

Difficulties in pronouncing english vowel sounds among sixth-grade spanish-speaking students in Barranquilla, Colombia

Dificultades en la pronunciación de los sonidos vocálicos del inglés entre los alumnos hispanohablantes de sexto grado de Barranquilla, Colombia.

Dificuldades na pronúncia dos sons das vogais do inglês entre alunos do sexto ano de língua espanhola em Barranquilla, Colômbia

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Abstract

Objective: This study analyzes the difficulties in pronouncing specific English vowel sounds (/ɪ/, /ʌ/, /ʊ/, /ə/) among sixth-grade students at Nazareth Olaya School in Barranquilla, Colombia. **Methodology:** Using a mixed-methods approach with a case study design, the research involved a non-probability sample of six students. Data collection instruments included participant observation, interviews, analysis of audiovisual material, and surveys. **Results:** Persistent articulation problems were revealed, mainly due to differences between the Spanish and English vowel systems. Common error patterns were identified, such as confusion between similar sounds and the substitution of English phonemes for their Spanish counterparts. In addition, unclear articulation of certain vowels was observed, which negatively affects students' communicative competence in English. **Conclusions:** The study highlights the lack of specific pedagogical intervention to address these problems, which contributes to their persistence throughout the learning process. Phonetic barriers and the absence of specialized teaching resources in the classroom further exacerbate the problem.

Keywords: English vowel sounds; Linguistic interference; Pedagogical intervention; Phonetic errors; Pronunciation difficulties.

Resumen

Objetivo: Este estudio analiza las dificultades de pronunciación de sonidos vocálicos específicos del inglés (/ɪ/, /ʌ/, /ʊ/, /ə/) entre estudiantes de sexto grado del colegio Nazareth Olaya de Barranquilla, Colombia. **Metodología:** Empleando un enfoque de métodos mixtos con un diseño de estudio de caso, la investigación involucró una muestra no probabilística de seis estudiantes. Los instrumentos de recolección de datos incluyeron observación participante, entrevistas, análisis de material audiovisual y encuestas. **Resultados:** se revelan problemas de articulación persistentes, debidos principalmente a las diferencias entre los sistemas vocálicos español e inglés. Se identificaron patrones de error comunes, como la confusión entre sonidos similares y la sustitución de fonemas ingleses por sus homólogos españoles. Además, se observó una articulación poco clara de ciertas vocales, lo que afecta negativamente a la competencia comunicativa de los alumnos en inglés. **Conclusiones:** El estudio destaca la falta de intervención pedagógica específica para abordar estos problemas, lo que contribuye a su persistencia a lo largo del proceso de aprendizaje. Las barreras fonéticas y la ausencia de recursos didácticos especializados en el aula agravan aún más el problema.

Palabras clave: Sonidos vocálicos del inglés; Interferencia lingüística; Intervención pedagógica; Errores fonéticos; Dificultades de pronunciación.

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Resumo

Objetivo: Este estudo analisa as dificuldades de pronúncia de sons de vogais específicas do inglês (/ɪ/, /ʌ/, /ʊ/, /ə/) entre os alunos do sexto ano da escola Nazareth Olaya em Barranquilla, Colômbia. **Metodologia:** Empregando uma abordagem de métodos mistos com um design de estudo de caso, a pesquisa envolveu uma amostra não probabilística de seis alunos. Os instrumentos de recolha de dados incluíram observação participante, entrevistas, análise de material audiovisual e inquéritos. **Resultados:** Foram revelados problemas persistentes de articulação, principalmente devido a diferenças entre os sistemas de vogais do espanhol e do inglês. Identificaram-se padrões de erro comuns, como a confusão entre sons semelhantes e a substituição de fonemas ingleses pelos seus homólogos espanhóis. Além disso, foi observada uma articulação pouco clara de certas vogais, o que afecta negativamente a competência comunicativa dos alunos em inglês. **Conclusões:** O estudo evidencia a falta de uma intervenção pedagógica específica para abordar estes problemas, o que contribui para a sua persistência ao longo do processo de aprendizagem. As barreiras fonéticas e a ausência de recursos didácticos especializados na sala de aula agravam ainda mais o problema.

Palavras-chave: Sons das vogais do inglês; Interferência linguística; Intervenção pedagógica; Erros fonéticos; Dificuldades de pronúncia.



INTRODUCTION

Learning English presents a significant challenge for Spanish-speaking students, particularly in the pronunciation of certain vowel sounds. Although both languages share the same alphabet, phonetic differences constitute a major barrier. According to Kenworthy (1987), intelligibility is a fundamental component of communication, and students who do not achieve accurate pronunciation often struggle to be understood. Among Spanish speakers, phonetic interference from their native language is common — especially since Spanish has only five vowel sounds, while English has up to twelve, as noted by Azkarai (2021) and Trujillo Aristizábal et al. (2018). For Spanish speakers, this disparity complicates English pronunciation—a challenge often underestimated due to the graphic similarity between the two alphabets.

Another contributing factor is the lack of emphasis on pronunciation. According to London (2014), students tend to focus more on grammar and vocabulary, neglecting essential components such as phonetics. This affects not only the clarity of their pronunciation but also the overall effectiveness of their communication. Bartolí Rigol (2012) emphasizes that correct pronunciation is crucial to avoid communicative misunderstandings, especially in second language learning. Despite its importance, pronunciation has historically been overlooked in English language teaching, with greater attention given to other linguistic components.

In Colombia, this challenge is further compounded by structural issues that hinder English language development. According to the 2022 Education First (EF) report, cited by Marín (2023), Colombia ranks 77th out of 111 countries in the global English proficiency index, with an average level of B1 based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Limited resources and insufficient educational infrastructure—such as at Nazareth Olaya School in Barranquilla—contribute to the low quality of English instruction, particularly in pronunciation. Marín (2023) notes that although some progress has been made in Colombia's proficiency index, significant challenges remain in oral production skills.

Methodologically, several studies have suggested strategies to improve pronunciation instruction. For example, Vásquez Castillo (2017) found that using Jazz Chants—a technique that combines rhythm and repetition—can be effective in teaching consonant phonemes, suggesting that musical and rhythmic elements can support students in producing challenging sounds. Trujillo et al. (2018) propose an approach that deliberately integrates phonetic and phonological skills to improve students' orthoepy (correct pronunciation). This is particularly relevant in institutions like Nazareth Olaya School, where current teaching methods need to be revised to address pronunciation difficulties in sixth-grade students more effectively.

Other studies highlight the effectiveness of audiovisual resources in pronunciation teaching. In this regard, Rodríguez Ludeña (2019) demonstrated that implementing educational videos significantly improved not only the fluency of intermediate-level students but also their grammatical competence. Audiovisual tools enable students to observe and listen simultaneously, which is crucial for grasping phonetic nuances that are often difficult to convey through theory alone.

This approach is especially valuable in resource-limited educational contexts, such as many public schools in Colombia, where exposure to native speakers and access to advanced technological tools are limited. Despite these constraints, videos have proven to be an effective alternative to compensate for the lack of materials and practical opportunities for pronunciation improvement. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that audiovisual tools may not fully address all phonetic challenges—particularly those resulting from fundamental differences between the phonological systems of Spanish and English.



Marrero Camacho (2016) and Guanopatin (2018) add to this discussion by suggesting that Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approaches are more effective than traditional grammar-based methods in improving pronunciation. They argue that CLIL, by combining subject-specific content with language learning, provides more opportunities for contextualized language use. Students learn pronunciation not in isolation, but through meaningful content, enhancing both retention and application. However, despite its proven effectiveness, Spanish phonological interference continues to affect the pronunciation of specific English vowel sounds.

This is particularly evident in the pronunciation of /ɪ/, /ʌ/, /ʊ/, and /ə/, which presents a specific challenge for sixth-grade students at Nazareth Olaya School in Barranquilla. While not unique to this institution, the issue is especially pronounced in settings where phonetics is not prioritized in the curriculum. According to London (2014), students who improve their pronunciation not only enhance their intelligibility but also gain confidence and motivation to participate more actively in class. Moreover, accurate pronunciation improves oral interaction, reduces misunderstandings, and enhances fluency—key elements for successful foreign language learning. These positive outcomes highlight the need for a more systematic integration of pronunciation instruction in the classroom.

Developing didactic strategies that integrate pronunciation instruction—especially for problematic vowel sounds—is essential. In this context, technological tools such as mobile apps and interactive platforms offering immediate feedback can provide new opportunities for autonomous practice. Similarly, incorporating playful activities like phonetic games and group pronunciation dynamics can make learning more engaging and less intimidating. Among these strategies, Jazz Chants stand out as a promising method. By combining rhythm and repetition with familiar musical patterns, they help students internalize pronunciation more naturally and enjoyably, facilitating the acquisition of difficult sounds.

Within this context, the central research question arises: What are the main difficulties in the pronunciation of the vowel sounds /ɪ/, /ʌ/, /ʊ/, and /ə/ among sixth-grade students at Nazareth Olaya School in Barranquilla, and how can these be addressed and improved in the classroom? The answer to this question may significantly enhance pronunciation teaching strategies in Colombian classrooms, equipping students with the tools they need to overcome phonetic barriers and achieve greater fluency and accuracy in English communication.

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach and Design: This study adopts a mixed-methods approach (Hernández Sampieri et al., 2014), aiming to understand the pronunciation difficulties related to the vowel sounds /ɪ/, /ʌ/, /ʊ/, and /ə/ among sixth-grade students at Nazareth Olaya School, and to explore the didactic strategies employed by teachers. It is framed as a descriptive case study (Hernández Sampieri et al., 2014; Ramos, 2015), focusing on the pronunciation challenges faced by EFL learners and examining recurring errors as well as how teachers address and manage them in the classroom.

Population and Sample: The sample consisted of six sixth-grade students, purposefully and non-randomly selected from a group of 20 students—three boys and three girls. The selection was based on the availability of participants in the only sixth-grade class at the institution.

Data Collection Techniques and Instruments: Participant observation was conducted in the classroom, where insights from both students and teachers were gathered. In addition, semi-structured interviews were carried out with students. Audiovisual materials were analyzed, and a survey was administered to assess pronunciation difficulties. The survey, comprising twelve multiple-choice questions, was validated by subject-matter experts, following the guidelines proposed by Hernández Sampieri (2014).

A pronunciation test was also implemented, including selected words that target each vowel sound in order to assess auditory discrimination and spelling accuracy related to /ɪ/, /ʌ/, /ʊ/, and /ə/. This test was reviewed and validated by two experts in applied linguistics to enhance its reliability and validity.

Video recordings of students’ oral performance were evaluated using a scale from 1 to 5 by a specialist with a master’s degree in English language teaching. Additionally, field journals were maintained to record classroom observations throughout the course of the study.

Data Collection and Analysis: The data collection process was divided into four phases. First, a contextual analysis was conducted through observation of students’ pronunciation challenges. In the second phase, students’ progress and teaching strategies were evaluated. The third phase involved the design and expert validation of a pronunciation test and questionnaire aimed at identifying phonological interference. In the final phase, the instruments were applied with the school’s authorization, and students’ responses were collected under conditions of strict confidentiality.

The data obtained were used to identify patterns of difficulty and to develop pedagogical recommendations. The analysis was guided by the principles of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), focusing on pronunciation issues related to the vowel sounds /ɪ/, /ʌ/, /ʊ/, and /ə/, which do not exist in the phonological system of Spanish—the students’ native language.

RESULTS

Outcome of Specific Objective 1: To identify the mispronunciation patterns of the vowel sounds /ɪ/, /ʌ/, /ʊ/, /ə/ among 6th-grade English students at Colegio Nazareth Olaya in Barranquilla, Colombia.

Based on the results obtained from the pronunciation assessment of English vowel sounds conducted with each student, it is possible to categorize their performance as reflected in Table 1.

Table 1.
Student Classification Based on Vowel Sound Accuracy

Student	Sound /ɪ/	Sound /ʌ/	Sound /ʊ/	Sound /ə/	General classification
Studentf01	Fair	Insufficient	Fair	Poor	Insufficient
Studentf02	Insufficient	Poor	Fair	Poor	Poor
Studentf03	Good	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair
Studentm01	Poor	Insufficient	Fair	Poor	Poor
Studentm02	Fair	Poor	Fair	Poor	Insufficient
Studentm03	Good	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair



Preliminary Observations: This qualitative analysis used the Oxford Dictionary as a reference standard to evaluate students' pronunciation. The evaluation focused on the accurate articulation of specific English vowel sounds, clarity of speech, and consistency in pronunciation.

Students were classified according to the following scale, based on a comparison with Standard American English pronunciation:

Excellent: Pronunciation was nearly identical to the target sound, reflecting deep understanding and precise articulation.

Good: Pronunciation was close to the expected standard, with only minor deviations that did not hinder comprehension.

Fair: Pronunciation was generally understandable but included inconsistencies that affected clarity.

Insufficient: Pronunciation showed significant challenges, affecting both intelligibility and sound quality.

Poor: Pronunciation was clearly incorrect or unintelligible.

The analysis revealed that most students struggled with at least one of the targeted vowel sounds (/i/, /Λ/, /ʊ/, /ə/). These difficulties were attributed to several factors, including phonetic interference from Spanish (their native language), limited practice or exposure to English, as well as potential issues related to the placement and articulation of the vocal organs.

Outcome of Specific Objective 2: To describe the pronunciation difficulties of the vowel sounds /i/, /Λ/, /ʊ/, /ə/ among 6th-grade English students at Colegio Nazareth Olaya in Barranquilla, Colombia.

The survey results provide a nuanced overview of students' self-reported proficiency levels.

In terms of pronunciation, most students indicated having received some form of instruction; however, there are notable discrepancies in how effective they perceived this instruction to be. For instance, students F03 and M02 demonstrated a high level of proficiency, reporting detailed instruction and expressing confidence in their pronunciation of the target sounds. Conversely, student F01 reflected a lower level of proficiency, citing a lack of specific instruction.

Regarding auditory discrimination, a range of abilities was observed among students. Some, such as F03 and M03, exhibited strong auditory discrimination skills in distinguishing between vowel sounds, while others, like F02 and M01, appeared to experience some confusion in this area.

With respect to graphemic representation (see Table 1), the findings indicate that while certain students had received detailed guidance on how to write specific sounds, others showed less clarity in this aspect.

These findings suggest that the didactic strategies employed by English teachers may differ in their perceived effectiveness among students. However, it is important to acknowledge that self-reported res-

ponses may not fully reflect the actual instructional practices received, as there is a possibility that some students provided inaccurate or incomplete information. Therefore, these results should be interpreted with caution and regarded as a preliminary basis for more in-depth research and direct classroom observation.

Table 2 presents a visual representation of students' self-perceived proficiency levels in terms of pronunciation, auditory discrimination, and graphemic representation of English vowel sounds.

Table 2.
Students' proficiency levels according to their self-perception in terms of pronunciation, auditory discrimination, and spelling.

Student	Pronunciation	Auditory discrimination	Spelling
F03	High	High	High
M02	High	Medium	High
M03	Medium	High	Medium
M01	Low	Medium	Low
F02	Low	Low	Low
F01	Low	Low	Low

In terms of percentages, the survey results reveal a varied distribution of proficiency levels among the students. As determined through the assessments (Table 2), approximately 50% of the participants reported having received some form of pronunciation instruction during their educational process. However, 33% of the students (F03 and M02) demonstrated a high level of mastery and confidence in their pronunciation. In contrast, the remaining 17%, represented by student F01, exhibited a lower level of performance compared to their peers, suggesting a discrepancy or a lack of specific instruction.

Moreover, as illustrated in Table 2, auditory discrimination emerges as a significant factor, with around 50% of students displaying diverse levels of ability in distinguishing vowel sounds. Notably, 33% of the group (F03 and M03) showed strong auditory discrimination skills when compared to their classmates. In contrast, the remaining 17% (F02 and M01) appeared to struggle with this skill, suggesting a degree of confusion in auditory differentiation.

With regard to spelling, and considering the three subskills evaluated, it was observed that 50% of the students had received detailed instruction on how to write and identify vowel sounds within English words. Likewise, 33% of the group (F03 and M02) also reported having been instructed in this area; however, they still exhibited certain deficiencies with specific vowel sounds, which is why they were included within this percentage. The final 17% of students demonstrated less clarity in their understanding of spelling conventions. Despite having reportedly received instruction, they appeared not to have assimilated the information effectively, highlighting the need for more targeted pedagogical support.

Outcome of Specific Objective 3: To analyze the didactic strategies found in the literature and those used by sixth-grade English teachers at Nazareth Olaya School in Barranquilla, Colombia, in relation to the pronunciation difficulties of the vowel sounds /ɪ/, /ʌ/, /ʊ/, and /ə/.

Students' progress was evaluated along with the pedagogical strategies employed, highlighting the use

of the communicative approach as the primary method. However, despite its implementation, difficulties in the pronunciation of English vowel sounds persisted. The communicative approach in learning English as a foreign language emphasizes practice and real-life use of the language, promoting effective communication through interactive and meaningful activities. It includes strategies such as the use of authentic materials, integration of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), and the creation of a learning environment that fosters interaction and motivation (Trujillo Aristizábal et al., 2018).

An analysis of the field journal results reveals that the observations provide a preliminary understanding of the challenges in the English teaching and learning process at Nazareth Olaya School. These observations offer initial insights into the pronunciation difficulties encountered by both students and teachers, as well as a noticeable lack of specific instruction in this area. Nevertheless, it is important to note that these findings represent only part of the broader picture and require further research and detailed analysis to fully understand the complexity of the situation (prospective of this study).

After reviewing the literature, the following are some of the most commonly used teaching strategies to address pronunciation difficulties of English vowel sounds among learners of English as a foreign language. It is recommended that these strategies be implemented by the educational institution participating in this study:

Auditory discrimination practice: Before producing the sounds, students must be able to distinguish them aurally. Teachers can provide auditory discrimination exercises where students identify and differentiate vowel sounds in specific contexts (Rodríguez Ludeña, 2019; Cock Martínez, 2022).

Modeling and feedback: Teachers should clearly model the correct pronunciation of each vowel sound and offer specific feedback on students' pronunciation errors. They can use verbal, visual, and gestural examples to reinforce accurate articulation (Quevedo-Seminario y Huamani-Meza, 2024; Rodríguez Ludeña, 2019).

Articulation exercises: Teachers can develop a range of articulation activities tailored to each vowel sound. These may include repetition drills, read-aloud tasks, and targeted practice with words and sentences containing the specific vowel (Salazar Parreño, 2013).

Differentiated feedback: It is essential that teachers provide feedback adapted to students' individual needs. Since some learners may struggle more with certain vowel sounds, teachers should adjust their strategies accordingly (Rodríguez Ludeña, 2019; Cock Martínez, 2022).

Contextualization: Teachers can embed pronunciation practice within meaningful and relevant contexts. This may involve practicing dialogues, role-plays, songs, and listening activities that reflect real-life situations where vowel sounds naturally occur (Salazar Parreño, 2013; Quevedo-Seminario y Huamani-Meza, 2024).

Recordings and multimedia resources: Using recordings of native speakers and multimedia tools can help students become familiar with authentic pronunciation in varied linguistic contexts. Teachers may use these recordings as models for students to imitate and practice (Gómez et al., 2020; Cock Martínez, 2022).

Ongoing practice and reinforcement: Improving pronunciation requires consistent practice and reinforcement. Teachers should provide regular opportunities for students to practice vowel sounds both inside and outside the classroom and offer positive reinforcement to motivate progress (Gómez et al., 2020; Salazar Parreño, 2013).

By implementing these didactic strategies effectively, teachers can support students in improving their pronunciation of English vowel sounds and developing clearer and more effective communication skills.

The proposed strategies include auditory discrimination activities, clear modeling followed by corrective feedback, and articulation exercises tailored to each vowel sound (Cock Martínez, 2022). The importance of differentiated feedback is also emphasized, along with the contextualization of practice and the use of multimedia resources such as recordings of native speakers.

These strategies, supported by the reviewed literature, aim to address pronunciation difficulties in learning English as a second language, especially among native Spanish speakers. At the international level, the connection between pronunciation and effective communication is widely acknowledged (Crystal, 2016). Furthermore, national and local strategies have been identified—such as the use of educational videos and playful pedagogical games—to strengthen oral comprehension in English (Rodríguez Ludeña, 2019; Acosta et al., 2024).

DISCUSSION

The results obtained from this study, aimed at determining the mispronunciation patterns of the vowel sounds /I/, /Λ/, /ʊ/, and /ə/ among sixth-grade students at Nazareth Olaya School, provide a clear perspective on the challenges students face when producing these sounds in English. Most students exhibited difficulties in correctly pronouncing one or more of the vowel sounds, which directly aligns with the specific objective of identifying and assessing such difficulties.

These findings are consistent with the reviewed literature and reflect the educational context of this institution. Previous research, such as the studies conducted by Marrero Camacho (2016; Guanopatin, 2018), has highlighted the importance of addressing pronunciation difficulties when learning English as a second language, particularly for students whose native language is Spanish. These studies have emphasized the need to implement effective strategies to improve students' pronunciation, considering the influence of native language phonetics, the lack of consistent practice and exposure to English, as well as issues related to vocal tract positioning and articulation (Brown, 2014; Orduz, 2012; Bartolí Rigol, 2012; Celce-Murcia 1996; 2010).

In light of these results and the discussion that emerged, it is recommended that English teachers at Nazareth Olaya School design specific activities to address the identified pronunciation difficulties related to English vowel sounds. It is essential to provide students with frequent opportunities for practice and feedback to enhance their pronunciation skills, alongside the implementation of pedagogical strategies that foster regular exposure to the language and promote an inclusive learning environment in which students feel comfortable practicing and improving their pronunciation (Girón Chávez et al., 2023; Acosta et al., 2024).



These recommendations are aligned with the general objective of this research, which seeks to strengthen students' comprehension and oral production in English as a foreign language at this educational institution.

Furthermore, the survey results offer a varied perspective on students' levels of proficiency in pronouncing English vowel sounds. This specific objective focused on identifying and describing difficulties in the pronunciation of the sounds /I/, /Λ/, /ʊ/, and /ə/. It was observed that most students reported having received some form of pronunciation instruction, although discrepancies were found in their perceptions of the effectiveness of such instruction. In Rodríguez Ludeña's study (2019), which also aimed to identify these difficulties—analyzing 1,700 vocalizations from a sample of 85 participants—errors in oral production were confirmed, and didactic proposals were recommended to improve the pronunciation of the aforementioned vowel sounds.

Regarding auditory discrimination, a range of skill levels was observed among students. While some demonstrated a high ability to distinguish between vowel sounds, others appeared to struggle with this skill.

The findings also show that some students received detailed instruction on how to spell certain sounds in English words, whereas others appeared less confident in this area. These results align with the reviewed literature (Camacho, 2016; Guanopatin, 2018; Garita Sánchez et al., 2019) and the educational context of Nazareth Olaya School in Barranquilla. Previous studies have emphasized the importance of addressing pronunciation difficulties in English language learning, especially for students whose native language is Spanish.

The studies by Marrero (Camacho, 2016; Guanopatin, 2018) addressed these challenges and stressed the need to develop effective strategies for improving students' pronunciation. Additionally, the findings are consistent with the educational context of Nazareth Olaya School in Barranquilla, where efforts are focused on enhancing students' comprehension and oral production in English.

The diversity of skill levels in auditory discrimination of vowel sounds also reflects the complexity of this aspect of English language learning, as discussed in the theoretical framework. The recommendations arising from these findings—such as designing targeted activities and promoting an inclusive learning environment—are aligned with the ongoing efforts to improve the teaching of English as a second language in this specific context (Girón Chávez et al., 2023; Fajardo Gómez & Sanabria Cifuentes, 2021). These findings and recommendations contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the pronunciation difficulties of vowel sounds among students at this school and offer valuable guidelines to enhance the quality of English language teaching in this educational setting.

Moreover, the field journals revealed the strategies used by English teachers at this school to address pronunciation difficulties related to the aforementioned vowel sounds. A lack of specific instruction in this area was noted for both students and teachers, highlighting an opportunity for improvement in the English teaching and learning process within this context.

This analysis underscores the importance of implementing specific and contextualized strategies to improve the pronunciation of vowel sounds in the educational environment of this institution, thereby contributing to the advancement of English as a second language.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions drawn from this research reveal the complexity and diversity of the challenges faced by Spanish-speaking students in learning the pronunciation and auditory differentiation of English vowel sounds. From discrepancies in the quality of instruction to variability in students' auditory discrimination skills, these findings underscore the urgent need for specific and contextualized interventions in the teaching-learning process of English as a foreign language. In this regard, the recommendations proposed aim to address these difficulties and promote more effective and equitable language development among Spanish-speaking students in Colombia.

Need for Specific Intervention: The diversity of proficiency levels among students in the pronunciation, auditory differentiation, and spelling of English vowel sounds (/I/, /Λ/, /ʊ/, /ə/) highlights the need for specific interventions to enhance phonetic competence in English as a foreign language. These interventions should address individual differences and the learning needs of each student.

Variation in Teaching Quality: The discrepancy in the quality and clarity of instruction provided by English teachers reveals the importance of evaluating and improving the teaching strategies used in the classroom. It is essential that all students receive detailed and effective instruction on the production of specific vowel sounds to ensure equitable and high-quality learning.

Importance of Auditory Discrimination: The diversity in students' auditory discrimination skills suggests that instruction may not have been fully effective in all cases. Beyond pronunciation, students' ability to distinguish between English vowel sounds is crucial for effective communication. Therefore, this skill must be comprehensively addressed in the teaching-learning process.

Recommendations: The following recommendations emerge in response to the conclusions drawn from a thorough analysis of the difficulties in pronunciation and auditory differentiation of English vowel sounds among Spanish-speaking students. These recommendations are designed to address the gaps identified in the teaching and learning of English phonetics, with the goal of improving students' phonetic and linguistic competence within an increasingly globalized and diverse Colombian educational context.

Standardization of Instruction: It is recommended to establish clear and consistent standards for teaching English pronunciation, ensuring that all students receive high-quality and coherent instruction. This can be achieved through the implementation of teacher training programs, the development of standardized instructional materials, and regular evaluation of the effectiveness of pedagogical practices.

Development of Auditory Skills: It is essential to implement specific programs designed to improve students' ability to audibly distinguish English vowel sounds. These programs can include auditory discrimination activities, sound identification practice, and active listening exercises in authentic contexts.

Use of Technological Resources: Integrating technological resources into the classroom—such as interactive apps, voice recognition software, and online learning platforms—can be highly beneficial for improving students' pronunciation and auditory differentiation. These resources provide additional opportunities for self-directed practice and immediate feedback.

Ongoing Teacher Training: English teachers should receive continuous training in effective pedagogy.



gical strategies for teaching pronunciation and developing auditory skills. This training may include workshops, online courses, collaborative study groups, and observation of expert teaching practices.

Differentiated Feedback: Teachers are encouraged to provide differentiated and personalized feedback to students regarding their pronunciation and auditory discrimination. This can include identifying specific areas for improvement, offering concrete examples, and providing individualized strategies for developing phonetic skills.

Contextualization of Content: It is essential to contextualize pronunciation and auditory differentiation exercises within real-life situations using authentic and relevant materials. By linking phonetic learning to authentic communicative contexts, students can develop practical language skills applicable in a variety of situations.

These recommendations are designed to improve the phonetic competence of Spanish-speaking students in English as a foreign language, thereby contributing to more effective language development within the Colombian educational context and preparing students for successful communication in a globalized world.

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