

# Laboratory I

## Final Project

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ENS en Lenguas Vivas Sofia B. de Spangenberg

## **Part 1- The phonetics field in action.**

### **Description of the group**

The group selected for this Project is 7<sup>th</sup> form in a private institution situated in San Martin neighbourhood. They have been learning English since they were in kindergarten. However, their level of English is not high. Throughout the year, we have been working with a course book. Most of the activities are done in class together. I try to carry out activities in which they have to produce on their own and practise the speaking part. This one, is the most difficult part, since because of embarrassment or lack of practice, they do not tend to participate actively.

They have never been taught phonemes. I have introduced some of them since the beginning of the year.

Taking into consideration the common European framework of reference, my students are A2 (Waystage or elementary) because they can

- understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment).
- communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters.
- describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.

### **Diagnosis**

Most of my students' productions are written. When it comes to the oral part, I find it really difficult to work with it because we do not have enough time. During the last weeks, I have devoted a long time to the oral part, in order to find out the most common mistakes connected with phonemes.

### **The Syllabus**

This group needs to focus on both suprasegmental and segmental features of Phonology. By suprasegmental features I refer to the function of tones at discourse level. They need to improve on suprasegmental aspects of English accent and pronunciation and intonation, added stress, time-stress, tone, linking and connecting, thought groups, volume, speed, reduction, assimilation, deletion, weak forms of function words, conversational

contractions, and standard contractions which are also used in writing. It plays an important role in the production of comprehensible speech patterns in English.

However, I decided to work on segmental aspects first. By segmental aspects I refer to working with individual sounds. Owing to my students' level, it is difficult to pay attention to the suprasegmental aspect at this point. There are more errors connected with phonemes that disrupt communication made by this group of students than tones or intonation in general.

### **Findings**

After some practice lessons, I found out the most common errors in relation to phonemes. These errors appear in both consonant and vowel sounds. Generally, the sounds they tend to produce are the ones they already know, the Spanish ones. They tend to replace:

- The bilabial plosive /b/ with voiced lenis approximant [β]
- The voiceless fortis alveolar plosive /t/ with a dental plosive [t]
- The alveolar plosive /d/ with post dental plosive [d]
- The voiced lenis dental fricative /ð/ with the alveolar plosive /d/
- Voiceless fortis dental fricative /θ/ with Spanish allophone [s]
- Voiced lenis alveolar fricative /z/ with voiceless fortis alveolar fricative [s]
- Voiced lenis palato-alveolar affricate /dʒ/ with the voiceless fortis palate-alveolar fricative /ʃ/
- Voiceless dental fricative /θ/ with labio dental fricative /f/

### **Reflection Time**

When I introduced the topic, students were surprised and confused. They did not have any idea of the work they were going to be able to do at the end of the class. At the beginning, just a few of them wanted to participate. It took some minutes to make them get involved.

They enjoyed the story . What is more, while reading, I could hear them trying to imitate the humming of the bee. Additionally, the song of the video was easy to follow. The problem was that they did not want to sing at first.

Overall, students mainly enjoyed activities in which they had to stand up and move around. It was a pleasure to see them practicing and putting their hands on their throats in order to get the sound. The fact that the class was completely different from the usual ones motivated them. We were not working with the book, the folder or any traditional material. I made them think in English, feel English sounds and enjoy Phonology.

Of course, it was not easy to make them feel confident at first. But they grew in confidence little by little. It was also new and exciting for me. I have never taught phonemes in this way before.

I enjoyed being part of this project and I noticed my students wanted to spend more classes with games and stories like the ones I introduced to them. I hope I have the chance to deliver more lessons like these ones in the future.

## Part 2- Background Theory

### **Phonological problems for River Plate speakers**

After a careful analysis of an inventory of errors, I have decided to work with /z/ because this is one the English sounds my students fail to perceive and produce. They tend to produce the Spanish /s/. According to Walker, the substitution of one consonant for another can cause some serious confusion for both NS (Native Speakers) and NNS (Non Native Speakers) listeners (consonant confluences).

Brinton points out *“...the task of the EFL pronunciation teacher is simplified by the homogenous first language background of the learners since knowledge of this language can generally be brought to bear in constructing the pronunciation syllabus.”*

Taking into consideration Brinton’s words, Walker says that we should cease to see the learner’s L1 as an obstacle to be overcome en route to achieving our goals, and view it much more as the basis on which to build our progress, and as a means of access to the new pronunciation goals, the already mentioned situation outlined in the previous section becomes significantly more optimistic. By openly starting from the learner’s L1 we switch on to the highlight of what our learner can do, and away from what they supposedly can not do. We should try to focus on the value of the students’ language as a useful tool for learning English.

This is one example of how this use of the learner’s L1 phonetics might help Spanish learners of English attain the consonants in the LFC:

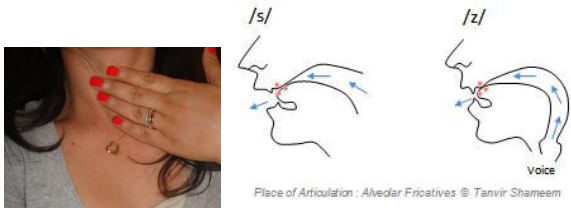
Problem: /s,z/ are often confused.

Potential solution through Spanish/related languages and dialects:

Donna Brinton suggests that transfer from Spanish generates sufficiently deviant realizations in some consonants so as to render them intelligible.

## What every teacher should know about this sound

Z is just like S, except it vibrates. Tense your tongue and as the air comes out, you should feel the vibration on your tongue and the roof of your mouth. Basically, you are holding your tongue in the S position, but with more tension. This creates the vibration. A good exercise could be imitating the humming of a bee. If you put your hand on your throat, you have to feel the vibration.



/z/

English: voiced lenis alveolar fricative: full distribution.

Voiced: *busy, clumsy, puzzle.*

Devoiced: *zone (partially), lose, hosepipe.*

Spanish: non-existent, except occasionally as an allophone of /s/.

Degree of difficulty: above normal.

Fault: The learner will produce /s/ for /z/.

Transfer: As there is no phonemic opposition between /s/ and /z/ in Spanish, this is reproduced in English.

Another difficulty: distribution

Spelling does not help much. The Teacher should be aware of all these problems and provide good imitation.

Inflectional ending: plurals, genitive, 3<sup>o</sup> person singular.

Tips for correction:

- a- Tell students to imitate the buzzing sound of a bee [zzzzzzzz] .
- b- Show, through minimal pairs, the phonemic opposition between /s/ and /z/; *Sue, zoo; seal, zeal; police, please; once, ones; ice, eyes.*
- c- Ask students to lengthen the preceding sound when followed by /z/ as in the pronunciation of the –s morpheme of the plural of nouns, the genitive case and the third person singular of the simple present tense: boys.

Examples:

Zoo zed easy opposition position was lies

There were no lizards in the Zulu zoo.

Busy Lizzy doesn't answer the buzz.

It's easy to criticize teachers.

## **Framework to teach pronunciation**

After reading Kaltenbock and Seidlhofer's article, I concluded to work with task-based teaching. They claim that there are several different lines of enquiry and various approaches to task-based teaching, but it is probably fair to say that they would subscribe to the following interrelated assumptions:

- That interaction is important to language learning and
- It is desirable for classroom activities to have a focus on pragmatic meaning rather than on linguistic forms.

In contrast with communicative language teaching, task-based learning can be seen as an attempt to address the dilemma of communicating versus noticing. A task is defined as an activity which satisfies the following criteria:

- Meaning is primary.
- There is a goal which needs to be worked towards.
- The activity is outcome-evaluated.
- There is a real-world relationship.

From a phonological perspective tasks can also be classified as restricted and unrestricted ( Robin Walker 2010). Restricted tasks are the ones which have a narrow focus on form, and unrestricted the ones with a wide focus on form. As I have mentioned before, I have decided to deal with restricted tasks which seem to be suitable for practising segmental features.

During the lessons, I have chosen different kind of activities. At the beginning, I have included reception and assimilation tasks. Students have to listen and repeat the new phoneme and incorporate new knowledge to the previous one. At the end, I have included perception and accommodation tasks through which students have to perceive, identify the sound and accommodate new information into their phonemic schema.

## Appendix 1

### 1.-Introductory story:

#### The Tree of Sounds

Once upon a time, there was a big tree in the playground of a school in Palermo. It had lots of green leaves and on top of these leaves, near the sky, there lived some letters.

The letters saw everything from up above, but they couldn't get down from the leaves. Every day they saw the children play on the playground during break. They saw them playing hide and seek, hop scotch and tag. And they really wanted to join the children in the fun, but they did not know how.

One day, the children were having a break, practising for their English lesson. The letters were watching from above and saw how the students struggled to pronounce English sounds, because they were River Plate speakers. The letters wanted to help them. Since they were part of the tree of sounds, they knew that they could help children to speak any language! But although they tried, they could not get down from the leaves in order to go and help the kids.

One night, there was a storm, and lightning struck the tree! The letters felt an energy flash run through their bodies and suddenly they realized that they had magically popped out of the tree magically alive and free to move around! They knew what to do next! They were going to help the children pronounce all the English sounds.

From that day on, they have been out and about helping River Plate speakers learn English sounds! The twin sisters teach children to say "Cheese!" and "Chip" for pictures. Happy Horse teaches the students his special laughter "hahaha". Zoe the Zebra teaches kids to dance in a zigzag way. And the Joker helps them jump joyfully like a jelly!

Have fun with them!



## 2.-Classroom

### procedure

#### Lesson 1

**Objective** : By listening to a story students will be able to identify and produce consonant sound /z/

**Time** : 40´ minutes

**Material** : cards- letters z

#### Pre –task

##### **Introduction**

The teacher tells a story in order to introduce the new sound. Students listen to her and try to imitate the sound.

##### **Zoe the Zebra**



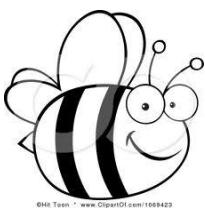
In a far away land, there is a zoo. But it is not a nice one. It is a terrible zoo.

This is zoo, the zebra. Zoe lives in the zoo. But it is not a funny zoo.

She lives next to her friend Zen, the buzzing bee. She loves buzzing around the zebra at the zoo.

Zoe loves to dance but inside the zoo she can't. She has to sing really quietly at night so no hears. Zoe, the zebra cries and Zen buzzes around to cheer her up.

When it is freezing, she walks in a zig-zag way inside the cage. If the zoo keeper sees her, she pretends to be dozing. But she doesn't like dozing. She likes dancing while her friend Zen is buzzing.





/zəʊi ðə zebra/

/ In ə 'fɑ:r əweɪ ˌlænd / ðər ɪz ə zʊ:// bət ɪt ɪz 'nɒt ə nɑɪs wʌn// ɪt ɪz ə tərɪbl zʊ:// ðɪs ɪz zəʊi/ ðə ˌzebrə//  
'zəʊi lɪvz ɪn ðə zʊ:// bət ɪt ɪz 'nɒt ə flʌni zʊ:// ʃɪ lɪvz 'nekst tə hə ˈfrend zən/ ðə 'bʌzɪŋ ˌbi:/ ʃɪ 'lʌvz bʌzɪŋ  
ərəʊnd ðə zebra/ ət ðə ˌzʊ:// 'zəʊi lʌvz tə dɑ:ns/ bət ˌɪnsaɪd ðə zʊ:/ ʃɪ kɑ:nt// ʃɪ hæz tə 'sɪŋ rɪəli kʷaɪətli ət  
, naɪt/ səʊ 'nəʊ wʌn hɪəz// 'zəʊi ðə zebra kraɪz/ ən zən bʌzɪz ə, rəʊnd/ tə 'tʃɪə hər ʌp/ wen ɪt ɪz ˌfri:zɪŋ/ ʃɪ  
'wɔ:ks ɪn ə ˌzɪg zæg weɪ/ ɪnsaɪd ðə ˌkeɪdʒ/ ɪf ðə 'zu:ki:pə ˌsi:z hə/ ʃɪ prɪ'tendz tə bi dəʊzɪŋ// bət ʃɪ  
'dʌznt lɑ:k , dəʊzɪŋ/ ʃɪ lɑ:ks dɑ:nsɪŋ/ waɪl hə frend ˌzen ɪz , bʌzɪŋ//



### Task:

While listening to this part of the story, children are encouraged to produce the sounds and feel them with their hands on their throat.

Now, listen to this part of the story. Zoe has come to teach us a trick he makes when his sounds appears.

Look!!Here comes my friend Zoe, the zebra, and Zen, the bee. Can you hear the buzzing sound? *ZZZZZZZZZZ*

This is Zen buzzing around Zoe. She can not buzz because she is a zebra. But She is trying to imitate her,

*zzzzzzzzzz*. Can you imitate Zen?

*zzzzzzzzzz*. Put your hand on your throat and buzz like Zen. Can you feel the vibration?

Let's buzz around: *zzzzzzzzzz*

### Follow up

#### A game

Zoe, The Zebra, doesn't like dozing. Zen was buzzing around when she suddenly dropped all the z sounds. Help her clean up all the words before

Zoe wakes up.

animal\_

\_en

\_oo

\_ig- \_ag

do\_e

bu\_ \_

\_ebra

\_ookeeper

\_oe

game\_

free\_ing

day\_

The teacher sticks all The cards on The blackboard and leaves The drawings of Zoe The zebra on a desk next to the board.

In turns, Students stand up and pick one drawing.

Each student has to put ``Zoe the Zebra`` next to the other letters to form the word.

Then, the student has to repeat and produce the buzzing sound.

## Lesson 2

**Objective :** By singing a song, children will be able to recognize the target sound in initial, final or medial position.

**Time :** 40` minutes

**Material :** board- dice- counters

### Classroom procedure

#### Pre-task

The teacher tells a story to make the students aware of the full distribution in the syllable in which the consonant sound z could be.

## Story

Zoe the zebra goes zig-zagging. She frequently moves to the front starting a few words. She moves inside words

resting in the middle and she moves to the back. She gets tired now. Zen, her friend, is waiting for her.

They both doze and say zzzzzzzzzzzzz and accompany the sound by moving their arms.

## Task

### A Game: ' Sounds around'

The teacher sticks the picture of Zoe the zebra on the blackboard and draws three columns for words with

the sound in initial, in the middle and in final position.

Teacher encourages pupils to think of different possible examples.

Arrange the class in order to form three groups.

Each group throws the dice and moves the counter. They must say the word aloud and write it on the correct column on the board.

The winner is the first group that collects eight correct words.

## Follow up

Students listen to the song and sing it along, trying to identify the z sound.

Every time the sound z appears they made the z symbol with their bodies.

Song: I'm a little zebra

I'm a little zebra,

White and black,  
Big bushy mane  
Riding down my back.  
I like to gallop  
And run and play  
Out on the African plains all day

### Lesson 3

**Objective :** By playing a game students will be able to recognise the consonant sound z and identify the words that have that sound.

**Time :** 40' minutes

**Material :** dice with different images.

#### Classroom procedure

##### Pre Task:

The teacher will draw a zig-zag line on the floor, and she will make the students walk on that line.  
While walking on the line, students will sing a song.

*Can you walk zig-zagging like Zoe the Zebra?*

Song:

Zoe the zebra is zipping by,  
Zipping by, zipping by.  
Zoe the zebra is zipping by,  
Zip! Zap! Zoom!

## **Task:**

### **A game Zebra sound.**

The teacher brings dice with different objects. Some objects contain the sound z, and others don't.

In turns, students throw one of the dice and name the object.

Students have to recognize if the word contains the sound z and produce it correctly.

The teacher makes them put their fingers on their throats in order to check.

If the image does not contain the sound z, they just name it.

## **Follow up**

Tongue twisters: The teacher brings some cards with words to put in order and form the tongue twisters. Then children play saying the tongue twisters without making mistakes

This is a zither.

Is this a zither?

Zithers slither slowly south

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