; although *Puntos de partida* notably excludes dialectal variation, its presentation of the other features would benefit from certain elaborations in order to effectively contribute to students' acquisition of Spanish pronunciation.

#### *Plazas 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*

*Plazas 4<sup>th</sup> edition* is a beginner Spanish textbook divided into 15 chapters, each one of which includes specific communicative goals at the start of each chapter and attempts to accomplish these goals with the information and activities provided. However, each communicative goal conspicuously omits any mention of pronunciation instruction, phonetic or phonological aspects of the Spanish language such as vowel and

consonant sounds, and even fails to include the Spanish alphabet. This repeated omission throughout all fifteen chapters of the textbook begs the question of how the authors intended to comply with the standards outlined in *ACTFL* to foster proper pronunciation by the explicit instruction of fundamental concepts like the letters and sounds of Spanish, phonetics and phonology, segmentals, or vowels and consonant sounds, suprasegmentals, such as the syllable structure words and sentences, oral and written accent marks that detail sentence stress and lack thereof, considerations of rhythm and intonation and dialectal variations. Table 4.3 details the evaluation of *Plazas* 4<sup>th</sup> edition:

Table 4.3 *Plazas* 4<sup>th</sup> Edition Evaluation

| Criteria   | Nonexistent | Poor | Fair | Appropriate | Excellent |
|--|-------------|------|------|-------------|-----------|
| 1. Letters and sounds of Spanish, as well as sound/spelling relationships (phonetics, phonology and orthography) | •           |      |      |             |           |
| 2. Segmentals (vowels, consonants, semiconsonants and semivowels)  | •           |      |      |             |           |
| 3. Suprasegmentals (syllabification, orthographic accents, rhythm and intonation)                                |             | •    |      |             |           |
| 4. Dialectal variation (phonetic/phonological contrasts, or lexical variations among dialects)                   |             |      | •    |             |           |
| 5. Oral output activities to practice pronunciation with input from instructor                                   |             | •    |      |             |           |

Remarkably absent from this textbook is the one of the most rudimentary elements of any language, a presentation of the alphabet. *Plazas* also excludes any mention of the relationship between Spanish letters and sounds, and does not include phonetics or phonology. For these reasons, the first criterion of the analysis scored Nonexistent and thus cannot be evaluated. Another fundamental feature of the Spanish language omitted from this textbook is segmentals, or the presentation of vowels, consonants, semiconsonants and semivowels. Due to its absence from the book, the second criterion also scored Nonexistent and its evaluation is impossible.

Regarding the third criterion involving the instruction of suprasegmentals, or syllabification, orthographic accent marks, rhythm and intonation, only one of these is even mentioned in the textbook. In the preliminary chapter, the authors included a graphic that explains two general intonation patterns in Spanish. According to the text, “When you ask questions in Spanish the voice rises on the last syllable of the last word of the question. It falls on the last syllable of the last word in a statement” (Hershberger et al. 3). The text then gives the example sentence “¿Cómo está usted?” with an arrow pointing upward, and another “Soy de California.” with an arrow pointing downward. These explanations are problematic for three primary reasons; first of all, how are students supposed to know which is the last syllable of the sentence if they are not first informed of the syllabification rules of Spanish? Furthermore, the text incorrectly states that voice lowers or rises on the “last syllable,” when in actuality it is the last stressed syllable of the sentence that receives the intonation pattern, not necessarily the final syllable of the sentence. In the first example sentence, a partial interrogative, the voice should be falling, not rising. Additionally, in the second example sentence, the tone of

voice should begin to fall after the syllable <for> in <California>, which is not the final syllable of the sentence. The only other mention of any suprasegmental feature can be found in Chapter Three, when the text further explains a Spanish intonation pattern: “To form sí/no questions, make your voice rise at the end of the questions” (Hershberger et al. 87). Once again, an extensive comprehension of intonation presupposes the understanding of Spanish syllabification, which is absent from the text. Due to the scarce and inaccurate inclusion of intonation and the oversights regarding other suprasegmental features, *Plazas* received a score of Poor.

Concerning the fourth criterion which includes the instruction of dialectal variation, *Plazas* focuses solely on the lexical variations among many dialects of Spanish, thereby excluding phonetic and phonological contrasts among dialects. Beginning in the preliminary chapter, *Plazas* includes an informational component called “Nota lingüística” that details one linguistic feature at a time. It is within these *notas lingüísticas* that the textbook mentions lexical variations among Spanish dialects. The first component in the preliminary chapter informs the reader that, “In some countries, such as Chile, Colombia and Venezuela people say ‘chao’ (‘chau’ in Argentina, Bolivia, Peru and Uruguay) to express ‘good-bye,’ due to the influence of Italian immigrants” (Hershberger et al. 4). Later in this chapter, the text explains in the instructor’s notes the limited usage of “vosotros” by Spaniards, however fails to bring this to the attention of students using the textbook (Hershberger et al. 10). The text does explain “vosotros” commands to students in the fourth chapter of the book, but fails to emphasize its limited usage (Hershberger et al. 128). In Chapter Two, the *nota lingüística* notes, “It is common for Mexicans to use the word ‘güero(a)’ to describe someone who is blond. ‘Pelirrojo’

means red-haired” (Hershberger et al. 60). This is factually incorrect, as the use of the word “güero(a)” is more often extended to generally mean “American,” not necessarily a blonde individual. In Chapter Four, the text explains, “In Spain, ‘el piso’ refers to the apartment as a whole. ‘El suelo’ is the term used for *floor*” (Hershberger et al. 115). Another note about Spain says, “Many Spaniards will say ‘echar una siesta’ instead of ‘dormir la siesta’. It is still common for Spaniards to return home for lunch and then take a short nap, before returning to work or school” (Hershberger et al. 129). In Chapter Six dealing with food, one helpful note mentions a pragmatic lexical tendency of Latin Americans and Spaniards:

In several Latin American countries it is quite common to use the diminutive form when requesting common beverages such as ‘un cafecito’ (little coffee) or ‘una cervecita’ (little beer). Also note that in Latin America, it is more appropriate to use ‘(yo) quisiera...’ (I would like) when ordering food. In Spain, it is more common to use the more direct present tense form ‘(yo) quiero.’ (Hershberger et al. 185).

In the next chapter about clothing, the note mentions, “In Argentina and Uruguay, a skirt is called ‘la pollera’ instead of ‘la falda’; a jacket is called ‘la campera’ instead of ‘la chaqueta’; and in Argentina ‘las camisetas’ are called ‘las remeras’” (Hershberger et al. 215). The final lexical variations mentioned in the text are found in Chapter Nine’s presentation of vocabulary related to travel. According to the text, “In Puerto Rico, buses are called ‘las guaguas’; in Argentina and El Salvador, ‘los colectivos’; in México, ‘los camiones’; and in other countries like Cuba, the terms ‘el omnibús’ and ‘el microbús’ are common” (Hershberger et al. 303). Given the rather extensive incorporation of lexical variation among Spanish dialects, *Plazas* received a score of Fair. Perhaps due to the absence of any pronunciation instruction whatsoever, no phonetic nor phonological contrasts were mentioned among Spanish dialects.

In conjunction with the exclusion of pronunciation instruction throughout *Plazas*, very few oral output activities to practice pronunciation with input from instructor are suggested in the text. The only allusion to the exchange of professor input, student output and subsequent correction of errors can be found in an instructor's note within Chapter One: "Have students review the material in written and spoken form. After they write their answers and verify that they are correct, have students read them aloud. Gently address pronunciation errors that may impede communication" (Hershberger et al. 46). It could be argued that the correction of pronunciation errors is one of the most essential functions of the instructor within the L2 classroom; thus, all pronunciation errors should be addressed, not merely those that "may impede communication." As a result of the indiscriminate exclusion of the aforementioned activities to foster proper pronunciation, *Plazas* received a score of Nonexistent.

As a whole, *Plazas* notably excludes several of the five evaluative criteria utilized in the analysis. Students using this textbook remain unaware of the existence of the Spanish alphabet, the relationship between letters and sounds, Spanish phonetics and phonology, the exact characterizations of vowels and consonant sounds, syllabification, rhythm, intonation and dialectal variation. Instructors using this edition are provided relatively virtually zero activities to guide students' pronunciation. In response to the second research question, which asks, "Do these approaches reflect current perspectives by providing adequate pronunciation instruction as outlined by *ACTFL* Standards?", the answer is decisively negative. Current perspectives mandate that all criteria are thoroughly presented in their entirety, yet *Plazas* notably excludes the majority of fundamental features that collectively contribute to students' acquisition of Spanish pronunciation.

### *Facetas 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*

*Facetas 3<sup>rd</sup> edition* is an intermediate Spanish textbook consisting of six chapters, designed to be used in one-semester intermediate courses at the university level. Perhaps due to the fact that this intermediate textbook made by the same publishers of the *Vistas* introductory textbook, which introduces some fundamentals of pronunciation, *Facetas* altogether lacks the instruction of pronunciation concepts such as the Spanish alphabet, the relationship between letters and sounds of Spanish, phonetics, phonology, segmentals, suprasegmentals and dialectal variation. As an intermediate-level textbook, this blatant omission results in the failure to adequately equip intermediate and often beginner-level students' pronunciation habits and lack of a common standard of pronunciation. This inadequacy seems especially problematic considering the wide variety of Spanish instruction received by students from various education systems and instructors, as well as possible pronunciation errors that could have become fossilized by the lack of input, instruction and correction. The exclusion assumes that students at the intermediate level already have good pronunciation, however this is improbable for many reasons. The assumption cannot be made that all students have achieved appropriate pronunciation given the short amount of time and exposure to the target language experienced many students in the introductory courses, the possibility of students testing into an intermediate level from secondary courses or advanced secondary coursework for university credit, and online language courses that often exclude pronunciation emphasis. Table 4.4 illustrates *Facetas*' absolute omission of pronunciation instruction:



Table 4.4 Facetas 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition Evaluation

| Criteria   | Nonexistent | Poor | Fair | Appropriate | Excellent |
|--|-------------|------|------|-------------|-----------|
| 1. Letters and sounds of Spanish, as well as sound/spelling relationships (phonetics, phonology and orthography) | ●           |      |      |             |           |
| 2. Segmentals (vowels, consonants, semiconsonants and semivowels)  | ●           |      |      |             |           |
| 3. Suprasegmentals (syllabification, orthographic accents, rhythm and intonation)                                | ●           |      |      |             |           |
| 4. Dialectal variation (phonetic/phonological contrasts, or lexical variations among dialects)                   | ●           |      |      |             |           |
| 5. Oral output activities to practice pronunciation with input from instructor                                   | ●           |      |      |             |           |

Perhaps the authors of this book considered pronunciation to be a concept that should have been covered in beginning courses and textbooks and thus merited exclusion from the intermediate level. However, given the great difficulty in achieving native-like pronunciation faced by adult learners of Spanish L2 and the lack of pronunciation instruction demonstrated in the three aforementioned beginner textbooks, *Facetas* should ideally include explicit pronunciation instruction. Without such instruction, pronunciation standards become nonexistent and the difficulty faced by these students to communicate appropriately in Spanish immeasurably increases. Although one can merely hypothesize as to the exclusion of such fundamental elements of the Spanish language from this textbook, perhaps it is due to its design for intermediate-level students who supposedly

have developed a mastery of such concepts. However, students at this level rarely achieve such a mastery after the first year of L2 instruction, and certainly not when they begin their university-level SLA at the intermediate level through previous coursework or a placement exam that rarely, if ever, examines the development of the skills outlined in the evaluation criteria. Within the initial levels of second language acquisition, it is imperative to recycle key concepts like pronunciation in order to reinforce skills in L2. Due to their collective exclusion from the textbook, the effectiveness of the criteria is unable to be evaluated.

In conclusion, the analyses conducted within this chapter demonstrate the neglect current textbooks embody regarding pronunciation instruction despite its considerable merit and significance within second language acquisition. Although some textbooks adopt a more comprehensive approach, as a whole, the textbooks analyzed epitomize the undervalued nature of pronunciation instruction and exhibit the need for a more comprehensive approach that aligns and complies with the standards set forth by *ACTFL*. Without such reform, the future of Spanish pronunciation instruction at the beginning and intermediate university levels seems capricious, arbitrary and at risk of being instructed with a haphazard approach.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Conclusion

Whereas the previous chapter presented the analysis of four prominent Spanish textbooks, the current chapter presents the conclusion to this thesis by defining the limitations of the research, its potential implications and applications to the field of SLA, and hypothesizes future research that would prove beneficial to enhancing beginning L2 Spanish students' pronunciation in the target language. To reiterate, the research questions that guided the study are:

1. What are the approaches to pronunciation instruction in recent university-level, beginning and intermediate L2 Spanish textbooks?
2. Do these approaches reflect current perspectives by providing adequate pronunciation instruction as outlined by *ACTFL* Standards?

### *Limitations*

One major limitation of the current study could be found in its inclusion of only Spanish phonetics and phonology; there are multiple facets of the Spanish language contributing to its acquisition as a second language that ideally should be included in SLA curricula. Linguistic elements such as morphology, pragmatics and syntax are crucial to developing a native-like mastery of the Spanish language, but were excluded from the present study due to their magnitude. Furthermore, the instruction of how to pronounce sounds using phonetics and phonology seem more applicable to university-level students for whom pronunciation consistently presents problems at beginning

levels. Although the acquisition of derivational morphology can certainly prove helpful for beginning students, it seems as though phonetic and phonological knowledge proves more beneficial at the beginning levels of SLA by instructing students how to pronounce sounds and train their ear to listen to utterances by native speakers. The instruction of simple pragmatic elements of the Spanish language, mainly those have direct parallels to English and those involving courtesy, would also be constructive and conducive to developing a native-like usage of Spanish as second language. For example, the basic notion that Spain uses a more direct communication method regarding requests and commands than countries like Mexico and Ecuador, which incorporate much more courtesy, would be useful information to beginning Spanish students who could potentially travel to such nations.

Another limitation of the current study could be found in its exclusion of the online component associated with each textbook. Although this trend has widely developed since the onset of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, one could argue that SLA is not something that happens most efficiently using a computer. Students need an adequately trained professor that offers feedback, correction of errors, and explanations as to why something is wrong, all of which are severely lacking in the majority of online activities.

### *Implications and Applications*

From this research, it follows that authors of Spanish textbooks could improve regarding the instruction of pronunciation to university students, for whom native-like pronunciation often proves illusive and unattainable if explicit instruction of phonetics, phonology and other features outlined in the analysis are continuously circumvented. Although some books are better than others regarding the implementation of these

fundamental features of the Spanish language, there remain many improvements and enhancements that could easily be made to promote proper pronunciation in Spanish. Another implication that could be drawn from this present research is that a surprising amount of Spanish instructors at the university level are inadvertently ill-prepared and unaware when it comes to the instruction of fundamental linguistic concepts such as phonetics, phonology, segmentals, suprasegmentals and dialectal variation. This overall inadequacy seems especially concerning given *ACTFL's* commitment to these fundamental concepts of the Spanish language, combined with instructors supposed adherence to these criteria. It would seem as though current educators aspire to conform to these standards yet simultaneously disregard them altogether; thus, the standards implore that Spanish instructors at the university level know and master such concepts so as to then be able to teach them to beginning students. This present research supports existing studies by Morin (2007) and Arteaga (2000) expressing the neglect current curricula demonstrate regarding pronunciation instruction in the first-year Spanish classroom. The inclusion of ongoing instruction and recycling information, inductive learning activities, and attention to form postulated by Arteaga (2000) is crucial for the acquisition of pronunciation. The authors of Spanish textbooks and the educators who use them could benefit from further training and education on these fundamental concepts to enhance SLA by fostering and cultivating a new generation of professors and students who are knowledgeable and cognizant of these fundamental aspects of the Spanish language.

### *Future Research*

Future research that would enhance the study includes an experiment that determines which types of transfer are most common among university native English speakers learning Spanish as an L2. This type of study could be conducted by research in which utterances of a set of words in the target language are recorded, transcribed and analyzed in order to ascertain the most common pronunciation errors produced by this community of students. The ability to know such information would allow for the specialization of curricula geared specifically toward this growing population of students that preempts their most common pronunciation errors and adequately prepares them to avoid such errors in the future.

### *Conclusion*

The present study investigated the second language acquisition process among L1 English university-aged students, conducted an analysis of four prominent L2 Spanish textbooks, and concluded that there are several areas of improvement needed for the instruction of pronunciation in the first-year university Spanish classroom. Although it is recognized that there are many aspects of the creation process of a textbook, authors and editors could consider the inclusion of Spanish phonetics and phonology, vowel and consonant features, rhythm and intonation, and dialectal variation, among other phonological elements. Other areas to consider are the instruction of such elements of the Spanish language with both technical terms and simpler explanations, as well as activities encouraging student output with feedback and correction of errors from the instructor. Empirical research is needed in order to ascertain which specific sounds present native

English speakers the most difficulty, thereby enabling the development of curricula including activities addressing such problematic sounds.

## APPENDIX



## Vowel Pronunciation Representation

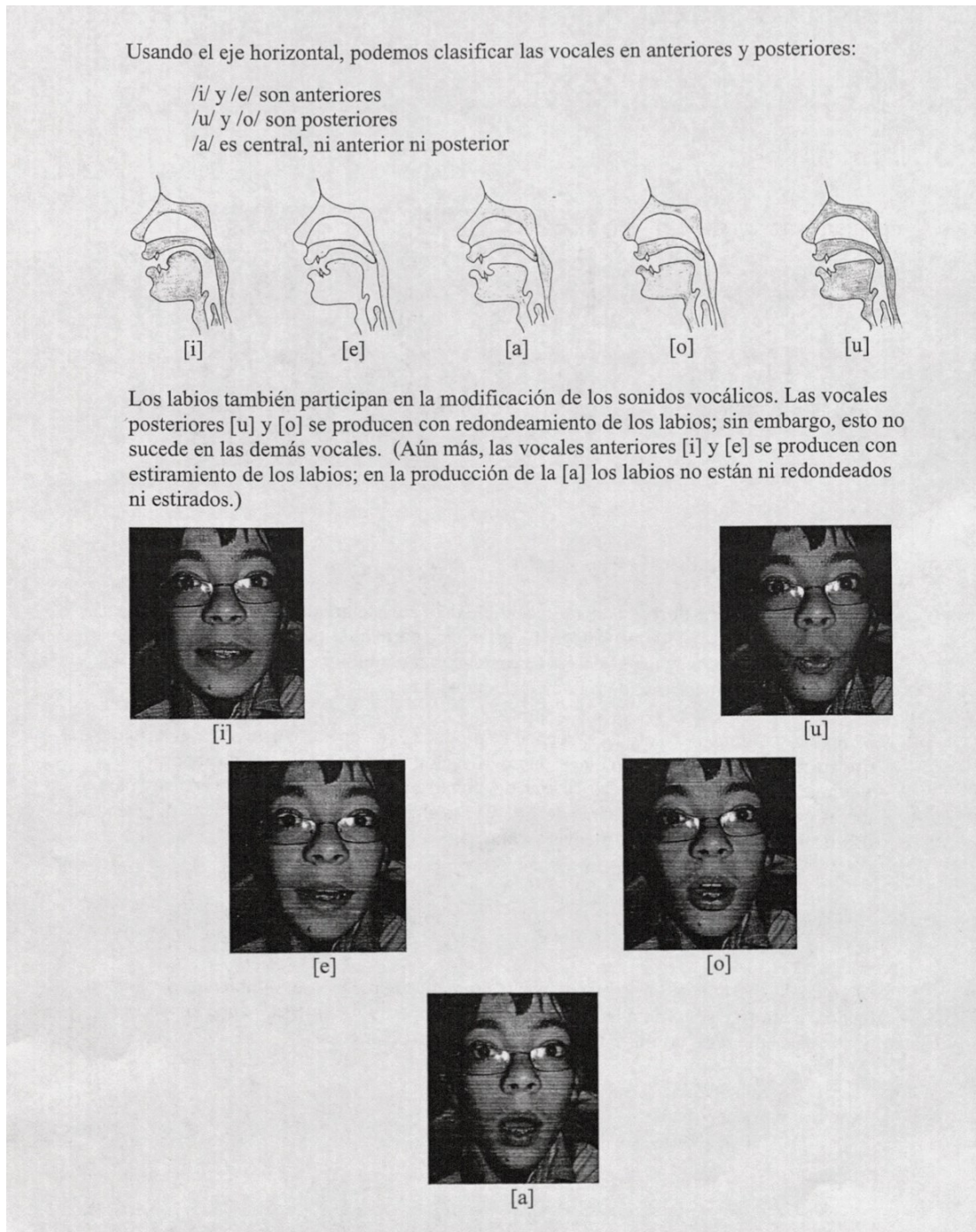


Figure A.1. Vowel Pronunciation Representation. Morgan, Terrell A. *Sonidos en Contexto; Una introducción a la fonética del español con especial referencia a la vida real*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2010: 89. Print.

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