



Phonetic strategies in online English teaching for the Bachelor's in National and Foreign Languages

Estrategias fonéticas en la enseñanza del inglés en línea para la licenciatura en lenguas nacionales y extranjeras


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ABSTRACT

The research aimed to analyze the implicit or informal phonetic strategies used in English teaching within the online program of Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages. A mixed methodology with descriptive and exploratory scope was applied. The population consisted of fourth-semester students and teachers, while the sample—selected through non-probabilistic convenience sampling—comprised 27 students and 5 teachers. Techniques included Likert-scale surveys, semi-structured interviews, and bibliographic review. The main results reveal that 52.4% of students had no formal training in phonetics, which negatively impacts oral development. Furthermore, 85.7% highlighted phonetics as essential for improving pronunciation, and 76.2% supported its inclusion as a formal subject. Additionally, 85.7% reported using digital tools such as the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), recordings, and apps to strengthen pronunciation. Teachers confirmed that although phonetics is not taught as an independent subject, they integrate strategies such as guided repetition, minimal pairs, tongue twisters, and auditory feedback. In conclusion, the study confirms the importance of phonetics in English language learning and emphasizes the need to formalize its teaching in the curriculum. It recommends including phonetics as a specific subject and promoting the use of digital tools to enhance oral production in virtual learning environments.

Keywords: Phonetics, English teaching, Pedagogical strategies, Pronunciation, Virtual learning.

RESUMEN

Hoy en día las competencias gerenciales son el conjunto de conocimientos, habilidades, actitudes y comportamientos que permiten a los gerentes y líderes gestionar equipos de forma eficiente y alcanzar objetivos empresariales. Su incidencia es fundamental, ya que influyen directamente en la eficacia de la organización, la toma de decisiones, la innovación, el desarrollo del talento humano y la adaptación al entorno cambiante. Este trabajo investigativo se estudia las competencias gerenciales y las actividades empresariales del comercial Morán Parrales. El objetivo general es establecer de qué manera las competencias gerenciales inciden en las actividades empresariales, mediante la identificación de los desafíos, y especificación de los principales obstáculos. La metodología utilizada combina enfoques cuantitativo y cualitativo, aplicando encuestas a 84 clientes y entrevista al gerente, permitiendo obtener información precisa sobre la gestión empresarial. Entre los principales resultados, se evidenció que la mayoría de los clientes percibe una gestión satisfactoria, aunque se señalaron desafíos como la comunicación interna, la innovación de productos y el fortalecimiento del servicio al cliente. Las conclusiones determinaron que las competencias gerenciales impactan directamente en la eficiencia, la adaptación al mercado y la competitividad de la empresa, recomendándose fortalecer la capacitación continua, mejorar la comunicación y promover estrategias de innovación que permitan un crecimiento sostenido.

Palabras clave: Competencias gerenciales, Actividades empresariales, Gestión operativa, Eficiencia.



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Introduction

The development of listening comprehension in English enables students to interact with linguistic components that support later learning. Language acquisition is not only about knowing what to say, but also how to say it with accuracy, rhythm, and naturalness. In a globalized world where English functions as the language of business, science, tourism, and international relations, clear pronunciation can open professional and academic opportunities (González et al., 2020).

Phonetics plays a fundamental role in strengthening oral competence and communicative confidence. In university settings, knowledge of phonetic aspects contributes to clarity and fluency in oral production. However, research shows that students' first language (L1) strongly influences pronunciation errors, which makes explicit pedagogical support essential. Strategies such as minimal pair exercises, guided repetition, and the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) are effective tools to overcome these challenges (Pacheco Vásquez et al., 2025).

Despite its importance, phonetics is often underestimated or superficially addressed in English language programs. In Ecuador, the lack of a systematic phonetic approach has generated significant gaps in pronunciation and listening comprehension (Sirlopú et al., 2023). At the Universidad Estatal del Sur de Manabí, particularly in the *Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages* online degree program, phonetics is not taught as a formal subject. Instead, it appears indirectly through listening practice, digital tools, and occasional teacher support. This fragmented approach often proves insufficient, leaving students uncertain and insecure when speaking English. Previous studies confirm that many students in Ecuador begin higher education with weak oral skills, largely because English teaching programs lack a systematic focus on phonetics (Emanuel, 2011; Sirlopú et al., 2023).

These deficiencies are intensified in virtual classrooms. The absence of direct interaction, reduced time for oral feedback, and technological limitations hinder authentic practice opportunities (Párraga, 2025). Consequently, students frequently feel demotivated and lack the confidence needed to use English effectively in academic and professional contexts. However, digital resources such as the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), minimal pairs, recordings, and auditory feedback have demonstrated potential to enhance autonomy, fluency, and oral accuracy in online learning environments (Nasim et al., 2022; Aldaz et al., 2024).

Given this reality, it is essential to understand how teachers address phonetic gaps in the absence of a formal subject. Thus, this study sets the following general objective:

To analyze the implicit or informal phonetic strategies used by teachers in the teaching of English in the degree program *Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros en línea*.

The specific objectives are:

- To analyze the perception of students in the program about the role of phonetics in their English learning process.
- To identify the phonetic strategies that appear in virtual classes without formal teaching.
- To recommend phonetic teaching strategies to improve English pronunciation in virtual environments.

This study seeks to analyze the implicit or informal phonetic strategies employed in online English teaching, evaluate their effectiveness, and propose recommendations to strengthen phonetic instruction in virtual settings. By doing so, it aims to contribute to teacher training and provide pedagogical alternatives that respond to the current educational challenges of English language learning.

Development

Methodological Development

Location

This research was conducted within the Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages degree program at the Universidad Estatal del Sur de Manabí, specifically in the online Room B section of the fourth semester. The virtual learning environment provided the context for exploring phonetic strategies used in English language teaching.

Duration

The study was carried out over a period of two months, covering the stages of literature review, data collection, instrument application, and analysis until the final results were obtained.

Type, Scope, and Focus of Research

The study employed a non-experimental design with descriptive and exploratory scope, adopting a mixed-methods approach. This design allowed the integration of qualitative insights with quantitative measurements to obtain a holistic understanding of the phonetic strategies used in online English teaching.

Methods and Techniques

The qualitative component focused on capturing participants' perceptions and practices through semi-structured interviews with teachers and a focus group with students. The quantitative component involved the application of a structured Likert-scale survey to measure the frequency and perceived effectiveness of phonetic strategies. Additionally, a bibliographic review was undertaken to establish theoretical foundations. The combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques enhanced the validity and depth of the findings.

Population and Sample

The population consisted of teachers and students enrolled in the fourth semester of

the online program. A non-probabilistic convenience sampling method was applied, considering accessibility and active participation. The final sample included 27 students and 5 instructors, whose direct involvement in phonetics-related teaching and learning ensured that the information collected was both relevant and representative of the studied context.

Variables under Study

- **Independent Variables:** Teaching of phonetics; Use of technology for oral pronunciation.
- **Dependent Variables:** Students' level of English pronunciation; Development of oral comprehension in virtual environments; Students' perception of the effectiveness of phonetic strategies.

Procedure

The research followed several phases:

1. **Documentary Review** of prior studies on English phonetics in virtual environments, to establish a theoretical basis.
2. **Design and Validation of Instruments** (semi-structured interview and structured survey), with expert judgment to ensure reliability.
3. **Institutional Consent and Data Collection**, conducted digitally to respect participants' confidentiality and voluntary participation.
4. **Data Analysis**, applying qualitative content analysis to interviews and focus group discussions, and descriptive statistical analysis to survey responses.

Sampling

A non-probabilistic convenience sampling technique was applied, which is appropriate for exploratory research in specific and delimited contexts. Data were collected through digital surveys and semi-structured interviews administered to 27 students and

5 teachers, based on their direct experience with phonetics in virtual learning.

Statistical Analysis

The quantitative data from the surveys were processed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and averages. This approach provided a clear view of students' perceptions and allowed trends to be identified without requiring complex inferential models. Data were organized in fre-

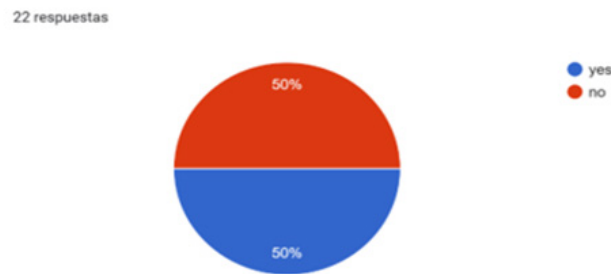
quency matrices and analyzed with digital tools such as Google Forms and spreadsheet software. As noted by Gonzales, Noriega, and Palacios (2025), descriptive statistics in linguistic research are effective for assessing the impact of pedagogical strategies by focusing on directly observed variables.

Analysis of Student Surveys

The analysis of student surveys revealed significant gaps in formal phonetics instruction.

Figure 1.

Phonetics

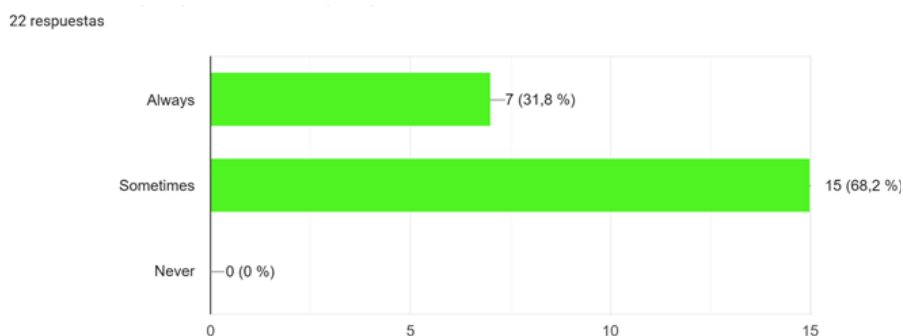


As shown in Figure 1, 50% of respondents reported having received some phonetics instruction, while the other 50% indicated they had not. This exact balance highlights

that half of the students lack specific phonetic training, which negatively impacts their oral development and their ability to decode linguistic structures (Illescas, 2024).

Figure 2.

Feedback on your pronunciation



Regarding pronunciation feedback, Figure 2 indicates that 31.8% of students reported always receiving feedback, while a larger proportion (68.2%) stated they received it only sometimes. Limited classroom time and low participation reduce opportunities

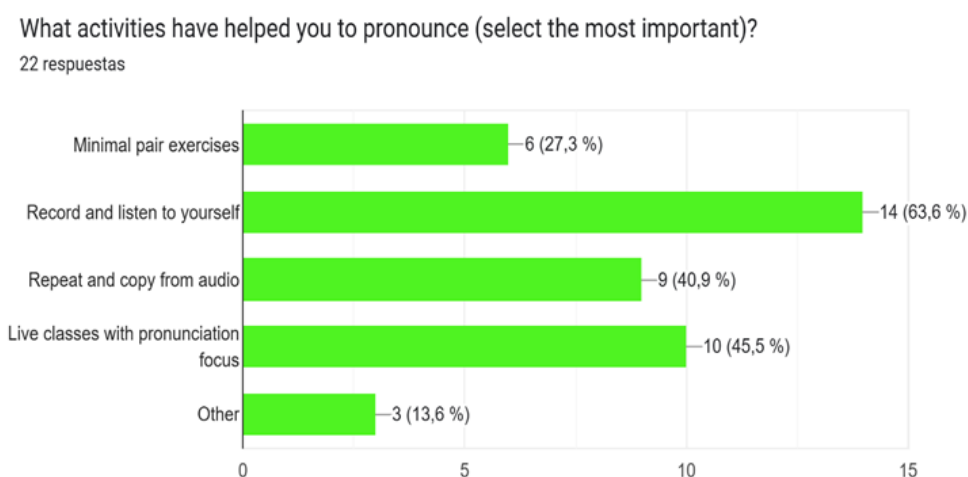
for oral correction. Peer-to-peer feedback has been highlighted as more effective than individual practice in addressing pronunciation errors (Evers & Chen, 2022).

Students strongly acknowledged the importance of phonetics for effective oral communication, 85.7% considered it essential for speaking English well, confirming a general awareness of its role in improving communicative competence (Briceño Machado, 2023).

In terms of technological support, shows that 85.7% of students reported using digital tools such as the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), recordings, or mobile applications to improve pronunciation. This reflects the relevance of technological resources in online learning environments (Nasim et al., 2022).

Figure 3.

Activities have helped to pronounce

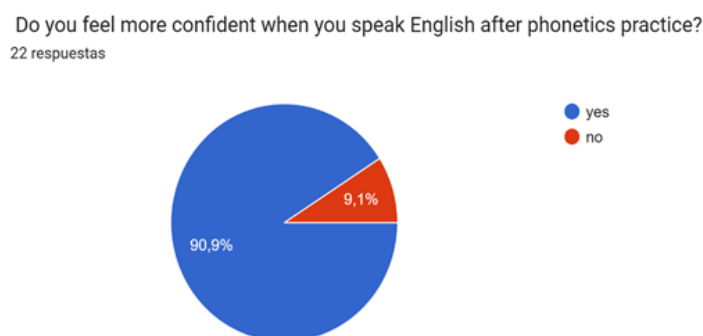


When asked about the most effective activities for pronunciation, Figure 3 highlights that 63.6% of students selected recording and self-correction as the most useful practice, followed by live pronunciation-focused classes (45.5%) and repetition from audio models (38.1%). These results suggest that a combination of autonomous practice and guided support provides the most effective outcomes (Briceño Machado, 2023).

Confidence in oral production also increased significantly after phonetic practice. As shown in Figure 4, 90.9% of students reported feeling more secure when speaking English, which reinforces the positive emotional impact of phonetic strategies on communicative performance (Gutiérrez, 2022).

Figure 4.

Safety when speaking English

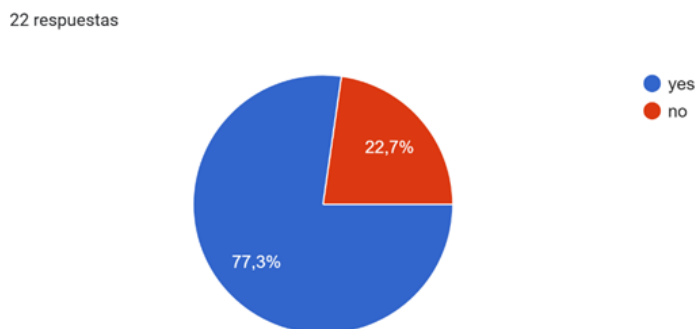


Finally, the majority of students (77.3%) expressed that phonetics should be taught as a separate subject (Figure 5). This reflects both the recognized need for systematic instruction and the demand for greater cu-

ricular emphasis on phonetics in English language programs. As Di Liu (2022) points out, intelligibility—rather than native-like imitation—should be the priority in pronunciation teaching.

Figure 5.

Phonetics as an additional subject



Analysis of teacher surveys

The survey of instructors revealed that teachers employ a range of strategies to support students' pronunciation in online classes. Among the most frequently mentioned were repetition exercises, tongue twisters, pair work, and listen-and-repeat activities, which provide auditory reinforcement and allow students to practice articulation patterns. Teachers also encourage reading aloud and short communicative tasks supported by visual materials to promote greater phonetic awareness and oral fluency.

When asked about the frequency and methods of teaching phonetics, teachers acknowledged that phonetics is not addressed as a formal subject in the program. Instead, it is incorporated informally and intuitively through practical classroom activities. Most instructors indicated that explicit phonetics instruction is generally reserved for more advanced levels of English, leaving beginners and intermediate learners with limited systematic exposure.

Regarding the use of digital tools, teachers reported integrating a variety of multimedia resources, mobile applications, and online

platforms that provide clear auditory examples and interactive practice. These resources help create authentic listening environments and encourage constant exposure to English sounds. Teachers agreed that consistent and active listening is the most effective way to strengthen pronunciation in virtual settings.

Several obstacles to teaching phonetics online were identified. The main difficulties include technical problems (such as unstable audio and internet connection), linguistic barriers (notably the interference of Spanish pronunciation patterns), and emotional challenges (lack of motivation and low self-confidence). To overcome these, teachers emphasized the importance of constant practice, emotional support, and building student confidence through positive reinforcement and engaging tasks.

When asked whether students experience problems with phonetics, four out of five teachers responded affirmatively, highlighting difficulties with intonation, vowel contrasts, and the articulation of consonant clusters. This coincides with the students' perception of the need for more explicit training. In fact, the majority of teachers (4 out of 5) agreed

that phonetics should be taught as a formal subject, confirming its relevance for communicative competence.

Finally, all five instructors reported that they had observed noticeable improvement in their students' pronunciation and confidence when speaking English. While progress varied according to the level of practice and motivation, teachers emphasized that integrating informal strategies and digital tools has helped students gradually achieve greater accuracy and fluency.

Discussion of Results

The findings of this study confirm the central role of phonetics in the development of oral competence in English. As noted by Ladefoged (2025), phonetics is essential because it strengthens both listening and speaking skills. This aligns with the results obtained, where 87.7% of students recognized phonetics as very important for effective communication, and the majority of teachers expressed that it should be implemented as a formal subject within the curriculum. Such convergence highlights the urgency of addressing the current gap, since insufficient phonetic training directly affects oral production, comprehension, and confidence in virtual classrooms.

Another key aspect concerns feedback practices. The data show that 71.4% of students reported receiving little to no systematic feedback on pronunciation. This lack of direct intervention restricts the correction of errors and slows down progress, particularly in contexts where students have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. As Loo et al. (2025) emphasizes, feedback from both peers and instructors is more effective than isolated practice, as it helps learners identify specific phonological difficulties and develop greater phonetic awareness. The low frequency of corrections can be explained by the reduced time available in virtual lessons, as well as by the absence of phonetics as a structured subject.

Taken together, these findings reveal a pressing need to strengthen phonetics instruction in online programs. The integration of explicit teaching, systematic feedback, and digital tools not only improves technical pronunciation but also fosters student motivation and self-confidence, which are essential for achieving communicative competence in English.

Conclusions

The analysis of data from surveys and interviews confirms that phonetics is not formally taught as a dedicated subject in the Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages program, but rather integrated implicitly through strategies such as guided repetition, minimal pair practice, the use of recordings, and digital resources like the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). While these approaches demonstrate teachers' efforts to address pronunciation, their implementation remains partial, inconsistent, and largely dependent on individual initiative.

Both students (74.6%) and teachers (86.7%) strongly recognize the importance of phonetics for improving oral communication and comprehension in English. This consensus highlights the urgent need for curricular reform that incorporates phonetics as a formal subject. Furthermore, the mixed-methods approach of this research provided a comprehensive understanding of the issue: quantitative surveys offered measurable insights into frequency and perceptions, while qualitative interviews revealed structural and emotional barriers—such as limited class time, low confidence, and lack of systematic feedback—that hinder effective phonetic instruction.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that asynchronous activities and assignments prioritize oral production and take advantage of technological resources, including artificial intelligence, as tools to strengthen pronunciation practice. The adoption of integrated and teacher-guided applications would maximize educational

impact in the virtual modality. Finally, it is strongly advised that academic authorities take measures to formally include phonetics in the curriculum of the program, ensuring that future teachers acquire the necessary skills to foster accurate, confident, and effective English communication.

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