



**UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO CEARÁ**

**CENTRO DE HUMANIDADES**

**DEPARTAMENTO DE ESTUDOS DA LÍNGUA INGLESA, SUAS**

**LITERATURAS E TRADUCAO**

**CURSO DE LETRAS-INGLÊS**

**LYVYA PEREIRA DE AZEVEDO ALVES**

**INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF TEACHING PRONUNCIATION TO  
LEARNERS OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE**

**FORTALEZA**

**2022**

LYVYA PEREIRA DE AZEVEDO ALVES

INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF TEACHING PRONUNCIATION TO LEARNERS  
OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Trabalho de conclusão de curso apresentado ao Curso de Graduação em Letras-Inglês do Departamento de Estudos da Língua Inglesa, suas Literaturas e Tradução da Universidade Federal do Ceará, como requisito parcial à obtenção do título de Licenciada em Letras-Inglês.

Orientador: Prof. Dr. Ronaldo Manguiera Lima Júnior.

FORTALEZA

2022

LYVYA PEREIRA DE AZEVEDO ALVES

INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF TEACHING PRONUNCIATION TO LEARNERS  
OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Trabalho de conclusão de curso apresentado ao Curso de Graduação em Letras-Inglês do Departamento de Estudos da Língua Inglesa, suas Literaturas e Tradução da Universidade Federal do Ceará, como requisito parcial à obtenção do título de Licenciada em Letras-Inglês.

Orientador: Prof. Dr. Ronaldo Manguiera Lima Júnior.

Aprovada em: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_.

**Banca Examinadora:**

---

Prof. Dr. Ronaldo Manguiera Lima Júnior (Orientador)

Universidade Federal do Ceará (UFC)

---

Prof. Dr. Fabio Nunes Assunção

Universidade Federal do Ceará (UFC)

---

Profa. Me. Gabrielle Tomaz de Souza

Universidade Federal do Ceará (UFC)

## **ABSTRACT**

Pronunciation is one of the features involved in the process of learning a language. Literature review has suggested that learning pronunciation is crucial for oral communication in a language, as people can only be understood if they are intelligible. In order to improve understanding of the role of pronunciation, the present paper aimed at reviewing relevant studies that examined how second language teachers perceive pronunciation in the context of language learning. Analysis of these studies reveals that although the area of pronunciation has been neglected over the years, especially when compared to other language features such as vocabulary and grammar, its value is undeniable. In order to understand teachers' beliefs on pronunciation teaching and its implications for second language learning, a qualitative study was carried out and the main results showed that language teachers believe in the importance of teaching pronunciation to their students, mainly because it directly affects their communication skills; however, they do not consider pronunciation as important as grammar and vocabulary teaching. Furthermore, the present study aims to explore the reasons for the insecurities teachers may feel when teaching pronunciation, and how schools could support these teachers to achieve better performance in their classes.

**Keywords:** Pronunciation. Second language. Teachers' beliefs.

## RESUMO

A pronúncia é uma das características envolvidas no processo de aprendizagem de uma língua. A revisão de literatura sugeriu que a aprendizagem da pronúncia é crucial para a comunicação oral em uma língua, pois as pessoas só podem ser compreendidas se forem inteligíveis. A fim de melhorar a compreensão do papel da pronúncia, o presente artigo visa a rever estudos relevantes que examinam a forma como os professores de segunda língua percebem a pronúncia no contexto de aprendizagem de línguas. A análise desses estudos revela que embora a área da pronúncia tenha sido negligenciada ao longo dos anos, especialmente quando comparada com outros aspectos linguísticos, tais como vocabulário e gramática, o seu valor é inegável. A fim de compreender as crenças dos professores sobre o ensino de pronúncia e suas implicações no aprendizado de uma segunda língua, foi realizada uma investigação qualitativa, e os principais resultados mostraram que foi realizado um estudo qualitativo e os principais resultados mostraram que os professores de línguas acreditam na importância do ensino da pronúncia aos seus alunos, principalmente porque esse aspecto afeta diretamente a capacidade de comunicação desses estudantes; contudo, não consideram a pronúncia tão importante como o ensino da gramática e do vocabulário. Além disso, o presente estudo visa a explorar as razões das inseguranças que os professores podem sentir ao ensinar a pronúncia, e como as escolas poderiam apoiar esses professores a alcançar um melhor desempenho nas suas aulas.

Palavras-chave: Pronúncia. Segunda língua. As crenças dos professores.

## SUMMARY

<b>1 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2.1 The history of pronunciation teaching.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2.2 The negligence of pronunciation in the process of teaching/learning a Language .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2.3 Insecurities teachers might face regarding teaching Pronunciation .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2.4 Teachers' and learners' beliefs in English language teaching/ learning.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>3 METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>4 DATA PRESENTATION .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>5 DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>6 FINAL REMARKS.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>36</b>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

There are plenty of studies regarding the teaching of English as a second language (L2), and there is an understanding throughout the world that people should learn English in order to get a good job or to grab good study opportunities. In fact, it has even become a Lingua Franca, which is “a language used for communication between groups of people who speak different languages” (CAMBRIDGE DICTIONARY, 2022). David Crystal, one of the most influential linguists around the world who works with the concept of English as Lingua Franca, attests its importance, and reveals its dominance: “You hear it on television spoken by politicians from all over the world. Wherever you travel, you see English signs and advertisements. Whenever you enter a hotel or restaurant in a foreign city, they will understand English, and there will be an English menu.” (CRYSTAL, 2003, p.2). As we can notice, English is everywhere: on TV shows, advertisement, social networks, in the labor market etc. There is no denying about the importance of teaching/learning English. Because of that, there has been a high demand when it comes to Bilingual Schools, especially in our country, Brazil. Parents are concerned that their children start to have contact with English from a very early age, so they can have better opportunities in their adulthood. “This is the role of bilingual schools, which is to insert the child into the English language environment, to make sure the student stay in touch with the language not only in the classroom, but also in various day-to-day situations, turning English into something natural in their lives from a very early age” (TERRA, 2020). According to a survey by the Brazilian Association of Bilingual Education (Abebi), since 2014, the market has grown 10% and currently moves 250 million reais. The study shows that in São Paulo alone, where there are 71 bilingual educational institutions and eight international ones, the number of students jumped, in five years, from 2, 800 to 4, 600, according to the Organization of Bilingual Schools of São Paulo.<sup>1</sup>

What is promised in many of these schools is that kids will be fluent in English, some of them even say that students will speak “perfectly like native speakers”.

---

<sup>1</sup> Available at: <https://veja.abril.com.br/educacao/escolas-bilingues-se-espalhampelo-pais-isso-e-bom-e-custa-caro/>. Access in 01 mar 2021 .

However, these promises not always are proven to be true. As we will see in the literature review, there are many situations where not all language aspects are worked as a whole in an ESL (English as a Second Language) environment, then, teachers tend to focus more on certain aspects, such as Grammar and Vocabulary. Regarding this issue, this research is going to focus on the importance of teaching pronunciation to L2 learners, specifically, on how L2 teachers perceive this question in their classroom setting. Taking into consideration the high demand of teaching English to children from an early age, the participants that will be investigated in this study are elementary school teachers.

As mentioned before, there is a clear universal interest towards the English language, and this is why there is so much focus on this subject in schools and courses. Still, there has been some neglected topics when it comes to the teaching practices involving this matter, such as: the role of pronunciation in an ESL environment. Derwing and Murro (2005) state that many teachers are reluctant to teaching pronunciation and, when they teach, it is often relying on their own intuition, with no proper instructions on how to do it. Thus, the main focus of this research is to answer the following question: “What view do teachers who teach English as a second language to elementary school students have about pronunciation teaching?”.

This study aims to investigate the role of teaching pronunciation to students who are learning a second language according to the educators who work with them on a daily basis. Besides that, we intend to analyze how students respond to the teaching of pronunciation, how they react when the pronunciation feature is in target, and what kinds of tools/ strategies teachers may use to engage students in learning pronunciation.



## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1. The history of pronunciation teaching

Morley (1991) states that during the **1940s**, **1950s** and into the **1960s**, pronunciation was perceived as an important component of the curricula in both audiolingual method, originated in the U.S., and the British system of situational language teaching. Together with correct grammar, pronunciation accuracy performed a major role in both teaching methods. According to Richards and Rodgers (1986) “language was viewed as consisting of hierarchies of structurally related items for encoding meaning”. (MORLEY, 1991, p. 484). Language teaching was perceived as a way to structure this hierarchy, “building the blocks” of the language, doing this by combining rules for phonemes, morphemes, words, phrases, sentences. “The pronunciation class in this view gave primary attention to phonemes and their meaningful contrasts, environmental allophonic variations, and combinatory phonotactic rules, along with structurally based attention to stress, rhythm, and intonation” (1991, p. 484-485). Students were instructed to practice a lot of imitation and memorize patterns through drills and dialogues.

At late **1960s** and continuing through the **1970s** and into the **1980s**, unlike what happened in the previous period, many questions about pronunciation in the ESL curricula started to be raised. There were questions about the importance of teaching pronunciation as an instructional focus, questions involving the direct teaching of pronunciation, whether or not it could be approached directly, or if it could be learned at all if it was taught in a direct way. “The effect was that many programs gave less and less time and explicit attention to pronunciation; many programs dropped entirely” (MORLEY, 1991). Many principles and practices seemed outdated after the elimination/reduction of the pronunciation component in the traditional Language teaching approach. However, in the **1970’s** there was a sign of change, since many professionals started raising issues and proposing changes concerning ESL teaching, here are some examples:

Prator (1971) examined issues relating to phonetics versus phonemics in pronunciation teaching; Allen (1971) wrote on intonation, providing practice suggestions that continue to be cited today; Bowen (1972) focused on contextualizing practice in the classroom, with a classic format that is still recommended, for example, by Celce-Murcia and Goodwin (1991) who refer to it as “Bowen’s Technique”; Kriedler (1972), W. Dickerson (1975), and Dickerson and Finney (1978) stressed the importance of the spelling/pronunciation link for learners; Morley (1975) emphasized the need for learner-involvement and speech self-monitoring; Robinett (1975) suggested ways to present information in a manner that appeals to students’ cognitive involvement; Stevick (1975) turned attention to a view of the learner’s feelings and the importance of the affective dimension in learning; L. Dickerson (1975) and W. Dickerson (1976) looked at aspects of variability in L2 pronunciation performance; Cathcart and Olsen (1976) reported on teachers’ and students’ preferences for correction (MORLEY, 1991, p.486).

Morley (1991) states that in the mid-**1980s** and continuing into the **1990s**, there was a huge interest in the pronunciation component in ESL curricula. More specifically, pronunciation teaching focused on adults and young adults. The explanation for this is because the target public needed this pronunciation instruction for specific purposes (i.e., academic, occupational, etc.). The modest number of pronunciation-focused papers of the 1970s was followed in the 1980s by a significant increase in both journal articles and teacher resource books, clearly a reflection of renewed interest in pronunciation teaching principles and practices. Morley (1991) mentions that a lot of review articles were published back then, and many themes emerged, such as: second language pronunciation learning and teaching; pronunciation within the context of discourse in both second language acquisition (SLA) research and ESL teaching; pronunciation in the international context of English as a foreign language (EFL); a discussion of the problems and the possibilities for innovative pronunciation planning for the adult learner.

The material produced throughout these decades reveal a number of important developments and relevant questions related to the teaching of pronunciation. Professionals in the area had been very concerned about the practices and methodologies in this component of ESL curricula. In this review, it becomes clearer that the decades of the seventies and eighties were important periods of research development. A number of changing views on pronunciation learning and teaching emerged. “It is important to point out that some of the need to rethink both principles and practices came about as the result of the pressing urgency of student needs” (MORLEY, 1991, p. 489).

## **2.2. The negligence of pronunciation in the process of teaching/learning a language**

According to Derwing (2017), pronunciation is crucial for second language (L2) learners, because the main goal of learning a language is to communicate with other people, and if the person cannot be comprehensible, this goal is not achieved. “To produce an utterance successfully, language learners must have intelligible pronunciation, the listener must understand exactly the message intended by the speaker, and furthermore, they should be comprehensible, or easy to understand.” (DERWING, 2017, p. 339).

One of the reasons the pronunciation field is neglected might be due to the lack of research in this area in comparison to the other aspects regarding language teaching. Celce Murcia *et al.* (2010) mention that grammar and vocabulary have been in focus by Western linguists for a long time, this is the opposite to pronunciation, which has been studied only almost at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Levis (2005) mentions that the History of Pronunciation in English language teaching is a history of extremes. While some approaches such as the *reform method* and *audiolingualism* highlighted the pronunciation feature in their processes, other approaches, such as the *cognitive method* and *early communicative approach*, mostly ignored the use of pronunciation (CELCE-MURCIA, M; BRINTON, Donna M.; GOODWIN, Janet M, 1996 *apud* LEVIS *et al.*, 2005). Levis states that “currently, it seems clear that pronunciation deserves neither fate, either to be unfairly elevated to the central skill in language learning or banished to irrelevance.” (2005, p. 369).

## **2.3. Insecurities teachers might face regarding teaching Pronunciation**

Baker (2011) states that over the past few decades, there has been a considerable increase on research that examined the cognitions (knowledge and beliefs) of L2 teachers. Borg (2006 *apud* BAKER, 2011) explains that “such research has provided insight into what constitutes teachers' beliefs and knowledge about teaching, how these cognitions have developed and how they are reflected in classroom practice” (2011, p.1). According to the author (2011, p. 1), “although numerous studies have been conducted into the curricular areas of grammar and, to a lesser extent, reading and writing, even fewer have examined teachers' cognitions into pronunciation instruction.”

The study conducted by Baker (2011) aims to explore some of the dynamic relationships between second language teachers' cognition and their actual pedagogical practices, on how these cognitions have developed through time, specifically investigating the relation between these cognitions and practices on the teaching of pronunciation. The research was performed with five ESL teachers. The findings reveal that the amount of pronunciation training teachers receive reflects directly on their pronunciation knowledge as well as on their pronunciation pedagogy. Besides that, this aspect also affects their confidence in the area.

Regarding teachers' confidence in teaching pronunciation, Macdonald (2002, p. 3) states that "studies have shown that some teachers in Australian ESL contexts lack confidence in this area, and do not teach it in a systematic, planned way [...]". In this research, eight teachers were interviewed in order to investigate why they find pronunciation a difficult area to teach, and/or why some of them avoid teaching it to their students. According to the findings, some of their reasons are: the absence of pronunciation in curricula and the lack of formal training, which create a situation where there is little incentive for these educators to explore their skills and to expand their knowledge in the area. So, it becomes difficult to experiment and practice these aspects if they are neglected. Besides that, the participants of the research claimed that there is a lack of suitable teaching and learning materials of high quality, and also, an absence of a proper framework to evaluate students' skills and development in this area.

A study was carried by Buss (2015) in order to investigate the impact of resources in the area of pronunciation learning and teaching on the practices and beliefs of Brazilian EFL (English as a foreign language) and ESL teachers. 60 participants, who completed an online survey on pronunciation teaching and learning, were recruited. The findings suggest that:

The instructors had generally informed views about pronunciation and positive attitudes toward its teaching. Their teaching practices tended to be traditional: the predominant approach was to deal with word-level features, especially problematic sounds, through repetition as the need arose. Although most of the respondents claimed to be comfortable teaching pronunciation, they reported a wish for more pronunciation training, as have other instructors in prior studies (e.g. Burgess & Spencer, 2000; Foote, Holtby, & Derwing, 2011 *apud* BUSS, 2015, p. 1).

Even though the results show that most of the respondents felt comfortable to teach pronunciation, we can notice the urge for having more pronunciation training. In the studies conducted by Baker and Macdonald, the findings also reveal something

very important about the training in pronunciation for teachers: This aspect affects their confidence in teaching pronunciation, their knowledge in this area and their pedagogical practices, which led us to perceive the importance of a strong and consistent training when it comes to the pronunciation field in English language teaching and learning.

Based on the research by Macdonald (2002), the interviews with eight educators, we have some recommendations that can make L2 teachers more confident about teaching pronunciation, according to the issues aroused by the participants: **Using the curriculum to drive change.** The interviews suggest that unless teachers feel an obligation at the curriculum level to upgrade their skills in this area, they do not feel the urge to change any aspect of how they teach pronunciation. The recommendation is that the need to change the way pronunciation is taught has to be highlighted in formal curricula. **Developing a centre culture or policy.** It appears that in some centres, it is common to follow a less explicit curriculum or syllabus guidelines. It would be interesting to create a “centre culture” in these places, as the author states “through teacher in-service sessions and development of teaching and learning resources.” (MACDONALD, 2002, p. 12). **Integrating pronunciation.** The need to build a syllabus that clearly integrates pronunciation with the other skills, activities, and topics, thus, giving a clear direction to the practice of teaching in this area in a course. Pronunciation must “become a core component number of competencies that students need to achieve in order to obtain a certificate.” (2002, p. 12). **Setting learner goals.** It is recommended that the curriculum include detailed guidance, so the teacher can be aware of the pronunciation goals they have to set for the students, and how to guide them so they can set goals for themselves. In these learner goals, it is important to approach all levels, from beginners’ pronunciation, through intelligible speech, and even to advanced levels of pronunciation. The fact that these learners have instructions about their pronunciation from the beginners’ level can be a very positive aspect because they are encouraged from early on stages to pay close attention to their pronunciation and they can overcome problems more easily than someone who just receives feedback at a later stage of learning English. **Devising assessment frameworks.** Together with the development of a range of learner goals, it is important to also develop frameworks for the assessment and recording of students’ pronunciation. These frameworks “need to be developed and integrated into ESL

curricula, and teachers need to be given instruction on how to use these tools and have opportunities to moderate their assessments with experts and colleagues.” (2002, p. 13).

#### **2.4. Teachers’ and learners’ beliefs in English language teaching/ learning**

“Beliefs are an important issue in every area that is related to human behavior and learning” (AJZEN, 1988; FISHBEIN; AJZEN, 1975 *apud* GILAKJANI; SABOURI, 2017). Besides teacher’s beliefs, it is also very important to consider students’ beliefs about learning a second language. They bring their perceptions, beliefs and attitudes within this process, and these aspects certainly reflect on their learning process. Teachers need to know about their students’ perceptions about the acquisition process, the nature of language, their own expectations, so they can design a syllabus and adequate their practices. (BERNAT; GVOZDENKO, 2005; BREEN, 2001 *apud* GILAKJANI; SABOURI, 2017 )

Understanding teachers’ beliefs facilitates the comprehension of their choices of teaching methods and practices. Also, these beliefs are quite relevant to teacher education. They help develop teachers’ thought and principles. Beliefs have a key role in a language teaching process because these aspects reflect how the learner perceives the world, and this impacts how the information is received by the individual, and whether this information is accepted or rejected. Our beliefs adjust our understanding of the events that happen around us (ZHENG, 2009; LI, 2012 *apud* GILAKJANI; SABOURI, 2017 ).

Understanding teachers' beliefs helps us to understand many important aspects when it comes to language teaching and learning, such as: second language learners’ behavior and actions in their learning process ( for example, the anxiety that might affect those learners while they are learning a foreign language); the different approaches teachers might use with their students, and also, new teaching methods that could be implemented; the possible conflicts that could appear between the students beliefs versus teachers beliefs and how to make both aspects converge; besides, this comprehension might be important for a better understanding of teachers’ attitudes, performance and decisions in the process of teaching, and how the divergence between theory and practice in a teaching- learning environment affects them (BARCELOS, 2017).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

For this study, we will carry out a qualitative research. We will administer a 10- question questionnaire to 15 Brazilian bilingual teachers who teach English as a second language for elementary school students. The questionnaire structure will be based on the book *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics – Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methodologies* by Dornyei. “Survey studies aim at describing the characteristics of a population by examining a sample of that group” (2007, p.101). The method of data collection chosen is the questionnaire survey because, according to Dornyei (2007), this method has become one of the most popular research instruments applied by this mean. The author states that:

The results of a questionnaire survey are typically quantitative, although the instrument may also contain some open ended questions that will require a qualitative analysis. The main methodological issues concerning surveys are (a) how to sample the participants and (b) how to design and administer the research tool, the 'self-report questionnaire'. (Dornyei, 2007, p.101)

The author explains that questionnaires have become one of the best tools used for a scientific research because the answers for the questions are given in a systematic and disciplined way. Dornyei argues that “the popularity of questionnaires is due to the fact that they are relatively easy to construct, extremely versatile and uniquely capable of gathering a large amount of information quickly in a form that is readily processible” (DORNYEI, 2007, p.101).

The target public to answer this questionnaire is in constant contact with the reality of pronunciation teaching. We believe in the importance of taking into consideration the opinion of L2 teachers because they are directly involved in this process. They prepare materials for the classes, they assess pupils in a regular frequency, they know the main strengths, weaknesses, and needs their students have. Based on their classroom daily observations and experiences, they are going to answer the following questions:

**1.** *In your opinion, what are the most relevant features to be taught to L2 learners? Rank order the following items according to your preference: Vocabulary; Pronunciation; Grammar.* The Participants are requested to order the items presented in

the list by assigning a number to them according to their preferences. In this case, the three items (Vocabulary, Pronunciation and Grammar) are going to be quantified, according to Dornyei (2007, p.107), “by- assigning three points to the top ranked option, two to the middle and one to the lowest ranked item.”

2. *What tools/strategies (if any) do you use as a teacher in order to teach pronunciation to your students?* This question is going to have 7 options, and participants can mark one of them or some of them by ticking the boxes. The options are: 1) music; 2) movies; 3) gadgets; 4) reading out loud; 5) role play. 6) Other; (here they will be given a space to write if they wish) 7) I do not use any tools.

3. *Grammar is the most important aspect to work with L2 learners.* This is a Likert scale type of question: “which consists of a characteristic statement respondents are asked to indicate the extent to which they 'agree' or 'disagree' with it by marking (for example, circling) one of the responses ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'.” (DORNYEI, 2007, p.105). The available options are:

**Strongly Agree    Agree    Neither agree nor disagree    Disagree**  
**Strongly disagree.**

4. *Vocabulary is the most important aspect to work with L2 learners.* This is also a *Likert scale* type of question. The available options are:

**Strongly Agree    Agree    Neither agree nor disagree    Disagree**  
**Strongly disagree.**

5. *Do you consider it important to focus on pronunciation when you teach English to L2 learners?* This will be an open question. According to Dornyei, questionnaires are not the best alternative to perform truly qualitative, exploratory research; however, open-ended questions can still have their own excellence, “by permitting greater freedom of expression, open-format items can provide a far greater richness than fully quantitative data” (DORNYEI, 2007, p.107). The author states that open responses can be quite relevant for the research because they can lead us to issues that were not discussed previously in the study. Also, we need open- ended questions in cases when do not know the range of different answers that can be given in that context, so we cannot prepare response categories.



6. If you agree with these statements (or, at least, with one or two of them), please, complete the following sentences: 1. 'It is important to teach vocabulary to my students because...' 2. 'It is important to teach pronunciation to my students because...' 3. 'It is important to teach grammar to my students because...'. This type of question is called *Sentence completion*: "where an unfinished sentence beginning is presented for the respondents to complete (for example, 'The thing I liked most about the course is ...'). This can elicit a more meaningful answer than a simple question." (DORNYEI, 2007, p.107).

7. Considering the school where you work, react to the following statements by circling one of the available options (the bold ones):

*The school where I work provides proper pedagogical training for English teachers.*

**Strongly Agree**    **Agree**    **Neither agree nor disagree**    **Disagree**    **Strongly disagree**

*The school where I work provides a grammar training for English teachers.*

**Strongly Agree**    **Agree**    **Neither agree nor disagree**    **Disagree**    **Strongly disagree**

*The school where I work provides a pronunciation training for English teachers.*

**Strongly Agree**    **Agree**    **Neither agree nor disagree**    **Disagree**    **Strongly disagree**

*The school where I work provides quality English materials for teachers.*

**Strongly Agree**    **Agree**    **Neither agree nor disagree**    **Disagree**    **Strongly disagree**

*The school where I work motivates their English teachers to improve their skills and knowledge in the area they teach*

**Strongly Agree**    **Agree**    **Neither agree nor disagree**    **Disagree**    **Strongly disagree**

As well as questions 3 and 4, this is a Likert scale type of question.

**8.** *In your opinion, do the English materials you use with your students cover all the aspects you consider important to learn a language, or do they leave much to be desired? Please, explain your answer.* This would be an open question.

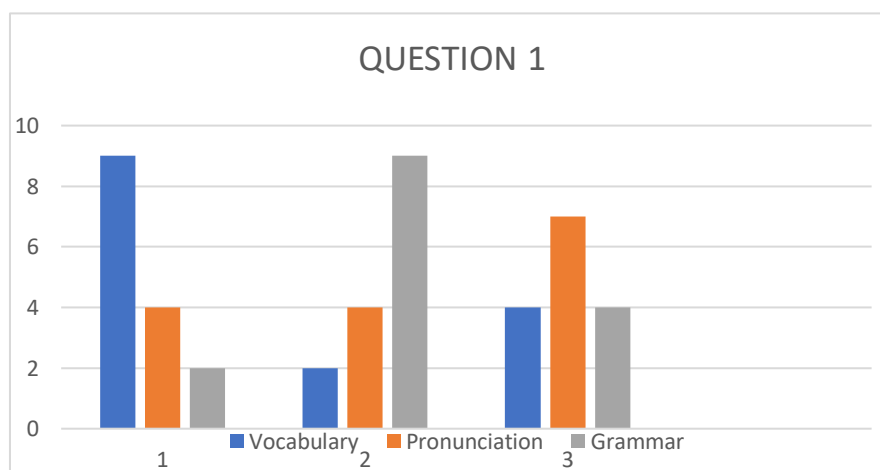
**9.** *Do you feel confident to teach all of the following language aspects to your students: (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation? ). Please, explain your answer.* This would be an open question.

**10.** *Do you believe your students feel motivated to learn vocabulary? Or do you believe they are more concerned in learning pronunciation, grammar, or another aspect? This would be an open question.*

#### 4. DATA PRESENTATION

This section presents the findings of the research. In order to search for answers to the questions, 15 Brazilian educators who teach English as a second language for elementary school students were recruited to answer the questionnaire previously presented in the Methodology section. The collection of data occurred through the use of the *Google Forms Platform*, in which the respondents were able to participate anonymously in the survey.

**Question 1:** In your opinion, what are the most relevant features to be taught to L2 learners? Rank order the following items according to your preference: Vocabulary; Pronunciation; Grammar.

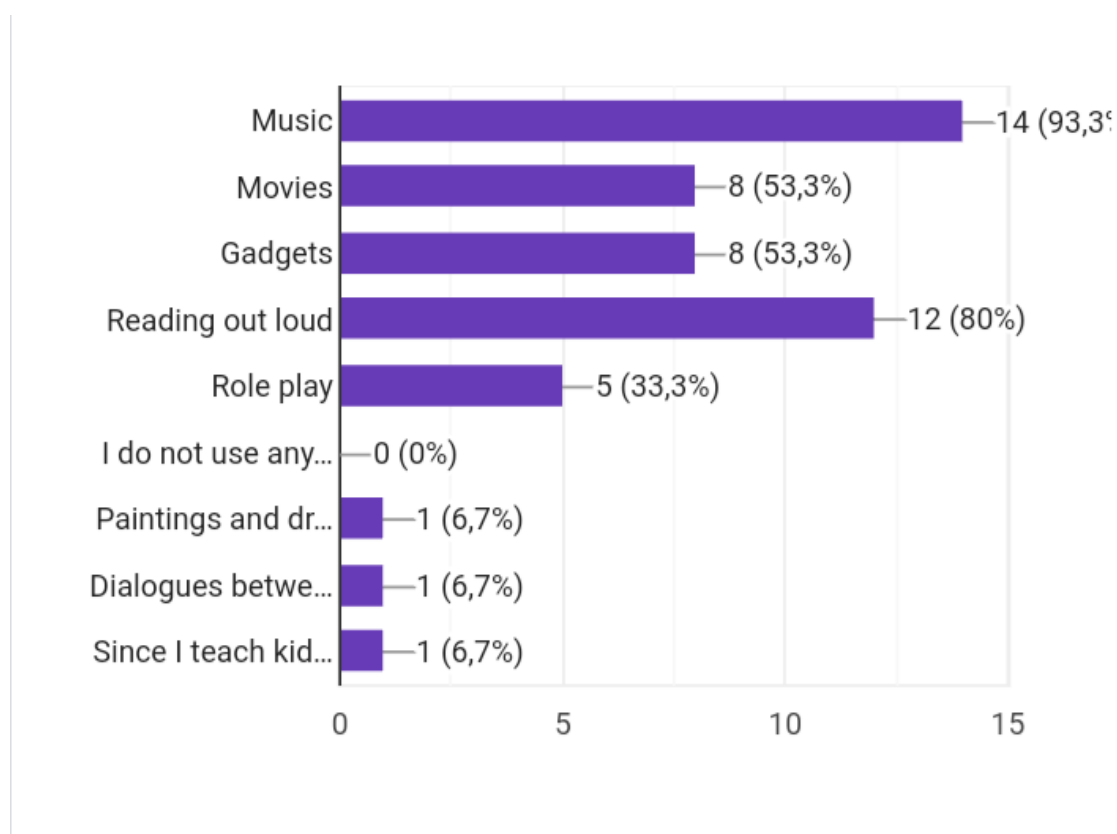


QUESTION 1 GRAPH

In this question, the participants could attribute different scores to these three features (vocabulary; pronunciation; grammar). *Vocabulary* was chosen as the most relevant feature (n °1) to be taught to L2 learners by 60% of the participants, *pronunciation* was selected by 26.7% of the teachers, and grammar comes after with 13.3%. *Pronunciation* was chosen as the lowest ranked (n °3) feature by 46.6% of the

participants, *vocabulary* and *grammar* come after, both with 26.7%. Considering the rating given by the participants, *vocabulary* was the most chosen as the n° 1 feature, *grammar* comes as the n° 2 feature, and *pronunciation* was the most chosen as the n° 3 feature to be taught to second language learners.

**Question 2:** What tools/strategies (if any) do you use as teacher in order to teach pronunciation to your students? 1) music; 2) movies; 3) gadgets; 4) reading out loud; 5) role play. 6) Other; 7) I do not use any tools.

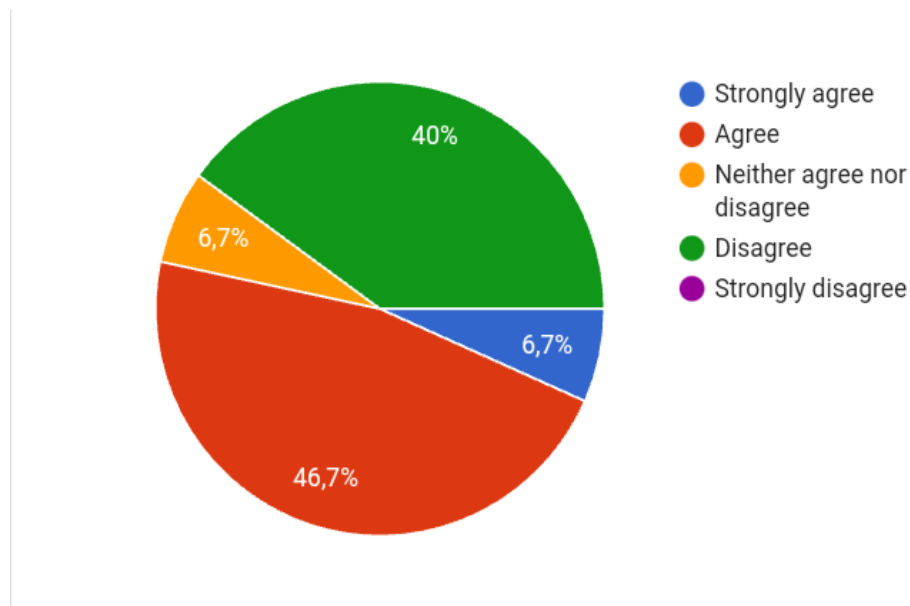


QUESTION 2 GRAPH

*Music* was selected as a tool to teach pronunciation by 93.3% of the respondents. 80% of the participants chose the option *reading out loud*. Among the options given (excluding *I do not use any tools*) *role play* was the least selected, with 33.3%. No one chose the option *I do not use any tools*. 20% of the participants wrote other tools/ strategies to teach pronunciation, they were: “Paintings and drawing” ;

“Dialogues between them” and someone wrote “— Since I teach kids, I tend to use the famous ‘repeat’ after me —”.

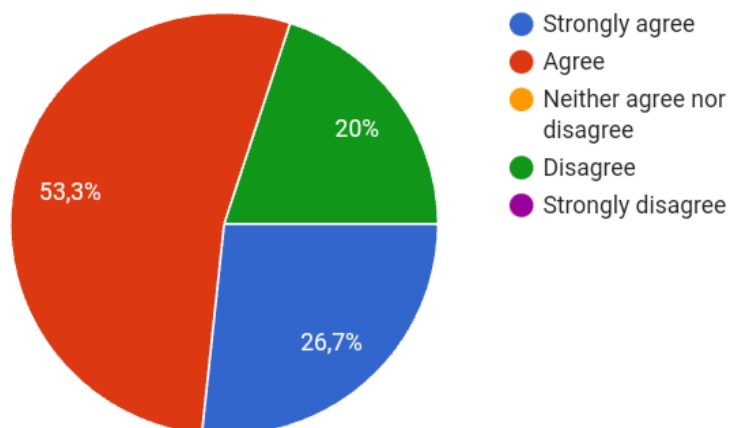
**Question 3:** *Grammar it is the most important aspect to work with L2 learners.*



QUESTION 3 GRAPH

53.4% of the participants agreed that Grammar is the most important aspect to work with L2 learners (including those who chose *strongly agree*), and 40% of them disagree. 6.7% neither agreed nor disagrees with the statement. None of the survey respondents chose the option *strongly disagree*.

**Question 4:** *Vocabulary is the most important aspect to work with L2 learners.*



QUESTION 4 GRAPH

According to the graph above, 80% of the participants agreed with the statement “Vocabulary is the most important aspect to work with L2 learners” (including people who strongly agreed) and 20% of them disagreed. None of the respondents chose the options neither agree nor disagree and strongly disagree.

**Question 5:** Do you consider it important to focus on pronunciation when you teach English to L2 learners?

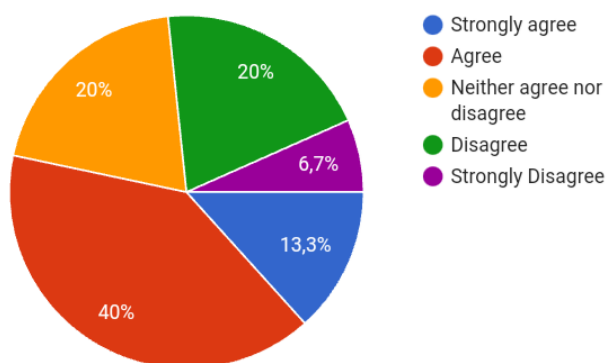
Most of the participants answered this question with short affirmative answers, such as: “Yes”, “Yes, I do”, “Yes, very much important”, “Yes, for sure”, “Sure”. Some other participants also gave affirmative answers, and elaborated their answers: “Yes, it should always be one of the focus in every English class”, “Yes, pronunciation is important for any level of education”, “Yes, I do. I think it’s important for them to have a guide in order to have an effective communication”. Two participants agreed that pronunciation is an important feature when teaching English to L2 learners; however, they stated that even though pronunciation is relevant, it should not be the focus of an English class.

**Question 6:** If you agree with these statements (or, at least, with one or two of them), please, complete the following sentences: 1. ‘It is important to teach vocabulary to my students because...’ 2. ‘It is important to teach pronunciation to my students because...’ 3. ‘It is important to teach grammar to my students because...’

13 out of the 15 participants answered this question. 5 people agreed with the three statements. According to the participants, it is important to teach pronunciation because “the students need to feel more prepared on how words sound, etc., so they can be more prepared when it comes to real life situations where they will have to talk”, “having a good pronunciation facilitates the main goal that is communication”, “the students as L2 learners should have the opportunity to hear the pronunciation properly, so they will have their own way to pronounce”. Grammar was considered as an important feature because, according to the participants, students might do some tests abroad that will require a good level of grammar knowledge; because they can create accurate sentences having a proper grammar instruction; because students can rely on an explanation that will solve their doubts and confusions, not only memorizing rules, but understanding the adequate language choices. Some participants only agreed with one statement, the most chosen was number 1 (‘It is important to teach vocabulary to my students because...’). Among the reasons why vocabulary was chosen as an important feature to be taught, the participants wrote that vocabulary arouses interest, curiosity for new words, and that having a vast vocabulary makes it possible for the students to communicate and talk about a vast number of topics.

**Question 7:** Considering the school where you work, react to the following statements by circling one of the available options:

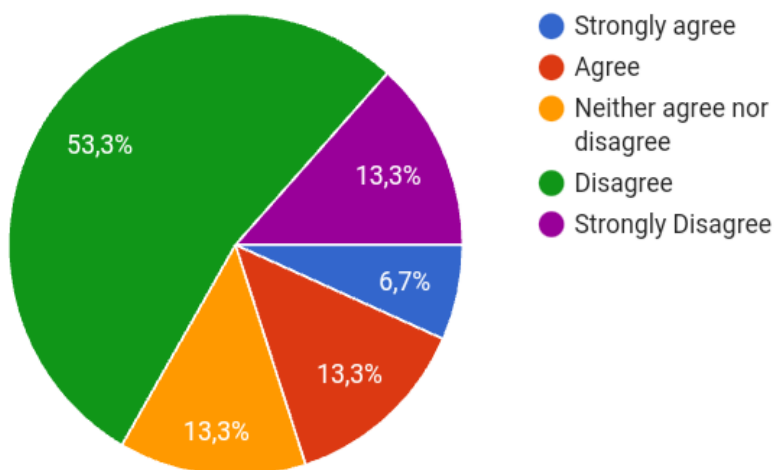
1) The school where I work provides proper pedagogical training for English teachers.



QUESTION 7 GRAPH 1

40% of the participants agreed with the statement, 20% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 20% disagreed. 13.3% strongly agreed with the statement. The least chosen alternative was *strongly disagree*, with 6.7%. We can infer that most of the participants agreed that they receive good pedagogical training coming from the school they work. However, 46.7% of them neither agreed nor disagreed, or did not agree.

2) The school where I work provides grammar training for English teachers.

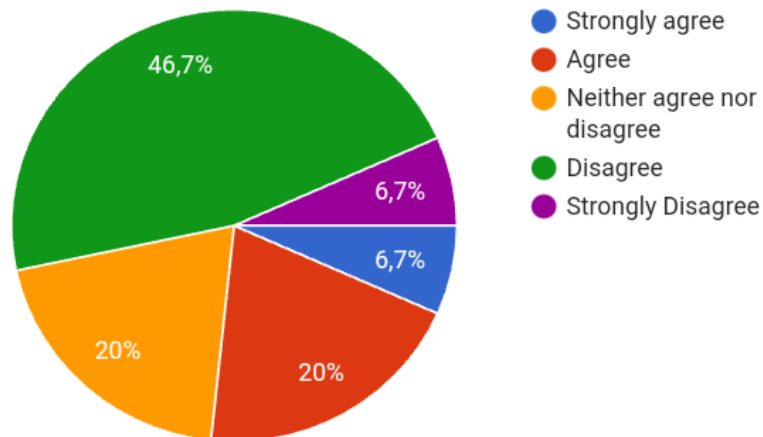


QUESTION 7 GRAPH 2

The graph above shows that 66.6% of the total number of participants disagreed or strongly disagreed that the school where they work provides grammar training for English teachers. 13.3% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 20% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Most of the participants disagreed that they receive proper grammar training as English teachers at the school where they work.



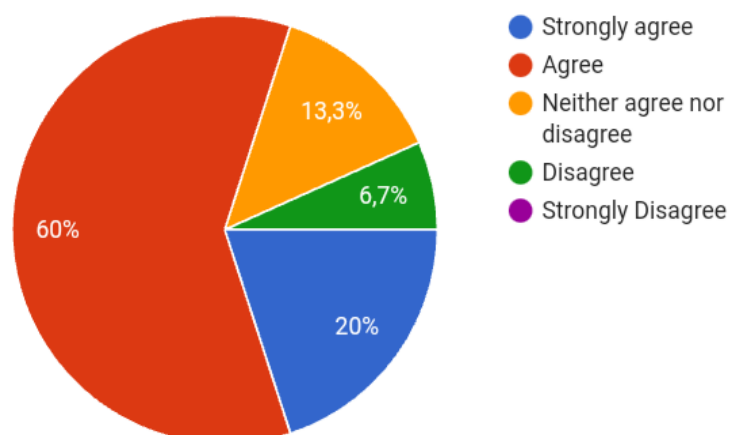
3) The school where I work provides pronunciation training for English teachers.



QUESTION 7 GRAPH 3

Analyzing the graph, we can observe that more than a half the total number of participants (53.4%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. 20% of them neither agreed nor disagreed, and 26.7% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. We can notice that most of the participants do not think they receive proper pronunciation training as English teachers at the school where they work.

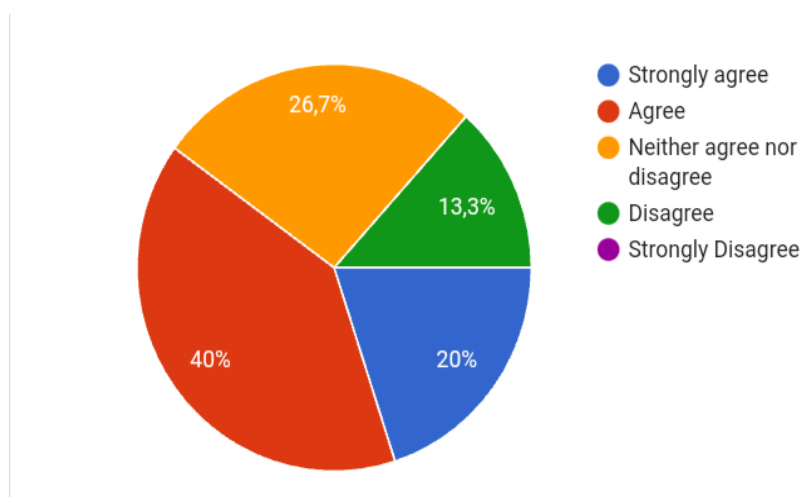
4) The school where I work provides quality English materials for teachers.



QUESTION 7 GRAPH 4

The majority of the respondents (80%) believe the school they work provides quality English materials for them. 13.3% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement, and only 6.7% disagreed. None of the participants chose the option *strongly disagree*.

5) The school where I work motivates their English teachers to improve their skills and knowledge in the area they teach.



QUESTION 7 GRAPH 5

60% of the participants felt motivated by the school where they work to improve their skills and knowledge in the area they teach. 26.7% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement, and only 13.3% do not feel motivated.

**Question 8:** In your opinion, do the English materials you use with your students cover all the aspects you consider important to learn a language, or do they leave much to be desired? Please, explain your answer.

7 out of 15 participants disagreed that the English materials they use are satisfactory. Among the reasons they gave, some participants stated that most of the content from the book is unnecessary because it has some themes that are far from students' reality; the texts are way too long, and they do not catch the students' attention; they lack explanation and activities that motivate the students. Two participants claim the books they work with simply ignore the grammar feature, and

they have to explain the grammar topics all by themselves. However, 7 out of 15 participants agreed that the materials provided by the school they work are satisfactory, which means they cover all the important aspects to consider when learning a language. Among the affirmative answers, some participants did not explain their answers, such as: “Yes, they are”, “Yes, the English materials are satisfactory”, “The materials are great”. Although some people preferred not to give explanations, the majority of the participants justified their answers. One participant wrote that the materials are very complete because they cover vocabulary, reading, speaking, grammar, listening and writing. Another participant stated that although the materials provided by the school are good, some of the activities from the book are too difficult and repetitive considering their students level of English.

**Question 9:** Do you feel confident to teach all of the following language aspects to your students: (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation? ). Please, explain your answer.

Only 6 out of 15 participants answered with certainty that they are confident enough to teach vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. However, most of the participants do not feel very confident to teach these three language aspects. Some participants attribute this confidence to that fact that they keep studying the language. Some of them were more specific and wrote about the aspects they do not feel confident to teach, grammar and pronunciation were the ones that appeared the most among the answers. There were some participants who answered that they lack confidence because of the courses they took throughout their lives. Because these courses did not cover well all of these aspects, they feel they have to study hard before the classes, so they do not fail with their students.

**Question 10:** Do you believe your students feel motivated to learn vocabulary? Or do you believe they are more concerned in learning pronunciation, grammar, or another aspect?

11 out of 15 participants answered that their students are motivated to learn vocabulary the most. Among those who answered vocabulary, there are a few people who chose both alternatives (vocabulary and grammar or vocabulary and

pronunciation). The participant who chose *vocabulary* and *pronunciation* answered that students want to learn vocabulary because they feel excited to learn new words, and pronunciation because they desire to speak as an English native speaker. According to another teacher, vocabulary is students' favorite language aspect to learn because they feel confident to communicate, as they learn new words. The participant who chose grammar explained that students are curious to know how the structures of the sentences worked in the lessons. One participant wrote that their students are not motivated to learn any of these aspects, and another participant answered that they are interested in learning all of the aspects equally.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The present section is meant to discuss the findings, so we can attempt to answer our research question. The main question we intend to answer based on our survey is: what view do teachers who teach English as a second language to elementary school students have about pronunciation teaching? Along with our main question, the sub-questions are: **1.** according to L2 teachers, how do students respond to the teaching of pronunciation?; **2.** how do these teachers react when the pronunciation feature is in target?; **3.** what's the relevance of a pronunciation training for these L2 teachers?; **4.** what kinds of tools/ strategies may teachers use to engage students in learning pronunciation?

In order to answer our main question, we found it interesting to compare the pronunciation feature with grammar and vocabulary, because our theoretical background presented some authors who believe that pronunciation is marginalized when compared to the other two language aspects. The data provided by question number 1 suggest that teachers may perceive the pronunciation feature as the least important when compared to vocabulary and grammar because when it comes to ranking the most important feature, pronunciation was the lowest ranked; however, it appears in the first place when the rank was about the least relevant feature. In question number 4, 12 out of 15 participants agreed that vocabulary is the most important aspect to work with L2 learners. However, even though some answers presented might not consider the teaching of pronunciation as relevant as the teaching of vocabulary and/ or grammar, in question number 5, all respondents agreed that it is important to work with pronunciation in an English class. 13 out of 15 participants answered that pronunciation should be on focus when teaching in an English class. In question number 6, 5 out of 13 respondents agreed that it is important to teach the three features. 10 participants (including the ones who chose the three features) chose vocabulary as an important feature to be taught to learners of English, 2 participants chose only grammar as an important feature, and 1 participant chose only pronunciation. The analysis identifies that even if the teachers consider the pronunciation feature as a relevant aspect to be

taught to learners of English as a second language, it does not have the same importance as other language aspects such as vocabulary and grammar.

Our first sub-question is related to how students respond to the teaching of pronunciation according to the L2 teachers who participated in our survey. In question 10, 11 out of the 15 respondents answered that their students are motivated to learn vocabulary the most. None of them chose only pronunciation or grammar, so we can infer that students prefer to learn vocabulary than the other two language aspects. One of the reasons they are motivated to learn vocabulary is because they are able to communicate better as they learn new words. The only participant who justified why their students are motivated to learn pronunciation is because they desire to speak as “a native speaker of English”. In the introduction, we discussed how bilingual schools are becoming popular nowadays mostly because parents have the need to see their children speaking English “like native speakers”. This leads us to reflect on how this might be affecting children who are learning English. Is this the reason why students are not so motivated to learn pronunciation? Do they feel pressured about their need to speak as native speakers even though they are not? This creates further questions to be answered in future research.

The second sub-question of our research is for a better understanding of how teachers feel while teaching pronunciation. 6 out of the 15 participants answered that they feel confident enough to teach vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. Most of the participants do not feel very confident to teach these features. Vocabulary is the most chosen feature as the one they are confident to teach. 2 participants specifically answered that they did not feel confident to teach pronunciation, one of them explained this is because pronunciation is a feature that does not need to be well approached in the school this respondent works. One participant stated that the lack of confidence in teaching comes from the lack of training from the school. As we can notice, teachers may not have a good training from the schools where they work, and this may be the reason why they lack confidence in teaching pronunciation. Why schools assure parents their children are going to speak like *native speakers* if they do not promote proper training for the English teachers? According to our research findings, teachers might feel confident enough in their classes if they could have a fully pedagogical support coming from their workplace.

Questions 7 and 8 lead us to a better understanding of how schools support their language teachers. In question number 7, the participants answered questions regarding their workplace. 8 out of 15 participants agreed with the statement “The school where I work provides proper pedagogical training for the English teachers”. 7 out of 15 disagreed or neither agreed nor disagreed. Two thirds of the participants did not agree that they receive good grammar training; 11 out of 15 respondents disagreed or neither agreed nor disagreed that they receive a proper training in pronunciation. We can infer that half of the participants are satisfied with the pedagogical training they receive; however, the majority of them is not satisfied with the grammar-pronunciation training their schools offer. As we previously read, Macdonald (2002) conducted a research with 8 L2 educators, and some recommendations were made according to their responses. The teachers in the Macdonald’s study stated that is important to highlight the importance of teaching pronunciation in formal curriculum in order to stimulate their need to update their pronunciation teaching skills. Also, they drew attention to the importance of developing a center culture or policy, so they can have a more explicit syllabus to follow as well as the need to build a syllabus that integrates pronunciation with the other skills, giving the teachers a clear direction on how to approach pronunciation in a more guided way. In addition to that, 6 out of 15 respondents disagreed or neither agreed nor disagreed that their workplaces motivate them to improve their skills and knowledge in the area they teach. This might be related to the lack of training/ support they receive. The answers given demonstrate the teachers’ need to have a better training regarding the pedagogical practices and some features they have to cover as language teachers. This could guide us to future studies regarding how these schools can promote effective actions to support their language teachers.

12 out of 15 participants agreed that their workplaces provide high-quality English materials for teachers, and 7 out of 15 agreed that the English materials they use with their students cover all the aspects they consider important to learn a second language. We can notice that some participants who agreed that they work with high-quality English material do not agree that this material cover all the important aspects they consider important when learning a language, which leads us to a question: What defines quality in teaching materials? This might be a direction for future research.

The 4<sup>th</sup> sub-question regards the kinds of tools/strategies teachers use in order to teach pronunciation to their students. All participants answered that they use

tool(s) and-or strategies in order to draw their students' attention to learning pronunciation. The importance of this question lies on the fact that teachers care enough about the teaching of pronunciation to think about good strategies to work with their students. Even though our theoretical background and even some answers in our questionnaire show they might have a certain lack of confidence teaching pronunciation, teachers might understand the importance of teaching pronunciation to their students. They use various tools/ strategies, such as: music; movies; gadgets; reading out loud; role play; paintings; drawing. An interesting aspect that could lead to further studies is the research to understand the impact of different tools-strategies in the teaching of pronunciation.



## 6. FINAL REMARKS

The present study aimed to investigate the role of pronunciation while teaching a second language, covering important theoretical points in this research area, such as the relevance of pronunciation teaching compared to grammar and vocabulary teaching, the reasons for teachers' lack of confidence in teaching pronunciation, and the effects of good pedagogical/language training for L2 teachers on their confidence. The studies reviewed in Section 2 provided an overview of the history of pronunciation teaching, the role of pronunciation in the process of teaching/learning a language, possible reasons why the area of pronunciation might be neglected compared to other linguistic aspects, and the importance of understanding teachers' beliefs.

Although the process of teaching and learning a language is a two-way communication process between teachers and students, it should be highlighted that the literature review in this paper has mainly focused on how teachers perceive pronunciation, because it would not be feasible to work with more than one population; moreover, it was important to narrow down the present analysis. Even though there is a question about how students feel about learning pronunciation, the main goal was to investigate teachers' perceptions about teaching pronunciation, especially considering mostly their view of the schools they work in, and how they feel about teaching the mentioned feature. Future studies should also focus on students' beliefs about pronunciation.

It was interesting to notice some divergences when we compare the theoretical background and the actual answers from the teachers. Some authors stated that pronunciation was neglected compared to grammar and vocabulary; however, in our findings, we have discovered some neglect of grammar, both among the teachers and the schools where they work. Among the aspects discussed, vocabulary was ranked as the most important by the majority of respondents. It would be useful to extend such studies to the other two aspects of language, and even to others not specifically studied in this paper, such as the four skills (writing, reading, speaking, and listening) and to relate these skills to the aspects we have discussed in this study. Future research could also try to find new methods to address pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary more

effectively. For example, it would be interesting to investigate how digital tools can support the process of learning a new language.

Based on the responses we received from the participants, it appears that although some of them do not consider pronunciation as important as the other features mentioned, they still believe that it is important to teach pronunciation to their students. Some of the reasons they gave for why pronunciation plays an important role in the process of learning English as a second language are: students need to be better prepared to pronounce the accurate sounds of words so they can be intelligible; they need to pay attention to how to pronounce words so they can be more prepared when it comes to real life situations where they have to talk to native or non-native speakers; and good pronunciation is essential to achieve the main goal of learning a language, which is communication.

However, considering the few participants who took part in this study, it would also be interesting to extend the study further with a larger number of respondents, so we would be able to investigate more reasons to explain why pronunciation is a relevant feature in language-learning, to develop new methods/strategies for guided pronunciation instruction. Also, by providing large-scale feedback, we could examine and then implement efficient methods/ strategies to teach pronunciation to learners of a second language that already exist but are not sufficiently widespread. Future research on pronunciation should focus on establishing a clearer picture of how effective teaching of pronunciation might affect the whole process of learning a language

## REFERENCES

- BAKER, Amanda. ESL teachers and pronunciation pedagogy: Exploring the development of teachers' cognitions and classroom practices. 82-94, September, 2011. Available in: <<https://ro.uow.edu.au/edupapers/368>>. Access in: 10 dec 2021.
- BARCELOS, Ana Maria Ferreira. Reflexões acerca da mudança de crenças sobre ensino e aprendizagem de línguas. **Revista Brasileira de Linguística Aplicada**, 2007. Available in: <<https://doi.org/10.1590/S1984-63982007000200006>>. Access in: 20 oct 2021.
- BUSS, Larissa. Beliefs and practices of Brazilian EFL Teachers Regarding Pronunciation. *Language Teaching Research*, Canada, no. 05, 619-63, 2015. Available in: <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1362168815574145>>. Access in: 10 dec 2021.
- CELCE-MURCIA, M.; BRINTON, Donna M.; GOODWIN, J. M.; GRINER, B. **Teaching Pronunciation: a course book and reference guide**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- CRYSTAL, D. **English as a global language**. Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 2003.
- DERWING, Tracy M. The role of Phonological Awareness in Language Learning. *In* GARRET, Peter; COTS, Joseph M. **The Routledge Handbook of Language Awareness**. 1. ed. New York: Routledge, 201. p. 339- 353.
- DERWING, Tracy M; MUNRO, Murray J. Second Language Accent and Pronunciation Teaching: A Research-Based Approach. **TESOL Quarterly**, Published By: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL) Vol. 39, No. 3, p. 379-397 (19 pages), Sep. 2005. Available in: <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3588486>>. Access in: 10 jul 2021.
- DÖRNYEI, Z. **Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Escolas bilíngues vêm ganhando cada dia mais a preferências de pais de alunos. **TERRA**, 2020. Available in: <<https://www.terra.com.br/noticias/dino/escolas-bilingues-vem-ganhando-cada-dia-mais-a-preferencia-de-pais-de-alunos,1e8c9ca4fd86b891b354f52fa81d0d9bzjgkjyef.html>>. Access in 01 may 2022.
- GILAKJANI, Abbas. SABOURI, Narjes. Teachers' Beliefs in English Language Teaching and Learning: A Review of the Literature. *Canadian Center of Science and Education*, Canada, 2017, N° 04, 78-86. Available in: <<https://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/elt/article/view/66914>>. Access in 08 dec 2021.
- LEVIS, John M. Changing Contexts and Shifting Paradigms in Pronunciation Teaching. **TESOL Quarterly**, Published By: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL) Vol. 39, No. 3, p. 369-377 (9 pages), Sep. 2005. Available in: <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3588486>>. Access in: 10 jul 2021.

LINGUA FRANCA. *In*: Cambridge Dictionary. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. Available in: <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/pt/dicionario/ingles/lingua-franca>>. Access in: 01 may 2022.

MACDONALD, Shem. Pronunciation – views and practices of reluctant teachers. Prospect, La Trobe University, no. 17, 03-18, December 2002. Available in: <<http://www.researchonline.mq.edu.au/vital/access/services/Download/mq:35597/DS01?view=true>>. Access in: 15 dec 2021.

MORLEY, Joan. The Pronunciation Component in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. TESOL **Quarterly**, Published By: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL) Vol. 25, No. 3, p. 481-520 (39 pages), Sep. 1991. Available in: <<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.2307/3586981>>. Access in: 10 jan 2022.

VIEIRA, Maria Clara. Escolas Bilíngues se espalham pelo país. Isso é bom – e custa caro. **VEJA**, 2019. Available in : <<https://veja.abril.com.br/educacao/escolas-bilingues-se-espalham-pelo-pais-isso-e-bom-e-custa-carro/>>. Access in: 20 aug 2021.