

**PONTIFICAL CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF ECUADOR
IN ESMERALDAS**



APPLIED LINGUISTICS SCHOOL

THESIS REPORT:

**THE INFLUENCE OF SPANISH ON THE PRONUNCIATION OF
THE ENGLISH PHONEMES /t/ AND /d/ IN STUDENTS OF THE
EIGHTH LEVEL OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMERCE
CAREER AT PUCESSE DURING THE FIRST SEMESTER OF 2016**

TESIS DE GRADO:

**INFLUENCIA DEL ESPAÑOL EN LA PRONUNCIACIÓN DE LOS
FONEMAS INGLESES /t/ Y /d/ EN LOS ESTUDIANTES DEL
OCTAVO NIVEL DE LA CARRERA DE COMERCIO EXTERIOR
EN LA PUCESSE DURANTE EL PRIMER SEMESTRE DEL 2016**

PRIOR TO THE ACADEMIC DEGREE IN:

APPLIED LINGUISTICS IN ENGLISH TEACHING

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I, Karla María Olivo Tello, affirm that the investigation in the present thesis report research is totally unique, authentic, and personal.

The content of this research is a limited legal and academic responsibility of the author and “PUCESE”.

Karla María Olivo Tello

080290389-8

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

First of all, I want to thank God for giving me the wisdom and intelligence to overcome each challenge faced in my personal, academic, and professional life.

To all the members of my family who motivated me every single day, showing me their love in many different ways; and, especially, to the best mom in the world, Digna Tello, for being lovely, sympathetic, and patient; for teaching me to be strong and to never give up; for inspiring and motivating me to achieve my goals. To my brothers, Jimmy and Jimpson, for being the friendly hand that was always there to help me out in all I needed; to my little and beautiful niece, Eduarda, who even when I did things wrong, I was always perfect for her. To my dear aunties, Shirley and Maggi, for their unconditional love and support and for pampering me as if I were a little girl.

To Joel Casanova, my boyfriend, who endured all my bad days and offered me his love and support. Also, to all his beautiful family for making me feel one of them.

To my classmates, “The Survivors”, because without their great help and love these four years had not been so productive. Thank you very much for all the happy moments you gave me. I will always keep you in my heart.

To all my dear teachers, those who left and those who are still here, for enriching my knowledge and giving me the best pieces of advice to succeed in my professional life. Special thanks to my dear tutor José Suárez and my readers Haydée Ramírez and Marjorie Perlaza, for giving me the final push to reach the goal. You did an excellent work. I got the best of each of you.

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ABSTRACT

The main goal of this thesis is to investigate the influence of Spanish on the pronunciation of the English phonemes /t/ and /d/ in students of the eighth level of the International Commerce studies at PUCESE during the first semester of 2016. The students from this level have shown some problems when pronouncing two of the most common English phonemes, mention above. For this reason, the author decided to carry out this investigation in order to find out the possible causes which are affecting those pronunciations, by comparing the way in which English and Spanish /t/ and /d/ phonemes are realized, identifying the specific problems presented by the students in the pronunciation of them in English, and adapting different techniques that teachers could apply in the classroom in order to improve the pronunciation of them. This thesis first makes a review of previous studies, done in the same field, to be contrasted later. In a second stage, seven students from the eighth level of the International Commerce studies who were registered in the eighth level of General English were observed during two weeks and following that they were interviewed. At the end of those two weeks the results showed that the biggest problem students have when pronouncing those two phonemes is when they are located in the final position of a word, due to the influence of their mother tongue. The author recommends to General English teachers to implement an explicit phonetic instruction technique to help students to improve this pronunciation problem.

Key words: pronunciation; mother tongue; influence; phonetics.

RESUMEN

El objetivo principal de esta tesis es investigar la influencia del español en la pronunciación de los fonemas ingleses /t/ y /d/ en estudiantes del octavo nivel de Comercio Exterior en la PUCESE durante el primer semestre del 2016. Los estudiantes de este nivel han mostrado que tienen algunos problemas cuando pronuncian dos de los fonemas más comunes del inglés, los mencionados antes. Por esta razón, el autor decidió llevar a cabo esta investigación con el fin de encontrar las posibles causas que están afectando esa pronunciación, comparando la forma en que los fonemas /t/ y /d/ del español y el inglés son pronunciados, identificando los problemas específicos que presentan los estudiantes en la pronunciación de estos fonemas en inglés y adaptando diferentes técnicas que los profesores puedan aplicar en el aula para mejorar la pronunciación de ellos. En esta tesis primero se hizo una revisión de estudios previos para luego ser contrastados. En segundo lugar, siete estudiantes del octavo nivel de Comercio Exterior, quienes estuvieron matriculados en el octavo nivel de Inglés General, fueron observados durante dos semanas y luego fueron entrevistados. Al finalizar esas dos semanas los resultados mostraron que el mayor problema que los estudiantes tienen cuando pronuncian esos fonemas es cuando estos se encuentran al final de una palabra, esto es debido a la influencia de su lengua materna. La autora recomienda a los profesores de Inglés General implementar la técnica de instrucción fonética explícita para mejorar a los estudiantes a mejorar este problema de pronunciación.

Palabras claves: pronunciación; lengua materna; influencia; fonética.

Introduction

In recent years, speaking English in Esmeraldas has become a necessity rather than a luxury, as many may consider it. This is due to the increase of job opportunities in big enterprises related with international businesses, such as the oil refinery, the port or customs duty, which require people to speak English. For this reason, it is very important to educate the future professionals of the province in this field, so as to ensure that they will be very well prepared to face the great world of business, where English is paramount.

Hence, when the English learning process of those future professionals lacks important elements, a problematic situation appears. Currently, this is the case of the students from the eighth levels of the International Commerce career at the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador in Esmeraldas (PUCESE), because they have shown inaccurate pronunciation in the English language. One of the reasons of this bad pronunciation can be that students do not have enough awareness of the influence that their mother tongue, Spanish, as spoken by the people from Esmeraldas, which has special peculiarities, is causing on their proficiency in English pronunciation, especially in those phonemes which are very common in the English language, such as /t/ and /d/.

It all seems, then, that they are dealing with what is called transfer phenomena, which are generally defined as “the incorporation of features of the L1 into the knowledge system of the L2, which the learner is trying to build” (Ellis 1994). This phenomenon is common in second language learning, but the problem here is that nobody is paying attention to improve this fundamental part, which is a marker of English pronunciation. As a consequence, students who finally become professionals will feel uncomfortable in business conversations caused by their bad pronunciation.

The factors of inaccurate pronunciation of the most common English phonemes present in the students of the eighth level of International Commerce are not identified yet; for that reason, this research is focused on finding out which the influence of Spanish on the pronunciation of the English phonemes /t/ and /d/ in the students referred is; what the differences between the English and Spanish /t/ and /d/ are, which the main problems that

students have when pronouncing the English phonemes /t/ and /d/ are and what the possible techniques that teachers can apply to improve the pronunciation of the English phonemes /t/ and /d/ are.

Currently, there is an evident problem in English pronunciation at the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador in Esmeraldas (PUCESE) by students of the eighth levels of International Commerce. This may be due to different factors, but the most important one to consider is that students do not have enough awareness of the influence that their mother tongue may have on their English learning process.

Thus, it is important to carry out this investigation because it will contribute, with valuable and useful information, to the development of the English Language Teaching field in Esmeraldas. The direct beneficiaries are going to be the students from the International Commerce career and teachers of general English from PUCESE, where the study is going to be carried out. The information collected in this investigation will help teachers to create and include in their lessons new teaching techniques, which can offer students the possibility to improve their pronunciation, taking into consideration the differences between two of the most common phonemes in English and Spanish, /t/ and /d/. As a result of that, students are going to be ready to face the big world of business, in their professional life, and where the appropriate use of English is fundamental.

On the other hand, this research is viable because there are a lot of human resources to work with, who are eager to collaborate. In addition, the material resources that are going to be used are accessible and so the cost will be low.

Apart from that this research will contribute with useful information to future studies about the phonological field, especially for those institutions which want to find out possible solutions for these kinds of problems and design realistic strategies in order to improve the English language teaching-learning process of their students.

Objectives of the study

General objective

To analyze the influence of Spanish on the pronunciation of the English phonemes /t/ and /d/ in students of the eighth level of International Commerce at PUCESE in order to help students to communicate effectively in the business world.

Specific objectives

- To compare the way in which English and Spanish /t/ and /d/ phonemes are realized.
- To identify the specific problems presented by the students in the pronunciation of the English phonemes /t/ and /d/.
- To adapt different techniques that teachers could apply in the classroom in order to improve the pronunciation of the English phonemes /t/ and /d/.

1. Theoretical framework

1.1 The influence of L1 on EFL learners

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) refers to learners who study the English language in their own country, where English is not the dominant one, and as a result of that they do not have too much exposure to it. Also, the only contact learners have with the English language and its culture is most of the time with their teachers at the center of education. For that reason, the teaching process of these students must include lots of practice using English, especially orally; exposure to living English; and reasons to learn English, and motivation to stick to it (Bell, 2011).

Pimsleur (1966 as cited in Krashen, 1981) suggested that:

”the ability for learning a foreign language has three main components. The first is verbal intelligence, which means both familiarity with the lexicon and the ability to make judgments about verbal materials. The second component is motivation that learners have to learn a new language. The third component is called auditory ability, it means how well learners perceive speech sound” (p. 182).

It is useful for this research to mention the Monitor Theory (Krashen, 1977) which states that there are two ways in which adult learners can develop the skills while working with second languages. They are conscious language learning and subconscious language acquisition. But, talking about EFL learners, it is convenient to focus the attention on conscious language learning, which is a process where the learners are aware of the presentation of grammatical rules and the error correct correction that it implies (Krashen & Seliger, 1975). That error correction is what will help students to get the appropriate linguistic representation in their minds.

The language learning environments play an important role in the EFL learning process because as many studies demonstrate, formal learning environments are better to achieve and improve second language proficiency, while other finding suggested that environments which are not formal are superior. However, it is shown that formal environments have the potential for encouraging both acquisition and learning.

Thus, Naimon *et al.* (1978 as cited in Krashen, 1981) predicted that all the learners that are competent and have developed many skills when working with foreign languages can be regarded as if they were passing for a language acquisition process, who enrich their knowledge and keep all the linguistic information actively in their minds and who are able to discriminate and use effectively this input for language acquisition.

Now, based on the idea stated above, it is really important to establish the influence that the first language (L1) has on second language acquisition (SLA/L2). The L1 acquisition, according to Gass & Selinker (2008 cited in Zhanming, 2014), is the process by which a child learns his or her native language, while SLA/L2 refers to the process of learning consciously another language after the native language has been learned. Therefore, many linguists (Chomsky, 1990; VanPatten and Benati, 2000; Krashen, 1980) coincided in the study of how L2 works but taking as a reference first the L1 system, because it can help learners to improve their language learning ability and classify the language input. Based on that, it is suggested that all learners of second languages subconsciously transfer linguistic properties of their first language to the second language. Thus, the most enduring and prominent phenomenon in L1 transfer is sounds transfer (Zhanming, 2014).

According to Kohn (1986), transfer can be defined as the influence produced by the interference of EFL learners' mother tongue when performing in second language. It also involves the L1 features that learners preserve in relation to the information they receive and interpret, transformation of the information that they receive into production of meaningful communication. In conclusion, this transfer is considered as the major factor which inhibit learners' interlanguage competence and performance.

In addition, the term transfer, in the same sense, has been analyzed by Odlin (1989) taking into consideration a general principle called "transfer of language", which states that the influenced of the learners' mother tongue is not the only way to establish an interference among languages, because this process is similar to the other common processes involved in acquiring the knowledge of any language. In addition, Ringbom (1992) supports that the concept of transfer can be considered as "L1 transfer," and he defined it as "the influence of first language elements and procedures in understanding and producing second language text". For instance, native speakers of Spanish, when learning English a foreign language, they tend to transfer the linguistic information that they already know about Spanish to English before they internalize the phonological system of the English language. For that reason, it is important to mention the influence of the mother tongue

on EFL learning because it will help teachers and learners to understand why some English structures and sounds are problematic for learners when trying to receive the input and perform with the output in the English language (Gorman & Kester 2014).

1.1.2 Pronunciation

1.1.2.1 Definition of pronunciation

According to Oxford Dictionary, pronunciation can be defined as “the way in which a language or a particular word or sound is spoken”. In other words, it is the way of speaking a word that can be understood or at least accepted by the audience. For that reason, it cannot be said that there is just one way to pronounce correctly a word because it will depend on the way of talking of each individual, which includes particular characteristics such as: the place in which they live, the environment by which they are surrounded speech problems, their cultural background and ancestors, their level of education, the stereotypes of the society.

Pronunciation also refers to the production of sounds to convey any meaning. It focuses the attention to specific sounds of a language, known as segments, which are features of speech which go beyond the pronunciation of each sound, such as intonation, phrasing, stress, timing, rhythm (suprasegmental aspects), and the performance of the voice. In a most deep definition, it pays a lot of attention to expressions and gestures connected to the way an individual use the language (AMEP RESEARCH CENTER, 2002)

1.1.2.2 The importance of teaching pronunciation

Teaching pronunciation involves many things, which means that it can be limited to treat just individual sounds/words because as a sub skill of speaking it must be regarded as a crucial part of communication. For that reason, teachers must include many pronunciation activities, of different types, in their lessons, in order to cover all the aspects that pronunciation has to help students to improve their pronunciation (Mikuláščíková, 2012)

Moreover, Harmer (2000 as cited in Hidayat, 2012) mentions that one of the best ways to help students improve comprehension and intelligibility is through focusing the attention on how sounds are made in the mouth, also the stress, intonation, etc. because it will give students extra information about how the foreign language works.

Apart from that, the way in which a person speaks, gives a lot of information about how that person is, in other words it is the first impression that the audience can get from someone. Many studies have confirmed that it is easier to understand a speaker who has a good pronunciation and some grammatical mistakes than those who have a perfect grammar but a deficient pronunciation. Thus, those kind of speakers can be frustrated because they cannot be understood and, as a result of that, they can feel as a part of the stereotypes known about speakers of foreign languages. The stereotypes suggested that learners with bad pronunciation could be regarded as incompetent, uneducated or lacking in knowledge. Once more, there is a strong evidence that it is very important to teach pronunciation in a proper way (AMEP RESEARCH CENTER, 2002)

1.1.3 Definitions of linguistics terms

1.1.3.1 Phonology

The concepts of phonology and phonetics are fundamental for this study because they are the theoretical foundations of pronunciation, since their theories and principles provide the knowledge needed to analyze the influence that Spanish has on English when pronouncing some specific phonemes.

According to Crystal (2000, as cited in Carrillo, 2014) “Phonology is a branch of Linguistics which studies how sounds function in a language [...] the sounds are organized into a system of contrasts, which are analyzed in terms of phonemes, distinctive features, or other, such as phonological units, according to the theory used”. In addition, Fromkin et al. (1974 as cited in Carrillo, 2014) affirms that:

“Phonological knowledge permits a speaker to produce sounds which form meaningful utterances, to recognize a foreign “accent”, to make up new words, to add the appropriate phonetic segments to form plurals and past tenses, to produce “aspirated” and “un-aspirated” voiceless

stops in the appropriate context, to know what is or is not a sound in one's language, and to know that different phonetic strings may represent the same meaningful unit." (p.216)

1.1.3.2 Phonetics

On the other hand, there is the branch of phonetics which, according to Hamann and Schmitz (2005), is related with how sounds are perceived, produced, and transmitted. In the same line, the British Association of Academic Phoneticians describe phonetics as "the systematic study of speech and the sounds of language". Another and more precise definition stated by Crystal (2008) is that it is the science which studies the patterns characteristics of human sound making, especially those sounds used in speech, and provides methods for their description, classification and transcription.

Traditionally, phoneticians rely on careful listening and observation in order to describe speech sounds". In addition, Ladefoged (2016) stated that it deals with the configurations of the three subfields of phonetics which are: the vocal tract used to produce speech sounds (articulatory phonetics), the acoustic properties of speech sounds (acoustic phonetics), and the manner of combining sounds so as to create syllables, words, and sentences (linguistic phonetics). These subfields are indispensable to a better understanding of speech production. This research, however, focuses the attention only on the production of sounds.

This brief introduction about phonology and phonetics is important because they provide valuable and useful information at the moment to contrast languages which have some differences in the phonological systems, such as English and Spanish.

1.1.3.3 Contrastive phonology

A contrastive analysis is used as a general approach to make investigation of language in some areas of Applied Linguistics, especially in foreign-language teaching. To develop a contrastive analysis of two languages, the most important aspect to consider is the differences among the structure of those languages, and then that difference can be

studied as areas with high level of trouble when dealing with foreign-language learning. This process is known as contrastive analysis hypothesis because it involves the study of how the structure of L1 is affecting the progress of the learner when trying to perform in the L2 (Crystal, 2008).

This research focuses the attention on a contrastive phonology study, which according to MacGarrity (2014), is the field in charge of analyzing and comparing the phonological variants of two different languages that have some linguistic features in common. Taking into consideration that a phonological system has three main components, which are the phonemes, the allophonic rules and the phonotactic rules. Phonemes are considered the minimal unit in the sound system of a language with the purpose of establishing patterns of organization of the different sounds heard in languages. Allophonic rules are referred to as the appropriate pronunciation of a phoneme when it has different realizations. Phonotactic rules are related to the way in which phonological units must be organized in a sentence in order to have a coherence sense (Crystal, 2008).

The aim of contrastive phonology is to show the different patterns of sounds found in a language, and investigate as much as possible the nature of the sound system of each language spoken in our societies. In other words, Phonology has to deal with the specific sounds of a language and how is the function of them. For instance, Spanish and English can be contrasted even they have almost a similar alphabet. As a result of that, the production of sounds and the differences between phonological systems can affect the reception/identification of sounds.

1.1.4 Contrast between the English and Spanish /t/ and /d/

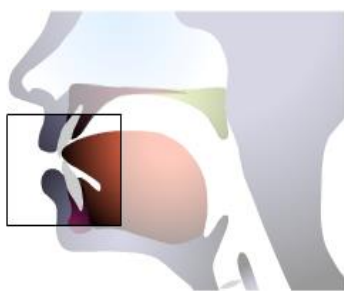
The different sounds of a language can be divided according to their manner or place of articulation. Hence, this research, because of its purpose, is going to take as a reference the place of articulation, which is referred to as each point at which the airstream can be modified to produce a different sound. Places of articulation are found at the lips, within the oral cavity, in the pharynx and at the glottis. Within the oral cavity, a small ridge protrudes from just behind the upper front teeth. This is called the alveolar ridge. The tongue may touch or be brought near this ridge (Dobrovolsky & Katamba, 1997).

The case of study of this research is to analyze the influence of Spanish on the pronunciation of some English phonemes by contrasting them. Those phonemes are /t/ and /d/, which differ in the place of articulation because in Latin American Spanish /d/ and /t/ are dental, while in English they are alveolar. It means that Spanish speakers pronounce them with the tip of the tongue against the edges inner surfaces of the upper front teeth. On the other hand, English speakers articulate them with the tip of the tongue on the alveolar ridge just above and behind the upper teeth (Whitley, 2002).

Moreover, it is important to take into consideration some interesting phenomena that make vary the pronunciation of some English phonemes; they are assimilation and realization. Assimilation happens when a phoneme is pronounced differently as a result of being near some other phonemes belonging to a neighboring word, and it may depend on the speaker's variant, speed of delivery and style. Thus, for this research, a specific kind of assimilation will be taken into account and it is called assimilation of place, where a final consonant with alveolar place of articulation is followed by an initial consonant with a place of articulation that is not alveolar. For instance, the final consonant in "that" is alveolar /t/ and in rapid casual speech the /t/ will become /p/ before a bilabial consonant (Roach, 2009, pp. 110-111).

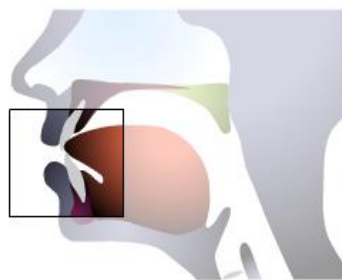
Realization has to do with the variants that a phoneme has, in other words the different pronunciation a consonant or a vowel have according to the place in which they are located in a word. For instance, English and Spanish phonemes /t/ and /d/ have some allophones, which are variants of the phoneme. In the case of the English /t/, it has four allophones which are aspirated, unaspirated, flap, and unreleased. It is aspirated when it is part of a syllable initial; unaspirated when it is placed after a /s/; flap in intervocalic position, when a second vowel is unstressed; and unreleased when it is in a word final position. Then, the phoneme /d/ reduces to [ɾ] between two vowels (or a syllabic consonant), particularly if the second one is unstressed. Also, /d/ is nasally released before a syllabic /n/. But, it is important to remark that this kind of realizations only happen in some dialects of English (Al-Jarf, 2014).

In contrast with the realizations mentioned above, the Spanish phonemes /t/ and /d/ have other kinds of realizations. For instance, the phoneme /t/ does not have any allophone, while the phoneme /d/ has two allophones. One of them occurs in word initial position or after a pause; after a lateral and after a nasal. The other allophone is the fricative-linguodental [ð] (Frías, 2010).



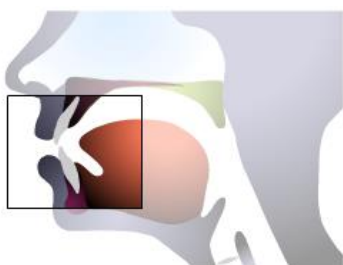
[t] La punta de la lengua toca la cara interior de los incisivos superiores creando una oclusión completa que interrumpe la salida del aire.

Figure 1. Place of articulation of the Spanish phonemes /t/. University of Iowa Research Foundation(2016)



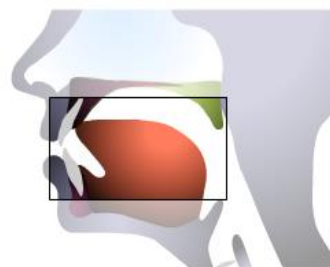
[d] La punta de la lengua toca la cara interior de los incisivos superiores creando una oclusión completa que interrumpe la salida del aire.

Figure 2. Place of articulation of the Spanish phonemes /d/. University of Iowa Research Foundation (2006)



/t/ Air pressure built up behind obstruction is released by lowering the tongue, producing noise burst.

Figura 3. Place of articulation of the English phonemes /t/. University of Iowa Research Foundation (2006)



/d/ The front and sides of the tongue contact the alveolar ridge anteriorly and laterally.

Figura 4. Place of articulation of the English phonemes /d/. University of Iowa Research Foundation (2006)

1.1.5 Phonological variants of Spanish dialects in Ecuador

First of all, it is necessary to introduce a definition of dialects. Thus, according to Holmes (as cited in Carrillo, 2014) “dialects are simply linguistic varieties which are distinguishable by their vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation; the speech of people from different social, as well as regional groups may differ in these ways...”

In the case of Ecuador, there are two distinct dialects, one which belongs to the Coast and another from the Highlands. Each of them have some special peculiarities, taking as a reference the pronunciation of some words and body movements. Thus, Toscano (1953as cited in Carrillo, 2014) supports that after the conquest, the Spanish in Ecuador began to differentiate itself from the Spanish in Spain, and that upon reaching the Ecuadorian land, southern colonists from Extremadura and Andalucía settled on the Coast; while

Castellanos had preferred the Highlands. For this reason, much of the characters of Coastal speech is also found in Andalucía. In addition, the influence of Quechua upon Spanish, especially in the Highlands, is quite significant and many of the words used in everyday life belong to that language.

Thus, nowadays there are evident changes in pronunciation based on phonetic features. For instance, the phoneme /d/ in intervocalic position is omitted, especially in those places in which afro-descendant population predominates (e.g. Esmeraldas). It means that they say “cocinao” instead of “cocinado”. Then, when the phoneme /d/ and /t/ are in final position they are omitted altogether, especially in rural areas. For example, they say “salú” instead of “salud”. But, in the case of the phoneme /t/ it happens because the Spanish lexicon does not have words ending in /t/ (Lipski, 1994as cited in Carrillo, 2014).

1.2 Teaching pronunciation methods and techniques

There are different methods that have been used to teach pronunciation. Verdía (2002 as cited in Pérez, 2011) and Celce Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin (1996) described and analyzed the contribution of each of them to the pronunciation field through the time.

1.2.1 Direct Method

It focused the attention on pronunciation because the other methods gave priority to grammar and translation. The way of teaching in this method is based on the use of intuition and imitation, which means that students had to follow a model that could be the teacher or a recording. In addition, students do not receive any pressure to speak because what prevails here is the amount of input that they receive in order to be familiar with the phonetic system. In addition, it works in the same line with the Total Physical Response and the Natural Approach, which state that learners must learn at their own pace.

1.2.2 Reform Movement

It appeared with the International Phonetic Association created in 1886 by the most important phoneticians of the time, such as Henry Sweet, Wilhelm Viëtor, and Paul Passy, with the purpose of describing and analyzing the way in which the sound system of a language works. As a result, the phonetic alphabet was created. To make this possible, the phoneticians stated some factors that are crucial and which must be put into practice by the teacher and students alike, in order to improve the pronunciation of each phoneme. They are as follows: the speaking skill must be taught first; phonetic principles should be used in language teaching; teachers must have a permanent training on phonetics; and students must receive phonetic training in order to improve their speech.

1.2.3 Audio-lingual Method

Following the same procedure of the Direct Method, it included the explicit teaching of phonemes. It was composed of some meaningful strategies to work on pronunciation because it was considered very important. For instance, teachers use phonetics information, such as charts, in which they show the articulation of sounds and a visual transcription system. Moreover, notions of contrast in structural linguistics such as the minimal pair drill are used in order to make students realize the different meanings that a word can have if its pronunciation changes.

1.2.4 Cognitive Approach

It was influenced by the Generative Grammar of Chomsky which focused the attention on just teaching grammar points. Generative Grammar criticized the effort put on pronunciation because they gave more importance to the internalization of grammatical rules. Apart from that, GG supported this idea stabilizing that working with native-like

pronunciation was an unrealistic objective and it preferred to spend the teaching time working with more learnable items, such as grammar and vocabulary.

1.2.5 Silent period

It was characterized by a focused attention on the accuracy of the production of sounds and structures. But this happened without having as a reference the phonetic alphabet. Here the teacher used more gestures than words and a lot of didactic materials in order to show their students the way in which they had to perform.

1.2.6 Communicative Approach to Language Teaching

It was centered in the systematic use of communicative activities in pronunciation lessons, in which teachers make the students practice grammar structures and vocabulary in simulated real situations in order to prepare them to face and solve problems in the real world (Murcia, 1983 as cited in Mukhtar, 2013). It is currently dominant in language teaching because nowadays learners need to improve their communicative skills, taking into consideration that English is a lingua franca, especially for those who study international business. To make this possible, it is necessary to work with some specific techniques that can contribute to the effectiveness of teaching pronunciation, such as explicit or implicit phonetic instruction.

Some approaches of the last decades of the twentieth century rejected the techniques that worked exclusively with sounds at the segmental level, in order to give more importance to the suprasegmental level. The only exception is the Silent Period.

Nowadays, there is another reality in our society because pronunciation does not have the attention that is needed. It happens because many teachers refuse the idea to innovate when teaching and, as a consequence, they still use the traditional method just to teach grammar and vocabulary. To support this idea, Gil (2007) quoted that “the pronunciation is the eternal poor relative of language didactics because it is still in a third plane in EFL

settings for different reasons, such as the lack of time, curriculum adaptation and predominance of grammar.

1.3 English as the international business language

1.3.1 The importance of English in globalization

Currently, around 500 million people speak English in the world because it is considered the global language. It is spoken as the official language in countries such as the United States of America, Canada, Australia, India, United Kingdom and Southern Africa. Thus, to have the ability to communicate in English is considered fundamental for those people who want to work in any area related with international business. It is relevant to remark that the use of English is growing at the same time as the economy. Besides English is not considered the first language of many countries in the world, is the language used most around the world: the lingua franca of traveling, international business, science, etc.; that is reason why it is important to speak English, especially in the business world, because of the basic function that any language has, which is to communicate with others.

English has increased its importance in this century because many companies have realized that they could increase their sales, given the chance to make international business. As a result of that, enterprises are very interested in hiring people who already speak English, because that will help to increase their development. Thus, learning how to speak English in the business world has become famous and maybe the only way to make the difference among professionals.

To speak English in the business world, it is necessary to develop some crucial skills such as writing e-mails and reports, making presentations, doing negotiations, using the telephone, attending and participating actively in meetings or telephone conferences and receiving visitors.

A significant number of employers around the world agree that English is crucial for communication in their present job. English is used to communicate with the whole people who work in an international company environment and even in social meeting

with people of the same field, though many workers are conscious that are not ready to face and solve problems in the business world. An effective communication, including good pronunciation, in the business world is essential because international enterprises need people who master the lingua franca of business well. (Global English, 2010 as cited in De la Cruz, 2011)

1.4 International commerce career at PUCESE

1.4.1 Mission

To form continuously, personalized and comprehensive human beings with enterprising, social, ethical, critical and self-critical sense, in the spirit of the gospel, capable of leading and of generating transformations, respecting the biodiversity, developing innovative and sustainable proposals for the growth of the international commerce of the province and of the country.

1.4.2 Vision

The school of International Commerce will be an educational area of the PUCESE in permanent search for academic excellence, participating in research networks, exchange of students and teachers with organizations and national and international institutions that regulate and operate in international commerce.

1.4.3 Specific Objectives

- To strengthen the structure and academic processes in the School of International Commerce.
- To raise the academic level of students, and motivate them to finish their studies.

- To promote research and innovation in areas linked to international commerce, so as to discover and improve exportable products.
- To advise producers in the province to develop investment projects oriented to international trades.
- To make exchanges of teachers and students with national and international institutions that operate in the international trade field.
- To give follow-ups to students that already finished their studies to contribute to their professional growth and business.

1.4.4 Graduate Student Profile

A comprehensive professional, able to propose and develop innovative ideas for the foreign trade of the province and the country, while respecting biodiversity and the environment.

A graduate professional will have enough technical knowledge to operate in international trade. The professional will be able to:

- Outline, implement and manage organizational systems that allow incorporating extra value to technology in the production of goods and services for exporting.
- Design plans, programs and investment projects aimed at the conquest of foreign markets.
- Manage the skills related to the oral and written expression of the English language as an element which facilitates integration into the labor market. This is the most relevant characteristic for this investigation because students do not show a good performance in English, above all pronunciation, at the end of their studies.
- Analyze and interpret the behavior of the variables related to the market and the national and international marketing.
- Develop projects in transportation and international logistics.
- Design strategies of marketing Ecuadorian products abroad.

1.4.5 Occupational field

- International Business
- International Marketing
- International finance
- Transport and international insurance

1.5 Previous studies

The previous investigations that have been done are crucial for this research because they show that it is very important to pay attention to the English teaching pronunciation field, focused on the interference caused by the influence of the mother tongue of the learners.

Kissling (2013 & 2014) supported the idea that one of the best ways to teach and improve the pronunciation of foreign language learners is through using an explicit phonetic instruction, which focuses the attention on the pronunciation of individual sounds, manner and place of articulation. According to (Bongaerts et al., 1997; Fullana, 2006 as cited in Kissling 2013) adult learners cannot have a native-like pronunciation if they do not have the opportunity to experience an explicit pronunciation instruction lessons. Moreover, a phonetic pronunciation instruction has demonstrated that it can help to improve the pronunciation of foreign language learners, including English, German and Spanish speakers. All this can be possible if teachers apply this technique in a correct way, it means giving them the appropriate time to discriminate the sound which contrast among languages. On the other hand, the general language instructions have not proven that they can cause a meaningful impact on pronunciation.

Novacka (2012), applied a questionnaire to collect valuable information given by students from Italy, Spain and Poland about their point of views on their progress in English pronunciation. The results stated that all these students agree with the idea that to have a good pronunciation is fundamental to communicate effectively. In order to achieve that students propose to pay more attention to the phonetic features, taking into consideration their mother tongues, so that they could have a good native-like pronunciation. In

conclusion, this research is relevant for this investigation because it treated the most recent phonetic literature in phonetic studies which can be taken as a reference to carry out this research successfully.

García (2011) made a research in which she took as a case study a Puerto Rican Dialect in order to remark the specific phonetic and phonological patterns that will affect the English pronunciation of monolingual children living in the USA. These children, with a Puerto Rican dialect, were taken as a reference because they have shown some peculiarities when speaking which contrast a lot with the English pronunciation. For example, they omit some consonants at the end or at the beginning of a word, the stops are different, the place of articulation of some consonants change, the assimilation that exists when some words precede others, etc. (Goldstein & Iglesias, 2001; Shriberg & Kwiatkowski, 1980). Finally, this study reveals that not paying too much attention to dialect features can affect considerably the English pronunciation of learners.

Face & Menke (2009) did a study based in the way in which native speakers of English acquire the Spanish voiced spirants /b, d, g/ which have articulatory differences in Spanish and English. To make this possible they used 53 native English speakers who were divided according to their levels of Spanish instruction; the first group was formed by university students enrolled in a fourth-semester Spanish course, the second was graduating Spanish majors, and the third was Ph.D. students in Spanish. They have to complete two tasks: the first one was to answer some questions about their experiences learning Spanish and the second one was an oral reading of a Spanish short story. Finally, the research showed that those students who have more instructions and experience studying the Spanish language were better when pronouncing the Spanish voiced spirants because they did it as a native-like. It was the case of Ph.D. students in Spanish.

González (2005) applied an instructional approach test based on the Input Processing model, which consisted on a controlled repetitions of drills that focused the attention on what the learners are listening to rather than on the meaning that it conveys; with the purpose of finding out the possible articulatory difficulties in the acquisition of the Spanish /r/ in a bilingual context. To carry out this investigation the researcher used as a sample of a five years old girl who spoke Spanish with her mother and English with her father at home. The girl had to discriminate the correct word, among minimal pairs, according to what she heard by choosing a picture which represented the answer. At the end of the experiment the girl was able to acquire the Spanish phoneme /r/ faster than

previous studies have shown with the same problematic situation. It means that paying more attention to the sound of words instead of its meaning helps in the acquisition of a better pronunciation. This result shows that this model can also be applied in classroom because it will help students of foreign languages to speed up phonological acquisition. In other words, to improve their pronunciation and reduce their foreign accent.

Alwan, You, Kazemzadeh, & Narayanan (2005), described and analyzed some pronunciation variation hypotheses contrasting English and Spanish. The study consisted of monitoring young children, native speakers of Spanish, when speaking in English in order to know the most evident pronunciation problems that they have, even with vowels or consonants. All this with aim to know if there are new acoustic phonetic differences among English and Spanish apart from those stated in previous studies. To make this possible the researchers used a transcription programme based on 4500 words. At the end, the analysis showed that there are some consonants which have a lot of allophones that do not exist in Spanish and for that reason they are difficult to pronounce for native speakers of Spanish. It means that new pronunciation problems are revealed in this study. As an example of it, there are the alveolar stop consonants /d/ and /t/ which have some pronunciation variants according to the place they appear in a word.

All the studies mentioned above arrived to the same conclusion, even if they have experimented with different situations, phonemes, samples and contexts. They agree with the idea that the strongest problem in pronunciation presented by EFL learners, FL learners, bilingual learners, and second language learners is caused by the influence of the mother tongue when performing in the target language and it happens mostly because of the lack of phonetic awareness.

1.6 Legal bases

According to the Ministry of Education of Ecuador (2012) in its Art. 26 “Education is a right for everybody” which at the same time means quality education for all students. The Ecuadorian government has created an online tutorial which include information about Ecuadorian in-service English Teachers Standards and the English language learning standards. It has as a main goal to guide and inform teachers about the current situation and management of English in the Ecuadorian context.

1.6.1 Ecuadorian in-service English teachers’ standards

Ecuadorian in-service English teachers’ standards describe the five domains of English language teaching and learning which are language, culture, curriculum development, assessment, professionalism and ethical commitment. Language refers to the purpose that it will have in the lesson such as development of fluency, communication activities, grammar structures, etc.

Culture, related with the knowledge that teachers must manage about the different ethnic groups and nationalities that exist in Ecuador and how they will influence the teaching English process. Curriculum development, which serves as a guide to plan effectively and offer students a meaningful learning through the appropriate use of available resources and technology. Assessment helps teachers to find the most suitable way of evaluating the progress of students according to objectives that they have to achieve at the end of the year. Finally, professionalism and ethical commitment have to do with the behavior and attitudes based on respect, morality and responsibility that teachers have to keep in mind performing in an educative institution. In the same way, it obliges teachers to be updated all the time with the contemporary pedagogy.

1.6.2 The English language Learning Standards

It establishes the proficiency levels that students have to achieve at the end of some specific years of school or highschool, with the purpose to help students to be competent in the use of the English language. All this taking into consideration the language skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) as the most important part of the program.

The progression of students in the English field in Ecuador is stipulated as follows:

- Students at the end of the 9th grade of the General Basic Education have to achieve the English level A1.
- Students at the end of the 1st year of Senior School have to achieve the English level A2.
- Students at the end of the 3rd year of Senior School have to achieve the English level B1.

2 Methodology

2.1 Method

The most viable method considered for this investigation was the inductive because it goes from a particular fact, the bad pronunciation of the English phonemes /t/ and /d/, to a general one, it means the suggestions made to help students to improve the pronunciation of these specific phonemes. This method is used when the observation of specific phenomena gives general proposals.

2.2 Type of investigation

It was a descriptive investigation which had as a goal to observe the characteristics of students from the eighth level of International Commerce when performing in English and describe them, in order to establish a general and meaningful solution about this study.

2.3 Line of investigation

Linguistic components of teaching English as a foreign language

2.4 Variables

- **Dependent**
The pronunciation of the English phonemes /t/ and /d/
- **Independent**
Students 'mother tongue, Spanish.

2.5 Participants

This investigation was possible with the collaboration of 7 students from the eighth level of the International Commerce career. They were registered in the eighth level of General English at PUCSE, during the first semester of 2016. They received five period of classes each Saturday. Moreover, two General English teachers were part of the process.

2.6 Techniques

- Observation: the students were observed during two weeks, it means 10 hours of classes, in which the researcher was evaluating their pronunciation of the English phonemes /t/ and /d/, in casual speech and according to some parameters. The parameters were based on the frequency in which students pronounced those phonemes correctly. The students were evaluated with never if they pronounced 0% correct the phonemes; with sometimes if they pronounced from 10-25% the phonemes correctly, with often if they pronounced from 30-50% the phonemes correctly; with generally if they pronounced from 70-90% the phonemes correctly; and with always if they pronounced 100% those phonemes correctly.
- Interview: it contained six questions which were designed to make students use, in their answers, words which include the phonemes /t/ and /d/ in different places. The students were recorded after finishing their lessons.

2.7 Data collection

The data collection was done during two weeks in which the researcher was observing 10 English lessons, each one of 60 minutes. At the moment to make the observation the researcher was taking notes, based on some parameters, while students were reading and speaking freely during the lesson. Apart from that, each were interviewed individually at the end of each English lesson in order to be recorded. Finally, that information was analyzed to find out the results and the corresponding conclusions and recommendations.

3. Results

3.1 The observation results

The observations were based on some parameters which showed the frequency (never, sometimes, often, generally, and always) in which students pronounced the English phonemes /t/ and /d/ in casual speech correctly.

Week #1

During that week, students were working with reading passages, questions and answers, listening activities, and repetition of words. When reading, students tried to do their best because they were conscious that the researcher, who has knowledge in the English language, was paying attention to their lesson but even then, the majority of them, (six students) presented a lot of problems when producing /t/ and /d/ in final position because they just did not pronounce them. Only one student pronounced correctly those phonemes, including words such as regular verbs, which were taken into consideration for this research.

Apart from that, (those six students) showed less problem when the phoneme /t/ was placed in initial and middle position in a word because, at least, they pronounced them once in a while. For this reason, they were categorized in “often” and in “generally”, according to the frequency in which they used sound /t/ properly. And again there was an exception because one of the students pronounced accurately phoneme /t/ in all positions. But, related with the /d/ sound, only a student presented problems because he never produced it correctly when it was placed in the middle position of words.

When the teacher asked questions about the reading text, most of the students, it means six students, were unable to answer the question saying a complete sentence in English, even if the teacher gave them keywords to do it. Thus, the few English words they used, including /t/ and /d/ sounds, were mispronounced because they were focused on the content rather than the pronunciation, which is very important to convey the meaning of a sentences.

When the teacher played a recording on an online webpage in which a native speaker, in a casual speech, uttered a sentence, and the students had to guess what had been said. Once they guessed the possible answer, they had to write the sentence on the webpage to check if it was correct. This activity confirms that students are not familiarized with the sounds of the English phonemes /t/ and /d/, especially when they are placed in middle and final positions in a word. For that reason it is difficult for them to understand the message.

Finally, the students worked with repetition of words to practice the pronunciation of the new vocabulary. It consisted of repeating words played in a recording and uttered by an English native speaker. In this case, all the students did it well but the problem was when the teacher asked them to use those words in other sentences because they failed in the pronunciation.

Table 1: Frequency of the correct pronunciation during the first week

Frequency Phonemes	Never							Sometimes							Often							Generally							Always								
Initial /t/																		x	x					x	x										x	x	x
Middle /t/																		x	x					x	x												x
Final /t/	x	x	x	x	x	x																															x
Initial /d/										x	x									x	x		x	x													x
Middle /d/						x				x	x				x	x			x																		x
Final /d/	x	x	x	x	x								x																								x
N° of students	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		

Week #2

The activities developed during that week were based on a reading role-reading filling gaps, interchanging questions and answers about a video, and training for a sketch.

When working with the role-reading, the students had the opportunity to listen to the conversation from a recording, in which English native speakers were interacting. They also listened to the teacher of that week's video, who was from The Netherlands. This time all the students tried to do it better than the previous week, because they already knew that the researcher was paying attention to their pronunciation. Our advantage was that they did not know to what sound this author was focused on. As a result of that, they were still showing serious problems in the pronunciation of the phonemes under study when they placed them at the end of a word. But, it is important to remark that some of them moved from the category "sometimes" to "often", in pronouncing the /t/ and /d/ sounds correctly. It means that, if students could have an explicit phonetic instruction, they could improve the pronunciation of these two very common phonemes in the English language.

As concerns to the gap- filling exercises, most of the students (6), except one student who has a very good English level, failed to do it properly, because they had the idea on their minds but they were unable to write that idea correctly. The same happened when they tried to answer the questions formulated by the teacher about the video, because even if they understood everything, it was too difficult for them to say a complete sentence in English; instead, they preferred to use Spanish.

Finally, they practiced the simulation of a TV show, which consisted of creating their own sketch and using their creativity to perform it. The problem presented here was that students did not have a guide to follow the correct pronunciation of all the words, so they just asked the teacher about those words they considered most important. They focused on content rather than on the way in which they were saying the words, showing, once again, weaknesses in the pronunciation of the /t/ and /d/ phonemes in initial, middle, and final position in a word.

Table 2: Frequency of the correct pronunciation during the second week

<div>Frequency</div> <div>Phonemes</div>	Never							Sometimes							Often							Generally							Always									
Initial /t/																							x	x	x	x									x	x	x	
Middle /t/																	x	x					x	x			x	x									x	
Final /t/	x	x	x	x	x	x																																x
Initial /d/																	x	x	x	x			x	x													x	
Middle /d/													x		x	x	x	x	x																		x	
Final /d/	x	x	x	x	x								x																									x
N° of students	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			

In conclusion, the observations revealed that most of the students pronounce correctly these phonemes when they are located in the initial and middle positions of a word. But, the biggest problem students faced was when the English phonemes /t/ and /d/ were located at the end of a word. Thus, according to the analysis made by the researcher, the incorrect pronunciation of these phonemes is due to three main factors.

First, because of the low English level students have. That is noticeable when students read, write, and speak.

Second, the influence of their mother tongue, because people from Esmeraldas have a particular way of speaking, which has as a main characteristic feature the omission of consonants at the end of words, and it is something you can easily tell when you hear them.

Third, the teachers do not focus the attention on the specific pronunciation of each phoneme when they develop pronunciation exercises in the classroom. They work with repetitions of words as a whole and they do not mind if the final sound is not said properly. But even if the teachers have a native-like pronunciation, students do not see and imitate them as a model to improve the pronunciation of those phonemes, which means that they need more explicit instruction.

3.2 The interview results

The questions of the interview were very simple to make students answer them easily, using the vocabulary they already know. Each question was focused on one word in order to realize when students have more problems in pronouncing the English phonemes /t/ and /d/. It is important to mention as well that all the students had the opportunity to prepare themselves for some minutes to answer the questions.

In the first question, “What are the fastest animals of the Savannah?”, all the students answered *the lion* and *the tiger*, except for one who also mentioned the zebra. They agreed with the expected answer established by the researcher, which was the word *tiger*, which has the /t/ sound in initial position in the word. In this case they did not show too much problem because most of them did very well.

The second question was “Count from 12 to 20”. The goal was to check the correct pronunciation of /t/ in the middle position in a word. But there was an inconvenient because only three students were able to say the numbers correctly; the other four pronounced them as if they were 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, and 90. Even if they said sixteen or sixty, most of them (six students) pronounced the phoneme /t/ in the same way they say it in Spanish.

The third question which focused the attention on the /t/ sound in final position in a word was “Where do you look for information to do your homework?”. One of the answers of the students matched the one proposed by the researcher: it was *Internet*; the other answer was *book*. In this instance, the six students failed completely when pronouncing this phoneme, because they just omitted the pronunciation of /t/ when it was placed in that part of the word.

Once again, the students showed that for them it is difficult to pronounce the /t/ sound at the end of a word, basically due to the influence of their mother tongue, in which case it is uncommon to find words with that ending.

“What kind of professionals work in a hospital?” was the fourth question to which students answered *doctors* and *nurses*, agreeing in that way with the investigator who expected as an answer the word *doctors*. It focused the attention on the /d/ sound in initial position in a word. In this case just one student failed in the correct pronunciation of this

word; the other six students did it properly. It is the researcher's opinion that they were very much concentrated on pronunciation this time. This result coincided with that one of the /t/ phoneme, and that means that students did not present too much problem when the sounds under study are placed in the initial position of a word.

The fifth question referred to what is celebrated in Ecuador on August 10th, and it is related with the correct pronunciation of the /d/ sound in middle position in a word. The results revealed that from the seven students, only three were able to pronounce the word *independence* correctly, which was the right answer; the other four students were focused on the correct stress of that word, which is, by the way, very similar to Spanish.

The last question, which was "What are the colors of the Ecuadorian flag?", aimed at the pronunciation of the phoneme /d/ in final position. It was the pronunciation of *red* the one expected on this occasion. The result of this showed, again, that for most of the students (6), it is very complicated to produce sounds that are not used in our mother tongue. This is particularly true of the people from Esmeraldas, because there is a tendency to omit the /d/ sound when it is placed at the end of a word.

In conclusion, the interview confirmed the same problems shown in the observations: the faulty pronunciation of the English phonemes /t/ and /d/, especially when they are found at the end of a word.

4. Discussion

In this study, some important questions were stated in order to achieve the goal of the investigation. They were presented as follows: Which is the influence of Spanish on the pronunciation of the English phonemes /t/ and /d/ in students of the eighth level of International Commerce at PUCESE? What are the differences between the English and Spanish /t/ and /d/? Which are the main problems that students have when pronouncing the English phonemes /t/ and /d/? And what are the possible techniques that teachers can apply to improve the pronunciation of the English phonemes /t/ and /d/? All these questions were answered successfully and have shown interesting results that can be contrasted with previous studies.

The first question, which was about the influence of Spanish on the pronunciation of the English phonemes /t/ and /d/ in students of the eighth level of International Commerce at PUCESE, revealed that the biggest influence on the pronunciation of students when saying these phonemes is definitely our mother tongue, which has some peculiarities. The features which influence the English pronunciation are the place of articulation (English alveolars /t/ and /d/ vs. Spanish dentals /t/ and /d/), the linguistic norm from Esmeraldas which has as a main characteristic the omission of consonants at the end of words and that phoneme /d/ is omitted in intervocalic position. Thus, the fossilization of these features, the way in which students have become accustomed to talk during their whole lives, is interfering in their pronunciation of such sounds in English.

Following the same ideas, Kohn (1986) stated that all the learners of a new language pass through a process called first language transfers in which the learners use all the linguistic information that they already have about their mother tongue when producing second language input. It means that this study is confirming that in most of the cases, the mother tongue will influence upon the acquisition of a new language.

The second question was about the differences between the English and Spanish /t/ and /d/. When comparing two different phonetic systems, many differences arise. To establish a contrast between these two phonemes, it is important to take into consideration some phenomena present in casual speech, such as realization, assimilation, and allophones which can influence the pronunciation of the students, as suggested by Frias (2010) and

Al-Jarf (2014). But, taking into consideration that the students from the eighth level of International Commerce are not fluent speakers of English, it is not relevant to focus the attention on those kinds of phenomena when contrasting these phonemes. As a result of that, this research found that the most relevant difference in this context is the place of articulation. The Spanish /t/ and /d/ are dental; it means that we have to put the tip of the tongue against the edges of the inner surfaces of the upper front teeth. The English /t/ and /d/ are alveolar, because they are pronounced with the tip of the tongue on the alveolar ridge just above and behind the upper teeth. This information coincided with the information stated on Whitley' book (2002), who remarked the contrast between some phonemes and, among them, /t/ and /d/.

The third question had to do with the main problems that students have when pronouncing the English phonemes /t/ and /d/. In previous studies such as García (2011), González (2005), Face & Menke (2009), Novacka (2012), Alwan, You, Kazemzadeh, & Narayanan (2005), the main problem native speakers of Spanish have when pronouncing the English phonemes /t/ and /d/ was shown and proven to be the mother tongue interference because of the norm used in the region in which they live. Therefore, the performance of the students from the eighth level of the International Commerce studies allowed the researcher to conclude that this pronunciation problem happens because learners substitute English sounds, which do not exist in Spanish, by those they have. Therefore, they tend to speak English in the same way as if they were speaking Spanish and it is due to the acoustic and orthographic similarities of the two languages. The same problems have been presented in students from the International Commerce studies.

Finally, the last question was about the possible techniques that teachers can apply to improve the pronunciation of the English phonemes /t/ and /d/. Actually, the teachers observed during this research do not use any specific techniques to improve the pronunciation of these two common English phonemes; they simply prefer to use:

- repetition drills, what means the students repeat the word as a whole without any focus on the phonemes in isolation;
- reading aloud,
- role reading,
- role-plays, among others in the same way of some previous investigations.

But, the researcher found out, that those techniques are not enough to solve the pronunciation problems of these phonemes and she considers convenient to look for other techniques, since the traditional ones have proven not to help students significantly to improve the pronunciation of these phonemes.

As a result of that, some interesting options are suggested, such as the practice of the suprasegmentals, which help to give the normal cadency of the language and facilitates pronunciation: rhythm, stress and intonation, using focus word, communicative lessons, and practice with explicit phonetics instruction.

Thus, the investigator agrees with Kissling (2013) who stated that one of the best ways to improve learners' pronunciation is through using an explicit phonetics instruction technique in which the learners work phoneme by phoneme. In Kissling's study, it was proven that all the learners improved their pronunciation after working with this technique.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

- Most of the International Commerce students have pronunciation problems of the English phonemes /t/ and /d/ because they do not have enough knowledge of the place and manner of articulation. Because of that, they cannot contrast the two sounds and so they cannot notice the difference between the way those sounds are pronounced in Spanish and in English.
- Most of the International Commerce students have problems when the English phonemes /t/ and /d/ are placed in final position in a word, as a consequence of mother tongue interference.
- To improve English pronunciation, teachers use listening and repetition of words as a whole, instead of making emphasis on the pronunciation of each phoneme.

5.2 Recommendations

- English teachers should include some notions about the contrast between the English and Spanish phonemes /t/ and /d/ in their pronunciation lessons, to make students aware of their mother tongue interference.
- English teachers should work on the pronunciation of the English phonemes /t/ and /d/ based on the specific characteristics that their mother tongue has.
- English teachers should include an explicit phonetics instruction as a technique to help students to improve the pronunciation of two of the most common English phonemes, /t/ and /d/, taken into consideration that those already used have not shown very good results.

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7 Appendixes

7.1 Proposal

Explicit Phonetics Instruction for International Commerce Studies

What is Explicit Phonetics Instruction?

Explicit phonetics instruction is a technique in a foreign language classroom, which typically emphasizes the differences between learners' L1 and L2 phonological systems, with regards to phonemic inventories, articulation of analogous phones, grapheme–phoneme correspondences, and phonological processes. In addition, it usually includes perception practice in the form of phoneme discrimination and identification exercises (Kissling, 2013).

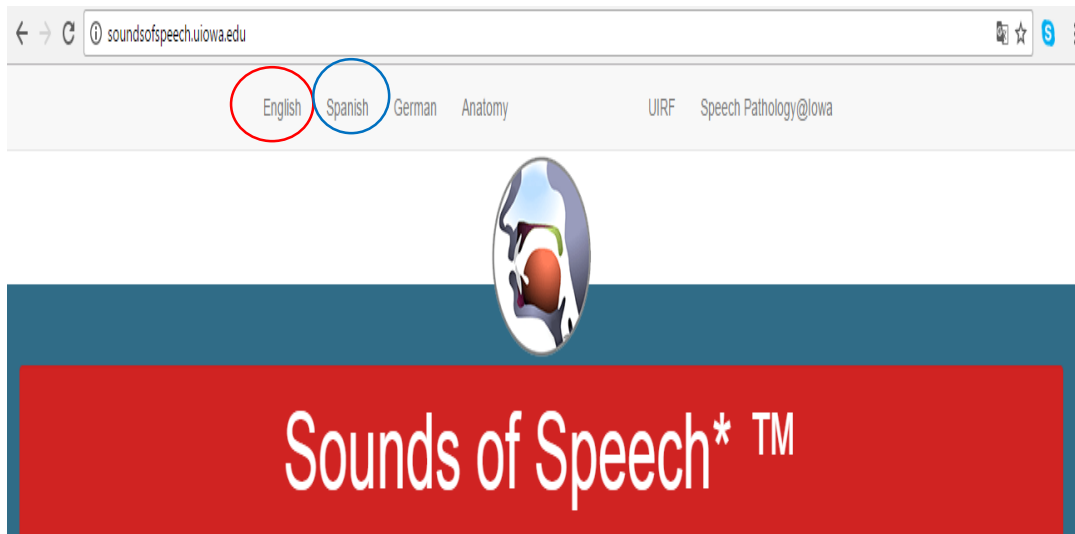
OBJECTIVE: To facilitate the acquisition of two of the most common English phonemes, /t/ and /d/, in order to help students to have appropriate communication in the real world of International Commerce.

How can teachers of General English apply this technique?

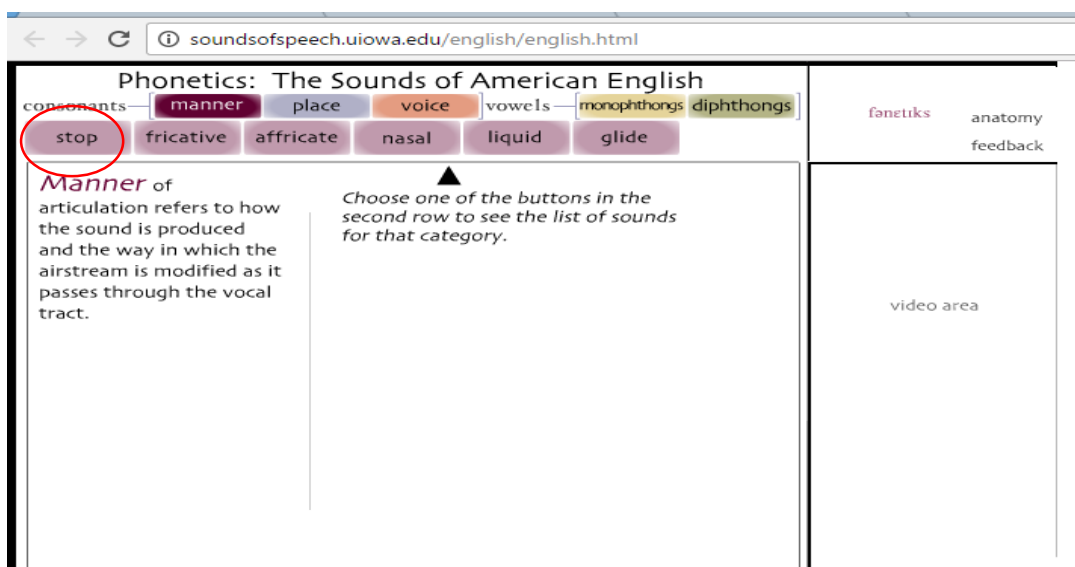
Taking into consideration that teachers have to follow the curriculum, a sequence of a book, to deal with a lot of contents, and to work with the four language skills, this technique can be applied as a reinforcement of the pronunciation activities with which they usually work. It means that teachers, instead of just using listening and repetitions of words as a whole, should give more prominence to the differences between English and Spanish phonological systems and the way in which each phoneme is pronounced.

Thus, to ease this process, the teachers can use an online webpage which has audios and pictures of the correct way English and Spanish phonemes should be pronounced. Also, it includes examples of the pronunciations of words in real time.
<http://soundsofspeech.uiowa.edu/>

Step 1: Enter in the webpage and select either English or Spanish.



Step 2: In this example English has been selected. Then, you have to select one of the manners of articulation. Taking into consideration that /t/ and /d/ are stops which would be the option that you have to select.



Step 3: Once here, you have to select either /t/ or /d/. Then, you can start working with the pronunciation of the two sounds. First, you have the option of playing the way in which /t/ sound is produced in the mouth and what organs you need to articulate it properly. Second, you can see some examples of how a person moves the mouth to pronounce these phonemes in different positions in a word.

After some repetitions of this activity, you can do the same with the Spanish phonemes, in order to make students realize the differences that exist between them.

Additional possibilities to work, in case there is not access to Internet, and to break the daily routine, were suggested by Tom Randolph (2013):

1. Paper for seeing aspirated plosives: English and Spanish /t/ and /d/

To hold a piece of paper vertically and loosely level up with, but a couple of centimeters away from the spot where the lips join. Say the phonemes and repeat those several times to see how the paper flies. That helps to establish the contrast between them.

2. Fingers on the throats, to feel the vibration of the vocal chords

Make students place a finger or two on the skin, just under where half the species has Adam's apple. Then, say some Spanish and English words that contain the phonemes /t/ and /d/, in different positions in the words and make the students say and discuss the differences they find out.

3. Use your hands to simulate the parts of the mouth

Hold the left hand horizontally to the ground, palm down. Bend the fingers as if they were the teeth of the upper jaw. Hold the right hand in a loose fist under the left hand, also palm down. This symbolizes the tongue, at rest. The teacher can say one of the consonants and move the hand that simulate the tongue, to make students see the process of pronunciation. After that, each student has to do the same, so as to experience the way of uttering a specific sound.

7.2 Questions of the interview

1. What are the fastest animals of the savannah?

Word expected in the answer: **TIGER** /t/ initial position

2. Can you count from 12 to 20?

Word expected in the answer: **SIXTEEN** /t/ middle position

3. Where do you look for information to do your homework?

Word expected in the answer: **INTERNET** /t/ final position

4. What kind of professionals work in a hospital?

Word expected in the answer: **DOCTOR** /d/ initial position

5. What is celebrated in Ecuador on August 10th?

Word expected in the answer: **INDEPENDENCE** /d/ middle position

6. What are the colors of the Ecuadorian flag?

Word expected in the answer: **RED** /d/ final position

7.3 Parameters for the class observation

Frequency Phonemes	Never							Sometimes							Often							Generally							Always						
Initial /t/																																			
Middle /t/																																			
Final /t/																																			
Initial /d/																																			
Middle /d/																																			
Final /d/																																			
N° of students	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Never: students pronounce 0% correct the phoneme

Sometimes: students pronounce 10- 25% correct the phoneme

Often: students pronounce 30- 50% correct the phoneme

Generally: students pronounce 70- 90% correct the phoneme

Always: students pronounce 100% correct the phoneme.

7.4 Picture of the class observations



7.5 Picture of the interview

