PDP:

An Approach to Oral-Text Scaffolding

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By Stella Maris Palavecino

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Research Paper

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An Approach to Oral-Text Scaffolding

Tutor: Magister Roxana Basso

This paper is fondly dedicated to the students and teachers who have contributed to this research, especially to my dear Phonetics tutor, Professor Roxana Basso and my mentor in Discourse Analysis, Professor Cecilia Pfister.

Abstract

Speaking consists of making meaning, using more than single words. These words are bound together into phrases, groups, clauses, clause complexes, and paragraphs which make whole texts, and their pronunciation affects each other to make meaning. At the moment of speaking, the choice between full or reduced forms depends upon the role of the words in an utterance. If it is simply that of connecting words or clauses, the word is usually pronounced in its weak form, but if the speaker wants to draw attention to it, it is generally pronounced in the strong form. Most phoneticians agree that speakers of Spanish of its River Plate variety share a consistent difficulty when dealing with these words. This research paper aims at finding evidence as to whether discourse resources can shed some light on the distinction between weak and strong forms, a distinction which could offer relief to struggling EFL students, or at least open new doors to a more thorough understanding in the field. The present exploration postulates the hypothesis that an awareness of the cohesive interplay between grammatical and content words may act as a scaffolding platform to the learning of weak and strong forms. A small-scale exploration conducted in the context of an English Phonetics I course at a Buenos Aires school of education made it possible to conclude that the strategies that the learners gained as they worked on the cohesive elements of oral discourse empowered them to account for weak and strong forms efficiently, which seems to show that awareness of this particular issue was indeed gained. They asserted that this 'new tool' was always at hand when they could not remember the phonetic restrictions. What is more, they asserted that, in an attempt to work on the texture of orality, they did notice the meaningful function of reduced and full forms. The data collected in this study clearly showed that a new didactic tool, which the researcher has taken leave to call PDP (Phonetics/Discourse/Pedagogy) might act as a scaffolding-aiding procedure that might constitute a new approach to the successful teaching of this area of Phonetics.

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Introduction

Speaking consists of making meaning, using more than single words. These words are bound together into phrases, groups, clauses, clause complexes, and paragraphs which make whole texts: their pronunciations affect each other to make meaning (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). Such words have an onset, a peak and a coda; and so do clauses as they become part of real discourse (Cruttenden, 2001). This can be illustrated in the following examples:

Example 1

Once upon a time *there* was a little girl called Goldilocks.

/ˈwʌns əpɒn ə ˈtaɪm/ ðə wəz ə ˈlɪtl ɡɜːl ˈkɔːld ˈɡəʊdɪlɒks/

Example 2

Goldilocks is over *there*.
/ ˈɡəʊdɪlɒks ɪz əʊvə ˈðeə/

In these broadly transcribed utterances, the homograph 'there*'* is pronounced with a weak [1]form in *Example 1* and with a strong form in *Example 2*. Even though, we can account for the phonetic role of these words to the grammatical functions, these examples can show that, in order to create the 'music' or rhythm of an utterance, certain words have their own weak and strong forms, and this is affected by the text they are

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[1] As a general rule, the so-called function, weak or grammatical words are pronounced without prominence because their main role is to hang the text together. They include prepositions, conjunctions, pronouns, determiners, auxiliaries, and modal verbs. Conversely, the so called lexical, strong or content words are made strong or prominent because they carry the meaning of the utterance. They include verbs, adjectives, nouns and adverbs

bound to. An analogy can be made between speech, rhythm, and music. Since linguistic "rhythm" refers to the way full or reduced forms of language is organized in speaking time, musical "rhythm" refers to the way certain notes stand out from others which are not in musical sequence. When music is being played, musicians choose which musical notes should stand out to create a certain melody. At the moment of speaking, the choice between full or reduced forms depends upon the role of the words in an utterance. If it is simply that of connecting words or clauses, the word is usually pronounced in its weak form, but if the speaker wants to draw attention to it, it is generally pronounced in the strong form.

Most phoneticians agree that River Plate Spanish speaking learners share a consistent difficulty when dealing with these words. However, these forms are crucial not only to the understanding of connected speech but also to the intelligibility of the language that Spanish speaking learners produce. This special feature of Phonetics has been studied in depth by many phoneticians. Nevertheless, River Plate students of English as a foreign language find this feature a great challenge. Therefore, this research paper aims at finding evidence as to whether discourse resources can shed some light on the distinction between weak and strong forms, a distinction which could offer relief to struggling EFL students, or at least open new doors to a more thorough understanding in the field.

Hypothesis

The present exploration is informed by the following hypothesis:

 The awareness of the cohesive interplay between grammatical and content words acts as a scaffolding to the learning of weak and strong forms.

PART I

The PDP approach and its background theory

Following a brief description of the main characteristics of this new approach, this section will discuss the extent to which the analysis of oral texts may be calibrated to explore three different dimensions: Phonetics, Discourse and Pedagogy (PDP).

1.- The Phonetics perspective

Most authors assert that weak and strong forms are an important feature of English pronunciation (Celce Murcia, 1996). If students want to acquire an efficient level of oral performance, as is the case of future teachers of English, they must be aware of this essential feature, since failure to produce or perceive them will affect English pronunciation and even lead to misunderstanding.

From a Phonetics-based perspective, the focus of this study has been a recurring issue among phoneticians, who agree that perceiving and producing weak forms can cause particular difficulties to learners of English. Experts usually focus on the number of grammatical words which may be found in their reduced or strong forms, and which cause considerable difficulty when they are perceived or produced in oral texts. A brief account of the distinctive features of the discoveries of the Phonetic experts is outlined below.

To begin with, Hector Ortiz Lira (1997), in his study of this field of Phonetics, groups a number of common grammatical words that are pronounced in mainly two different ways: their strong and weak forms. The above author states that this is an essential feature of English pronunciation because it is not only vital for fluent speech but also

important for keeping the natural rhythm of the English language. Ortiz Lira highlights that failure to pronounce weak forms in appropriate contexts will result in a foreign accent, wrong emphasis or contrast, or excessive formality. Moreover, he discusses the main difficulties that speakers of English as a foreign language find in this feature of the English phonetic system, and considers that the weakening of the grammatical items is not so obvious because this feature of Phonetics does not exist in Spanish.

In contrast, Gimson, in his book *Pronunciation of English* (2001)*, refers to this topic as 'unaccented or weak forms', with an emphasis on a gradation, which means "reduction of the length of sounds, obscuration of vowels towards, and the elision of vowels and consonants" (p 234). He states that this form is the most commonly used, as opposed to the *Accented* or *Strong* form, applied only in certain circumstances or when the elements are used in isolation. He also makes the observation that the faster a sentence is delivered, the more notable the reduction and obscuration of the weak forms, giving a list of examples to illustrate his point. The weak form, being the most commonly used —according to Gimson— should be considered by foreign learners of English to be the expected pronunciation, though attention should be paid, naturally, to the few occasions on which the strong form is to be used.

Similarly, Lecumberri and Maidment (2000) provide a number of cases in which weak and strong forms are used in RP (Received Pronunciation) English and emphasize that when words are in isolation, that is to say, are decontextualised, they are stressed in a way that differs from their appearance in connected speech.

On a note not too dissimilar, Paul Tench elaborates on this issue in his book *Transcribing the sounds of English* (2011). It is important to mention that although the author attempts to highlight the effects of discourse in the field of pronunciation, he still concentrates on the grammatical items of utterances and gives a detailed explanation of all the cases used in RP through illustrative examples.

It is undeniable that studying all the cases in which functional words may vary in pronunciation is an essential feature during the first year of teacher training in English;

however, students lack previous knowledge and do not know how to 'wage war on this territory'. Understanding the enemy —as they often regard this field of battle at the very beginning— is essential to a sure victory. Therefore, discourse-related theories, in particular the cohesive theory of Mark Halliday, can act as a scaffolding[2] (Bruner and Ross, 1976, as cited in Williams, 2004) to trigger the Zone of Proximal Development[3] (Vygotski, 1978, as cited in Williams, 2004), between the students' initial linguistic structure and the cases most phoneticians present related to this the particular case of items being weakened.

2.- The Discourse perspective

2.1.- Text and texture

From a discoursal perspective, the spoken language has a number of features that are not usually present in the written language. When speakers create a text, they produce a meaningful message shaped by the tools that reduced and strong forms provide (as well as other features such as body language, which are not the main concern of this paper). That shape is decoded by hearers. This shape or 'texture' is what distinguishes an oral or written succession of words from a 'text'. For the purpose of the present study, the word 'text' –in its discoursal sense— is taken to refer to any passage, spoken or written, of whatever length, that forms a unified meaningful whole (Halliday and Hasan, 1997, as cited in Eggins, 2004).

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[2] *Scaffolding Theory* was first introduced in the late 1950s by Jerome Bruner, a cognitive psychologist. He used the term to describe young children's oral language acquisition. Helped by their parents when they first start learning to speak, young children are provided with instinctive structures to learn a language. Bed-time stories and read alouds are classic examples (Daniels, 1994). Wood, Bruner, and Ross's (1976) idea of scaffolding parallels the work of Vygotsky. They described scaffolding as the support given to a younger learner by an older, more experienced adult.

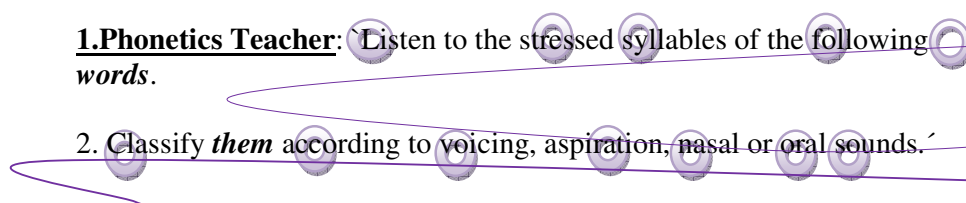[3] Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist, introduced the concept of a zone of proximal development (ZPD), which is the notional gap between a.) the learner's current developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving ability and b.) the learner's potential level of development as determined by the ability to solve problems under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers

If a segment of English containing more than one sentence is perceived as a text, there will be certain linguistic features present in that passage which can be identified as contributing to its total unity and to giving texture, as is shown below:

In describing how a text forms a unified whole, Halliday and Hasan (1976/2001) introduce the concept of `Texture´. Weak and Strong Forms are essential features to create the texture of oral texts. This is illustrated in *Example 3*.

Example 3

Imagine a phonetics teacher talking to her class:

1.Phonetics Teacher: `Listen to the stressed syllables of the following *words*.

2. Classify *them* according to voicing, aspiration, nasal or oral sounds.´

Metaphorically speaking, a text can be compared to a "beaded necklace". The "beads" are the content words, and the thread that joins one bead to the next, the grammatical words or weak forms, as is shown above. A pair of cohesively related items stands for every single bead and the hidden thread that holds the beads together in a necklace. The thread that links the beads is not visible, the same way as the weak forms in an utterance may be almost inaudible. However, this thread is as important as the beads to hold the necklace together as a unified whole, as is shown in *Example 3.*

In order to construct a unified whole, each clause should be linked to the next one by what I may take leave to call a "beaded tie". This is shown in *Example 3*: Line 1 has five beads, but only one of these beads contributes to the texture of orality by linking it to Line 2. The syllables in bold type form the tie that holds all the beads in Lines 1 and 2 together to create the texture of English sounds. The listener needs to recover this connection to construe meaning. This means that speakers and listeners should be aware of a certain number of words which have at least two possible pronunciations: a full

form with a strong vowel (the beads) and a reduced form with a weak vowel (the thread).

Cohesive ties in this paper are based on the taxonomy of Halliday and Hasan (1997, as cited in Eggins, 2004), which explores the bearing of cohesion on oral texts.

2.2.- The choice of cohesion suggested for this paper

The term *cohesion* was coined by Halliday in 1964. It occurs when the interpretation of one element is dependent upon another one in the text. It plays a special role in the creation of texts because it can provide a continuity that exists between one part of a text and another. Readers and listeners can rely on the continuity provided by cohesion and coherence to fill in missing information, which is not present in the text, but which is necessary to render it interpretable. Halliday points out that it is the underlying semantic relation that actually has the cohesive power, rather than the specific cohesive marker. This relation creates the texture of both written and oral texts.

Halliday and Hasan (1985, as cited by Thornbury, 2006) suggest that texture involves the interaction of two components: *coherence*, or the text's relationship to its extra-textual context, and *cohesion*, the way the elements within an oral text bind together as a unified whole. The result of the interaction of these two dimensions is a piece of language which uses linguistic resources in a meaningful way. This means that a text can be bound by means of different cohesive ties, namely *reference*, *substitution*, *ellipsis* and *conjunction*. This paper mostly focuses on the EFL learner's zone of proximal development (Vygotski, 1978), rather than on a commitment to a more formal study of weak and strong forms. Therefore, the following elements taxonomised by Halliday and Hasan (1985, as cited by Thornbury, 2006) are to be examined, in an attempt to focus on their effect on oral texts:

➢ *Anaphoric and Cataphoric Reference,*

➢ *Demonstrative Reference: Deixis,*

➢ *Endophoric and Exophoric Reference,*

2.2.1.- Anaphoric and cataphoric reference

Returning to the discussion in *Example 3,* it is clear that the word *them* in the second clause refers back to *words*, or is anaphoric to *words* in the first sentence, that is, it functions as *Pronominal Substitution with Anaphoric Reference*. This anaphoric function of *them* gives cohesion to the two clauses, so that speakers interpret both utterances as a whole, or rather, as text. It could be affirmed that the texture of the utterance is provided by the cohesive relation that exists between *them* and *words*.

Hence, it may be stated that when a functional word serves an anaphoric function with respect to a content word that can be recovered within the text, it is reduced to a weak form unless it is emphasized by the speaker. This can be compared with *cataphoric reference*, which points to a word that refers to another later in the text. In this case, the speaker needs to look forward to understand meaning as illustrated in the following example:

Example 4

When he arrived, John noticed that the door was open.

/ˈwen hi əˈraɪvd/ ˈdʒɒn ˈnəʊtɪs ðət ðə ˈdɔː wəz ˈəʊpn/

If that is the case, it is said to be functioning as *cataphoric* reference or p*ronominal substitution with cataphoric reference.* Reference can also be related to names or

vocatives, as shown at the beginning of the following story: 'The Little Old Lady Who Was Not Afraid of Anything' (1986) by Linda Williams.

Example 5

> Narrator 1: Once upon a time, there was a little old lady who was not afraid of anything! One windy afternoon the little old lady left her cottage and went for a walk in the forest to collect herbs and spices, nuts and seeds. She walked so long and so far that it started to get dark. There was only a sliver of moon shining through the night. The little old lady started to walk home. Suddenly she stopped! Right in the middle of the path were two big shoes. And the shoes went CLOMP CLOMP.
>
> Old Lady: Get out of my way, **you two big shoes**! I'm not afraid of you.
>
> /get ˈaʊt əv maɪ ˈweɪ / ˈjuːˈtuː / ˈbɪg ˈʃuːz/
>
> On she walked down the path. But behind her she could hear : Two shoes go CLOMP, CLOMP.

What this structure has in common with reference is that the subject (the vocative head: *You*) is referential, while the predicate (the subsequent noun phrase: *Big Shoes*) is identificational. A description is offered by the Nominal Group as identificational, on the basis of shared knowledge including the identity of big shoes. By using the pronoun *You*, the speaker is signalling that, in this linguistic context, s/he intends and hopes that the identification will be successful. I can claim that this accounts for the use of a strong pronominal form. However, vocatives do not predicate, so the head is not cataphoric, but *deictic*, which will be developed below.

2.2.2.- Demonstrative reference: deixis

Another form of reference is 'Demonstrative Reference', which is a form of verbal pointing. They are adverbials such as *here, there, now* and *then*; participants such as *this, that, these,* and *those* and the neutral *the* or *a/an*. In discourse, namely Systemic Functional Linguistics, henceforth SFL, these determiners belong to a class of experiential function known as 'deixis' or 'verbal pointing'. The focus will be set now on the analysis of deictic items which include: demonstrative reference: *there and that* and neutral demonstrative reference *the* and *a/an.*

Example 6

> We are in a car approaching Little Falls, Mnn, USA.
>
> Speaker 1**:** *There* is Little Falls, that is *the* place to live.
>
> /ˈðeər ɪz ˈlɪtl ˈfɔːlz/ ˈðæt ɪz ˈðiː ˈpleɪs tə ˈlɪv ɪn/

The useful notion of pointing is related to a word, the determination of whose referent is dependent on the context in which it is said or written. It is similar to pointing to the context realized through a strong form in speech. In *Example 6*, *there, that*, and *the* are deictic because the determination of their referents depends on who says that utterance, where, when, and about whom it is said. It is shown that a discourse-based approach can provide EFL speakers with tools to recognize grammatical words functioning as deictic as full forms.

2.2.3.- Endophoric and exophoric reference

Continuing with the idea of cohesion, there are certain items in every language which have the property of reference, which, as is widely known, indeed affects functional words. It includes personal, demonstratives, and comparatives. One example of each of the first two categories, which is the focus of this paper, is illustrated below:

Example 7

> Once upon a time there were **three little pigs** and the time came for them to leave home and seek their fortunes. Before **they** left, their mother told them ".Whatever you do , do it the best that you can because that's the way to get along in the world¨.

Example 8

> The wolf ran away from **the little pig´s house** and he never went **there** again
>
> /ðə ˈwʊlf /ˈræn əweɪ frəm ðə ˈlɪtl pɪgz ˈhaʊs /ən hi nevə ˈwent ˈðeər əˈgen/

In the specific sense in which personal and demonstrative reference is being used in the above examples, they make reference to something else for their interpretation. In *Example 7* , *they* refers to *three little pigs*; in *Example 8, there* refers to *the little pig's house.* That is to say that *they* is a personal referent that refers to *three little pigs,* and *there* is a demonstrative referent that refers to *the little pig's house.* What characterizes this particular type of cohesion is that specific information can be retrieved, either from somewhere in the text, that is to say 'endophorically', or from the co-text or context of situation outside the text, that is to say, 'exophorically'. In short, speakers create texture by providing cohesive ties between utterances. The listener has to look for the clues the speaker provides, either endophorically or exophorically.

Returning to the central focus of this paper, that is, whether cohesive clues can help text receivers or text producers to respectively produce or perceive full or reduced forms, it is necessary to mention that 'exophoric reference' takes the strong form of the

demonstrative, as is shown in *Example 8*. The key issue is that the text does not make the location explicit. It cannot be retrieved from the text although the place is not well-known to those who are present in the conversation. It has been suggested, in fact, that reference to the context of situation is prior to reference to another item within the text. Endophoric reference, such as shown in *Example 7* does not function in the same way as if it was a case of pronominal substitution with anaphoric reference, as explained in 2.2.1.

A considerable amount of exophoric reference is characteristic of the language of children's peer groups. When children interact with each other —especially young ones— they do so through constant reference to things:

Example 9

Child: Look at that. /ˈlʊk ət ˈðæt/

Mom: The bear? /ðə ˈbeə

Child: No, that /ˈnəʊ/ ˈðæt/

Mom: That what? /ðæt ˈwɒt/

Child: That big thing that dispenses pops /ðæt ˈbɪg θɪŋ ðət dɪsˈpensɪz ˈpɒps/

Mom: It´s vending machine! /ɪts ə ˈvendɪŋ məʃiːn/

It did not occur to the child that he could point to the object in question. This is a limitation that is characteristic of the five year old children's phase of interaction. Exophoric reference is one form of context-dependence, since, without the context, text receivers cannot interpret what is being said. What is essential to every instance of reference —whether endophoric or exophoric— is that a presupposition must be satisfied; the object referred to has to be identifiable in order to avoid ambiguity. Referential elements

create cohesion if they are within the text; they do not if they are part of the context of situation.

In spoken or written English, verbal activity is closely interwoven with non-verbal activity. That is the reason why it is quite common for third-person forms to function exophorically. Yet, sometimes the hearer is constrained to demand explicit identifiaction, as shown below:

Example 10

Speaker 1: There they are /ˈðeə ðeɪ ˈɑː/

Speaker 2: Who are they? /ˈhuː ˈɑː ðeɪ/

In brief, the relations that have been examined through the examples given create a semantically cohesive interplay between the referential elements to constitute an oral text. From a phonetic perspective, the list of weak and strong forms accounts for their use.

From a discoursal perspective, full or reduced forms can be justified by means of cohesive ties. It may be stated that it may be important to bring together the traditional phonetics-based perspective with a discourse-based approach in the Phonetics class, to create a new scaffold that might enable novice learners of the English phonetic system to bridge the gap between their intuitive use of weak and strong forms and the corpus of Phonetics theory. This can be undertaken to such an extent that teaching cohesive devices may hopefully be taken onboard the Phonetics course design to facilitate the learners' first encounters with the texture of oral texts.

PART II

Fieldwork in action

1.- Research universe

The population investigated was made up of one male and nine female students, all around 25 years old, who participated on a voluntary basis. They were attending a Phonetics I course at Escuela Normal Superior en Lenguas Vivas 'Sofia Broken Spangenberg', as part of their training to become EFL teachers. They were all from Buenos Aires (a monolingual community) and Spanish was their mother tongue.

2.- Method

In this section, the design and methodology used to conduct the fieldwork are explained.

As there are two sides to teaching pronunciation, that is, the teaching of productive skills and the teaching of receptive skills (Kelly, 2000), this research describes classroom activities that have been developed to assess learners' command of the perception and production of strong and weak forms.

Three sessions were designed to conduct this fieldwork. The first one included perceptive activities, the second one productive, and the last one both perceptive and productive activities (See Appendices I and II).

It should be important to note that these three sessions were conducted during class time, using the interactive board as a resource for perceptive tasks and the laboratory for the productive ones. The choice of these resources was meant ensure validity through high-quality recorded material in the listening phase as well as in the productive stage.

It is important to mention that the practice took place after the trainees had been taught weak and strong forms following a traditional phonetic approach to this, as is customary at the start of most courses in Phonetics. The need to create the new learning strategy presented in this survey stems from the recurrent difficulties the learners encounter when resolving the phonetic restrictions to the use of grammatical forms. The analysis of classroom tasks is introduced in the next section.

3. - Analysis of classroom tasks

During the three sessions of this field research, two stories and three nursery rhymes were selected to introduce and practise weak and strong forms. This choice had a twofold purpose: on the one hand, the students were working with classroom material that may be handy for the everyday lessons that they might themselves have to deliver in a practicum environment, and on the other, they are preparing themselves to become future storytellers, as part of their future professional practice. In that way, Phonetics lessons may come alive in their teaching practice. The three sessions developed as follows:

Session 1: Perception of gradation

The lesson began with the presentation of a game, which tested the learners' use of weak forms. By means of this game, students were able to infer the rationale behind this particular topic. This simple exercise made a very important point about how English is

spoken. By completing this "masked" test, the students inferred the typical stress-timedness that characterises the English language, as against many other languages, which are considered syllabic (See the Pre-task in Appendix I).

During classroom Task 2, students read a nursery rhyme identifying the referent items by drawing cohesive ties, which justified the use of either weak or strong forms. They were encouraged to listen to the storyteller, comparing and contrasting their reading with the recorded version.

After that, the students transcribed the text. The phonetic transcriptions were provided under each sentence. Looking back on the classroom tasks done through a final reflection allowed the students to check whether they had acquired a new learning strategy that justified the use of full or reduced forms of grammatical words with reference to pronominal substitution with anaphoric reference.

Session 2: Production of storytelling

The second lesson began with the telling of the first part of 'The Lady Who Was not Afraid of Any Thing'. The students surveyed recognized pronominal substitution with anaphoric reference and were introduced to pronominal substitution with cataphoric reference, as shown in Task 2 (see Appendix I). Two lexical items that the Lady encounters introduced discoursal reference. The class was also invited to predict how the story continued and used full or reduced cohesive ties. Although it was extremely difficult for the students to produce a story of their own, they were able to do so because the story included lexical items at different times, which were accompanied by their onomatopoeic words such as ¨Clomp, Clomp¨ and structural parallelism such as ¨Get out of my way¨. This provided a framework to develop their stories.

Towards the end, the class had fun by telling their own versions of the story. By means of the interactive board, Justin Bieber was shown telling the story of 'The Lady Who Was not Afraid of Any Thing'. This served the purpose of showing a storytelling model, which probably raised the learners' motivation.

Session 3: Reading aloud

The third session challenged the students to change the meanings of utterances through the use of weak and strong forms, which drew the students' attention to the importance of this feature of English in producing and construing meaning. This activity fostered the accommodation of the recently acquired strategy into the learners' schema structure.

Next, the students were invited to read aloud the story 'The Cat in the Hat' by Dr Seuss. They were actively engaged in a game in which they changed the weak forms into strong forms of demonstratives, and the other way around. This procedure provided the act of reading aloud with a natural and suitable environment.

The final reflection on the overall learning process helped the students evaluate this new approach to this area of Phonetics.

4.- Discussion

It is not surprising that the students were indeed able to perceive the cohesive ties that made up the texture of oral texts in the nursery rhyme introduced in Task 1. They managed to do so by linking referent words to pronouns. This procedure helped them become aware of the discoursal rationale behind the use of the full and reduced forms that are found in pronominal substitutions with anaphoric reference. At the end, the students reflected on their learning process and concluded that this new learning strategy did help them understand the use of full and reduced grammatical words to construct and construe meaning.

During the second session, the tasks required the students not only to notice but also to produce reduced and strong forms in the context of a story for children. First, they read part of the story, paying special attention to the use of full and reduced forms of grammatical words when they implied a cataphoric reference with pronominal substitution function. This awareness-raising activity focused the students' attention on

the pronunciation of the pronouns in the segments of a story, helping them to perceive the different forms in cohesive ties. Second, they listened to each other's contribution to the story and compared and contrasted their predictions with the real ending. Finally, they practised storytelling in front of an audience, which was their own class, comparing and contrasting the sounds they produced. These activities enabled the students to ascertain whether they were able to perceive the full or reduced forms of pronominal substitution in anaphoric or cataphoric reference. However, it was perceived that they still needed further practice to gain a complete command of gradation.

The last session was introduced to expand the discoursal approach to the notion of cohesive ties as related to neutral demonstrative reference (the and a / an) and selective demonstrative reference *(that / there)*.

The game presented in Task 1 led the students to become aware of the importance of creating rhythm. They realized that even though the grammar of the utterance was the same in every identical sentence, the power of full or reduced forms could change the meaning of an utterance (see Appendix I). Having that in mind, it was not difficult for them to recognize the use of demonstrative reference (*This* and *That*) and neutral demonstrative reference (*the* and *a*) in the story 'The Cat In The Hat'. They reflected on the reasons why these words are made prominent in the text when their function is deictic or pointing to a referent item which is either endophoric or anaphoric.

In their final reflection, the students concluded that there are good reasons to explore this topic in their course in Phonetics. Firstly, this knowledge might help them improve their production of spoken English. It might make them move beyond the influence of Rio de la Plata Spanish rhythm. Secondly, knowing the weak and strong forms improved their comprehension of English as is spoken by fluent speakers, and almost an undeniable fact. However, this particular task proved hard, due to the number of restrictions they needed, particularly as they lack the experience of resolving cohesion. Therefore, they unanimously agreed, in their final reflection, that acquiring this area of Phonetics from a discoursal perspective can be central to building a foundation to acquire the restrictions explained by phoneticians concerning this particular issue. (See

'Full Script of The Interview' in Appendix IV, or see References, for the route to the vod-cast of 'The Interview').

The most important contribution was discovered by the students in the course of their final reflections, and could be inferred from the interviews. They recognized the need to use this approach prior to the traditional phonetics-based strategies. In addition, it was confirmed that students perceived that they now had more tools to detect and produce the use of reduced or full forms of grammatical words when dealing with oral texts. Additionally, it was clear that the discourse approach indeed aided their work on both the perception and the production of oral texts in general.

5.- Instruments of data Collection

The researcher used two types of investigation processes: qualitative and quantitative; and three types of instruments for data collection: the interview, the questionnaire and the survey.

The qualitative research included an interview as a data gathering means, and the quantitative part included a questionnaire and a survey. Both types of research observations and their instruments provided the phonetics class with different ways of operationalizing and measuring the new theoretical constructs and practical concepts.

5.1.- Results and analysis of the interviews

The interview is probably the most traditional research method. It is usually accurate because it allows the researcher to ascertain the reliability of the question in real time, and clarifying possible uncertainties to the person being interviewed, as is shown in the full script of the interview (see Appendix IV).

In the present research, there were two sessions of interviews with the surveyed population. Half of the class was interviewed in the first one, and the other half in the second one. The interviews are available online (http: //www.goear.com/ listen/b1f82f7/ elv-sofia-b-de-spangenberg-phonetics-i-). Additionally, the types of questions used were open, as this format allowed the students to speak freely and make their own choices (the instrument is available in Appendix III).

The interview showed a solid majority of the students surveyed perceived that it was possible for them to build a foundation for the use of weak and strong forms from a perspective which was not purely Phonetics-grounded, but which was more clearly focused on communication. This became apparent when one of the interviewed students said: "*When I am doing a transcription and can't remember the list of weak and strong forms* (sic)*, now I can use these new discourse tools. It really helps*". Another student mentioned that this knowledge acted as a scaffolding structure, preparing them to understand a more profound study in this field, but emphasized that both perspectives are important to fully understand this area of Phonetics. This could be inferred by the following assertion: *"I think both approaches should be studied. The Discourse approach helps us reason what we do when we talk, read or transcribe a text, and the Phonetics approach provides us with the rules that define what we do when we talk, read or transcribe a text. But when you are in the middle of a task, sometimes, rules do not come to your mind easily. So, we have now more tools"*.

Interestingly, the researcher could witness that all the students but one stated that this discourse based approach could indeed be regarded as a valuable tool to help learners acquire the weak and strong form of grammatical words more clearly. It was clear that the respondents' perception of this didactic instrument echoed the primal postulation that informed this study: *The awareness of the cohesive interplay between grammatical and content words acts as a scaffolding to the learning of weak and strong forms*.

## 5.2.- Results and analysis of the questionnaire

Multiple choice questions were chosen for this section. They allowed for many different answers (including "*I don't know*") to be assessed. The main strength of this type of research tool is that forms are simple to fill in and the answers can be checked and quantified with relative ease.

The collection of this data developed as follows: After completing sessions 1 and 2, the students were asked to complete a questionnaire which aimed at establishing whether they could recognize the influence of reference in this field of phonetics (see the questionnaire in Appendix III). The questionnaires yielded the following results:

Question 1

Here the students were asked to elaborate on the following statement: "When a grammatical word is functioning as a pronominal substitution with anaphoric reference, it is reduced to a weak form". The respondents could agree, disagree or only partly agree. The result is shown in Graphic 1:

Graphic 1
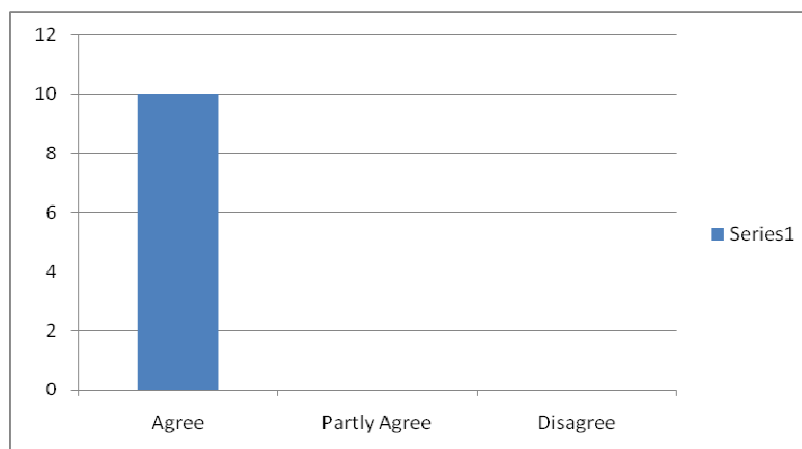
The graphic shows that 100% of students agreed that, when a grammatical word is functioning as a pronominal substitution with anaphoric reference, it is reduced to a weak form. This seemed to show that students succeeded in establishing a link between oral texture and cohesive ties.

Question 2

Again, the students were given the three above options with respect to the affirmation that follows: "¨This new learning strategy facilitates the recognition and production of weak and strong forms". 70 % of students agreed with the assertion provided, 15% partly agreed and 15% disagreed. This is shown in Graphic 2.

Graphic 2
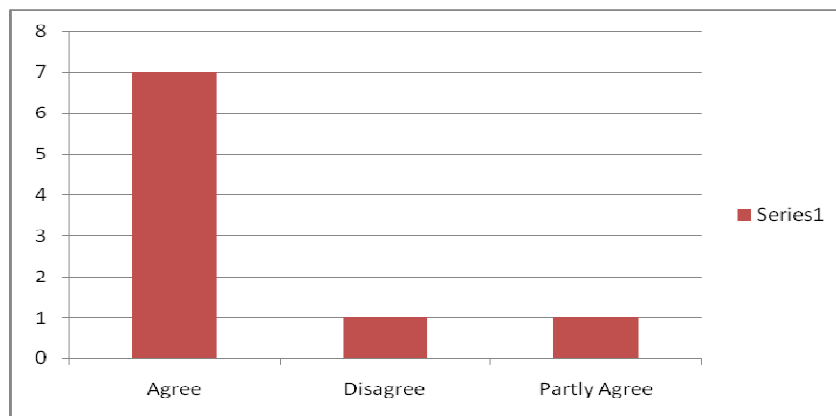
Question 3

The group of respondents were again given the same above options about the following affirmation: "It is easier to recognize the use of weak and strong forms by remembering the number of cases introduced by most Phonetics books".

Graphic 3
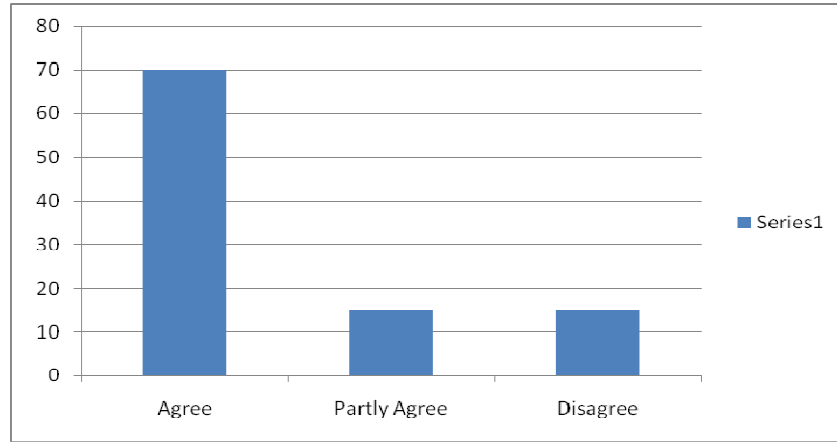
As is shown in the above graphic, 70% of the students agreed that it was easier to recognize the use of weak and strong forms by remembering the number of cases introduced by most Phonetics books, 15% disagreed and 15% partly agreed.

Question 4

This time, the options were presented about the following statement: "When a grammatical word is functioning as a pronominal substitution with cataphoric reference, this one is reduced to a weak form".

Graphic 4

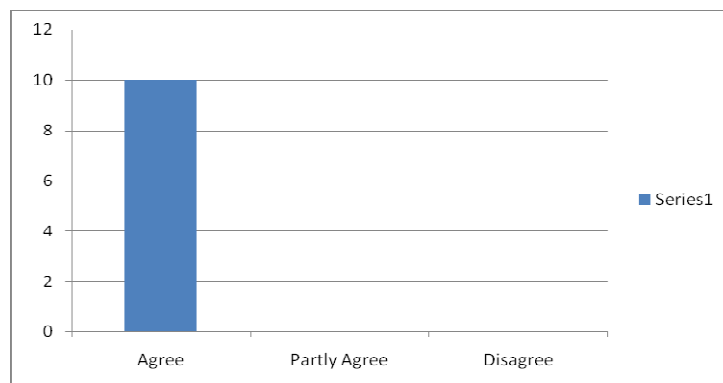Once again, the students linked texture to cohesive ties in oral texts: 100% of them agreed with the postulation given. It therefore seems clear that disentangling cohesive ties in oral texts is not a hard task for the novice student, since there are more textual clues they can resort to when analyzing oral texture.

Question 5

The respondents elaborated on the following: "This concept is easy to take up".

Graphic 5
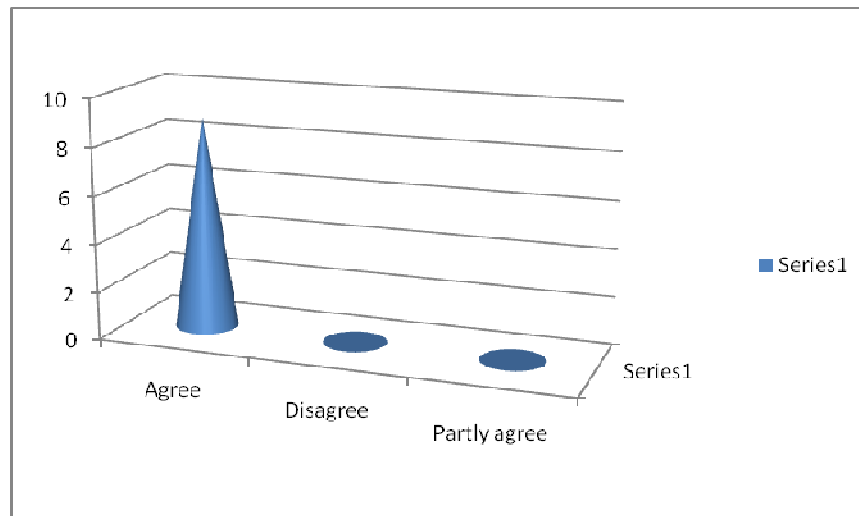
None of the students denied that discourse helped them in their uptaking of this area of phonetics. Thus, this reflection resulted in 100% of the students favouring the introduction of the discoursal approach.

5.3.- Results and analysis of the survey

A survey-based design was used in this section of the present study because it provided easy access to information to be collected. It may be highlighted that the survey is often a very valuable tool for assessing students' opinions on new learning strategies. This research instrument also permits an easy and accurate quantification.

In this research, two questions were asked with a view to comparing and contrasting both theories. The results of the survey showed that 25% of students favoured a phonetics-based orientation to this field, while 75% preferred a discoursal approach to topic. This is displayed in the graphic below.

Graphic 6
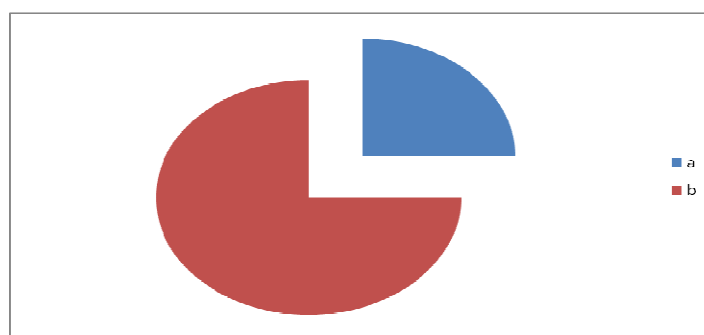
6.- Analysis and results of the data collection

As shown in the previous section, a combined method was selected for the development and analysis of this research: qualitative and quantitative. It should be important to note their respective advantages and to recognize the strengths of these two members of the same family.

In short, the quantitative method yielded data that can be related and aggregated to the analysis of its qualitative counterpart. Relation and aggregation were indeed clear: the quantitative method produced data that recognized the contribution of a discoursal approach to the study of this area of phonetics. It also showed that the students did not underestimate the importance of studying the restrictions of gradation. This discovery confirmed the need to introduce the use of discoursal strategies to aid the study of this topic. Additionally, the qualitative part of the research helped to probe and explain those relationships, and to elucidate contextual differences in the quality of those relationships. The students suggested that their comprehension of weak and strong forms would have been much quicker and easier if they had been exposed to the study of cohesive ties of oral texts, before studying all the restrictions that are presented by most phoneticians. This can be clearly seen when one of the interviewed students said: "*I think we should study this approach to texts before actually plunging into the academic study of Gradation by Gimson or Maidment",* and when another added, "*I think the analysis presented by Maidment is useful but this new strategy clarifies our views on this tricky issue".*

This outcome presented similar learner preferences to complete a 'missing middle', that is, the area between null perception /production of gradation, and the phonetic restrictions often postulated for this particular topic. This blurry middle section might very well be filled in with cohesive ties, and with possible future trends in the Phonetics course, which will eventually scaffold weak and strong forms of grammatical words with the introduction of PDP.

PART III

1.- Conclusions

This study mainly focused on the students' perception and production of weak and strong forms of functional words, anchored in the primal postulation that an awareness of the cohesive interplay between grammatical and content words might act as a scaffolding platform to the learning of weak and strong form. The reality showed that a novice student of phonetics finds it hard to acquire the rhythm of orality in the case of grammatical words. These learners find it even more difficult to analyze each individual case presented by most phoneticians. The solution seems to lie in providing them with new learning strategies that might aim at disentangling the oral texts from a discoursal perspective from which they can perceive and produce oral texture with relative accuracy.

The data in this study were collected and analyzed in an attempt to determine whether these forms had been in the students' command after a period of discourse-based tuition was completed. The strategies that the learners gained as they worked on the cohesive elements of oral discourse empowered them to account for weak and strong forms efficiently, which seems to show that awareness of this particular issue was indeed gained. They asserted that this "new tool", to put it in their own words, was always at hand when they could not remember the phonetic restrictions. What is more, they asserted that, in an attempt to work on the texture of orality. They did notice the meaningful function of reduced and full forms.

2.- Looking ahead: the proposed learning tool

PDP (Phonetics/Discourse/Pedagogy) may entail an analysis of the way in which cohesive devices help produce meaningful oral texts rather than a strong reliance only on phonetic rules. What is more, the Phonetics teacher might provide learners with new strategies with a view to catering for different learning styles. At the same time, learners can deploy these new strategies when working on the cohesion of oral discourse by noticing the meaningful function of reduced and full forms, as suggested in the previous section. The key to success seems to lie in this discoursal 'scaffolding', in Jerome Bruner's terms, which acts as an aid to supply comprehensible input to the novice student.

The initial discoursal stage can enable the learner to move into the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vigotsky, 1978) from texture in oral texts to a thorough systematic study of Phonology. This process should provide the type of scaffolding that learners need to assimilate and accommodate a new phonetic framework into their cognitive structure in the following way: a learner encounters a cohesive tie for the first time and calls it a "bead". From this metaphorical starting point, learners start going through the ZPD to assimilate the information into their schema for a cohesive tie. When they accommodate information, they take into consideration the different properties of oral discourse, comparing and contrasting them with the cohesion of oral texts, and by justifying the use of reduced or full forms of grammatical words by means of cataphoric or anaphoric reference with pronominal substitution, demonstrative reference or deixis and endophoric or exophoric reference. They might perhaps call a full or reduced form of a grammatical word a cohesive "tie". They will have accommodated the information once they have eventually learnt that grammatical words in connected speech are used in their weak form most of the time, and that there are some restrictions, for example, their stressed owing to emphasis or contrast.

A mental representation, or schema, of phonetic restrictions adds more information to that discoursal schema that makes sense to the learners (assimilation). They only notice information that fits into their schema (assimilation) and confirms it. Their schema is completely different, not just full of additional information (accommodation). In this way, the phonological approach to the study of this area can be assimilated and accommodated into the novice learner's cognitive structure efficiently. This is another prime example of scaffolding[4], which, it is hoped, may be included in the design of future courses of English Phonetics.

The data collected in this study clearly showed that PDP might act as a scaffolding-aiding procedure, and might constitute a new approach to the successful teaching of this area of Phonetics. It might be advisable for both course designers and experts in the field of Phonetics to pay attention to this particular perspective, which will no doubt include the discourse strategies that Phonetics teachers can create when they predict the difficulties that their students will have in a given task.

This paper, based on a small-scale research may be considered the birth of PDP: an approach to scaffolding oral texts. The data seems to show the practicality of this stance, which could very well be put into operation before referring the learner to the phonetic analysis suggested by the experts in this field. Even in the world of higher education, students are dependent on scaffolding platforms; more often than not, a restriction to the scaffolding-orientated aiding oral cues supplied by the teacher may be simply insufficient.

This research has given ample evidence that the Phonetics students surveyed greatly benefitted from the type of scaffolding that helped disentangle oral texts, although it should be conceded that the particular area explored in these pages indeed begs much further research. However, it is felt that when students can notice the interplay of

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[4] Scaffolding includes most activities that teachers do when they predict the kinds of difficulty that the class or individual students will have with a given task. Typical examples are the activation of background knowledge at the beginning of the lesson or a brief review of key concepts through narrow or broad transcriptions at the end of it, as will as the study of the interplay of cohesive ties in oral texts(Bruner 1976)

content and grammar words of oral texts and account for their use in an oral text, input will be made considerably more comprehensible, and the affective filter will hopefully be lowered (Krashen and Terrell, 1983).

Finally, it must be highlighted that the findings of this exploration are expected to be, in the years to come, checked against extensive large-scale research based on classroom practice, and on the work of teachers and students of Phonetics, the real intended recipients of the work presented in this study.

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Appendix I: Classroom Material

Lesson 1 - Presentation

<u>Objective</u>: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to acquire a learning strategy that facilitates the use of Weak and Strong Form of Pronominal substitution with cataphoric and anaphoric reference in oral texts.

<div align="center">

Pre Task

</div>

<u>Play a game</u>: Say the following sentences aloud and count how many seconds it takes.

The beautiful mountain appeared transfixed in the distance.
He can come on Sundays as long as he doesn't have to do any homework in the evening.

Time required? Probably about 5 seconds. Now, try speaking this sentence aloud.

Wait a minute. The first sentence is much shorter than the second sentence! **You are only partially right!**

What does that mean?

<div align="center">

Classroom Task 1

</div>

Transcribe the following Nursery rhyme and justify the use of weak forms

"**There Was an Old Woman Who Lived In a Shoe**" is a popular English nursery rhyme.

There was an old woman who lived in a shoe.
_____

She had so many children, she didn't know what to do;
_____

She gave them some broth without any bread;
_____

_____

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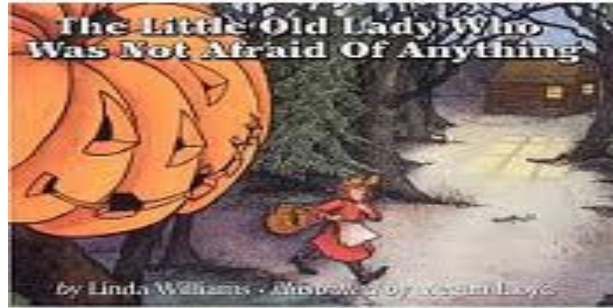Then [whipped](#) them all soundly and put them to bed

_____

Reflection

´She´ in the second sentence refers back to _____. That is to say it is anaphoric to or it is mentioned after _____ in the first sentence. This anaphoric function of _____gives cohesion to the two sentences, so that we interpret them as a whole, and the two sentences together constitute a text. We could also claim that if the pronoun _____ is anaphoric to any word to create *texture* within a text, it will be reduced to a weak form. Read the nursery rhyme again. This time , look for another pronoun that creates *texture* linking the second , third and forth clause. Texture is provided by the cohesive relation that exists between *them* and _____. Again, we can claim that if the pronoun _____ is anaphoric to any word to create *texture* within a text, it will be reduced to a weak form.

Confirm in the following task the general rule you have inferred. ´All in all, we can say that all pronominal substitutions with anaphoric reference are reduced to a weak form´.

Classroom Task 2

a. Read aloud the first part of the story ´*The Little Old Lady Who Was Not Afraid of Anything*´ by Linda Williams and identify the referent items by drawing bead ties as if you were drawing a necklace. Are these pronominal substitutions with anaphoric reference reduced to a weak form too?

b. Now, look for the pronouns that are found before the referent item. From a discoursal perspective, these pronouns are said to be in a cataphoric function, namely after referent items.
   Think about this, are pronominal substitution in cataphoric reference reduced to weak forms too? Try your prediction by reading it aloud.

c. Then listen to the storyteller and check your choices. Are your guesses correct? Why? Why not?

_____

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Characters: Narrator
Shoes
Pants
Little Old Lady

Narrator: Once upon a time, there was a little old lady who was not afraid of anything! One windy afternoon the little old lady left her cottage and went for a walk in the forest to collect herbs and spices, nuts and seeds. She walked so long and so far that it started to get dark. There was only a sliver of moon shining through the night. The little old lady started to walk home. Suddenly she stopped. Right in the middle of the path were two big shoes. And the shoes went CLOMP CLOMP.

Old Lady: Get out of my way, you two big shoes! I'm not afraid of you.

Narrator: On she walked down the path. But behind her she could hear. Two shoes go CLOMP, CLOMP. A little farther on, the little old lady stumbled into a pair of pants. And the pants went WIGGLE, WIGGLE.

Old Lady: Get out of my way, you pair of pants. I'm not afraid of you.

Narrator: On she walked, but behind her she could hear. Two shoes go CLOMP, CLOMP

One pair of pants go WIGGLE, WIGGLE. Farther still, the little old lady bumped into a shirt.

Reflect on this: If we underline the Old Lady´s utterances we will recognize a pair of cohesive items that look like the *´beads of a necklace´* at first sight. *The Necklace* is a metaphor I use to refer to the texture weak and strong forms create within a text. The relation between *you* and *big shoes or pants* creates this texture by providing cohesive ties between utterances. However, if a personal pronoun is before the referent item, in this case a noun phrase, it is in _____form.

Classroom Task 3

REFLECT ON THIS

How much do you agree with the following statements?

Agree   **Disagree**   **Partly Agree**

1.-When a grammatical word is functioning as a pronominal substitution with anaphoric reference, this one is reduced to a weak form.

A		D		P

2.-The knowledge of cohesion facilitates the recognition of *Weak and Strong Forms* of pronouns.

A		D		P

3.-It is easier to recognize the use of Weak or Strong Forms by remembering the number of cases in which they are used.

A		D		P

4.-When a grammatical word is functioning as a pronominal substitution with cataphoric reference, this one is reduced to a weak form.

A		D		P

5.-I find this feature of Phonetics easy to take up.

A		D		P

Lesson 2 - Perception and production

Objective: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to perceive and produce weak and strong forms of pronominal substitution in anaphoric or cataphoric reference in oral texts.

Your Turn:

Break into five groups and go on with the story. Each group will include in their recount one new character picked from the box below, and, who the lady meets before getting back home. Then, listen to your partners and think of the end of the story

Pants   Shirt   Gloves   Hat   Pumpkin

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Now listen to the real story. Which one would you rather tell a children´s class? Make up your mind and get ready for storytelling.

Lesson 3: Production

Weak and Strong Forms of Neutral and Selective Demonstrative Reference

General Objective: By the end of this unit, student teachers should be aware of the function of weak and strong forms in reading aloud stories for children

Specific Objective: By the end of the lesson students should be able to discover the use of weak and strong forms of the neutral demonstrative reference *the* and *a/an* and selective demonstrative reference *that* and *there* by means of a hands-on- activities.

<div style="text-align:center">

Pre Task

</div>

Experimenting with weak and strong forms:

In groups analyze the utterances below and try the following hands-on activities:

A.-How can you change the meaning of the following utterances if you do not change any word?

B.-What is the difference in meaning?

C.-Is making this difference important to make meaning? Why? Why not?

1.a-John thinks that man is evil.
1.b-John thinks that man is evil.

2.a-There is an old man who sells shells on the beach

2.b-There is an old man who sells shells on the beach

3.a-Buzios is the place for holidays

3.b-Buzios is the place for holidays

4.a-You had a drink in the pub

4.b-You had a drink in the pub

➢ **Reflect on the experience:**

1) Is the study of weak and strong forms of grammatical words important for:

a) meaning?   b) speaking? c) listening?

2) Why? Why not?

Task 1:

Pair work:
Student 1: Read aloud the first part of story ´The Cat in The Hat ´stressing all words.
Student 2: Does your partner sound natural? Why? Why not?

The Cat in the Hat

The sun did not shine. It was too wet to play. So we sat in the house
All that cold, cold, wet day. I sat there with Sally, we sat there we two.
And I said, "How I wish we had something to do!" Too wet to go out
and too cold to play ball. So we sat in the house. We did nothing at all.
So all we could do was to Sit! Sit! Sit! Sit! And we did not like it. Not
one little bit And then something went BUMP! How that bump made
us jump! We looked! Then we saw him step in on the mat! We looked!
And we saw him! The Cat in the Hat! And he said to us, "Why do you
sit there like that?" "I know it is wet And the sun is not sunny. But we
can have lots of good fun that is funny!" "I know some good games that we could play,
" Said the cat. "I know some new tricks, " Said the Cat in the Hat. "A lot of good tricks.
I will show them to you. Your mother will not mind at all if I do.

Task 2:

a) Clap your Hands

Now, transcribe the story and underline grammatical words that can be either in weak or
strong forms justifying their use.

Next, read the passage aloud to your partner skipping all the underlined words but to the
rhythm of the clapping of your hands.

Cat hat Sun Not Shine Too Wet Play

b) <u>Reflect on this:</u>

Does the content of the story make sense to the hearer?

Now repeat the procedure, this time reading all the words more naturally. Have you improved your sounds?
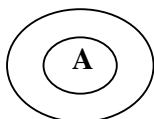
Phonetics Focus

Complete and Remember this!!

These grammatical items: *there, that* , a/ an and *the* are   *Demonstrative Reference* because they are a form of verbal pointing to a referent item.
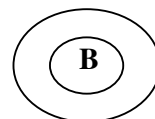In speech, some of these determiners take either weak of strong forms for some reasons which are essential to the production and reception of English sounds. They take the strong form when they function as _____ to a reference item which can be in the text or context of situation. Conversely, when these words do not function as verbal pointers but linkers of the content words as the thread that joins a bead necklace together they take their _____ form.

Students´ Evaluation

Which of the following theories do you find easier to the study of weak and strong forms of grammatical words:

A   or   B

A.-We inferred that some knowledge of *Discourse Analysis* can be useful when dealing with weak and strong forms and made up the following rules:

1.-When a grammatical words, such a pronoun , is functioning as a pronominal substitution with anaphoric reference , this one is reduced to a weak form. Conversely, when a grammatical word is functioning as a pronominal substitution with cataphoric reference, this one takes its strong form.

2.- These grammatical items: *there, that* , a/ an and *the* are   *Demonstrative Reference* because they are a form of verbal pointing to a referent item.

B.-Paul Tench summarizes the phonetics perspective in the following way:

<u>Determiners</u>

The determiners that have special weak forms are the definite and indefinite articles and the possessive adjectives:
The definite article THE has a special strong form /ði: /, as in Spain is the place for the sun. It also has an ordinary weak form as in /ðə/

<u>The Indefinite Article</u>

They have a strong form /ei/ before consonants and /æn/ before vowels as in:
I said an egg not a dozen.
The demonstrative adjectives /ðɪs//ðæt//ði: z//ðəʊz/ do not change in unstressed positions. It is in this respect that it is important to distinguish between that as a conjunction which regularly weakens to /ðət/ and /ðæt/ as a determiner retains its strong form.

<u>Possessive Adjectives</u>

They take their strong form for emphasis

<u>Pronouns</u>

The subject pronouns, the object pronouns take the strong form for emphasis or contrast.

<u>Reading aloud</u> (continued)

" Then Sally and I Did not know what to say. Our mother was out of the house. For the day. But the fish said, "No! No! Make that cat go away! Tell that Cat in the Hat you do NOT want to play. He should not be here. He should not be about. He should not be here When your mother is out!" "Now! Now! Have no fear. Have no fear!" said the cat. "My tricks are not bad, " Said the Cat in the Hat. "Why, we can have lots of good fun, if you wish, With a game that I call UP UP UP with a fish!" "Put me down!" said the fish. "This is no fun at all! Put me down!" said the fish. "I do NOT wish to fall!" "Have no fear!" said the cat. "I will not let you fall. I will hold you up high as I stand on a ball. With a book on one hand! And a cup on my hat! But that is not ALL I can do!" said the cat... "Look at me! Look at me now!" said the cat. "With a cup and a cake on the top of my hat! I can hold up TWO books! I can hold up the fish! And a little toy ship! And some milk on a dish! And look! I can hop up and down on the ball! But that

is not all! Oh, no. That is not all... "Look at me! Look at me! Look at me !
NOW! It is fun to have fun. But you have to know how. I can hold up the cup. And the milk and the cake! I can hold up these books! And the fish on a rake! I can hold the toy ship. And a little toy man! And look! With my tail I can hold a red fan! I can fan with the fan As I hop on the ball! But that is not all. Oh, no. That is not all..." That is what the cat said... Then he fell on his head! He came down with a bump from up there on the ball. And Sally and I, We saw ALL the things fall! And our fish came down, too. He fell into a pot! He said, "Do I like this? Oh, no! I do not. This is not a good game". Said our fish as he lit. "No, I do not like it, Not one little bit!" "Now look what you did!" Said the fish to the cat. "Now look at this house! Look at this! Look at that! You sank our toy ship, Sank it deep in the cake. You shook up our house And you bent our new rake. You SHOULD NOT be here when our mother is not. You get out of this house!" Said the fish in the pot. "But I like it here. Oh, I like it a lot!" Said the Cat in the Hat To the fish in the pot. "I will NOT go away. I do NOT wish to go! And so, " said the Cat in the Hat, "So so so... I will show you. Another good game that I know!" And then he ran out. And then, fast as a fox, The Cat in the Hat Came back in with a box. A big red wood box. It was shut with a hook. "Now look at this trick, " Said the cat. "Take a look!" Then he got up on top. With a tip of his hat. "I call this game FUN IN A BOX, " Said the cat. "In this box are two things I will show to you now. You will like these two things, " Said the cat with a bow. "I will pick up the hook. You will see something new. Two things. And I call them Thing One and Thing Two. These things will not bite you. They want to have fun." Then, out of the box Came Thing Two and Thing One! And they ran to us fast. They said, "How do you do? Would you like to shake hands With Thing One and Thing Two?" And Sally and I Did now know what to do. So we had to shake hands With Thing One and Thing Two. We shook their two hands. But our fish said, "No! No! Those Things should not be in this house! Make them go! "They should not be here When your mother is not! Put them out! Put them out!". Said the fish in the pot. "Have no fear, little fish, " Said the Cat in the Hat. "These things are good Things." And he gave them a pat. "They are tame. Oh, so tame! They have come here to play. They will give you some fun On this wet, wet day." "Now, here is a game that they like, " Said the cat. "They like to fly kites, " Said the Cat in the Hat. "No! Not in the house!" Said the fish in the pot. "They should not fly kites In a house! They should not. Oh, the things they will bump! Oh, the things they will hit! Oh, I do not like it! Not one little bit!" Then Sally and I Saw them run down the hall. We saw those two Things Bump their kites on the wall! Bump! Thump! Thump! Bump! Down the wall in the hall. Thing Two and Thing One! They ran up! They ran down! On the string of one kit. We saw Mother's new gown! Her gown with the dots That are pink, white and red. Then we saw one kite bump On the head of her bed! Then those Things ran about .With big bumps, jumps and kicks And with hops and big thumps And all kinds of bad tricks. And I said, "I do NOT like the way that they play! If Mother could see this, Oh, what would she say!" Then our fish said, "Look! Look!" And our fish shook with fear. "Your mother is on her way home! Do you hear? Oh, what will she do to us? What will she say? Oh, she will not like it To find us this way!" "So, DO something! Fast!" said the fish. "Do you hear! I saw her. Your mother! Your mother is near! So, as fast as you can, Think of something to do! You will have to get rid of Thing One and Thing Two!" So, as fast as I could, I went after my net. And I said, "With my net I can get them I bet. I bet, with my

net, I can get those Things yet!" Then I let down my net. It came down the a PLOP! And I had them! At last! Those two Things had to stop. Then I said to the cat, "Now, you do as I say. You pack up those Things .And you take them away!" "Oh dear!" said the cat. "You did not like our game... Oh dear. What shame! What a shame! What a shame!" Then he shut up the Things In the box with the hook. And the cat went away With a sad kind of look. "That is good said the fish."He has gone away. Yes. But your mother will come. She will find this big mess! And this mess is so big And so deep and so tall, we can not pick it up. There is no way at all!" And THEN! Who was back in the house? Why, the cat! "Have no fear of this mess, " Said the Cat in the Hat. "I always pick up all my playthings And so... I will show you another good trick that I know!" Then we saw him pick up all the things that were down. He picked up the cake, And the rake, And the gown, And the milk, and the strings, And the books, and the dish, And the fan, and the cup, And the ship, and the fish. And he put them away. Then he said, "That is that." And then he was gone, with the tip of his hat. Then our mother came in And said said to us two, "Did you have any fun? Tell me. What did you do?" And Sally and I did not know What to say. Should we tell her The things that went on there that day? She we tell her about it? Now, what SHOULD we do? Well... what would YOU do If you mother asked YOU?

Teachers' notes

Lesson 1

Pre-task

The game shows that, in English, we give stress to certain words while other words are quickly spoken. In other languages, such as Spanish, each syllable receives equal importance. Many speakers of syllabic languages don't understand why in English a number of words are said quickly in a sentence. In syllabic languages each syllable has equal importance, and therefore equal time is needed. English however, spends more time on specific stressed words while quickly gliding over the other, less important, words.

This activity leads to make students infer that for speaking skills students need to understand which words people generally stress and which they do not stress. Basically, stress words are considered ' content words´ such as: nouns e.g. kitchen, verbs, adjectives, adverbs; and non-stressed word are considered ' function words' such as: determiners auxiliary verbs, prepositions, conjunctions and pronouns.

Students analyze the number of stressed in the utterances used to play the game. 14 syllables in the first one and 22 in the second one. Even though the second sentence is approximately 30% longer than the first, the sentences take the same time to speak. This is because there are 5 stressed words in each sentence.

Task 1

Students listen and read the nursery rhyme concentrating on the stressed words rather than giving importance to each syllable. They soon find that they can understand and communicate more because they begin to listen for stressed words. And that stressed words are the key to excellent pronunciation and understanding of English.

Reflection

´She´ in the second sentence refers back to <u>woman</u> That is to say it is anaphoric to or it is mentioned after *the noun* in the first sentence. This anaphoric function of <u>she</u> gives cohesion to the two sentences, so that we interpret them as a whole, and the two sentences together constitute a text. We could also claim that if the pronoun <u>she</u> is anaphoric to any word to create *texture* within a text, it will be reduced to a weak form. Read the nursery rhyme again. This time look for another pronoun that creates *texture* linking the second , third and fourth clause. Texture is provided by the cohesive relation that exists between *them* and <u>children</u>. Again, we can claim that if the pronoun <u>them</u> is anaphoric to any word to create *texture* within a text, it will be reduced to a weak form. Confirm in the following task the general rule you have inferred. ´All in all, we can say that all pronominal substitutions with anaphoric reference are reduced to a weak form´.

Classroom task 2

If we underline the Old Lady´s utterances we will recognize a pair of cohesive items that look like the ´beads of a necklace´ at first sight. *The Necklace* is a metaphor I use to refer to the texture weak and strong forms created within a text. The relation between *you* and *big shoes* or *pants* creates this texture by providing cohesive ties between utterances. However, if a personal pronoun is before the referent item, in this case a noun phrase, it is in <u>its full</u> form.

Lesson 3

Pre-task

➢ Experimenting with weak and strong forms. In groups analyze the utterances below and try the following hands-on activities:

  A. How can you change the meaning of the following utterances if you do not change any word?

  By using either a weak or strong form of the grammatical words.

B. What is the difference in meaning?
C. Is making this difference important to make meaning? Why? Why not?

As indicated by these examples, if a speaker unknowingly uses the strong form instead of the weak form, misunderstandings can occur.

1. /ðət/
This version of the sentence, with the weak (unstressed) form of *that*, means "John thinks all humans are evil."

2. /ðæt/
This version of the sentence, with the strong (stressed) form of *that*, means "John thinks a specific (male) individual is evil."

3. /ðeə/
This version of the sentence, with the strong(stressed) form of there, means ¨ that is the one we identify as the old man who sells shells on the beach¨. As if the interlocutors were pointing to the man.

4. /ðə/
This version of the sentence , with the weak (unstressed) form of there, means ¨ any old man who sells shells on the beach ¨. The interlocutors are not pointing to a place but focusing on the act of any old man selling shells on the beach.

5. /ðə/
This version of the sentence, with the weak (unstressed) form of the, means ¨ the place we were talking about¨. They mention it before so grammatically there is no possibility of an indefinite article.

6. /ði: /
This version of the sentence , with the strong(stressed) form of the, means ¨ that is the only one, the best of all¨ The interlocutors are probably pointing to the place as special.

7. /eɪ/
This version of the sentence , with the strong(stressed) form of a/an, means ¨ you didn´t have an ordinary drink but a special one¨ So the interlocutors point to the drink by using the strong form

8. /ə/
This version of the sentence, with the weak (unstressed) form of , a/an means ¨ you drank something¨

➢ Reflect on the experience:

3) Is the study or weak and strong forms of grammatical words important for:

       a) meaning?   b) speaking?   c) listening?

4) Why? Why not?

There are two good reasons why weak forms ought to be taught. First, teaching weak forms can help students improve their production of spoken English. Because of the influence of their first language, we Rio de la Plata speakers tend to pronounce every word very clearly. As a result, our speech always sounds foreign, sometimes unintelligible, because enunciating each word in a sentence can disrupt the natural rhythm of spoken English. Second, not knowing the weak form may inhibit speakers' comprehension of the English spoken by fluent speakers. Therefore, acquiring weak forms is important not only for students' production of spoken English but also for their listening comprehension.

Phonetics Focus

Please complete and Remember this!

These grammatical items: *there, that* , a/ an and *the* are   *Demonstrative Reference* because they are a form of verbal pointing to a referent item.

In speech, some of these determiners take either weak of strong forms for some reasons which are essential to the production and reception of English sounds. They take the strong form when they function as *pointing* to a reference item which can be in the text or context of situation. Conversely, when these words do not function as verbal pointers but linkers of the content words as the thread that joins a bead necklace together they take their *reduced* form.

Palavecino, Stella Maris
PDP: AN APPROACH TO ORAL-TEXT SCAFFOLDING
Escuela Normal Superior en Lenguas Vivas "Sofía Broquen de Spangenberg"
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Appendix II: Instruments for Data Collection

The Interview:

1.- How easy or difficult do you find Weak and Strong forms of grammatical words after having studied this field of Phonetics from two different theories?

2.-What strategies do you use to recognize and produce Weak and Strong Forms?

3.- Do you tend to remember the list of grammatical rules presented by phoneticians or you´d rather analyze the text in terms of the discoursal approach (such as pronominal substitution with anaphoric or cataphoric reference or identifying full or reduced forms of determiners and pronouns by means of deixis?

4.- What are your views , in general, of both the Phonetics or Discoursal approach to the study of this field?.

5. - Is this field of Phonetics easy to take up from both approaches?

The Questionnaire:

To what extent do you agree to the following statements?
Choose from:

1.- I agree	2.- I disagree	3.- I partly agree

1.-When a grammatical word is functioning as a pronominal substitution with anaphoric reference, this one is reduced to a weak form.

A   D   P

2.-The knowledge of cohesion facilitates the recognition of *Weak and Strong Forms* of pronouns.

A   D   P

3.-It is easier to recognize the use of Weak or Strong Forms by remembering the number of cases in which they are used.

A	D	P

4.-When a grammatical word is functioning as a pronominal substitution with cataphoric reference, this one is reduced to a weak form.

A	D	P

5.-I find this feature of Phonetics easy to take up.

A	D	P

The Survey

Which of the following affirmations do you favour as to the study of weak and strong forms of grammatical words?

A.-We inferred that some knowledge of Discourse Analysis can be useful when dealing with weak and strong forms and made up the following rules.

1.- When a grammatical word such a pronoun is functioning as a pronominal substitution with anaphoric reference , this one is reduced to a weak form. Conversely, when a grammatical word is functioning as a pronominal substitution with cataphoric reference, this one takes its strong form. 2.- These grammatical items: there, that , a/ an and the are Demonstrative Reference because they are a form of verbal pointing to a referent item.

B.- Paul Tench summarizes the phonetics perspective in the following way:

¨Determiners¨ The determiners that have special weak forms are the definite and indefinite articles and the possessive adjectives: The definite article THE has a special strong form /ði: /, as in Spain is the place for the sun. It also has an ordinary weak form as in /ðə/ The definite article /ðə/The Indefinite Article They have a strong form /ei/ before consonants and /æn/ before vowels as in: I said an egg not a dozen. The demonstrative adjectives /ðɪs//ðæt//ði: z//ðəʊz/ do not change in unstressed positions. It is in this respect that it is important to distinguish between ´that´ as a conjunction which

regularly weakens to /ðət/ and /ðæt/ as a determiner which retains its strong form. Pronouns The subject pronouns, the object pronouns take the strong form for emphasis or contrast.

Appendix III: Full script of the interview

Part I

This is also available at: http: //www.goear.com/listen/b1f82f7/elv-sofia-b-de-spangenberg-phonetics-i-

Teacher: ¨ Here, we are with a group of five students who are attending Phonetics 1 at ´Escuela de Lenguas Vivas Sofia B de Spangenberg. Hello. Thank you for cooperating with this research¨.

Student 1: ¨Hello¨

Student 2: ¨Hello¨

Student 3: ¨Hello¨

Student 4: ¨Hi¨

Student 5: ¨It´s a pleasure¨.

Teacher: ¨ I am going to ask you a few questions about the theories we are studying connected to Weak and Strong Forms of grammatical words¨.

¨Are you ready? ¨

Students: ¨Yes, yes¨

Teacher: ¨Here comes the first question: How easy or difficult do you find Weak and Strong forms of grammatical words after having studied this field of Phonetics from two different theories? ¨

Student 1: ¨They are quite difficult, especially if we try studying the rules by heart¨.

Student 2: ¨But trying to reason them as we learn this year is easier, I think¨.

Teacher: ¨What strategies do you use to recognize and produce Weak and Strong Forms? ¨

Student 3: ¨Sometimes I use the discoursal approach and sometimes I use the grammatical approach¨.

Student 4: ¨Me too¨.

Student 5: ¨I do too¨.

Student 1: ¨I use either one or the other depending on the context. I mean, whether I find the difference or not¨.

Teacher: ¨Sorry, but what ´difference´ are you talking about? ¨.

Student 1: ¨I mean, when I don't remember the rules I use the discoursal approach as a basis and then I go to the rules and try to reason them¨.

Student 2: ¨ I do something similar. I use the discoursal approach when I don't remember the rules of grammatical words that take weak or strong forms¨.

Teacher: ¨Do you tend to remember the list of grammatical rules presented by phoneticians or you´d rather analyze the text in terms of the discoursal approach (such as pronominal substitution with anaphoric or cataphoric reference or identifying full or reduced forms of determiners and pronouns by means of deixis? ¨.

Teacher: ¨What are your views , in general, of both the Phonetics or Discoursal approach to the study of this field? ¨.

Student 4: ¨When you study phonetics a long time it is easy to remember the rules. But at the beginning is difficult. It is not by osmosis, you know? ¨.

Student 5: ¨In my case, if I know the rule, I try to use the Grammatical approach if I don´t, I try to reason it by using the discoursal approach¨.

Teacher: ¨ Is there anything that you would like to add to this discussion? ¨.

Student 1: ¨I think both theories are necessary and teachers should teach both¨.

Student 2: ¨Yes, I think we should study the discoursal theory first and after that the grammatical approach. Because in that way, why realize why we use what we use¨.

Student 3: ¨And we realize how meaning can be changed¨.

Student 4: ¨I think both theories go together¨.

Teacher: ¨Thank you very much for your contribution¨.

Part II

Also available at http: //www.goear.com/listen/03caf35/elv-sofia-b-de-spangenberg-phonetics-i-

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Teacher: ¨Hello. Thank you for cooperating with this research. Here is the first question: How easy or difficult do you find Weak and Strong forms of grammatical words after having studied this field of Phonetics from two different theories? ¨.

Student 1: ¨Well, when it comes to speaking, I guess, I don´t think about Weak and Strong forms of grammatical words. I just talk and I am sure I make mistakes but I can´t think when I talk¨.

Student 2: ¨Errr I also talk without thinking about sounds and hope for the best¨.

Teacher: what about with transcriptions? ¨.

Student 3: ¨ I agree with them when they say that with talking we tend not to think about sounds. Maybe because we are just beginning. But with transcriptions I now realize that I do not think either. I use the weak form by default¨.

Student 4: ¨When I come across certain words, like grammatical words, I pay more attention when I transcribe texts than when I talk¨.

Student 1: ¨And well, doing a dictation is a disaster so¨.

Student 2: ¨In dictations I try to pay attention to the teacher´s voice¨.

Teacher: ¨What about you two, what do you pay more attention to when you do a dictation? ¨.

Student 3: ¨Well, I think I focus more on other aspects of the language such as assimilation or elision¨.

Student 4: ¨I try to concentrate on what the teacher says¨.

Teacher: ¨So, you mean you do not notice weak and strong forms at all.

All students unanimously: no, no¨.

Student 1: ¨but it is very difficult¨.

Teacher: ¨so, when do you pay more attention to ? and if so , what strategies do you use to recognize and produce Weak and Strong Forms? ¨.

Student 1: ¨I look for rules in the chart of the Phonetics book¨.

Student 2: ¨ I try to remember by heart but when I don't remember I remember the pearl necklace and look for the pearls in the text¨.

Teacher: ¨You are using metaphors. You mean cohesive ties¨.

Student 2: ¨Yes, I am not good at remembering names but I like metaphors and remember yours¨.

Teacher: ¨Do you tend to remember the list of grammatical rules presented by phoneticians or you´d rather analyze the text in terms of the discoursal approach (such as pronominal substitution with anaphoric or cataphoric reference or identifying full or reduced forms of determiners and pronouns by means of deixis? ¨.

Student 3: ¨ I try to use the cohesive devices. I pay more attention to them because that gave me good results¨.

Student 4: ¨I am re-attending the subject and I found this year you gave us those explanations and I use them. They are clear to me¨.

Teacher: ¨ What are your views of both the Phonetics or Discoursal approach to the study of this field? ¨.

Student 3: ¨I would say that the discoursal approach gave me much better results, definitely¨.

Student 4: ¨Yes, I think that it is better the discoursal approach but sometimes, when you are doing a test you don't have much time to anlyze the text, so the grammatical approach is better¨.

Student 1: ¨ Yes, if I have time I use the discoursal approach but I think if I can remember the rules by heart that will help me too¨.

Teacher: ¨Is there any other thing that you would like to add to this discussion? ¨.

Student 2: ¨Yes, of course. I think teachers should teach both theories because people learn in different ways. You cannot teach only one approach to working with texts¨.

Student 1: ¨ I want to add that when you are doing a test you have to make use of whatever comes first to your head. And that´s why the explanation about how to find connections in the text helps a lot¨.

Student 3: ¨ yes, we should be taught both theories¨.

Teacher: ¨Thank you¨.