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A Motivational, Online Guide to Help English Language Learners with the Development,Implementation, and Evaluation of their Individual Pronunciation Improvement Plans

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with the Development, Implementation, and Evaluation

of Their Individual Pronunciation

Improvement Plans

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ABSTRACT

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Intelligibility is one of the major concerns among ESL learners due to its impact on their ability to communicate with native speakers of English (Derwing & Munro, 2005). Even though pronunciation is often addressed in classrooms, it is difficult to tackle all intelligibility issues relevant for each student. Therefore, it is crucial for ESL learners to spend some extra time outside of class improving their pronunciation. Faced with a daunting task of regulating and taking charge of their own learning, they often have questions with respect to what exactly they need to work on, what activities will help them achieve their goals, how they need to organize those activities, and how long they should practice until they can see results. In such an endeavor, issues like motivation to persist and put forth great effort arise and influence outcomes. In sum, many factors are in play when ESL learners strive to improve their intelligibility.

The main purpose of creating *Sofia's ESL Pronunciation Lab* is to guide ESL learners in improving intelligibility, while helping them feel confident and motivated about what they are doing. Thirty students participated in the pilot-testing phase of this project. They participated in six weeks of self-regulated instruction followed by the completion of a survey at the end of that period. The results show that *Sofia's ESL Pronunciation Lab* accomplished its purpose. Students thought that the website guided them well in the creation and implementation of their own improvement plan. They also thought that the online guide was professional and informative. Several students gave constructive feedback to further enhance the website. Most suggestions were related to including more graphics and visuals as well as adding more content, such as examples and activities. Overall, students believed that the online guide was a helpful addition to the current instruction they were receiving as part of an intensive English language program of study.

Keywords: intelligibility, pronunciation, motivation, self-regulation, strategies improvement plan, guide, online, ESL, EFL

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Chapter One: Introduction

An English language learner, recently arrived in the United States from Asia, takes a placement test upon entering an intensive English Language Program. He is placed at an intermediate level. Even though his performance is functional and he can carry out several uncomplicated tasks in English, he notices that native speakers do not always understand what he is trying to say. He gets frustrated when people do not understand him. His speaking class simply provides practice in general speaking activities, but it does not focus on his particular pronunciation difficulties. Therefore, in order to improve his level of intelligibility and increase his positive experience with native speakers, he has to make an individual plan to improve his pronunciation. He searches online for *pronunciation exercises* in Google® and finds websites with videos to help him practice different sounds and phrases. He finds others that include conversations on various topics, and even some pronunciation software, but he is challenged by how to best use these materials. He does not know where to start or what exercises will best help him with his particular areas of difficulties. He has many questions, including what exercises he should do first, or if there are speech characteristics that are more important than others. He feels overwhelmed because he knows he will be in the United States for only a couple of semesters, and feels he may not have enough time to figure out what he needs to do to improve his pronunciation. He realizes he does not have a lot of experience studying materials, which teachers have assigned. He is accustomed to only studying what the teachers assign. He therefore fears it will take him a while to teach himself how to study pronunciation independently. He wonders if there is some resource that could guide him as he creates his plan to improve his intelligibility.

This student is not unique. Many other ESL learners worry about their pronunciation. In a study carried out in Canada with 100 ESL learners, Derwing and Rossiter (2002) found that 90% of their student participants would take a pronunciation class if it were available. From that same group, 55 respondents thought that pronunciation affected their communication significantly. My own investigations with focus groups (to see questions refer to Appendix A) of ESL learners at the English Language Center (ELC) at Brigham Young University (BYU) found that most students are concerned about their pronunciation and feel that there should be more pronunciation instruction in class. Some students even feel that their pronunciation is the main reason for their lack of communicative success with native speakers. This was perfectly illustrated by one student, who said, "I think people can't understand me because of pronunciation" (excerpt from personal communication). The students in my investigations perceived pronunciation as the aspect of language most affecting their intelligibility.

It is clear that ESL learners regard pronunciation instruction as vital to their communicative skills' development. However, it seems that teachers may feel uncomfortable teaching pronunciation due to lack of knowledge in that area or lack of pedagogical training in pronunciation especially in a multilingual classroom (Breitkreutz, Derwing & Rossiter, 2002; Derwing & Munro, 2005). This may result in reduced pronunciation instruction in classrooms. The ELC, for example, has added an extra pronunciation class one day a week for those students that feel they need further focus on their pronunciation. This may indicate that the pronunciation instruction currently given in listening/speaking class is not enough.

With the popularity of self-regulated learning increasing, students may be able to target their individual needs in pronunciation and see faster results if they adopt of an more autonomous learning approach. However, not all learners know how to self-regulate their learning process. In addition, most students do not have the background knowledge regarding phonetics, phonology, or phonetic processes that occur in speech, which makes it more challenging for them to understand information such as the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). Often learners do not know what activities they need to choose to improve their speech, or which strategies would prove most helpful for their needs.

The frustration of not being able to communicate effectively with native speakers and the lack of guidance improve intelligibility may lead to decreased levels of student motivation (Dickinson, 1995). This in turn will make language learning less effective and enjoyable.

Hence there is a need for materials that assist students in designing their own personalized plans to improve pronunciation, while also fostering and maintaining high levels of motivation. Personal experience in working with English language learners for more than 8 years has shown that students struggle in three primary areas: developing intelligibility, regulating their own learning, and finding the kind of motivation that will lead them to achieve their goals. A more complete overview of these three issues, as well as the rationale for this project, will be presented in the following section of this chapter.

Intelligibility

Intelligibility is "the extent to which a speakers message is actually understood by a listener" (Munro & Derwing, 1995, p. 76). One of the factors that make intelligibility

difficult to address in a classroom setting is the wide variety of needs. Identical pronunciation issues are not shared by all students. As research shows, if learners want to see improvement in their pronunciation, they need to receive focused and explicit instruction of their difficulties (Venkatagiri & Levis, 2007; Saito, 2011). If the needs of every student in an ESL class were to be addressed, there would be as many pronunciation lessons needed as students in the class. This situation would make a teacher's task nearly impossible, especially in a traditional classroom where the teacher is the organizer and manager of the lessons. It is improbable that there would be enough time or resources to address all of the students' particular needs in a classroom. It is common for teachers to focus on those features that are more applicable and beneficial to all, neglecting other more crucial individual weaknesses.

A second difficulty in treating intelligibility in a classroom is related to the teachers' knowledge regarding treatment of pronunciation issues (Breitkreutz, Derwing & Rossiter, 2002). Often, teachers feel inadequate when it comes to helping students become more intelligible. Some teachers do not know where to start teaching, what the most important pronunciation features to address are, or which activities are more efficient for learning. This uncertainty may stem from the fact that instructional materials and pronunciation syllabi are frequently based on intuitive decisions instead of research, and that most ESL teachers are not trained to teach pronunciation (Derwing & Munro, 2005; Jenkins, 2002). Thus, there is a need for better teacher preparation in the area of pronunciation instruction. Until this happens, however, it is necessary to develop research-based materials to guide students' independent efforts to improve individual intelligibility.

Motivation

Motivation is the "primary impetus to initiate learning the L2 and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process" (Dörnyei, 1998, p. 117). Motivation plays a fundamental role in ESL students' autonomous learning. Motivated students tend to be more successful at independent learning than their less-motivated counterparts, because they tend to exert greater effort and are more persistent in achieving their goals (Dörnyei, 1998; Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998; Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005a; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003). Autonomy can, however, improve motivation (Dickinson, 1995). Autonomous learning frequently motivates learners because they make their own decisions instead of having a teacher tell them what to do (Dickinson, 1995; Vansteenkiste, Soenens, Sierens, Luyckx, & Lens, 2009).

On the other hand, students' previous experiences and beliefs about both themselves and specific learning tasks can affect motivation considerably. If learners lack experience in regulating their own pronunciation learning process, their choices and behaviors can be less effective, and thus their outcomes less successful. Lack of experience can lead to failures, which in turn can negatively affect motivation. Similarly, students' beliefs about both their abilities and specific learning tasks can affect their overall performance, as well as the effort they put forth toward achieving their goals (Bandura, 1993). Conversely, learners' confidence in both themselves and learning tasks can have a positive impact on their results. It is therefore fundamental to foster positive motivational behaviors, as these will increase students' efforts and resulting in intelligibility improvement.

Self-Regulation

Zimmerman (2000) defined self-regulation as "self-generated thoughts, feelings and behaviors that are oriented to attaining goals" (p. 65). It has become increasingly necessary for learners to be actively engaged in their own learning process (Morley, 1991). One of the reasons why it is better for students to take charge of their learning is that they will experience better results and higher success rates (Knowels, 1975). Also, self-regulation can help learners that feel unsuccessful to become more efficient and overcome their feelings of frustrations and incompetence (Gremmo & Riley, 1995). These are some of the benefits of becoming self-sufficient learners.

However, for students to work independently effectively, they need to possess background knowledge as well as certain skills (Jones, 1998). This is when scaffolding is necessary (Gremmo & Riley, 1995). The development of self-study pronunciation materials could therefore help guide ESL learners to improve their intelligibility. This is true not only for students who are unaccustomed to working independently, but also for those who are self-regulated yet inexperienced in developing and/or improving their own intelligibility and pronunciation skills. Such material would not only assist learners in developing their own learning plans, but also help create self-regulation habits that can transfer to all other aspects of life. With such materials, students could improve their pronunciation while learning how to be autonomous learners.

Purpose of Pedagogical Thesis

The purpose of this pedagogical thesis was to produce a guide that would provide ESL learners with direction in creating personal individualized pronunciation

improvement plans. This guide was designed to foster students' autonomy while providing a structure for them as they design their personalized plans. This guide was also intended to help learners become aware of their personal motivations, as well as providing actions to take to help them maintain a positive attitude, and continue to put forth effort toward their individual goals.

As the creator of this pedagogical thesis, my task was to provide a framework of resources and activities for students at intermediate and advanced levels, designed to assist them in the development of pronunciation skills. This thesis included the creation of a set of materials to guide students through different stages as they outline a personal plan for improving their weaknesses in pronunciation.

These materials were then distributed in an online guide that included:

- A video clip introducing *Sofia's ESL Pronunciation Lab*, its purpose and benefits to ESL learners.

- A video clip orienting students to the three main aspects of pronunciation: general speaking habits, prosody and segmental features.

- Downloadable PDF worksheets, logs and suggested activities accompanying different phases and steps for the creation, implementation and evaluation of the student's plan. Information included in these PDFs was designed to help students take steps to improve fluency, stress, pausing, and so forth.

- Links to helpful websites students could consult when designing their improvement plans and selecting activities.

This pedagogical thesis was piloted in the English Language Center (ELC) at Brigham Young University, located in Provo, Utah. The online guide was piloted in this

particular language center in part because the ELC requires students at an intermediate level to develop their own personalized improvement plans based on their individual weaknesses. This was therefore the perfect environment for this project since many students were already required to work on pronunciation independently for their classes. In addition, the ELC is always striving to help students develop autonomy, and become more self-regulated, successful learners. Finally, the MA TESOL program for which this pedagogical thesis was created took place at the same university (BYU) to which the ELC belongs.

The next chapter reviews current literature regarding intelligibility, self-regulation and motivation. With respect to intelligibility, the chapter reviews features that greatly impact intelligibility, practices proven to best improve intelligibility, and the impact of pronunciation strategies on spontaneous speech. When addressing motivation, the chapter explains some of the mainstream psychological theories on motivation, and later two second language (L2) motivational theories proposed by Gardner (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995) and Dörnyei (2003). The chapter then concludes with a section concerning self-regulation, discussing its importance, the characteristics of self-regulated learners, and a three-phase process that self-regulation performance entails.

Chapter Three explains the design and development process of this pedagogical thesis. It includes a needs analysis, curriculum design, media development, and evaluation of the material. Chapter Four presents the actual product created for this project, both through screenshots and a description of each section of the material. Chapter Five then discusses how the product was evaluated, as well as the results of the data collected. Finally, the last chapter of this report discusses what I learned from the development and

implementation of the materials. I also include suggestions for additional future work with similar materials.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

This literature review is divided in three main sections addressing central areas in the creation of this pedagogical thesis. The first section deals with intelligibility acquisition. The second section explores the key concept of motivation, and how motivation is a critical issue in successful learning not only in a classroom, but even more so in self-regulated learning. This section also explores ways to improve and foster learners' motivation. Finally, this chapter taps into the concept of self-regulated learning, including its components and a model to develop autonomy while creating personalized learning plans.

Intelligibility

The overall goal of most ESL leaners is to be able to communicate with native and nonnative speakers successfully (Derwing & Munro, 2005). To do so, non-native speakers need to achieve a certain level of intelligibility. Before I get into what factors affect intelligibility and how to help learners develop it, I will define some of the terms that will be employed in this section.

Intelligibility, *comprehensibility* and *accentedness* may seem to be very similar concepts. However, there is research that shows that ESL speakers can be highly accented but intelligible and comprehensible to the native English speakers. This means that non-native speakers (NNS) can be easily understood, despite having a very noticeable accent (Derwing & Munro, 1997; Munro & Derwing, 1995). This shows that intelligibility, comprehensibility and accentedness are indeed distinct from each other. In the following paragraphs, I will present their definitions, the way they are measured and the factors that influence each of the three terms.

Intelligibility refers to how much of a message listeners understand (Derwing & Munro, 2005; Munro & Derwing 2006). One of the methods that have been used to measure intelligibility is to have native speakers (NS) listen to a non-native (NNS) utterance and transcribe it (Munro & Derwing, 1995). The transcription is later compared to the NNS speech production by counting the number of words transcribed correctly. This procedure shows how much of the message was understood.

Comprehensibility means the facility with which a listener can understand what is said (Derwing & Munro, 2005; Munro & Derwing 2006). In other words, *intelligibility* refers to the level at which a received message is understood, while c*omprehensibility* refers to the ease with which a listener understands the message (Derwing & Munro, 2005, p. 385). To measure *comprehensibility*, Munro and Derwing (1995) have used a 9-point Likert scale that ranged from *extremely easy to understand* to *impossible to understand*.

Accentedness is used to describe the difference between non-native and native speakers' speech sounds (Derwing & Munro, 2005; Munro & Derwing 2006). In other words, accentedness has to do with whether ESL speakers sound native-like or nonnative-like. To measure accentedness, rating scales have also been used (Munro & Derwing, 1995).

These three distinct terms are also distinguished by how different error types in L2 English speakers' utterances affect listeners. Accent, for example, is affected by various types of errors, such as phonetic, phonemic, grammatical and intonation (Munro & Derwing, 1995), speech rate and pausing (Munro & Derwing, 1998, 2001; Trofimovich & Baker, 2006). Phonetic errors refer to minor discrepancies in the sounds' articulation that may indicate accentedness but do not change meaning. In contrast, phonemic errors have the potential to change the meaning of an utterance. In their study, Munro and Derwing

(1995) also show that all error types— phonetic, phonemic, grammatical and intonation—

had an impact on comprehensibility except that phonetic errors' significance was reduced.

Interestingly, intelligibility was not affected by phonetic errors at all, and the other

errors—phonemic, grammatical and intonation—were shown to have disturbed

intelligibility in fewer utterances.

      Factors that affect intelligibility. Even though intelligibility is affected by a wide

variety of other factors, such as grammar, familiarity with the topic, a particular accent, and

a particular speaker, lexical discourse markers, issues of lexical specificity, and syntactic

relationships (Varonis & Gass, 1982; Gass, & Varonis, 1984 as cited in Derwing and Munro,

1997; Tyler, 1992), I will focus on the pronunciation aspect of intelligibility.

      When studying what factors in pronunciation affect intelligibility the most, several

researchers (Morley, 1991; McNerney & Mendelsohn, 1992; Derwing, Munro, & Wiebe,

1998; Derwing & Rossiter, 2003; Hahn, 2004; Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 2010)

claim that suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation, intonation and stress, have a greater

impact on intelligibility than segmental features, consonants and vowels, and its focus in

pronunciation instruction will lead to greater improvement.

      Derwing, Munro, and Wiebe (1998) carried out a 12-week study that showed the

supremacy of global instruction over segmental instruction. In their study, three groups of

learners' pronunciation were assessed. Each of the three groups was instructed differently.

One group was taught segmental features, another was instructed in prosodic,

supersegmental features, and the third group had no pronunciation instruction at all. The

two groups instructed in pronunciation showed improvement in accentedness, but the two

groups did not benefit equally. Only the group that had been instructed in supersegmental features was significantly more fluent and comprehensible in subsequent narrative tasks.

Similar to the previous study, Derwing and Rossiter (2003) studied the impact of instruction type on 48 non-native speakers' pronunciation. The participants of this study were also divided into three groups, receiving either global, segmental or no specific pronunciation instruction for a period of 12 weeks. At the end of the 12 weeks, only the group that received global pronunciation instruction was found to have made improvement in intelligibility and comprehensibility.

Additionally, studies on voice quality (Esling & Wong, 1983) show the impact that general speaking habits have on intelligibility. Pennington (as cited in Jones & Evans, 1995) defines voice quality as "the overall pattern of suprasegmental features that results in the general auditory impression of the speaker's voice" (p. 245). Those features are "pitch, rhythm, stress, speed, loudness, vocal setting and the realization of phonemes" (p. 245). To illustrate, when ESL learners use a voice quality setting—rounded lips or retracted tongue throughout an utterance—that is not used in English, native speakers of English will experience difficulties in understanding a message clearly. A further example, Spanish speakers tend to speak with a higher pitch and lower volume than American English speakers (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Goodwin, 2010).

Global instruction with a special focus on suprasegmentals has been proved to be crucial to improve intelligibility. However, segmental features should not be disregarded (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Goodwin, 2010). Munro and Derwing (2006) tested the usefulness of functional load theory in determining which consonants have the greatest impact on listeners' perception of accentedness and comprehensibility. They had 13 native English

speakers analyze 23 Cantonese speakers' sentences. The sentences had high or low

functional load (FL) errors. The study showed that those sentences with high FL errors had

a greater impact on the native speakers' perceived comprehensibility than those with low

FL errors. Also, the accumulation of high FL errors led to increased perceived level of

accentedness.

Functional load. Functional load theory can be very helpful in identifying sounds

that can affect intelligibility, and can be a reliable approach to the selection of instructional

material (Munro & Derwing, 2006). Functional load (FL) is a theory that determines "the

number of minimal pairs that can be found for a given opposition" (King, 1967, p. 831),

which will affect intelligibility more or less depending on the load of the pair, high or low.

FL is different from contrastive analysis in that it does not focus on determining

problematic areas when learning a second language. The focus in functional load (FL) is on

intelligibility, and how the confusion of different contrastive units, phonemes, affects

communication (Wedel, Kaplan, & Jackson, 2013). For example, in Mandarin, identifying

the tone in a syllable is as important as identifying its vowels for the message to be clear

(Surendran & Niyogi, 2006). Thus, those features identified as most impactful for

intelligibility can receive greater learner effort and attention than others that may not

make as much of a difference. Identifying high functional load features would aid both

teachers and learners in choosing and prioritizing those pronunciation aspects that need

more immediate attention.

Adam Brown (1988) presents several factors that come into play to determine the

functional load of a pair; to name a few, this list includes cumulative frequency, probability

of occurrence of the individual sound, acoustic similarity between sounds, and structural

distribution. Table 1 ranks phoneme pairs from higher (10) to lower (1) functional load

based on the different variables presented by Brown (1988). This list, however, uses the

Received Pronunciation phonemes used in British English instead of the phonemes used in

General American English. Clearly, functional load can be very useful in determining what

of all English segmental features hinder intelligibility the most if confusion occurs.

Table 1

Rank Ordering of RP Phoneme Pairs Commonly Conflated by Learners (Brown, 1988).

Vowels		Consonants	
10	/e, æ/ /æ, ʌ/ /æ, ɒ/ /ʌ, ɒ/ /ɔ:, əʊ/	10	/p, b/ /p, f/ /m, n/ /n, l/ /l, r/
9	/e, ɪ/ /e, eɪ/ /ɑ:, aɪ/ /ɜ:, əʊ/	9	/f, h/ /t, d/ /k, g/
		8	/w, v/
8	/i:, ɪ/		/s, z/
7	—	7	/b, v/
6	/ɔ:, ɜ:/ /ɒ, əʊ/		/f, v/ /ð, z/ /s, ʃ/
5	/ɑ:, ʌ/ /ɔ:, ɒ/ /ɜ:, ʌ/	6	/v, ð/ /s, ʒ/
4	/e, eə/ /æ, ɑ:/ /ɑ:, ɒ/ /ɔ:, ʊ/ /ɜ:, e/	5	/θ, ð/ /θ, s/ /ð, d/ /z, dʒ/ /n, ŋ/
		4	/θ, t/
3	/i:, ɪə/ /ɑ:, aʊ/ /u:, ʊ/	3	/tʃ, dʒ/
		2	/tʃ, ʃ/ /ʃ, ʒ/
2	/ɪə, eə/		/j, ʒ/
1	/ɔ:, ɔɪ/ /u:, ʊə/	1	/f, θ/ /dʒ, j/

Contrastive analysis. Contrastive analysis proposes that second language learning filters through the first language (Gradman, 1970; Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 2010), which leads to certain predictable errors in each language. Contrastive analysis compares the first and second languages to determine the sounds that tend to be problematic for learners based on their first language (L1). For example, a French speaker will be more likely to say *sink* instead of *think,* a Russian speaker will say *tink*, and a Spanish speaker will say *beat* instead of *bit* (Wardhaugh, 1970)*.* Korean speakers find the /l/ and /r/ sounds very difficult to produce consistently when speaking English, due to the fact that those two sounds are allophonic variants for Korean speakers. They can use them interchangeably without affecting the meaning of a word. Contrastive analysis hypothesis can be helpful in finding potentially difficult areas of English speech for NNS.

In Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin's book (2010), they briefly discuss other hypotheses such as error analysis, avoidance, interlanguage hypothesis, and markedness theory that tap into how the first language interferes with second language learning. These hypotheses and theories help determine the difficulties learners may encounter when learning a second language, as well as the intensity of those difficulties, and types of errors. For further reading on these hypotheses, refer to *Teaching Pronunciation: A Course Book and Reference Guide* by Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin (2010). Also, for a detailed list of potential problematic areas in pronunciation, categorized by languages, refer to *Teaching American English Pronunciation* by Peter Avery and Susan Ehrlich (1992).

One of the problems with these theories—functional load and contrastive analysis—is that they limit pronunciation instruction to the segment level (Pennington & Richards, 1986), which is problematic mainly because research has shown that global instruction

with emphasis on suprasegmental features has a greater impact on intelligibility than instruction focused on segmental features (Derwing, Munro, & Wiebe, 1998; Derwing & Rossiter, 2003). However, when it is necessary to target some problematic segmental features, these theories can help narrow the focus to those features that affect intelligibility the most, such as high FL errors.

To sum up, when students need to decide what they are going to work on in pronunciation, they should consider first that suprasegmental features have greater impact on intelligibility than segmental features. This would automatically lead them to focus on suprasegmental features. This, however, does not mean that disregarding segmental features is a smart choice, since the confusion of certain pairs has also proved to deter communication. Learners should then prioritize those segmental features that have higher functional load and, therefore, higher impact on communication. From among those high functional load features, learners could start with sounds that contrastive analysis helped to identify as problematic for speakers of their first language.

Methods to develop intelligibility. Students may wonder if they should focus first on all suprasegmentals and leave segmentals for later. They may also wonder if paying special attention to rules and phonological features is important, or if they should disregard self-instruction and just focus on talking to native speakers, which will automatically lead to improvement. They may wonder what kind of activities they should do, whether they should repeat sounds, words, or engage on conversations. These are some of the issues that are addressed in the following paragraphs.

Suzanne Firth (1992) suggests using what she calls the zoom principle when setting priorities to addressing individual pronunciation needs. The zoom principle refers to the

ability to adapt ones vision to different levels of specificity of pronunciation instead of focusing on only one of them. She suggests focusing first on general speaking habits—clarity, speed, loudness, breath groups, eye gaze, fluency, voice and gestures—then on specific suprasegmentals—intonation and stress—and finally on segmentals—consonants and vowels. Suzanne described this principle as the ability to go "from overall effectiveness of communication, to a specific problem, to overall effectiveness of communication, and so on" (p. 173). Jones and Evans (1995) also argue in favor of starting with a more holistic approach to pronunciation. Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin (2010) agree that segmental instruction should not be ignored, but prosodic instruction should is crucial for learners to become intelligible.

Explicit instruction. Explicit instruction takes place when teachers explain specific rules or when students are asked to pay attention to particular forms to find out the rules themselves (DeKeyser, 2003). Explicit instruction can help learners develop phonological awareness—the metalinguistic ability to identify the sound structure of words—(Venkatagiri & Levis, 2007), which in turn can lead learners to notice the difference between their productions and those of proficient speakers of L2 (Derwing & Munro, 2005).

Venkatagiri and Levis (2007) conducted a study in which 17 EFL learners had to complete 14 phonological awareness tests, three phonological short-term memory tasks, read aloud a passage and narrate picture stories. Twelve native speakers rated the EFL speakers' comprehensibility. The results show that there was a strong positive correlation between phonological awareness and comprehensibility, and phonological awareness and

phonological short-term memory. These results support the importance of explicit

pronunciation instruction to improve comprehensibility and intelligibility.

      Similarly, Saito (2011) carried out a study with 20 Japanese ESL learners to find out

to what extent explicit instruction has an effect on comprehensibility and accent. The

learners were assigned randomly to two different groups, from which one received

segmental instruction and the other did not receive any instruction at all. The group that

received explicit instruction was trained to identify, discriminate and produce in controlled

and communicative contexts a few predetermined segments. Results revealed that explicit

instruction had a significant influence on comprehensibility, though not so much on accent.

      Noticing. Noticing refers to helping learners be aware of a specific content. Derwing

and Munro (2005) highlight the importance of raising students' awareness through explicit

instruction and appropriate perception training. They point out that providing students

with explicit knowledge facilitates meaningful input by helping them notice things that they

might otherwise miss. Input refers to information that students receive that can take the

form of a spoken utterance. Research shows that acquiring pronunciation is very much like

acquiring syntax in that learners need to notice what they are doing to acquire it, or in

other words, learners need to notice for input to become intake (Schmidt, 1990).

      Derwing and Munro (2005) share how a study done by Bradlow, Pisoni, Akahane-

Yamada, and Tohkura (1997) indicates that perceptual training techniques lead to

improvements in production. In this study, Japanese learners were trained to identify the

difference between /r/ and /l/. Their pronunciation of these sounds was then tested. The

results showed that participants' production of /r/ and /l/ had improved, even when they

did not receive production training. This study highlights the importance of providing

discrimination and identification exercises to improve pronunciation.

Output hypothesis. Output hypothesis refers to what students produce, such as a

conversation in speaking or an essay in writing. Izumi, Bigelow, Fujiwara, and Fearnow

(1999) explain that output has a threefold purpose, as proposed by Swain (1993, 1995 as

cited by Izumi et al., 1999). First, it aids learners in their hypothesis testing as they learn an

L2. ESL learners may test their knowledge as they interact with native speakers whose

facial expressions and other cues may inform the speaker of the effectiveness of the

hypothesis tested. Second, output can lead learners to engage in metalinguistic functions,

and therefore increase their awareness of forms, rules, etc. For this to happen, however,

learners need to reflect upon their performance and language. When reflection and meta-

talk—talk about language and the learning process—occur, learners' experience "more

syntactic processing than is necessary for the comprehension of input," leading to modified

and improved output (Izumi et al., 1999, p. 423). Third, output may help learners notice a

gap between their production and the native speakers' speech. This allows learners to

identify problematic areas, which they could focus on later on.

In their study, Izumi et al. (1999) discovered that for output to lead to final intake it

would be necessary not to exert heavy cognitive demands on the learners when they

engage in output activities (p. 446). Through a closer look at their data, Izumi and Bigelow

(2000) noticed that output does not always draw learners' attention to the target form. One

of the reasons for those results can be explained by clarifying that exposure to input does

not necessarily suppose learners will notice specific features of that input, which is crucial

for input to become intake. In other words, output can lead to improvement as long as learners notice those specific aspects of their input that need improvement.

In the light of the previous results, the authors give a few suggestions to aid learners in noticing from their productions (Izumi & Bigelow, 2000). They suggest helping learners to complete awareness-raising activities such as developing noticing strategies, i.e. text-scanning and proofreading skills. Also, teachers could present improved input after performance by highlighting the parts that learners need to focus on. Carrying out analysis and corrections as well as giving feedback on the content and form are a few more ways to draw learners' attention to specific language features.

Communicative approach. The end goal of learners becoming more intelligible in English is to communicate successfully with native and non-native English speakers (Derwing & Munro, 2005). A communicative approach to learning language regards meaningful and authentic interaction as not only the goal but also as a means to reach that goal of being communicative competent (Brown, 2007). With respect to pronunciation, critics typically point out that there is often a tendency to teach it through outdated audio lingual methods, using a lot of drills, rote memorization, and decontextualized words and sentences (Jones, 1997; Vitanova and Miller, 2002). Other proponents of pronunciation instruction, on the other hand, argue that many programs are in actuality using curricula that focus on training learners to be communicatively competent (Morley, 1991). Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin (2010) have validated this view, emphasizing the importance of pronunciation instruction being embedded in a communicative framework that integrates suprasegmental and segmental features in a way that meets learners' needs (Celce-Murcia, Derwing, Goodwin, 2010).

Along the lines of the communicative approach, some studies have been carried out to see the impact of conversation on intelligibility. Derwing, Munro, and Thomson (2007) conducted a study that showed the positive effect that frequent effort in communication had on pronunciation. This study focused on the process through which beginning ESL speakers with Mandarin and Slavic language backgrounds developed fluency and comprehensibility over a period of two years. All of the participants were taking ESL classes. Throughout the two years duration of the study, the participants were monitored through both recorded speech samples and reported estimates of how much English they were using per week. Thirty-three native English speakers rated the speech samples at three points in the two-year period. The results demonstrated that being engaged in English conversations and media use correlated directly with developing fluency and comprehensibility. There was a significant improvement in the Slavic learners' comprehensibility that was not present in the Mandarin learners. The authors reported that one of the factors explaining the difference is that Slavic speakers engaged in English conversations and media use more frequently than the Mandarin speakers did. Willingness to communicate, which refers to the disposition to interact with other speakers, is therefore one factor that needs to be addressed and encouraged as it results in a significant difference in learners' fluency.

A similar project carried out in Japan focused on providing students with speaking opportunities in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. Results showed interesting effects on students' perceptions of fluency, as well as their enjoyment of speaking tasks as they engaged in conversations with peers outside of class. The researchers for this particular study, Provenzano and Yue (2001), had 114 students

participate in an assignment that required them to engage in conversations with their

classmates outside the classroom. They asked their students to prepare what they were

going to talk about before engaging in conversation, and to reflect on their performance

after the conversation. As part of the assignment, students were to complete a worksheet

with examples and specific information regarding the three aspects of the speaking task

(preparation, conversation, reflection). The results of the survey showed that students

enjoyed using English more, and felt more relaxed when talking with their classmates.

Their confidence increased, and they felt that their fluency increased as well.

These two studies carried out with Mandarin, Slavic, and Japanese speakers, are

applicable to the current study as they show that students increased in fluency and

comprehensibility when they engaged in meaningful conversation as part of their practice.

The positive effects of conversational experiences extend to all languages, not just those

present in the studies. Therefore, all second language learners can benefit from

conversation experiences. A further study carried out by Jones and Evans (1995), in which

Cantonese speakers enrolled in the first year of translation and interpretation were

introduced to voice quality using a role-plays, shows that students were better able to

produce phonological patterns when using communicative techniques.

To sum up, for learners to acquire pronunciation and to become intelligible, they

need to receive explicit instruction of the English phonological system. For example, if ESL

learners are struggling with the pronunciation of English /r, l/ sounds, they would greatly

benefit from the instruction of place and manner of articulation of those sounds. Helping

learners be aware of their own speech production and the native speakers' speech

production with plenty of opportunities to practice speaking, especially in communicative

contexts, will bring forth positive results, as suggested by the research reviewed above.

Motivation

Motivation plays a key role in mastering a second language (Csizér & Dörnyei,

2005a; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003). Even though factors such as learner's ability, learning

opportunities, and quality of instruction also influence the outcome (Csizér & Dörnyei,

2005b), motivation is "one of the key factors that influence the rate and success of second

or foreign language (L2) learning." Motivation provides the "primary impetus to initiate L2

learning, and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process"

(Dörnyei, 1998, p. 117). The most skilled student without motivation will not be as

successful as a learner who, despite some deficiencies, is highly motivated (Dörnyei &

Csizér, 1998). Thus, motivation is a crucial variable in the learning outcomes.

Despite the fact that no theory captures motivation in all its complexity, I will

present mainstream views on motivation, according to Dörnyei (1998), from the field of

motivational psychology: Self-determination, expectancy-values, goals theories, and I will

discuss their application to L2 learning motivation. The reason why I chose to make

reference to these theories is because the current motivational models on second language

acquisition contain elements from the theories mentioned above. After introducing these

three main psychological theories, I will expand on Gardner's Socio-Educational Model and

Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self-System.

Self-determination. Deci and Ryan (2000) developed the self-determination theory

(SDT) that claims that motivation is based on needs. SDT hypothesizes that people engage

in activities that satisfy their needs such as competence, relatedness, and autonomy. Individuals that interact in an environment that fosters the fulfillment of these needs will experience optimal outcomes. On the other hand, when people experience adverse conditions, such as an over controlling environment, they get discouraged; and therefore, their motivation suffers and the outcome is less than desired.

The same authors have found two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan, 1985) refers to those activities individuals do in the absence of other consequences. Intrinsic motivation implies that the sole motive of carrying out an activity is enjoyment and pleasure. Extrinsic motivation, however, has to do with motives that bring about rewards or have external consequences. For example, someone who decides to learn a second language because of the possibility of a future raise in salary and a new position in his job is motivated extrinsically.

Intrinsic and extrinsic categories are not clear-cut types of motivation. Deci and Ryan (2000) claim that there are different levels of extrinsic motivation. They proposed a self-determination continuum (2000, p. 237) (see Figure 1), which ranges from amotivation (the lack of motivation) to intrinsic motivation, where extrinsic motivation varies in four different degrees of autonomy. Extreme *extrinsic regulation* is the type of motivation that is completely regulated by an external source, such as rewards and punishment.

A second type of extrinsic motivation is called *introjected regulation*, in which the individual is somewhat regulated but does not accept the activity as his own goal, but rather wants to protect his own sense of worth. An example of this type of motivation would be when, upon a teacher's assignment, learners carry out a role-play in front of a

class. If for some reason learners do not think that this activity would help them learn, they would still carry out the task and would even try to do it correctly to protect their image in front of the rest of the classmates.

The third degree of extrinsic motivation, *identified regulation*, is self-regulated because the individuals see the value of the task and identify with it. The individuals accept the action as their own goal. For instance, students who are part of an English program may perceive that giving a presentation in class is useful to practice oral skills, and therefore they are motivated to put forth effort to carry out that task.

The last type of extrinsic motivation is very close to intrinsic motivation and is called *integrated regulation*. In this case, the action is fully assimilated to the self and the person is as self-regulated as with an intrinsic motivation. To illustrate, if learners with integrated regulation are assigned to carry out 10-minute conversations everyday, they would act as if they had set those goals for themselves and would therefore make decisions that would best lead them to accomplish their goals.

One of the premises proposed by self-determination theory is that intrinsic motivation leads to more effective learning performance than extrinsic motivation (Valas & Sovik, 1993; Grolnick & Ryan, 1987; Benware & Deci, 1984). Students who are given more opportunities to choose and have teachers who are less controlling are more intrinsically motivated and have higher quality learning experiences. On the contrary, evaluations and rewards (examples of extrinsic motivation) undermine intrinsic motivation (Deci, 1971; Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999) and lead to lower quality learning such as a decrease in the conceptual processing of information (Grolnick & Ryan, 1987).

 Another premise proposed by Deci and Ryan (2000) is that to increase intrinsic

motivation, instructors have to help L2 learners to engage in activities that will satisfy

three crucial needs: *autonomy*, *competence*, and *relatedness*. For example, controlling

environments, those characterized by rewards, threats, etc., lead to reduced intrinsic

motivation and poorer performance because they undermine the need for *autonomy*.

Therefore, providing choices and acknowledging people's experience enhances their

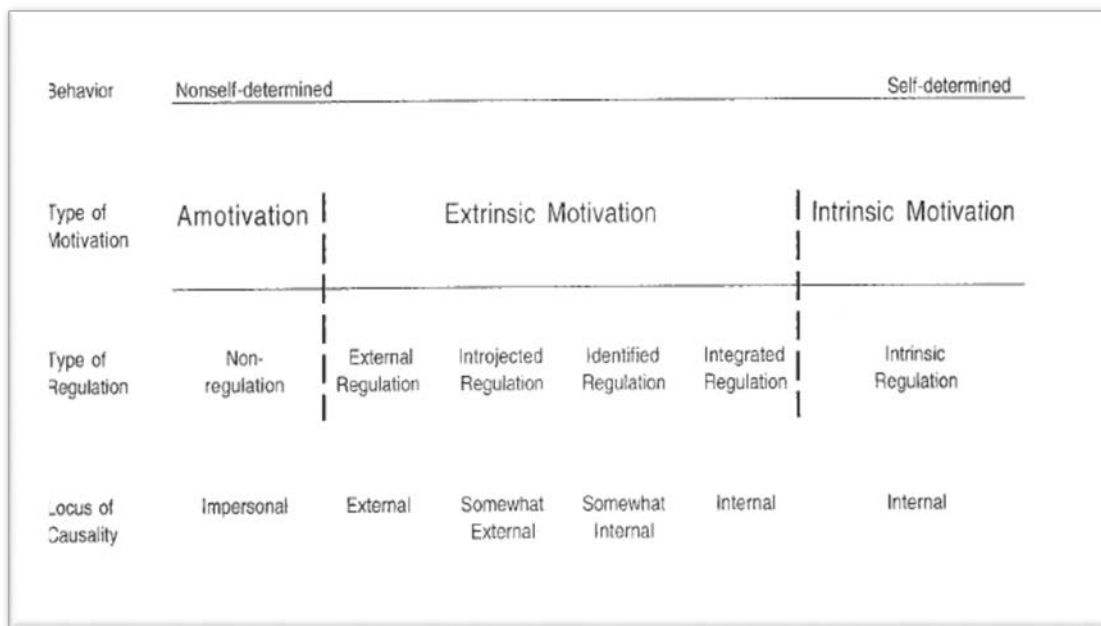intrinsic motivation and confidence in performance, resulting in finer outcomes (2000).

Figure 1. The self-regulated continuum showing the motivational, self-regulatory, and perceived locus of causality bases of behavior that varies in degree to which they are self-determined (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Several studies have demonstrated that low controlled environments correlate with

more successful learning. Vansteenkiste, Soenens, Sierens, Luyckx, and Lens (2009) carried

out a couple of relevant studies among high school and college students. The first one had

the participation of 881 high school students from Belgium. In the second study, there were

484 teachers training students from Belgium too. They investigated motivational profiles

and the impact they had on outcomes. They found four main types of motivational profiles:

A good quality motivation group (high autonomous, low controlled), a poor quality motivation group (low autonomous, high controlled), a low quantity motivation group (low autonomous, low controlled) and a high quantity motivation group (high autonomous and high controlled). The results demonstrate that those learners who are more self-regulated and have low controlled structure exhibit the highest scores and had the most ideal learning patterns.

With respect to the need of feeling competent, individuals who receive negative feedback or feedback that makes them perceive themselves as incompetent such as "you are capable of better work" leads to decreased intrinsic motivation. In contrast, informational feedback such as "generally direct object goes before indirect object" accompanied with positive feedback that leads to a good perception of competence, increases intrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan, 2000).

Similar to autonomy and competence, even though it does not impact motivation to the same degree, relatedness influences intrinsic motivation and final outcomes. Relatedness refers to the need human beings have to relate and connect with other humans. Individuals who have positive interactions and relate well with those in their environment experience higher intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is more likely to flourish in contexts characterized by a sense of security and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 71). A study carried out by Ryan & Grolnick (1986) shows that students experience higher levels of intrinsic motivation when teachers were 'warm and caring'.

Other authors have stressed the weight that developing intrinsic motivation and autonomy has on successful L2 learning. Douglas Brown (2007) emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation in the classroom in helping learners develop the value

for the task itself, so that students can see the personal gains for carrying out that task, such as knowledge or the pleasure of learning and growing. Dickinson (1995) states in her review "enhanced motivation is conditional on leaners taking responsibility for their own learning" (pp. 173-174).

In the light of self-determination theory, teachers can better help students if they give them opportunities to make decisions about where they want to go and how. This will satisfy their need to be autonomous (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Also, by helping students understand the reasons why the teacher chooses a certain goal and a specific plan (in a predetermined program of study, for example), teachers are giving students the opportunity to internalize those goals, and make them their own (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In this way, learners can become more self-determined and more motivated.

To summarize, teachers need to make sure that the students' need for competence is also satisfied so that their level of motivation does not decrease. Therefore, teachers should give informational feedback to their students so they will not have a low perception of their capabilities. Students should know that they are capable of carrying out any tasks the teacher assigns them, and that failure or success is not a consequence of a lack of competence. They should know that they are learning to do a new task, and that they have all the capability to make it happen.

Finally, students' need for relatedness requires them to have positive interactions with the instructor, while the lack thereof impairs motivation. Authors such as Gardner (1985) and Dörnyei (1998) have included students' perceptions and attitudes towards the L2 teacher in their models of motivation as factors that influence students' motivation.

Expectancy-value theories. In addition to self-determination theory, another mainstream theory was developed to explain the complex nature of motivation, the expectancy-value theory. According to this theory, motivation is the result of the individual's expectancy of success of a task and the value attached to the success of the task (Dörnyei, 1998). To attain expectancy of success, there are three theories, which have been adopted L2 motivational researchers, that explain the cognitive processes individuals, go through: attribution, self-efficacy and value theories. I will briefly discuss these theories in the following paragraphs.

Attribution theory. According to attribution theory, the way individuals process successes and failures will affect future outcomes. If learners attribute their failures to factors they do not have control over, such as intelligence, they will feel helpless, and they will believe "that the likelihood of an event is independent of what [they do]" (Weiner, 1979, p. 21). Consequently, their motivation and effort will decrease. However, if failure is attributed to factors that can be controlled such as choice of strategies, time management, etc., learners are more likely to persist and put forth more effort to achieve their goals. The task of the teacher is to train their students to be aware of those factors that they can control which may be impairing their performance.

Training learners to develop appropriate attributional skills has proven to have positive results not only on final outcomes but also during the process of exerting effort towards set goals. Försterling (1985) demonstrates in his review of 15 attributional training studies that attributional retraining techniques lead to an increase of persistence and performance. These techniques consist of helping individuals to attribute their failures

to lack of effort, which is a factor that is internal and controllable. This is something instructors should examine to foster L2 learners' motivation.

Self-efficacy theory. Self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993) has to do with how people judge their own abilities to carry out specific tasks. Self-efficacy will affect the difficulty of the goals that learners set, the kind of activities chosen, the effort put forth towards the goal, level of persistence, and so forth. Individuals with a strong sense of self-efficacy will approach with confidence those tasks that are difficult or represent a personal threat. They will also "visualize success scenarios" (p. 118) which will guide and motivate their performance, whereas people who have a lower sense of self-efficacy "visualize failure scenarios" (p. 118) and spend more energy on what can go wrong than in acting for success.

Instructors can help learners develop a strong sense of self-efficacy to help them face threatening situations—situations in which students could make mistakes and could feel embarrassed or interpret making mistakes negatively—with confidence (Dörnyei, 1998). Students also need to understand that self-efficacy beliefs are based on their own perceptions of people's opinions, teachers' evaluations, failures and successes, rather than their ability and competence. It would be helpful to make learners aware of the real source of their beliefs. It is not the evaluations and feedback, but their own perception of those evaluations and feedback that makes the difference.

Value theory. Value theory proposes that the value attributed to success of a task influences learners' effort in accomplishing a task. Value, also known as valence, incentive values, and task value, has not been developed to the same extent *expectancy for success* has. Eccles and Wigfield (1995; Dörnyei, 1998) have established four components that

make up valence: attainment value, intrinsic value, extrinsic utility value, and cost. *Attainment value* refers to the importance of being successful at the task. *Intrinsic value* is related to the interest the individual has on the task. *Extrinsic utility value* has to do with how enabling the task is towards reaching the goals. Finally, *cost* represents the negative value of the task such as effort, time, emotional cost, etc.

The individual's effort towards achieving a goal will depend on the interplay of those four elements. For example, if attainment value is very high, it is very likely that the individual will put forth great effort despite the *cost* of the task, such as amount of time, emotional strains and other sacrifices, because achieving that goal is more valuable than the cost. However, if the individual does not conceive a task as meaningful and important, carrying out that task will not be worth the effort and time put into it. Therefore, no goals or high quality outcomes will be achieved.

Expectancy-value theories have been applied to L2 motivational models by several authors, among them Gardner and Dörnyei. Gardner (1985) has borrowed from attribution, self-efficacy, and valence theories, and he categorizes them as mediating variables between motivational antecedents and motivational behavior. Expectancy-value theories are also part of Dörnyei's views on motivation, and they are mingled within the three components of the *L2 Motivational Self-System* he proposes (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). Gardner and Dörnyei's models will be explained in greater detail in the L2 motivational models section of this chapter.

All in all, attributing success and failure to factors that can be controlled will lead students to take more responsibility for their own learning. They will be more prone to expect success, and consequently will exhibit higher levels of motivation. Teachers can

definitely aid students in understanding that there is something they can do to be in control of their own learning.

Similarly, instructors can help learners realize that their own views of their capabilities will influence their efforts and choices, and therefore the results. Even though teachers cannot do the work of a counselor, they can do their part by giving positive feedback, highlighting the students' strengths, and attributing weakness to other factors such as experience, choice of strategies, and so forth. Soon students will learn that all they have to do is either gain more experience by continuing to practice or, or switch to a strategy that will work more effectively.

Goals theories. Goals theories include theories on goal setting and goal orientation. Goal-setting theory explains how results are influenced by not only setting goals but also by the nature of the goals (Locke, 1996). Goal orientation deals with intentions on the part of the learner to either master the goal for intrinsic reasons or get it done for external reasons (Ames, 1992).

Goal-setting theory. Motivation is also fostered by setting goals (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995; Locke, 1996). Goal-setting theory states that action is initiated by purpose and that actions start when goals are set and pursued by choice. Locke (1996) also highlights the importance of self-efficacy in determining human action.

Locke (1996) summarized some of the most important contributions of goal-setting theory. One of the premises is that levels of specificity and difficulty of the goals lead to varied results (Locke, 1996). The more specific the goal is, the better regulated the actions will be, and the higher the performance level. The "do your best" type of goal is not specific enough, and it elicits varying levels of performance. In contrast, difficult specific goals lead

to greater achievement, while commitment, ability and knowledge to achieve a high goal are crucial for its attainment. Locke (1996) specifies that for individuals to be committed to a goal, they have to believe that the goal is important and attainable; otherwise, effort and performance will suffer.

Additionally, pursuing goals is more powerful when individuals can keep track of their progress (Locke, 1996). This implies that teachers should find means to provide feedback with respect to students' progress. In a self-regulated environment, learners should find ways to measure their progress. If they are trying to work on fluency in speaking, they can keep track of words per minute, as well as pauses and hesitations. Seeing progress will instigate greater effort if strategies chosen are effective, and will allow the learners to make necessary changes if methods are not effective.

When goals are complex, finding effective and appropriate strategies gets more complicated. This is when consulting others with more experience and finding role models is very useful and feed motivation.

To sum up, goal setting leads to increased motivation in that goals direct attention to activities that are relevant, they regulate effort dedicated to the task, they encourage persistence until the goal is achieved, and they promote the exploration of relevant plans and strategies (Dörnyei, 1998).

Goal-orientation theory. Goal-orientation theory proposes two ways of looking at goals that have an influence on motivation. The two orientations are mastery and performance orientations (Ames, 1992). The former has to with the individual's desire to improve and grow. The latter is related to the individual's concern to achieve a goal and obtain public recognition. Ames (1992) explains that mastery goals call for more difficult

work, higher intrinsic motivation, a more positive attitude towards learning, and higher risk taking than performance orientations. Mastery goals help individuals to be more fully involved and committed, resulting in maintained achievement behaviors, and consequently successful outcomes. On the contrary, since performance goals seek to avoid failure, individuals would set easier and low-risk goals resulting in lower quality outcomes.

L2 Motivational Theories

Several L2 motivational models take up elements of the preceding theories and apply them to L2 learning. In the following paragraphs, I will discuss two mainstream models: Gardner's Socio-Educational Model and Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self-System.

Socio-Educational Model. Stemming from social psychology, Gardner proposed a model that he calls the Socio-Educational Model to explain motivation based mainly on empirical support (Dörnyei, 1998). Tremblay and Gardner (1995) define motivation as "the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in the activity" (p. 506). According to this definition, there are three main components in language learning motivation: putting forth effort to learn a language, wanting to learn the language, and enjoying learning the language. To say a learner is motivated, all three components, effort, will and attitude (Dörnyei, 1998) must be present. If somebody puts forth effort to learn a language but does not have the desire to learn it, and will not experience satisfaction with the task of learning, that person is not going to exert the same amount of effort and persistence that a motivated learner will. Motivated learners need to exhibit evidence of all three components.

In Gardner's Socio-Educational Model (1985), he proposes two classes of variables that influence motivational behavior (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995): Integrativeness and attitudes towards learning situations. The former class of variables has to do with positive views about L2 native speakers. This class comprises three types of attitudes: attitudes towards target language group, interest in foreign languages, and integrative orientation. The latter has to do with attitudes towards language course and attitudes towards the language teacher. These two classes of variables are included in a more general category called language attitudes, which are called by Gardner motivational antecedents.

Motivational antecedents precede motivational behaviors, which refers to those events that can be observed. The antecedents influence motivational behavior; however, these two areas are mediated by other factors: goal salience, valence, self-efficacy and adaptive attributions (see Figure 2). In search for empirical support of Gardner's model, Tremblay and Gardner (1995) studied the impact of motivational antecedents on motivational behaviors in 75 students from a francophone school. This study indicates a strong link between the antecedent variables and achievement. This means that antecedent variables such as the learners' attitudes towards the course and the teacher may influence their motivation, affecting their learning success. Also, if students have positive views about L2 native speakers and their culture, the learners again are more prone to make more effort to learn the language.

Within those antecedent variables, Gardner and his colleagues (Lambert, Gardner, Barik, & Tunstall, 1963) proposed two orientations that influence language attitudes: integrative and instrumental orientations. Integrative orientation is the predisposition to have a positive outlook on L2 and its culture, and to want to learn the second language to

be part of an L2 community. The orientation can be instrumental when the learner sees

learning an L2 for practical benefits, and the motive to study the language could be getting

a job promotion. The higher the levels of integrative motivation, the more the learners

desire to interact with L2 individuals and the more they desire to resemble them (Csizér &

Dörnyei, 2005b). This desire to interact with L2 native speakers leads to greater effort to

learn the language than learning English for more practical reasons such as a better job.
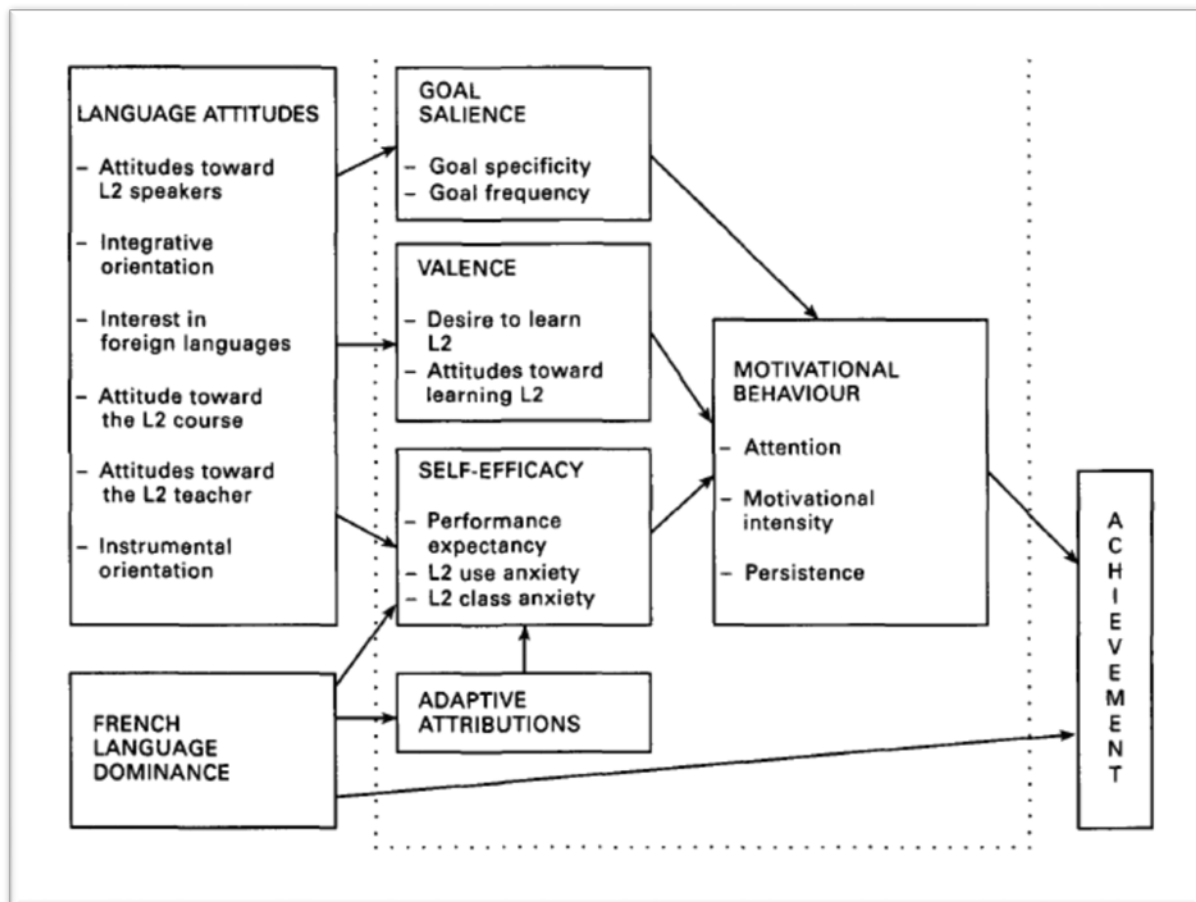
Figure 2. Tremblay and Gardner's (1995) Proposed Model of L2 Motivation (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995).

Going beyond the desire to interact with native speakers, studies on ethnic group

affiliation shows that learners' proficiency is greatly influenced by their level of affiliation

to the L2 group. Researchers like Elizabeth Gatbonton and her colleagues have looked into

the influence of acculturation on ESL proficiency (Gatbonton, Trofimovich, & Magid, 2005) and on pronunciation. They have investigated how this psychosocial factor influences learners' pronunciation of an L2. Her research has shown that second language learners modify or adjust their accent to fit the ethnic group of their choice, either L1 or L2 depending on their needs and context. If learners feel more identified with or want to be more like the L2 culture, they score higher in proficiency and in pronunciation.

L2 Motivational Self-System. Besides Gardner's model of motivation, Dörnyei's model is one of the most thorough and up to date constructs on motivation. Dörnyei (1998) formerly defined motivation as a "process whereby a certain amount of instigation force arises, initiates action, and persists as long as no other force comes into play to weaken it and thereby terminate action, or until the planned outcome has been reached" (p. 118). However, in Dörnyei's (Dörnyei & Chan, 2013) most recent views on motivation, he defines it "as a function of the language learners' vision of their desired future language selves", in which the learners' capacity to generate mental imagery determines the level of motivation (p. 437).

Dörnyei (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009) developed a model of motivation called L2 Motivational Self System, which is grounded on the psychology theory of selves and the concept of integrativeness. This model explains the integrative motivations as a process of identification with one self and not with an outer group. This model consists of three components: an *ideal L2 self*, *ought-to-be self and L2 Learning Experience*.

The *ideal L2 self* refers to the L2-specific facet of one's ideal self (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009), those characteristics the person would like to have (Magid & Chan, 2012). Generally these characteristics come from their own desires, hopes and wishes. The ideal self

comprises integrative and internalized instrumental motivations. The *ought-to self* is a

representation of attributes other people believe the person ought to have. Those

attributes, which can be internalized at different levels, are related to responsibilities,

obligations and duties. The ought-to L2 self, is made up of extrinsic (less internalized)

instrumental motives. This concept resembles that of the self-determination theory

proposed by Deci and Ryan (2000) in that there are different levels of extrinsic motivation.

The more internalized extrinsic motivations would be part of the Ideal L2 self, whereas

those extrinsic motives that are less accepted are part of the ought-to self. The L2 learning

experience component makes reference to those motivations that originated from having

the experience. It is hypothesized that these selves serve as motivators due to the inner

desire to reduce the breach between the actual self and the ideal/ought-to-be selves

(Higgins, 1987).

Envisioning and imagery play a crucial role in the L2 Motivational Self System

(Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). For ideal L2 self to be a strong motivator, Dörnyei outlines

several conditions. First of all, students need to have an elaborated and vivid self-image.

Creating a strong self-image involves the use of the senses, such as vision, touch and smell.

Another condition for the ideal L2 self to be a strong motivator is that it has to be

perceived as possible and should not clash with expectations of the environment. This

condition relates to the expectancy-value theories that claim that the more possible a goal

is perceived by the learner, the more motivated he or she will be and the more effort they

will put forth to achieve that goal. It also has to be activated by the learner's working self-

concept. The ideal self also has to be accompanied by effective procedural strategies and

plans. Starting with setting goals and followed by a methodology to achieve the goal and

finalize with a check-up section celebrating goals achieved, reevaluating others, and so forth are important steps in the process. Finally, the ideal L2 self has a greater impact on motivation if both tendencies are activated: approach (the desired ideal self) and avoid (the feared self). Being aware of the negative consequences of not achieving the desired end-state, can motivate the learner to press forward towards achieving the ideal self.

Dörnyei and Chan (2013) conducted a study among 172 Chinese students to see how related students' imagery abilities were with their future L2 self-guides, and how those variables were connected to learning achievement in English and Mandarin languages. They have found that ideal L2 self highly correlates with intended effort, and that imagery capacities are crucial in the development of strong future L2 selves.

Therefore, to help students increase their motivation, one of the first strategies teachers should apply is to help them create their vision. First of all, teachers should help students be aware of the importance of envisioning an ideal self. After that, they can aid their students to think about past ideal selves and be aware of aspirations, dreams, and desires that they have had in the past. Also, they can show them powerful role models. Teachers can remind students of what they do not want to be, or the place they do not want to find themselves as part of strengthening their vision of their ideal self.

To sum up, any sort of instruction should aim at helping students to exercise their autonomy and have plenty of opportunities to choose (goals, activities, etc.). Learners should learn to attribute success and failure to factors they can control and that therefore, they can make all necessary adjustments to attain the desired outcome. Also, learners should be encouraged to set specific and challenging goals as a means of enhancing their motivation, as well as having a well-informed plan that gives them that sense of security

and assurance of knowing it is possible to achieve goals previously set. Instructors should help learners be aware of the importance of building a strong L2 self, and the importance of having positive views and attitudes towards the L2 culture as factors that will influence their motivation.

There are several other views on motivation applied to L2 learning that have not been mentioned in this literature review. However, giving students the opportunity to be self-initiated, self-regulated, helping them develop success-leading patterns with respect to past successes and failure attribution, self-efficacy, helping them find a purpose and set goals, and helping them find integrative and intrinsic motives to engage in certain task, will definitely lead learners to increased motivation and more successful learning.

Self-Directed Learning

Self-regulation is defined as "…a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action" (Little, 1991, p. 4). Zimmerman (2002) refers to self-regulation as "self-generated thoughts, feelings and behaviors that are oriented to attaining goals" (p. 65). Schunk & Zimmerman (1994, 1998) suggest eight main skill areas encompassed in self-regulation. These component skills are: 1) setting specific goals for oneself, 2) applying powerful strategies to achieve those goals, 3) monitoring one's performance for signs of progress, 4) restructuring one's physical and social environments based on the goals, 5) managing one's time efficiently, 6) self-evaluating one's method, 7) attributing causation to results, and 8) adapting future methods.

Benson (2001) talks about autonomy as the ability some individuals have of taking

charge of their own learning in which the learner is in control of three interrelated areas of

autonomy: learning management, cognitive processes, and learning content.

Learning management. Learning management refers to behaviors learners exhibit to

direct the planning, organization and evaluation of their learning. Learning management

includes metacognitive strategies and social/affective strategies. Learning strategies

facilitate self-directed behavior (Eckstein, 2007), hence the importance of providing

students with strategies to foster autonomy. Learning strategies can be described as

decisions students make to learn faster, easier, more effective and more enjoyable (Oxford,

1990). O'Malley and Chamot (1990) explained learning strategies in terms of thoughts and

behaviors that aid learners' comprehension, acquisition, and retention of new information.

Developing metalinguistic and metacognitive notions as well as giving them

knowledge on materials, techniques and planning skills are crucial for learners to be

successful and efficient self-directed learners (Gremmo & Riley, 1995). Learners need to

improve their methodological resources, such as techniques and activities, selection of

materials and so forth.

Metacognitive strategies are those abilities that oversee the process of learning.

They are skills learners use "to manage, direct, regulate, and guide their learning" (Wenden,

1998, p. 519). Wenden proposes three main metacognitive strategies: planning, monitoring

and evaluating. Cook (1993) suggests 5 metacognitive strategies: directed attention (when

deciding in advance to concentrate on general aspects of a task), selective attention (paying

attention to specific aspects of a task), self-monitoring (checking one's performance), self-

evaluation (appraising one's performance in relation to one's own standards), and self-

reinforcement (rewarding oneself for success). O'Malley and Chamot (1990) propose two

more strategies than Cook: Planning, directed attention, selective attention, self-

management, self-monitoring, problem identification, and self-evaluation.

With respect to social and affective strategies, Oxford (1990) categorizes self-

reinforcement strategy as part of the affective strategies instead of metacognitive strategies

(Cook, 1993). The social and affective set of skills control the management of the learning

process by making decisions, and taking action in relation to other people, social strategies,

and to self (Benson, 2001). Oxford's taxonomy (1990, p. 21) of social and affective

strategies is presented in Figure 3.

Cognitive processes. A second aspect of autonomy is concerned with having control

over cognitive processes (Benson, 2001). Some cognitive strategies presented by Cook

(1993, p. 114) are repetition, resourcing (using dictionaries and other materials),

translation, note-taking, deduction (conscious application of L2 rules), contextualization,

(when embedding a word or a phrase on a meaningful sequence), transfer (that is using

knowledge acquired in the L1 to remember and understand facts and sequences in the L2),

inference, question for clarification (when asking the teacher to explain, etc.).

Schmidt (1990) and Robinson (1995) claim that the cognitive process of noticing

plays a crucial role in L2 acquisition. They say that awareness and consciousness need to

happen so that linguistic information can be processed. Leow (1997) carried out an

empirical study that analyzed the think-aloud protocols from 28 second language learners

of Spanish at a beginning level. The participants had to complete a problem-solving task

and two post-exposure tasks. The results showed that meta-awareness correlated with a

higher use of processes such as hypothesis testing and morphological rule formation, and
that attention allowed learners to take in and retrieve the content more efficiently.

Social strategies:

    A.   Asking question:

        1.   Asking for clarification or verification

        2.   Asking for correction

    B.   Cooperating with others:

        1.   Cooperating with peers

        2.   Cooperating with proficiency users of the new language

    C.   Empathizing with others:

        1.   Developing cultural understanding

        2.   Becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings

Affective strategies

    A.   Lowering anxiety

        1.   Using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation

        2.   Using music

        3.   Using laughter

    B.   Encouraging yourself

        1.   Making positive statements

        2.   Taking risks wisely

        3.   Rewarding yourself

    C.   Taking your emotional temperature.

        1.   Listening to your body

        2.   Using a checklist

        3.   Writing a language learning diary

        4.   Discussing your feelings with someone else

Figure 3. Oxford's Social/Affective Strategies (Oxford, 1990, p. 21)

      Another cognitive strategy that has a great impact on autonomy is reflection. Little
(1997) points out that the capacity for reflection is a distinctive characteristic in
autonomous learners. Smyth (1991, as cited in Benson, 2001, p. 91) identifies five moments
in the reflection process: Describe, inform, confront, reconstruct, and legitimacy of current
practice. There are different kinds of questions that aid these five moments: 1) What do I do?
2) What does this description mean? 3) How did I come to be like this? 4) How might I do things

differently? 5) What do my practices say about my assumptions and beliefs? Where did these ideas

come from? What social practices are expressed in these ideas?

Learning content. A third component of autonomy suggested by Benson (2001) is

having control over learning content. This has to do with *what* is going to be learned.

Autonomous learners should also make decisions pertaining to the language as well as

what aspects of that language they desire to acquire. However, very much like the

internalized extrinsic motivation proposed by Deci and Ryan (1990), there are learners

that take in the content decided by others as their own, and work autonomously towards

achieving them.

With respect to these two types of autonomous learners, Littlewood (1999)

proposed two types of autonomy: proactive and reactive. Proactive autonomous learners

make decisions pertaining to the direction they want to go, as well as the methodology and

strategies. Reactive autonomous learners adopt the direction and objectives set up for

them, but will plan and make other decisions about methodology and activities on their

own. Therefore, even in contexts where content is already decided for the learner,

autonomy can still be fostered and encouraged in students.

Importance of autonomy. Developing autonomy in students provides them with

countless advantages, such as increased intrinsic motivation, productivity and self-esteem,

as well as higher levels of proficiency (Dickinson, 1995). Because working autonomously

strengthens intrinsic motivation, it leads to more motivated learners and therefore to more

efficient and meaningful learning (Dickinson, 1995). Students who are better at taking the

initiative learn more and better than those that wait for their teachers to tell them what to

do (Knowels, 1975). Learners generate knowledge instead of passively receiving it from the

instructors (Kenny, 1993). Some experiments have shown that learning to learn can help

learners who are slow and feel unsuccessful to become more efficient and overcome their

feelings of frustrations and incompetence (Gremmo & Riley, 1995). Students initiated

choice of texts and materials have greater probabilities of being internalized or learned

than those teacher-imposed materials (Slimani, 1989). In addition, high levels of

proficiency do not seem to be achieved only through formal instruction, which means that

self-directed learning plays a crucial role in achieving higher levels of proficiency (Benson,

2001). Autonomy is essential not only for life-long learning skills but for quality learning

and overall well-being.

Autonomy and scaffolding. Creating a guide to help ESL learners improve their

intelligibility would, by no means, threaten the whole concept of independent study. There

is literature that supports the role of scaffolding or expert intervention to enable and foster

learners' self-regulation habits (Gremmo & Riley, 1995). Instruction seems to be vital at the

beginning stages of the process of becoming autonomous. Gremmo and Riley (1995) stated,

"self-directed learning scheme providing a reasonable variety of methodological and

linguistic resources can help learners to find their way through any foreign language"(p.

155).

In fact, Jones (1998) discovered that fully autonomous learning is effective when

learners have some background knowledge and series of skills. This means that students

who are at an intermediate level have a greater probability of taking advantage of working

independently, without teacher's intervention, than learners at a beginning level, where the

level of dropout is very high. In his study, Jones (1998) also demonstrated that working

independently does not exclude classwork, and that they actually can complement each

other very well. The combination of autonomy and classwork works better than either in isolation.

The intervention of educators can also help learners be aware of their strengths and weaknesses, accept them, and find ways to learn that are compatible with their personalities (Gremmo & Riley, 1995). Therefore, by providing a guide which students are going to use as a support to develop their own individualized plans, and by providing students with a wide variety of options, they can find their own learning style, preferences, and increased motivation as they see the results of their hard work.

Zimmerman's Self-Regulated Model. Zimmerman (2002) presented perhaps the most recent and complete interactive self-regulated learning model. One of the fascinating aspects of this model is its capacity to integrate mainstream theories such as self-determination, expectancy-value, goals and selves theories. Also, Zimmerman talks about self-regulation as a process, implying that there are a series of steps that everybody can take to become self-regulated. Being aware of this process and putting it into practice over and over again will lead to successful self-regulated learners.

Zimmerman's model includes the metacognitive strategies discussed above, such as planning, selective and directive attention, self-monitoring, self-reinforcement, self-evaluation, problem identification, etc.

Zimmerman's self-regulation model (2000) organizes the skills and processes in three major cyclical phases: 1) *Forethought Phase*, which takes place before the effort to learn, 2) *Performance Phase*, which entails the processes that happen during the implementation of the learning tasks, and 3) *Self-reflection Phase*, which occurs after the learner's effort (see Figure 4).

Phase 1: Forethought. There are two processes encompassed in the first phase of the cycle: *Task analysis* and *self-motivation beliefs*. *Task analysis* supposes that the learners set goals, and plan the strategies they are going to implement in the other two phases. There is evidence that demonstrates that students are more successful when they set specific and measurable goals than general ones. For example, if they set to memorize the pronunciation of ten words in a week, and apply strategies that will lead to achieve that goal, such as asking help from native speakers, or consulting a dictionary, students will most likely learn those ten words.

Self-motivation beliefs include feelings about self-efficacy, outcome expectations, intrinsic interest/value, and learning goal orientation. For example, if learners believe they are self-efficient to learn a second language's intonation contours and expect to be able to communicate in a work environment clearer, they will be more motivated to learn autonomously (Zimmerman, 2002). Intrinsic interest and learning goal orientation make reference to how students value the task per se, and how they value the process of learning. For example, students that enjoy studying geography will be more motivated to learn it by themselves than those students that do not hold the same values.

Phase 2: Performance. The performance phase, which in general terms means to put into use the strategies and decisions planned in the forethought phase, is divided in two main processes as well: *Self-control* and *Self-observation*. The self-control category includes the following methods: imagery, self-instruction, attention focusing, and task strategies. To illustrate these methods, let's think about students learning the word pen. The students can picture or form an image of the word pen, and self-instruct by learning how to pronounce the word and how to use it in a sentence. To do so, they need to be focused, and if there are

distractions in their environment, they need to make necessary changes to control their attention better. To apply a task strategy, they could categorize the word pen under school objects and find other words for objects that have the same function (Zimmerman, 2002).
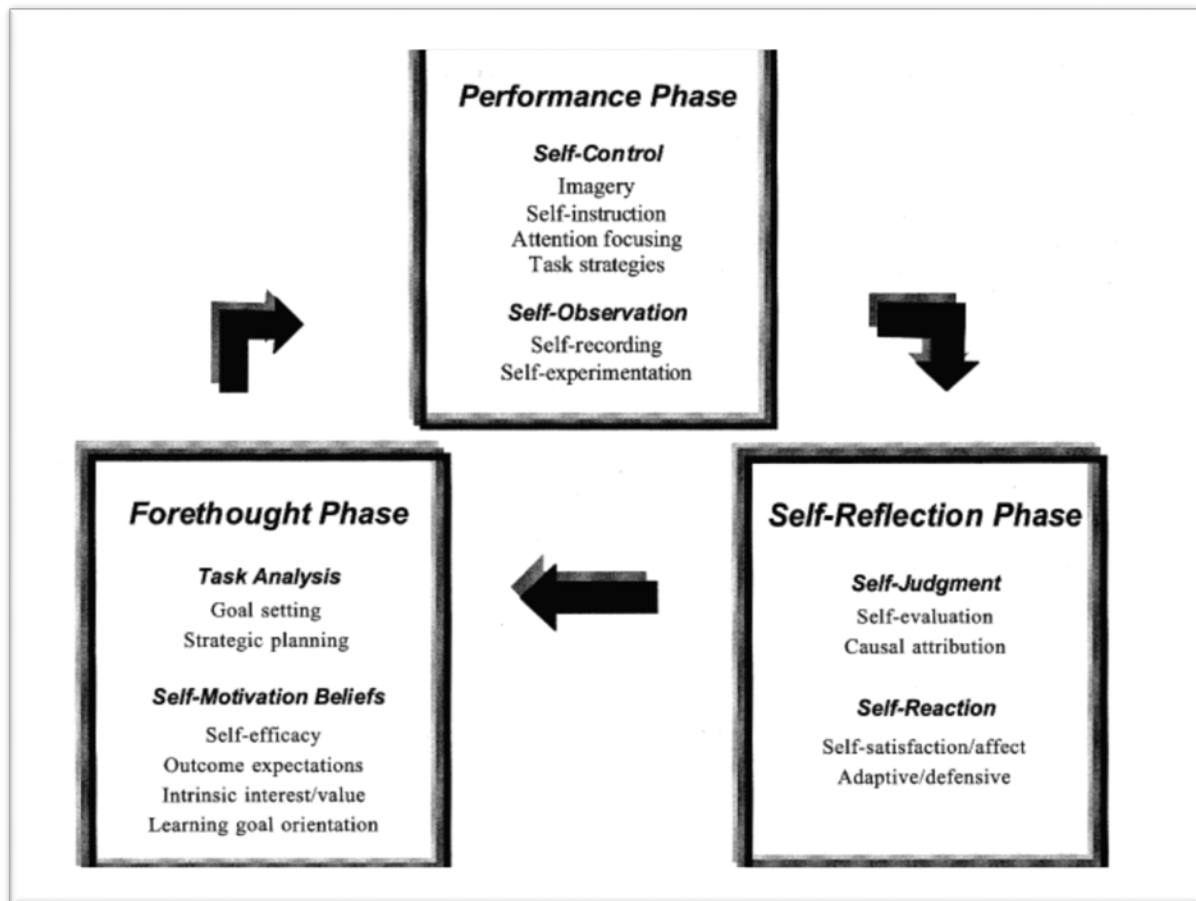
Figure 4. Zimmerman's Self-Regulation Model (Zimmerman, 2002). Zimmerman presented a model that consists of three cyclical phases.

Self-observation "refers to one's cognitive tracking of personal functioning" (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 68), such as frequency of failures and successes. Two basic strategies to enable self-monitoring are self-recording and self-experimenting. To self-record, learners will take note of the events that are taking place. For example, they can record the time spent doing homework, or other activities they had planned to work on. They can also write down the effectiveness of that activity and compare it to the time it has

taken. Self-experimentation would include changing some variables to see results they bring about. For instance, the student can do some activities by himself and others with a classmate, and compare how much time it has taken him to do the work alone or with company. All the information the student learns while self-observing will be useful to identify why the learner is improving, or not improving, as well as other relevant information, which will happen in the next phase.

Phase 3: Self-reflection. This phase is crucial since research has shown the importance of helping learners go from learning activities to periods of analysis and reflection in which they can work on their beliefs and representations of language and their language learning (Gremmo & Riley, 1995).

The Self-reflection phase includes two main processes: Self-judgment and Self-reaction. One of the steps that take place in self-judgment is to *self-evaluate performance*. This is when the student analyzes the information gathered in the self-observation phase. The student can compare the outcome of the course of actions planned in the first phase to either previous performance, before the performance phase or even before the forethought phase, or to other students, or just to a standard performance. Another component of self-judgment is *causal attribution*, which is to identify possible causes that would explain the final outcome, either failed or successful. This step is very important because if students attribute their failure to a fixed cause, a factor that cannot be changed, they may lose motivation to make future efforts. However, if they believe that the cause of poor performance is a strategy or something else that they can control or change, students will know that they can still succeed to achieve their goals.

Self-reaction has to do with feelings such as *self-satisfaction* and positive *affect* towards the performance, and adopting an adaptive or defensive response. The more satisfied students are with their performance, the more motivated they would be to keep on exerting effort on their own process of learning (Schunk, 2001). However, if learners are not satisfied with the outcome, this can become a challenge for students, and therefore motivate them to make the necessary changes and put forth greater effort to achieve a desired performance. Students respond to their outcome in a defensive or adaptive manner. If they adopt a defensive attitude, they will take measures to protect their self-image, such as not taking advantage of opportunities to learn, or dropping a class. However, an adaptive response means that the student will make adjustments to their plans to increase the effectiveness of the activities and strategies, and achieve a better performance.

Pronunciation strategies and autonomy. With respect to intelligibility and pronunciation, students need to develop an array of pronunciation-learning strategies that will help them notice how well they are performing, what they need to improve, how well they are adjusting their performance according to new knowledge, and how much progress they have made. Students need to be aware of the strategies that they generally employ and the ones that they can start using to improve their pronunciation. One of the roles of the materials will be to provide opportunities for student to be aware of the strategies they already have experience with and experiment with new ones.

In Grant Eckstein's thesis (2007), he demonstrated how the strongest pronunciation learners used pronunciation-learning strategies more frequently than poorer learners. Also, in his study, he demonstrated that the strategies that positively relate to pronunciation were *noticing pronunciation mistakes*, *adjusting facial muscles while speaking*

and *asking for help with the pronunciation of new words*. In addition, the study revealed that there is a correlation between the frequency of usage of the strategies and the spontaneous pronunciation skill, which means that the more frequently learners used the pronunciation strategies, the better were their pronunciation skills and spontaneous conversations.

Independent study does not mean leaving learners alone without an expert's intervention. Self-regulation has proven to be a complex process that intertwines the efficient use of learning skills with strategies to manage learning well. The practices that lead to successful autonomous learning do not come natural for all, and scaffolding, guidance from an expert, is necessary to provide learners with opportunities to develop these skills (Gremmo & Riley, 1995). Learners need to learn how to be in control of managing their own learning by using appropriate metacognitive and social/affective skills, of their own process of learning through cognitive strategies, and of the content they are interested in learning. Merely using these strategies does not guarantee efficient practice of autonomy. Well-organized and research-based models such as Zimmerman's three-phase self-regulated model provide an excellent opportunity to start the journey towards autonomy.

Conclusion

This literature review has discussed the literature on intelligibility, motivation, and self-regulated learning whose concepts underline the design of my project for a self-regulated pronunciation improvement plan. The first section shared important research about how to improve intelligibility, prioritize content, and choose relevant activities, techniques and strategies to create an individual plan. The second section discussed crucial

information about what drives humans to pursue a desired goal and what makes them persist, or not, until they get the desired results. It also explored ways to foster motivation in ESL learners. The last section looked into aspects of autonomy and skills that interplay while self-regulated learning takes place. The following chapter describes the process of designing and developing this pedagogical thesis.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The previous chapter looked into the three main areas that shaped this project: intelligibility, motivation and self-regulated learning. This chapter describes the different steps I took to develop the online guide. The procedure I followed in the creation of the guide was based on a combination of the project management phases and steps proposed by Michael Greer (1988) and the ADDIE Model (Branson, Rayner, Cox, Furman, King, & Hannum, 1975).

The whole project management process, created by Michael Greer (1988), can be divided in three main phases. The first phase, project planning, consists of the making decisions prior to undertaking the development of the material as well as gathering and analyzing information pertinent to the product, such as needs analysis. The second phase, instructional development, has to do with the steps taken to design and create the product. The final phase, implementation and evaluation, expands on implementing and evaluating the material to gather feedback and finish the final product. I incorporated aspects of the ADDIE model (Branson, *et al.,* 1975) into Greer's project management model (1988).

Phase I: Project Planning

During this phase and as suggested by Greer (1988), Dr. Henrichsen, chair of my committee, and I discussed the target audience, scope of the project, time available, and effort needed for my thesis. Initially, this project was going to be created for the English Language Center (ELC) at Brigham Young University. However, we decided to create materials that would be accessible to and helpful for many other ESL learners, not just

students from the ELC. Therefore, to reach a broader audience, we determined that this project would be created as an online website.

Project scope. The first step in this phase was to determine the project scope. To gauge the extent of the project, Dr. Henrichsen and I discussed the amount of materials that needed to be developed. These materials included: 1) two video clips, 2) the design of a three-phase guide to help learners create, implement and evaluate their improvement plan, 3) downloadable sample worksheets, worksheet templates, checklists, questionnaires, suggested exercises and charts with strategies to use during any of the phases, and 4) a list of links for students to use when creating and implementing their plans.

Regarding the video clips, we decided to create two clips of one or two minutes. The first video clip would introduce the process of developing an individualized pronunciation plan. The second video clip would introduce the three main aspects of pronunciation: general speaking habits, segmental features, and suprasegmental features. The information in the video clips would also be included in writing for ESL learners that may need to read while listening. For future development, it is my desire to create video clips for each phase to explain and demonstrate the steps learners would have to take in each phase; however, the production of more video clips was beyond the scope of this thesis. In phase II of this chapter, I give details about how the video clips were produced.

In addition to the video clips, Dr. Henrichsen and I discussed details about the self-regulated guide that was going to be created for this website. We decided that Zimmerman's self-regulated model (2000) would provide a simple and well-organized three-phase guide to help learners become more self-regulated. More details about how the phases were created and the content included will be given in phase II of this chapter.

Also part of the scope of the online guide was the creation of downloadable: sample worksheets, worksheet templates, checklists, questionnaires, suggested exercises, and a list of strategies for each phase. The purpose of the worksheets is to assist leaners in following the instructions in the various steps of each phase. Providing learners with sample worksheets was considered appropriate because it would help learners clearly understand how to organize all the information they would be generating when designing their plans. The sample worksheets would provide learners with a reliable start-up point. The checklists and questionnaires would raise self-awareness, encourage reflection, and aid in the organization of the creation process. The suggested exercises would give students some idea of specific tasks they could carry out to improve their pronunciation. Finally, the strategies are an important part of the guide since they empower learners to become self-regulated.

To determine the feasibility of this project, I evaluated the amount of resources needed such as time, money, skills, and equipment. With a graduation date set, work and other responsibilities that I had, it was crucial to keep a rigorous and tight schedule to be able to pilot the project in the fall semester, carry out the evaluation of the materials, and write the report before defending the thesis in March.

Money was another concern in this project since I did not have substantial financial support to develop the project. One of the options I had to resolve this issue was to find volunteer students from the IP&T department at BYU, to assist with the production of the website or to produce it myself. I knew it was going to take me a long time to learn to create a website myself, so that option was soon discarded. However, trying to find a volunteer was taking a lot of time, and by the time I needed to start creating the website, I had no one

that was willing or ready to help me. I had no other option but to hire a website programmer/designer.

When I began analyzing the resources needed for the video clips, I found that I had already learned the steps and requirements to produce the videos from Linguistics 678, Advanced Materials Development. It was in this class that I learned that the production of a one-minute video often takes several hours of shooting and editing. Therefore, I had an idea of how much time it would take to produce the video clips when I was planning the process.

Regarding the equipment necessary for the video clips, the ELC let me borrow cameras to shoot the video clips and the technology needed to edit them. However, the video clips produced with these resources were not of high quality. In order to get better results, I asked the ArcLite video crew from BYU to help me shoot and edit the video clips. Later in this chapter, I explain in greater detail how the video clips were produced.

With a clear idea of the magnitude of the materials I needed to develop the project and the time, financial assets, and technological resources that I had at my disposal, it was time to organize the development of the materials.

Organization of the project. According to Greer (1988), this subsection of planning includes developing a more detailed plan and confirming materials available, and creating a more detailed schedule of when each aspect of the product will be developed. During this phase, I discussed with Dr. Henrichsen the feasibility of the scope of the project and confirmed all the assumptions about the resources needed to bring about the desired results. The purpose of this step was to finalize details and specifications prior to the

development of the materials. We set specific deadlines for the completion of the scripts for the video clips themselves, and the website's content.

Gather information/analysis. According to Greer (1988), gathering information would be part of phase II, instructional development. Since gathering information and analyzing it affects the plans and decisions prior to the design and development of the materials (Branson et al., 1975), I decided to include it in Phase I when I was planning the project. Gathering information included conducting a needs analysis of the target audience and the content needed.

Gathering information correlates with the analysis phase of the ADDIE model (Branson et al., 1975). During this phase, the developers are supposed to analyze the problems and concerns of the audience. Together with the identification of the audience's needs, the developers can establish goals to respond to those necessities.

Prior to conducting a needs analysis, I met with a member of the Executive Council at the ELC who used to oversee academic levels. She shared with me some of the concerns that the council had. It seemed that students were confused by creating their own plan to improve their English, and that they struggled with feeling motivated at the middle and end of the semester. She also mentioned that learners struggled mainly with productive skills.

I decided to conduct a needs analysis to look into those concerns and to see what else students needed help with. I organized three focus groups, conducted teacher interviews, performed an analysis of ten pronunciation online websites, and carried out a review of literature. In the following paragraphs, I will give more detailed information about how the focus groups, interviews and websites' analyses were carried out and how the data gathered was processed to identify students' needs.

To carry out the needs analysis and analyze the data, I decided to use both investigator and methodological triangulation (Mackey & Gass, 2005). These techniques were used to aid credibility and transferability of the results. To gather data about what students needed, I conducted focus groups with students and interviews with teachers who taught DS. To guarantee reliability of the data analysis, I and another ESL professional colleague examined the information separately. We followed the techniques outlined in Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), by coding information based on categories. We highlighting responses that were conceptually related, patterns emerged and categories were formed. My colleague shared with me the main categories she discovered, and I compared those categories with mine. This procedure avoided a biased interpretation of the results from the focus groups and the interviews. The needs analysis allowed me to find common patterns and problems that needed to be solved or at least addressed in the development of the materials.

Focus groups. The focus groups were conducted at the ELC. There were three groups of about eight to ten students at an intermediate level. Initially, I was going to conduct three sessions of focus groups, one at the beginning, one in the middle and another at end of the semester. However, while waiting for the IRB approval, most of the semester passed by, and I received permission to conduct the focus groups at the end of the semester. Despite the fact that there was only one session of the focus groups carried out, the information gathered was enough to confirm some concerns the supervisors had shared with me previously.

The three focus groups were performed on the same day, after students finished their classes. The focus groups' sessions lasted about 45 minutes, and they were recorded

by the teacher in charge of each section. I was in charge of one of the groups. Teacher A, a teacher and current member of the ELC's Executive Council, conducted another focus group; and Teacher B was in charge of the third group. The recordings were transcribed so that the data could be processed and analyzed (to see the focus groups' questions, refer to Appendix A).

The focus groups' results (Table 2) confirmed that most students struggled with the creation of their own improvement plan. Most students said that they needed guidance at different points of the development of their plans. They also felt that they did not know what activities to choose to improve a certain aspect of their speaking. One student, for example, said that he did not know what activities would improve his intonation. He did not even know what exactly intonation was. One student also mentioned that at the beginning of the semester they study useful principles of how to become better self-regulated students, but when they have to develop their plans, they needed guidance and more examples.

With respect to motivation, they stated that they felt very motivated at the beginning of the semester, but for some students their motivation started to decrease when they did the same thing over and over again, when they did not get much feedback of what they need to improve, and when they had difficulties communicating with native speakers. Regarding the latter, students shared that not being able to communicate successfully with native speakers was one of the biggest frustrations. Most students attributed the lack of ability to communicate successfully to their pronunciation. The results of the focus groups led me to pay closer attention to the three main areas of this thesis, 1) pronunciation, to help learners become more intelligible, 2) motivation, to help learners become aware of

their attitudes and beliefs, and 3) self-regulation, to help learners develop skills necessary

to be in control of their own learning.

Table 2

Needs Assessment Results from Focus Groups

Categories	Answers shared by the three groups	
Self-regulation	Challenges -challenging to plan alone -need for more advice/guidance to plan	Successes -found useful resources -help of other people
Motivation	Demotivating -not knowing where to start to improve -insufficient feedback -student burnout -getting bored	Motivating -grades -activities -making friends -seeing improvement
Speaking	Frustrating -not communicating successfully -pronunciation not being corrected	Satisfying -activities and practice: *talking with native speakers/tutors/ interns *watching/listening to authentic media

Teachers' interviews. There were two teacher's interviews toward the end of the

semester (to see the interviews' questions, refer to Appendix A). I interviewed two teachers

from the DS class. Due to conflicting schedules, the interview with Teacher A was

conducted via email, through which Teacher A answered all the questions I sent her. I

interviewed Teacher B orally at the ELC. The purpose of talking with these teachers was to

find new insights as to what were some of the needs and concerns among the students.

Teachers observed that one of the difficulties students were having was related to

setting specific goals. They also noticed that students struggled with making better use of

time and resources. One of the teachers said that learners would benefit from having a

better list of resources where they could find activities and examples as they make their

plans. Teachers also observed that students were very motivated at the beginning of the

semester, even if they did not know how to make a plan to improve their weak areas, but

that learners seemed to have difficulties finding new activities towards the end of the

semester and this may have affected their motivation (to see the results, see Table 3).

Table 3

Needs Assessment Results from Teachers' Interviews

Categories	Teacher A	Teacher B
	Worked well	
Self-regulation	-learning logs are helpful -ss seemed more prepared	-intercultural assessment helped with self-regulation -ideas form teachers for activities -ss used time effectively in DS
	Did not work well	
	-difficulties finding online resources -need to share more resources with students	-difficulties in planning specific goals -didn't know how to improve weaknesses
	Worked well	
Motivation	-motivated this semester -helped students achieve their goals -new students motivating for the others -ss making a lot of effort	-eager to learn -help with individual needs intercultural assessment
	Did not work well	
	-demotivating challenges: not knowing how to plan for specific goals or how to improve weaknesses	

Pronunciation websites. I analyzed ten online pronunciation websites to see what is

available to ESL learners. I wanted to see how these websites helped learners to improve

their pronunciation, and also whether they offered guidance to ESL learners to work

independently. Some of the websites I viewed were: *AmEnglish*, *EF Englishtown*, *English*

Central, *IDEA*, *Iowa University*, *Live Mocha*, *Pronunciation Workshop®*, *Rachel's English*, and

Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab. The URLs of these websites can be found in Table 4. I

chose these websites, first, because some of them seemed to be popular among ESL

learners at the ELC, for example, the Iowa University phonetics' website, *Rachel's English*,

and *Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab*. The rest of the websites were suggested by TESOL

MA students in Linguistics 625 Pronunciation Theory and Pedagogy and Linguistics 671

TESOL Listening, Speaking and Pronunciation classes that had reviewed them as a class

assignment. I could have reviewed a hundred websites more; however, such a task was

beyond the scope of this thesis. For my purpose, it was sufficient to make the decision

based on the websites' popularity and pedagogical soundness.

The AmEnglish website seems to be a space to advertise lessons and workshops.

There is a one-day workshop for up to ten people for accent reduction and pronunciation.

The fee for the group is $2,450 dollars. A 12-hour one-on-one tutoring session costs $1,800

dollars and is designed to reduce accent and pronunciation problems. The course or

program includes access to Kathy Hans' book, *Pronunciation in English*. There is also a list

of online products that can be accessed for 90 days. There is not a lot of information

provided about how the website works.

EF Englishtown is an online school that teaches individual students and companies

all over the world, to name some HSBC, IBM and Lufthansa. Their goal is to help their

students learn to communicate in English using the latest technology and adapting the

lessons to students' needs. One of the positive aspects of this website is that students can

interact with other students that are also taking lessons through *EF Englishtown*. In this

way, learners are provided with a support system that can keep them motivated and give

them plenty of meaningful interactions.

Table 4

Websites Reviewed and their URLs

Websites	URLs
AmEnglish	http://amenglish.com/
EF Englishtown	http://www.englishtown.com/en-us/
English Central	http://www.englishcentral.com/
IDEA	http://idebate.org/
Iowa University	http://www.uiowa.edu/~acadtech/phonetics/english/ frameset-ad3.html,
Live Mocha	http://livemocha.com/
Pronunciation Workshop®	http://www.pronunciationworkshop.com/
Rachel's English	http://www.rachelsenglish.com/
Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab	http://www.esl-lab.com/

English Central is a website with a compilation of videos to practice any of the four

skills, for any levels (beginner, intermediate and advanced), with different types of English

(academic, career, social, etc.). Learners can work on vocabulary, grammar,

communication, and pronunciation. In this website, learners can record themselves

repeating previously demonstrated passages. If they say something incorrectly, the

software will not let them go to the next level. In this way, they can learn what their trouble

areas are so that they can work on them. As I reviewed this website, it seemed that it did

not give specific details regarding how to improve pronunciation. The system simply

assigns a grade, A, B, etc., but does not give specific feedback, for example, instructing

learners to work on the /d/ sound. Learners therefore have to guess what they are doing

wrong, and try to correct it on their own. The site offers two lessons for free, but it requires an upgrade to continue its use. Another observation I made while reviewing this site, specifically relevant for pronunciation, was that this site only treats issues with vowels and consonants. Other important features of pronunciation are not addressed.

IDEA is a website that provides learners with opportunities to engage in speaking activities such as debates. Thousands of students from all over the world come together to participate in these debates, giving ESL learners an authentic opportunity to use English. This website, however, does not focus on any of the skill areas of English, and it does not provide lessons to improve it. Its sole purpose is to provide learners with a place where they can come together and talk about worldwide issues. It must be mentioned, also, that learners must be at an intermediate level minimum to be able to participate in debates through this website.

Iowa University has created a website that teaches you how to pronounce American English consonants and vowels. Consonants are organized by manner, place of articulation and voicing. Vowels are organized by monophthongs and diphthongs. Monophthongs are divided by location in the mouth: front, central and back vowels. Each sound has an interactive image that shows how to move the articulators appropriately to produce the desired sound. This website also shows a video of a person saying the target sound so that learners can see how the person moves the lips, tongue, and jaw. In addition, the website provides learners with a video and audio samples of a few words that contain the target sound in context.

Live Mocha is another website that provides lessons in American English. This website is oriented toward speaking and pronunciation. However, to get the lessons

students have to pay. The lessons are divided by proficiency levels, but it is not clear as to

what is required for students to advance from one level to another. On this website,

students have the opportunity to talk to other learners in order to practice English. But

complete access is not possible without paying a fee.

Pronunciation Workshop® is a company founded by speech language pathologist

Paul Gruber. Contrary to other websites, this website's services for ESL learners are

provided by speech pathologists instead of experts in education. This site works with

individuals and companies through live training and videos. One of the features that stands

out in this website is its large number of success stories from all over the world.

Rachel's English is a website that provides learners with many videos on various

aspects of American pronunciation, such as segmental and suprasegmental features as well

as general speaking habits (voice volume, etc.). One of the unique features of this website is

that the articulation of sounds is explained in great detail, giving learners a clear picture of

how they need to move their mouths. Another characteristic of the videos in this site is that

learners are provided with examples in context. Students also have the opportunity to

practice a particular sound by using words and full sentences.

Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab is a website designed mainly for listening

activities. However, it can be a great tool for applying some pronunciation learning

strategies. Students can listen to conversations on various topics, and then repeat them to

practice intonation, stress, or simply the pronunciation of new words. In addition, this site

contains a list of links that lead learners to websites were they can collaborate with other

students and leave voice messages on various topics. A great feature this website has is that

it includes scripts of the listening passages, so students can refer to them and practice

reading aloud while focusing on the pronunciation model provided by native English speakers.

The main issue I discovered while reviewing these websites is that, even though they are extremely useful and have valuable content to help learners improve their pronunciation, they do not assist learners in the creation of their own improvement plans. For students to address their needs using these sites, they would need to pay for lessons, and rely on someone else to make decisions regarding the content, activities, and strategies to implement.

Phase II: Instructional Development

This phase includes elements from Greer's model (1988) and the ADDIE (Branson et al., 1975) model. According to Greer, the instructional development phase consists of developing a blueprint and creating the draft materials. Similarly, ADDIE's model consists of first designing the project, followed by the development of the product.

Development of the blueprint/design. The purpose of this step was to create a synthesized version of the project in order to receive feedback from teachers and others before creating the whole product. I therefore created Google® sites, which, even though the design was very basic, allowed me served to start uploading all the information and PDFs that were going to be included in the final website. Google® sites allowed me to create different pages correlated to the phases of the guide.

A professional who has specialized in marketing and an ESL professional with a master's degree in TESOL from the ELC viewed the Google® sites I created and gave me informal feedback. The former reviewer suggested working on reducing the amount of

technical vocabulary that I used throughout the guide. He also suggested that I should

organize the information to be more visually appealing, for example, breaking down the

content into paragraphs. Consequently, I reduced some of the text and organized some of

the information into bullet points.

The second reviewer was very interested in having access to some sample

worksheets and logs that I had created. She also told me that she wished her students had

had access to my PDFs when she was teaching the directed studies class at the ELC. She

also expressed that she felt it was very valuable to provide students with strategies for

every stage in the process of creating pronunciation improvement plans. A suggestion was

made to use acronyms when referring to a list of characteristics, such as those related to

effective goals, or a series of steps like the three phases of *Sofia's ESL Pronunciation Lab*. I

therefore decided to use the acronym *SMART goals* by Doran (1981), and also the acronym

PIE to refer to the phases, Planning, Instruction, and Evaluation.

Step one, the development of the blueprint, and step two, the creation of materials,

overlapped to a certain extent. The blueprint per se did not have to include all the content

of the final website. However, while I was looking for an expert to design the website and

start creating the final product, I finished preparing and uploading the content, worksheets,

and logs—part of step two—onto the Google® sites, which were part of the blueprint. I

describe the materials' development in detail in the following section.

Creation of the materials/development. This stage took place during the

spring/summer semester in 2014, and part of the fall semester of the same year. For this

stage, Linguistics 678 (Advanced Materials Development) proved very helpful. In this class,

I received instruction regarding the creation of videos, principles of visual design

(Williams, 2004), copyright issues, and so forth. To illustrate, I learned that I should only use pictures from the public domain for my website and paraphrase instead of quoting exact activities from other authors. Quoting ideas from other authors in a thesis report is different from using them for a website, for example. If I want to use their exact words, I need to have permission from the authors.

Website design. For the purpose of having a professional look and design for the guide, I decided to work with a website designer. He used a programming system that allows users to open websites in other devices other than just computers, such as phones or tablets. This programming system, however, required all the information I prepared to be coded, and this step therefore took longer than expected.

As mentioned previously, I created the content, and the designer accessed it through the Google® sites I created. The website I designed consists of three main sections: the home page, the guide, and other resources. The Home Page contains two video clips and introduces students to the guide—PIE. The guide is divided in three sub-sections, which correspond to the three phases to create the individual improvement plan: planning, instruction, and evaluation. The reason I decided to use those names was to create an acronym—PIE—that would help learners remember the name and purpose of each phase. Each phase is composed of two main steps. Details regarding these steps are presented in Chapter Four of this thesis. The Google® site for each of the phases of PIE also includes step-by-step instructions on how to create, implement and evaluate improvement plans. There are also worksheet samples, worksheet templates, checklists, and questionnaires. The last main section of the website is named Extra Information and also contains three

subsections: Areas of control and strategies, key pronunciation concepts, and links to other websites.

In the planning phase, I included a list of suggested exercises students could choose from when designing their plan. Some of these exercises were borrowed from *Teaching American English Pronunciation* (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992), and others were exercises I created for my own classes. In addition, each phase contains a list of strategies that students can use while they create, implement and evaluate their plans. In addition, each phase includes a checklist and logs to aid in the different processes. To view the worksheets, logs, checklists and activities, refer to Appendix B.

While the designer worked on programming the website, I dedicated my time to editing the content of the website, creating the PDF files, and producing video clips. I edited the content of the website repeatedly. Every change I made was sent to the web designer, so that he would encode it and include it in the website.

Besides creating the content of the online guide, I was also in charge of finding images that I wanted to include in each phase. I wanted to make the website appealing, and I also wanted the images to capture the concepts or steps described in each phase. To protect the materials from possible copyright issues, I chose pictures from the public domain, with the exception of some drawings that were created by two of my students. These I used with their consent.

Finally, I also chose a server, created the URL for the website, and found an appropriate name for the online guide. Upon consulting with experts, and following the web designer's advice, I selected *Bluehost* to be the server for the site. I decided that the words *pronunciation* and *improvement* were important key words for my site, resulting in

the URL http://pronunciationimprovementlab.com/. I also created the name for my website: *Sofia's ESL Pronunciation Lab*. My thesis committee has since suggested adding more key words to the website's name to help it contain the ideas of self-regulation and guidance in creating an improvement plan. Both the name and URL may therefore change in the future.

     Video clips. The video clips for the site were first scripted (see Appendix C) and then filmed. Shooting of the videos required several attempts. The first attempt took place at the ELC with the camera available there. A former TESOL MA student and ESL professional colleague came to help me with the process. After this initial filming, one of the lab assistants at the ELC aided me with editing the video clip. We added text to the video and made sure it started and cut at the right times. However, I realized that the video clip did not look very professional due to how evident it was that I was occasionally moving my eyes to read the scripts.

     A second shooting therefore took place with the same resources, but the distance in which the scripts were displayed was changed. However, upon showing the video clips to my thesis committee chair, I realized that I needed to find a way to film the videos with better lighting and sound for the product to look more professional. Since the ELC had created some videos for the purpose of instructing students about English Etiquette, I contacted some of the teachers involved to find out where to go to receive help. I was directed to contact the assistant/director in the Center for Language Studies, where videos are created for the College of Humanities. The director of the Center for Language Studies put me in contact with two technicians and editors from the ArcLite video crew, who provided the technology and assisted me with the production of the video clips.

Prior to shooting the video clips, I sent one of the technicians the scripts so that they could be in the teleprompter at the time of shooting. Also prior to the shooting day, I chose a backdrop and reserved a room. On the day of the shooting, one of the technicians was in charge of the camera and the lights, and the other was in charge of the sound. I practiced with the teleprompter a couple of times so I could sound as natural as possible, and then we shot the videos. It took a few attempts, but soon we had satisfactory recordings for each video clip. The assistants edited the video clips, and added the text, which I provided, to the videos clips. They sent me the completed video clips after a few days through my YouTube channel.

I was the creator of all the content for this website, including selecting the three phases for the guide and naming them. I developed the video scripts, names, worksheets, charts, checklist, questionnaires, and exercises for the site. The designer of the website then put this information online. He coded it to make it accessible not only by computer, but by cellular phone and tablet as well.

Phase III: Implementation and Evaluation

This phase was based mainly on the ADDIE model (Branson et al., 1975) steps: implementation and evaluation, but also includes the distribution step from Greer's model (1988).

Implementation. Implementation of the materials took place at the ELC, BYU, during the fall semester of 2014. Students used the online material for a period of six weeks in their listening and speaking class. Each week, students had 30 minutes on Monday to review one of the phases, and then they had the rest of the week to put it to use while

creating, implementing and evaluating their plans. Students were also allowed to use the website in their last class of the day, in order to work on improving their areas of pronunciation weaknesses. In addition to this practice, at the end of every week, students completed a Google® form I sent them to find out how much of the website they read and used during that week. These Google® forms were sent to students for 6 weeks. They were created from a template that Google® Forms provides, that allowed me to write questions for the students to answer. I sent the students the link that the Google® Form generated, which I could have access to immediately after students submitted their answers. I give a complete description of this phase in Chapter Five of this report.

Evaluation. Several tools were used to evaluate this project. Google® forms (refer to Appendix D to see the questions), personal conversations with students, and observations during the class all provided feedback during the implementation phase. A Qualtrics survey (refer to Appendix E to see the questions) was also administered to the students involved in this project at the end of the semester. This survey obtained more detailed feedback from learners regarding the overall experience they had with the website. In this survey, students were asked to give their opinion about the purpose of the website, its content, and design. Analysis of the data gathered from the survey was carried out following grounded theory procedures (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Chapter Five expands on these evaluation methods and feedback received from them.

Distribution. Even though physical distribution of materials was not necessary, this step is parallel to setting up the website, making it available to the target audience, and ensuring it worked appropriately in distributing the content electronically.

Conclusion

      This chapter explained the development process of this project, including needs analysis, curriculum design, media development, and evaluation of the materials. The following chapter will present the actual product through screenshots and a description of each section of the material.

Chapter Four: Final Version of the Online Guide

Introduction

This chapter presents screenshots of the website and explains the purpose and reasons for its structure. To view the website and its features, you can go to http://pronunciationimprovementlab.com/. The website is composed of three main sections: the Home Page, the Guide, and the Extra Information. The guide includes three sub-sections, or phases: Planning, Implementation and Evaluation—PIE.

Home Page

The first section of my website is the home page. The home page includes the title of the website—*Sofia's ESL Pronunciation Lab*—and is followed by the purpose of the website (see Figure 5). On the home page, an introductory video is presented. On the video, I as the website's creator explain more fully how the online guide can help learners improve their language more independently and focus on their individualized needs. The video was included towards the beginning of the home page to capture students' attention and engage them from the start of the guide.
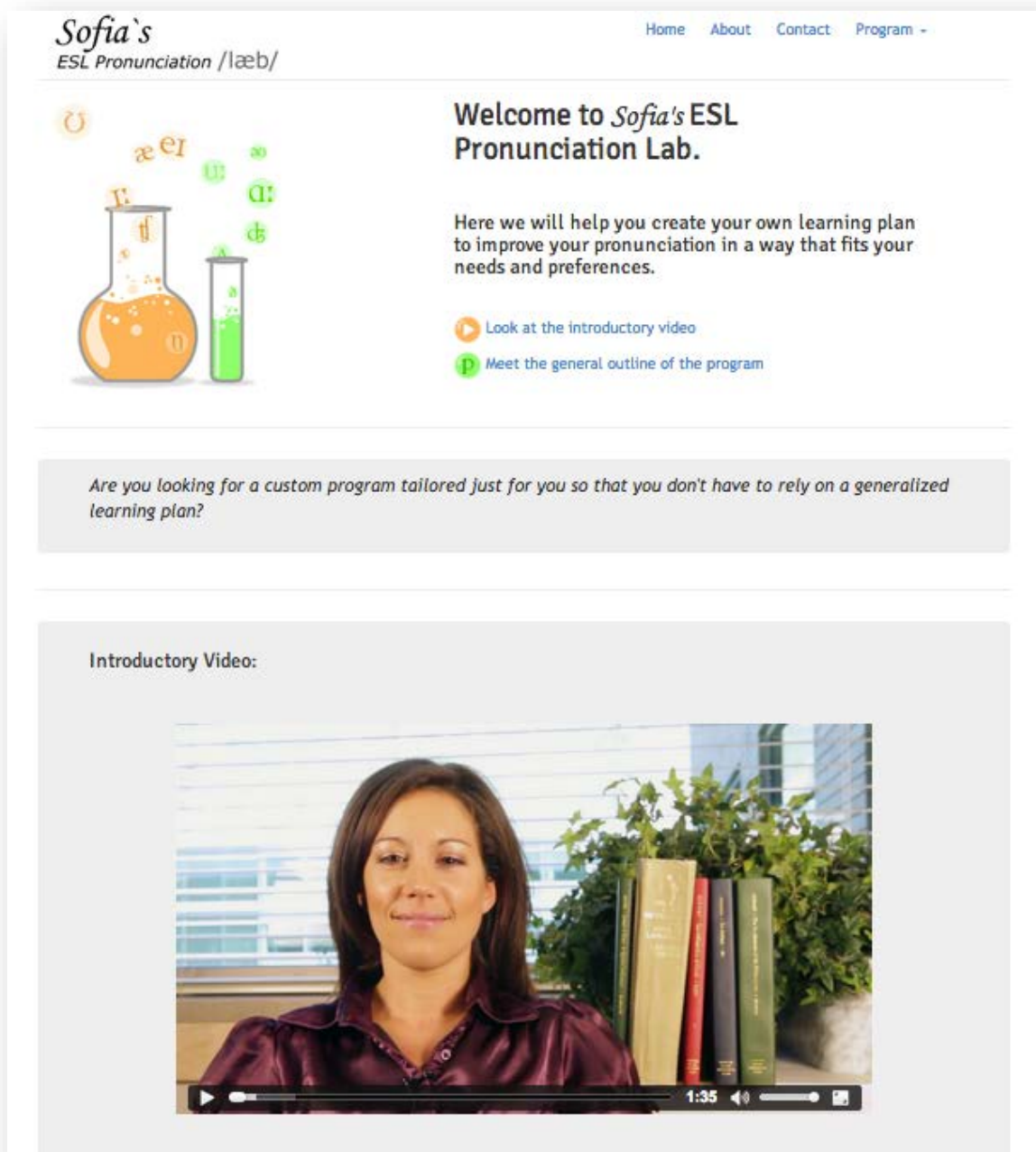
Figure 5. Home page for *Sofia's ESL Pronunciation Lab.*

The second image (Figure 6) shows a section on the home page that presents

students with the three-phase guide they will use to create their own plan for language

acquisition. Following the plan, there is a brief explanation of what the students will learn

as they use this website, such as becoming more independent, motivated, and proficient in

English. This information is also included in the first introductory video.
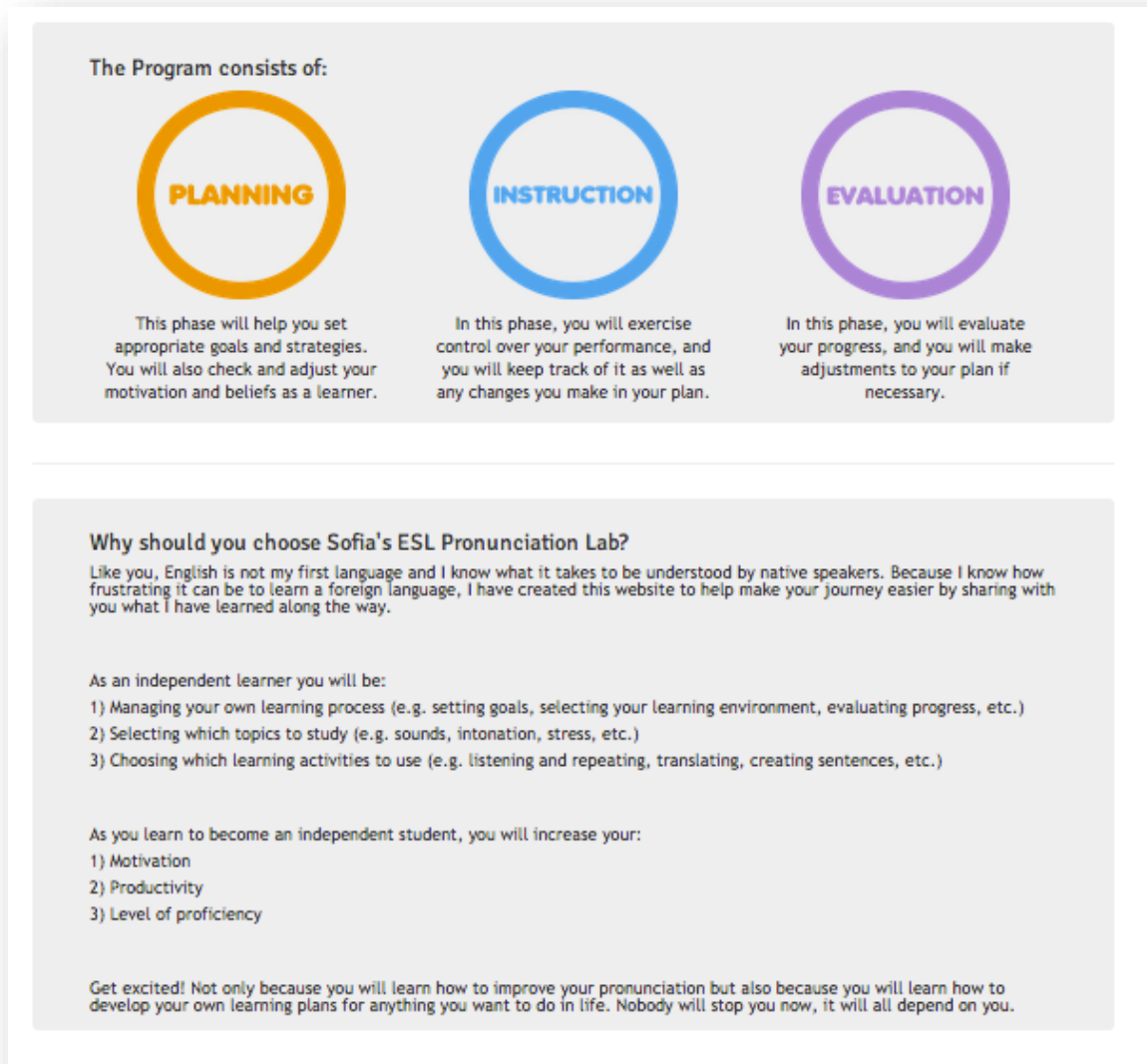
Figure 6. Presentation of the three-phase guide on the home page of *Sofia's ESL Pronunciation Lab.*

The next section of the home page (Figure 7) shows the screenshot of a brief

introduction to aspects of pronunciation that give students an idea of what is important to

work on when it comes to intelligibility and where to get started. A link—Suggested

Topics— is included for students to click on to find more information about those aspects of pronunciation. It also shows an introduction to aspects of pronunciation that is accompanied with a video clip that introduces general speaking habits, suprasegmentals, and segmental features.

In addition, Figure 7 shows the last piece of information included in the homepage, a brief explanation of the steps needed to use the guide. The idea is to give students an overview of how they will create, implement, and evaluate their plan.

Lastly, at the bottom of the page, there is a *start now* button to take students to the initial Planning Phase. This feature will need to be changed since learners have difficulty finding where to click to get started with their plans. I will have alternative areas for students to access the three phases of the learning guide.

Figure 7. Third section of *Sofia's ESL Pronunciation Lab's* home page.

Phase I: Planning

The first phase of the guide is the Planning Phase. The Planning Phase helps ESL

learners carefully plan how they will work on improving their English pronunciation. The

two main steps (Figure 8) to implement the Planning Phase include: 1) Task Analysis and 2) Motivation & Personal Beliefs as a Learner. After these two steps are introduced, a small section includes a quote that gives advice related to these steps. This quote serves as a reminder that students are in control of their own learning.
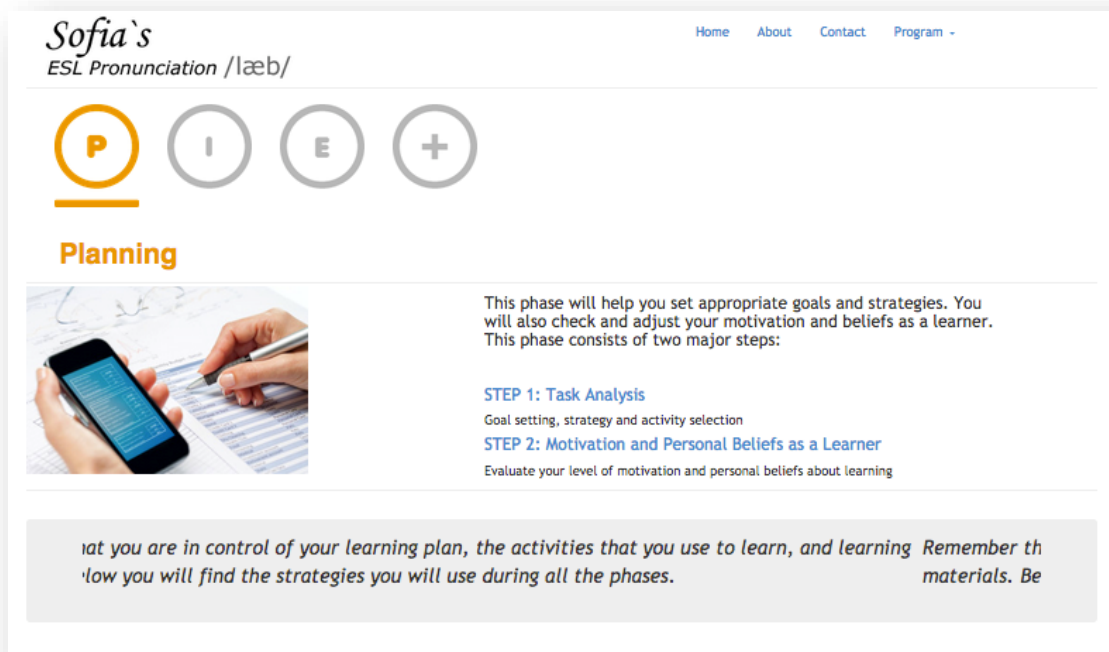
Figure 8. Introduction to Planning Phase.

The first step of the Planning Phase—Task Analysis (Figure 9)—helps learners set appropriate goals in order to make decisions regarding activities and strategies that will lead learners to achieve their set goals. The content is separated into three main groups: setting goals, planning activities, and planning strategies. Students will find links to extra information about goals (how to set effective goals, examples of goals, etc.), activities (types and examples), and strategies both in a box on the right side of the page and embedded in the text for convenience as they read the instructions.

In addition to written text, pictures have been included to aid in the visualization of the goal setting process. One example of a picture includes an athlete at a starting line ready to commence a race. This picture alludes that students are now a part of a race in which they will determine how far they will run to finish the race, how quickly they will accomplish this task whether by running or walking, and the best way to utilize their energy to cross the finish line. The student is in the race, just as the picture suggests, and will require training and effort on their behalf.

Figure 9. Step 1 of Planning Phase: Task-Analysis.

The second step of the Planning Phase (Figure 10) discusses the importance of motivation and personal beliefs of the learner. In its entirety, this section is to direct

students to become aware of their own motivation and beliefs and how those factors will affect their efforts in learning English. To improve motivation, students are not only presented with what develops motivation, but are introduced to questions that will cause them to reflect on their own motivation and beliefs. The second purpose of this sub-section is to empower students by providing them with ways in which they will improve their motivation and beliefs. For ESL learners, this is an area of needed improvement. Students will benefit from examples to improve their level of motivation.

Figure 10. Step 2 in Planning Phase: Motivation and Personal Beliefs as a Learner.

The third section in Phase I—Suggested Topics (Figure 11)— is not a part of either step one or two, but it is informative with regard to pronunciation. Students are introduced and given examples to the three aspects of pronunciation—general speaking habits, suprasegmentals, and segmentals. Exercises to practice each said area are included in a box on the right side of the page. Not all students have a clear idea of what to improve or, if they do, they may not know where to start and may not know what is most important. Although this section is not comprehensive, it allows learners to jumpstart their plans knowing why they are doing what they are doing.

Suggested Topics

If you don't know where to get started, here are some suggestions based on research of what influences intelligibility the most. First of all, intelligibility is not referring to your accent. Intelligibility refers to how well native speakers can understand what you are saying. You can have a heavy accent but still be fully understood (Derwing & Munro, 1997; Munro and Derwing, 1995).

To get started with your improvement program, we will use something called the Zoom Principle (Firth,1992) in which you start with general habits of speaking and then go to specific habits and then revert to general once again, as if you were using the zoom function on a camera.

General
Clarity, speed, loudness, etc.

Suprasegmental
Stress, intonation, etc.

Segmental
Consonants
and vowels

Activities and Worksheets

- Exercises for General Speaking Habits
- Exercises for prosodic features
- Exercises for segmental features

1. Some general speaking habits are:
   - clarity
   - speed
   - loudness
   - eye contact
   - fluency
   - voice
   - gestures

   Even if you pronounce words perfectly, people will not understand your message if you speak very soft. Also, people may lose interest in talking to you if you do not make eye contact.

   Below you will find a document with suggested activities for you to work on these general aspects.

   Second, you may want to start paying attention to prosodic features since they seem to influence intelligibility more than segmental features (Munro & Derwing, 1997). Research shows that mistakes in word/sentence stress, intonation, pausing, etc. can make communication very difficult even if individual sounds are pronounced correctly. Some prosodic features are:

2. Prosodic features:
   - stress
   - intonation
   - pausing
   - linking
   - rhythm

   Below you will also find another document with some activities for you to work on what I like calling 'the music of the language'.

   Finally, you also want to work on individual sounds which mispronounced can cause confusion and misunderstanding. For example, the pronunciation of the first sound in 'think' is different from the first sound in 'sink'.

3. Sounds:
   - consonants: /t/, /k/, /m/, etc.
   - vowels: /a/, /e/, /u/, etc.

Remember that the more you do something, the easier it gets and the more automatic it gets. This means that you will end up using phrases without having to

Figure 11. Planning Phase: Suggested Topics.

Phase II: Instruction

The second main section of the guide is the Instruction Phase and is designed to aid students in the implementation of their plans by accomplishing self-control and by establishing self-observation skills. Figure 12 introduces the two subsets of instruction: 1) Exercise Self-Control and 2) Observe Yourself. Before beginning step one, students will find a quote meant to inspire them to achieve their goals.
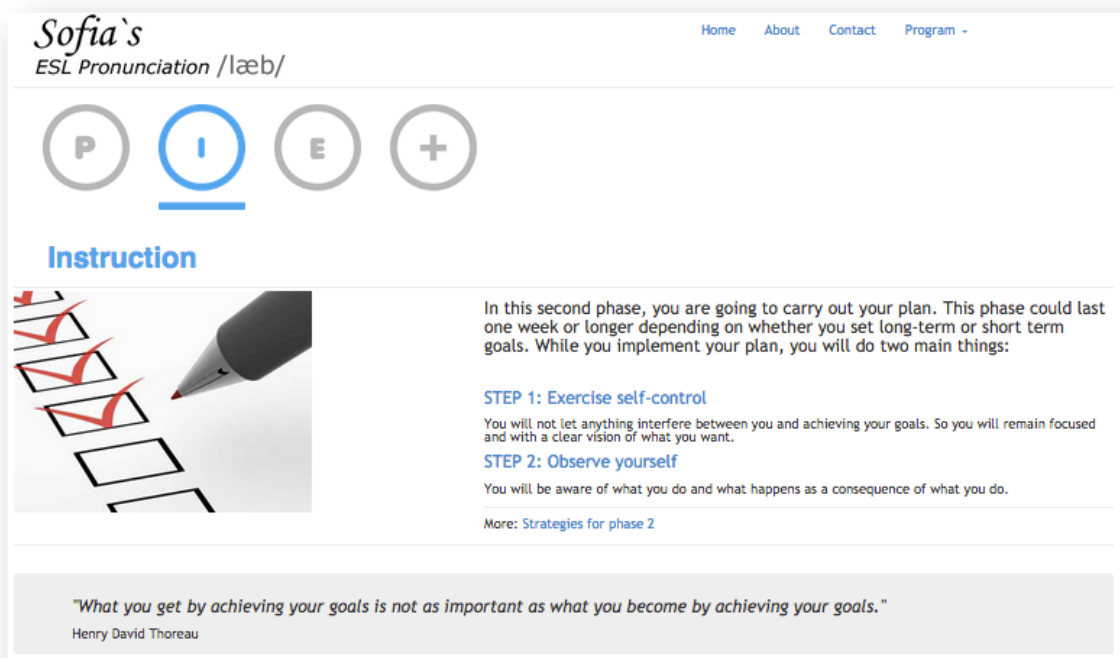
Figure 12. Introduction to Instruction Phase.

The next diagram, Figure 13, shows how the first step—Self-Control—needs to be carried out. Self-control aspects include visualization skills, focused attention strategies, and self-instruction. These aspects permit learners to maintain self-control and perform to their potential. This section includes a checklist students will utilize to assess how effectively they are maintaining control over their learning.

Figure 13. Step 1 in Instruction Phase: Self-Control.

The second step of the Instruction Phase (Figure 14) allows for self-awareness. In order to observe your goals and plans, learners need to keep track of their thoughts, feelings, and reactions. This area advises students to experiment with various activities and strategies.

Self-observation is a key factor in success. For example, one student sets the goal to raise the volume of his voice when speaking. So in order for him to obtain his goal, he would select an activity such as a drama exercise that requires practicing in front of a mirror. As he starts the Instruction Phase, he notes in his journal that he speaks louder when he practices in front of a mirror or camera, however, when he uses English with native speakers, he speaks softly again. After being self-aware and noticing this, the student

decides to practice the drama exercise with native speakers he knows from a club he attends every Wednesday. In the beginning, he feels shy, but as he practices over and over again, he realizes he feels more confident. After hard work and dedication on a daily basis, he notices when he interacts with native speakers in real-life conversations, he speaks a bit louder and the listeners do not ask him to repeat what he is saying. This is an example of how exercising self-control, self-observation, and experimenting will bring results.

Figure 14. Step 2 in Instruction Phase: Self-Observation.

Phase III: Evaluation

The third main section of the guide is the Evaluation phase. The purpose of the Evaluation Phase is to guide autonomous learners in the process of evaluating the effectiveness of their plan. The first section of this page—Evaluation Phase—(Figure 15) introduces the purpose of this phase, which is: 1) Evaluate your Progress and 2) Adapt your Plan. This is followed by another quote to motivate and inspire students.

Figure 15. Introduction to Evaluation Phase.

Self-Evaluation, the first step of the Evaluation Phase, (Figure 16) includes two processes: self-evaluation and reflection. These two sub-stages assist students in the analysis of the information recorded previously and in the assessment of the results. ESL learners need to reflect on the choices made during planning and then their performance while implementing plans in order to find reasons for their results. A questionnaire is included to help beginners evaluating their results and to reflect on their learning experience.

Figure 16. Step 1 of Evaluation Phase: Self-Evaluation.

The second step (Figure 17) was created to have an adaptive response to outcomes in order to make adjustments to their plans, if necessary, and to persist. Emphasis is placed on the fact if their goals were not achieved, then they still made progress by recognizing what areas to rethink.

Figure 17. Step 2 of Evaluation Phase: Adaptation.

Extra Information Section

In this last main section of my website, learners can find Extra Information. The Extra Information includes areas of control and strategies, key pronunciation concepts, and suggested links for self-instruction phase. The first part of this page (Figure 18) introduces topics mentioned.
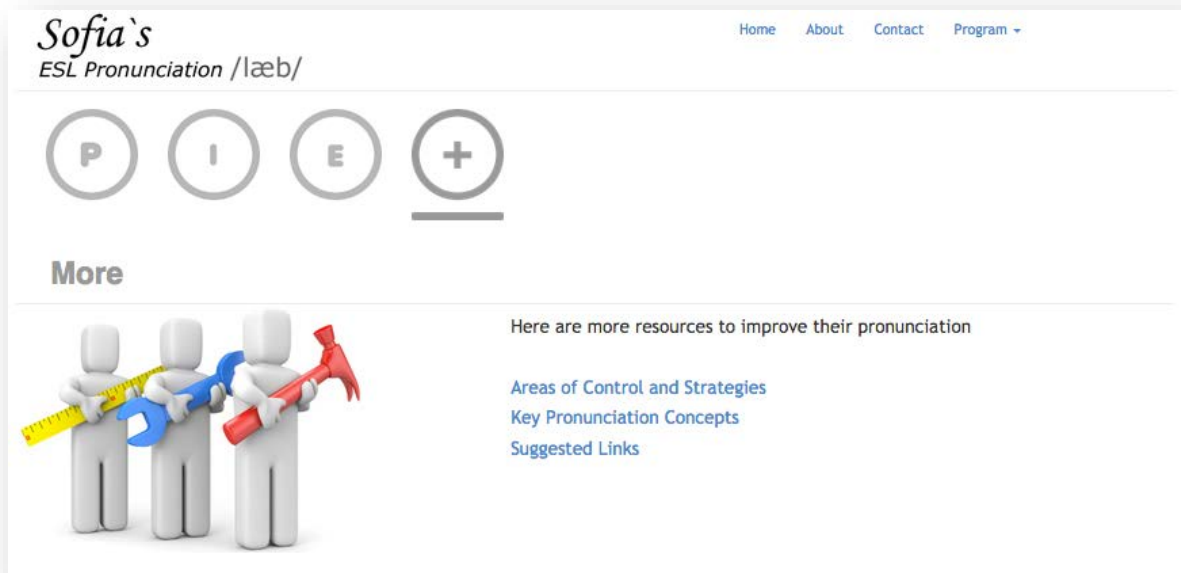
Figure 18. Introduction to Extra Information.

The next section (Figure 19) teaches students that when they are independent learners, they are in control of their learning management, cognitive processes, and learning content. Even though these words are very technical for intermediate ESL learners, knowing these concepts by their names would give students more technical terminology. If those terms are replaced for more familiar and less academic vocabulary, it may be confusing for the learners when they continue their learning.

Areas of Control and Strategies

Before getting started, you need to know that you will be in control of:

-**Learning Management:** You will control your learning by using metacognitive and social/affective strategies.

Strategies are tools that help you achieve a goal. Let's say you want to hang up a picture in your room. A hammer is a tool that helps you push a nail into a wall to hang up your picture. In learning English, asking a native speaker of English the pronunciation of a word is like a hammer because it will help you achieve your goal, which is to learn how to pronounce a new word.

Here is a list of strategies that will help you learn more effectively:

Strategies	Definition	Examples
Metacognitive	actions that you take to oversee and manage your learning	· planning · goal setting · self-monitoring
Social strategies	actions you take to interact with another person to assist a learning task	· asking questions for clarification
Affective strategies	actions you take to be in control of your affective sphere so as to assist a learning task	· applying relaxation techniques

-**Cognitive Processes:** You will control your cognitive processes by using cognitive strategies.

Strategies	Definition	Examples
Cognitive strategies	Mental steps to process what you are trying to learn.	· use auditory imaging to remember the pronunciation of a word · repeat the pronunciation of a word · group words based on categories

-**Learning Content:** This means that you will decide:

· the language areas you want to improve (or you can ask your teachers/native speakers to suggest areas that need improvement, or check the section 'Suggested Topics' in this website).

· the activities you want to do.

Figure 19. Areas of control and strategies

The next section (Figure 20) includes a chart of strategies that students will use for all of the phases. The chart is divided into three categories—metacognitive, cognitive and socio-affective strategies. Which in turn is divided further by Phase I, Phase II, and Phase
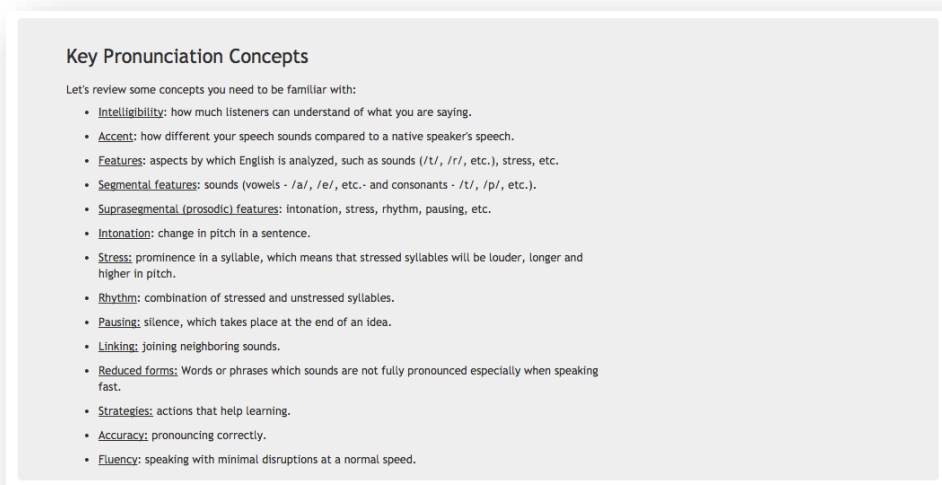
III. The chart not only presents a list of strategies, but gives examples of how to utilize each strategy.

Strategies for all Phases

Category	Phase	Strategies	How to use them
Metacognitive	Phase 1	goal setting	· decide what you want to learn and be SMART about it
		planning	· decide what you will do, how you will do it, for how long, and when. Make sure you write everything down.
		directed attention	· decide in advance to concentrate on general aspects of a task
	Phase 2	self-monitoring	· check your performance by keeping a journal, a log, or some sort of record. Keep track of results, and thoughts and feelings as well.
		selective attention	· paying attention to specific aspects of a task, for example, is you are having a conversation you apply selective attention by paying attention to intonation instead of your grammar.
	Phase 3	self-evaluation	· identify the progress you have made. Resolve if you have achieved your goal.
		problem identification	· identify areas that may be the cause of not getting the results wanted
		self-reinforcement	· rewarding oneself for success
Affective	Phase 1	Lowering anxiety	· use progressive relaxation
			· deep breathing
	Phase 2		· meditation

Figure 20. Strategies divided by phases.

The penultimate section (Figure 21) presents the definitions for key pronunciation concepts, such as intelligibility, accent, features, rhythm, and pausing. The main purpose of

this section is to provide students with an understanding of the terms used in this website and in other sites as well. As students are acquainted with meta-language, they may become more independent.

Figure 21. Key concepts of pronunciation.

The final part in the Extra Information section (Figure 22) provides students with resources and links to use during any stage of their improvement process. The first few sites are mainly targeted towards pronunciation and speaking even though other websites hold great potential for pronunciation and speaking activities.
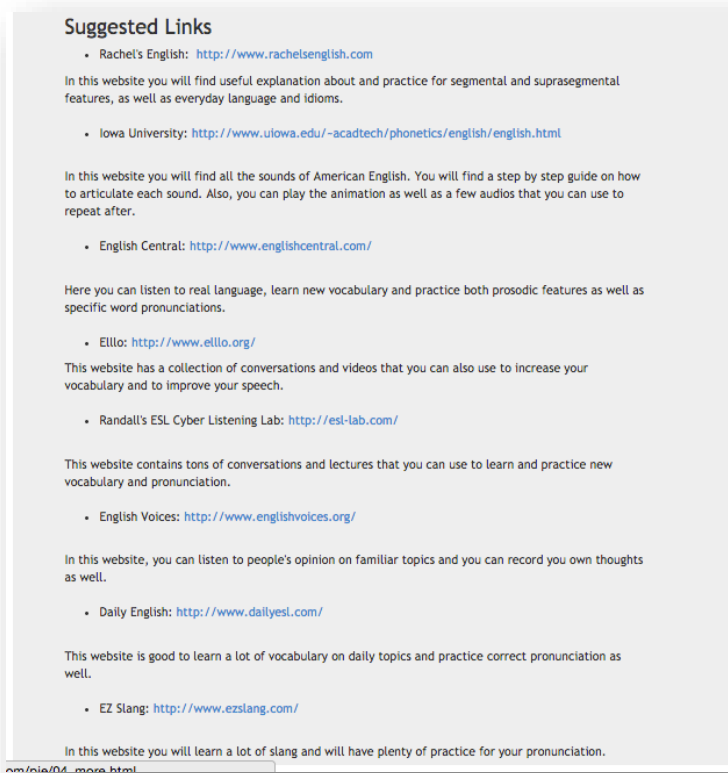
Figure 22. Links to other websites.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has presented screenshots of the various segments of the website, such as the Planning, Instruction, and Evaluation Phases, as well as suggested topics, a list of links, and key pronunciation concepts. The screenshots are a first draft only of the online guide; however, the present format allows students access to important information that will aid them in the creation of their self-improvement plan.

Chapter Five: Pilot Testing, Feedback and Evaluation

This chapter will discuss the process of pilot testing this project, the feedback gathered from various sources (my observations, the committee's feedback, as well as the participants' comments), and the revisions necessary to be completed in order for the website to be appropriate for its audience.

Pilot Testing

I began piloting the online guide: *Sofia's ESL Pronunciation Lab* on October 20, 2014. Deciding for how long the website would be piloted required careful outlining. First, I realized that if students were using the Planning, Instruction and Evaluation Phases together, it would be easier for the teachers to make sure they were utilizing the website correctly and would make the class more manageable. In order to facilitate this direction, I decided that students should spend one week on the Planning Phase, another week on the Instruction Phase, and the following week on the Evaluation Phase. By doing this, students would go over the three-phase guide in three weeks. Since the pilot testing period started in the middle of the semester, and we had eight weeks left of classes, I decided to have the same students go over the guide twice. Each time the students completed the three-week period I refer to that as a *cycle*, which means that students used the website for two cycles. I gave students ample time and opportunities to experiment with the guide in order to allow more substantial feedback.

I presented the guide in the Directed Studies (DS) class at the ELC. I chose to the website in the DS class was because students develop plans to improve various aspects of their English during that time. The website aids in their planning, implementation, and

evaluation of their plans, while encouraging and reinforcing self-regulated behavior. However, upon meeting with the DS teachers, they indicated they would not have enough time for students to use the website during the week and would only have time for it on Thursday, as that is the day students plan for the following week.

After discussing my concerns with my supervisor that the website would not be utilized by the students if it was not required in class, I created forms to help the students be accountable and minimize the teachers' work-load. After verifying with the teachers at the end of the week, they mentioned that they had not directed their students to use the forms, nor and had they required students to utilize my website. They merely encouraged the learners to use the website, but because of the lack of clarity of the task at hand, this just confused the students. The DS teachers suggested instead I implement the website during my class, Listening and Speaking, due to their busy schedule and already planned projects for that hour. I took this as an opportunity to observe more closely the students' experience with the website and to make sure they had enough practice with it to provide useful feedback.

I took this as an opportunity to observe the students' experience with the website more closely and to ensure they had sufficient practice in order to provide useful feedback. After deciding to use my class instead of the DS class for piloting this material, I continued to explore ways to integrate the online guide into my curriculum.

In the Academic Preparation (AP) Listening and Speaking class, students are responsible to have a minimum of five 10-minute conversations every week with feedback from the individuals they conversed with. In addition to conversations, students also receive feedback from video journals, presentations, and tests. To take advantage of

feedback received, students had to create a list of aspects they needed to improve on their pronunciation in order to set goals for the following week. From this list, students had to choose areas that were most frequently mentioned to create their goals. With areas of improvement already in hand, students used *Sofia's ESL Pronunciation Lab* to create, implement and evaluate their pronunciation improvement plans.

The first week of the pilot test consisted of working on the Planning Phase. On Monday October 27, students spent half of the class becoming familiar with the information on the website and with the worksheets and logs that aided in the process of creating their improvement plan. After becoming familiar with the new information, students used the rest of the week to finish developing their improvement plans. In addition to the time spent in my class, students were allowed to use the website during DS class to utilize the Planning Phase information on how to set effective goals, choose appropriate activities and strategies, and stay motivated. Students were then assigned to bring their improvement plans to class the following Monday.

Students were required to complete a form each week of the piloting phase. My forms were created by simply using Google® Forms. I wrote the questions I wanted my students to answer in a template from Google® Forms. When I completed my questions, Google® Form generated a link that I emailed to my students. Students were then required to answer each question, and submit the form. I immediately had access to the answers through Google® Drive. To see the questions I sent to my students using Google® Form, refer to Appendix C. These forms were useful as a tool to collect informal feedback and to help students be accountable

On the following Monday, November 3, students brought their improvement plans to class. We spent the first part of the hour in the computer lab going over the second phase of the guide, the Instruction Phase. During this time, students read the instructions in the guide and asked questions. Following the next week, they implemented and carried out their plan. They also kept a log which they completed expressing their feelings, thoughts, experiences, and results they noticed. This log was integral in the evaluation process of their plan and performance.

The third week was dedicated to evaluating improvement plans. On Monday, students studied instructions of evaluation during class. Subsequently, they used the rest of the week to complete the evaluation process, which was aided by the completion of questionnaires and checklists. At the end of the week, another form was completed to account for their work and obtain feedback on their experience.

The second cycle of the piloting phase followed in a related manner as one week was dedicated to the Planning Phase, the next to the Instruction Phase and the last one to the Evaluation Phase.

Informal Feedback

Throughout the pilot testing phase, informal feedback received from three main sources: my observations, my students through the completed forms, and my advisor.

Observations. I noticed that when students finished watching the videos and reviewed information on the home page, they were unsure of where to click on to start phase one. I indicated to them that they needed to scroll down and click on the *start now* button. I discuss how I intend to fix this problem later in this chapter.

I also noticed some students seemed less independent and continued to ask more and more questions about what to do next, when and how to complete logs and worksheets, and when to go over checklists. For students to be more autonomous, I will include a video explaining how to use the website.

One student suggested that it would be clearer for them to see the logs right in between the explanation, instead of having them n a box next to the text. They would like accessibility to the logs when they are scrolling down the page, so they do not have to click on a link to open them. Another suggestion included filling fill out the logs on the website, rather than printing and completing them. Another suggestion is to have a login on the website so that their information would be saved.

Students also struggled with academic words, such as cognitive and metacognitive strategies. The methods of clarifying these words included looking up the words in the dictionaries, asking me directly for clarification, and realizing there was a section on the website with definitions of key concepts. I purposefully kept these difficult words to push learners to become more independent in learning meta-language—language that is used to describe aspects of language and learning. For students to self-instruct successfully, they need to be acquainted with this academic vocabulary and utilize their own resources to understand these key concepts. However, another way to simplify learning so it is less time consuming and distracting is to hyperlink those words with their definitions.

My observations included my students' interactions with the online guide and the difficulties they had with the website. At an early stage of the piloting period, I learned that the website needed some adjustments in the navigation system (*start now* button), the

presentation of the instructions (logs and worksheets embedded in the text), and the presentation of new vocabulary (hyperlinked to the definitions).

Google® forms. Students had to complete six forms from Google® Form in total, one for every week and two for every phase. I will present the feedback received from the six weeks in three main groups: the Planning Phase, the Instruction Phase, and the Evaluation Phase. Also, I will share some encouraging comments and suggestions students shared in the forms. Notice that I did not change students' spelling, grammar, and vocabulary mistakes.

Planning Phase. During the Planning Phase, students seemed to understand the information presented and seemed to use the different worksheets, logs, and checklists well. There were 24 students who completed the form for the Planning Phase of the first cycle, and 20 that completed the form for the second cycle. To see the questions I used in the forms, check Appendix C.

From the forms for the Planning Phase I learned that all students had read and used the logs, worksheets and questionnaires in phase one. However, there were ten students that had not checked and used the section with extra information that contains a list of links students can use to plan for activities and self-instruction. This may suggest that students may have had difficulties finding this section; therefore, it may be a good idea to rename and/or relocate it.

For this phase, students were also asked to share what they learned from Step 1: Task Analysis and Step 2: Motivation and Personal Beliefs. I wanted to see if students could comprehend the information presented in the website. For Step 1: Task Analysis (Cycle 1) some students said that they learned "Self- Control. Be focused on my goals, visualize and

self instruction," "I learn how to organize my desires and develop into a goals," "Using Goals worksheet is good strategy for me to make sure my understanding." Similarly for cycle 2, some students said, "Plan specific time per day to work in my goal," "It is very important to be specific with the goals if not maybe it will be difficult to achieve them," "That planing is the base of a good project, if you planning good activities you can actually see results," "choose right activity and strategy. it is helpful to stay on track and not to be bored."

For Step 2: Motivation and Personal Beliefs, students also demonstrated an accurate understanding of the information presented in step 2. For example, (cycle 1) "I learn that you need to always think in succes. Be positive but realistic. Don't have negative feeling if the things are not going the way that you plan," "The effort we put towards accomplishing our goals," "I liked 'Motivation and Personal Beliefs sheet' because it helped me to realize my beliefs I myself," (cycle 2) "we need to perform well (external motivation) or master the goal (internal desire to learn). I learned that if I have desire to study it is more effective and productive. Most important in learning process is wish to learn, it always will help us to do our best if we do this with desire," "It is important to have a good attitude, will help to accomplish our goals better," "Work on my goals every day will help me to reach a better result and it will keep me motivated!!!" It is very encouraging to see that students understood the importance of motivation to make progress. These comments also demonstrate that the information was understandable and very useful for the students.

Instruction Phase. During the Instruction Phase, the majority of the students read the different steps and used the logs in this section. There were only two students that did not use the self-recording log during this phase. However, they did it in the second cycle of the

online guide. The forms demonstrated that students utilized the guide to implement their improvement plan, and that they understood the information presented in this phase.

One of the questions in the form was whether they thought the self-recording log was helpful and why, to which students answered: (Cycle 1) "I can notice whether this assignment helps me or not, when I do good job by using strategies and so on. It is helpful for figuring out my progress," "Because it helps me recognize what my mistakes are," "yes, becouse I can control what I do, what plan I have, and what time I must spend for my learning," (Cycle 2) "Yes it was. because I can look back easily what I did, and it helps me to decide what should I do next. I have to record every day next week," "Yes because I could measure my progress."

The forms students completed while utilizing the Implementation Phase of the online guide show that students had positive experiences with the website.

Evaluation Phase. The forms students completed for the Evaluation Phase demonstrate that students completed all the tasks, such as completing questionnaires and reflecting on their self-recording log, outlined in that phase. Students said that the self-evaluation questionnaires very useful, and they enjoyed learning about how to interpret their progress positively, even if they did not reach their goals as expected. They also enjoyed learning about how to adapt their plans if further work on the same goals was necessary.

Students' answers to what they learned from Step 1: Self-Evaluation were also positive. Some examples (cycle 1) are: "that we need to write the thinks that we think that we do good and what we can do better," "Its important to evaluate our performance to measure our progress," "I learn about my own mistakes and try to get help," "I learned

about how to evaluate myself with the activities that I have done," (cycle 2) "I really can see after the daily practice the good results. I feel so much more confident and comfortable to use the new words!" "It is important to autoevaluate our progress, the result of our actions."

With respect to Step 2: Adaptation, students had the following comments (cycle 1) "when we learning something evrytime we have results even if we are didn't achieve evrithing perfect," "It is important to have a positive attitude and try to change the things that did not work," "I can adapted all of these steps to improve my English," (cycle 2) "I need to be positive. Positive thoughts. Positive actions," "I learned to dont be frustrated when i didn't attend all my goals or if i didn't improve as much that i want," "When I was working, couple times I feel discouraged but I just kept my plan and tracking. After a week I feel totally different and more confident to speak."

I was very satisfied with the students' responses and to find out what they had learned. I was happy to realize that they started to feel capable of setting more effective goals, and that they were more positive towards themselves and their learning process. I was also content to read some students' comments about how they can see they had made progress. I am happy to witness students grow and become more motivated self-regulated learners.

Overall, the forms show that students had enough experience with the website, and their comments demonstrate that they have learned while using *Sofia's ESL Pronunciation Lab*. The survey that learners completed at the end of the pilot-testing phase will shed more information regarding points such as the organization of the content, clarity of instruction, and so forth.

Committee's feedback. I have worked closely with my committee's chair, receiving feedback with respect to the content and structure of the project as well as the write up of the thesis. Dr. Henrichsen has supervised the survey questions, my thesis report, and has made valuable suggestions to improve the website.

During the summer of 2014, the product was created and revised by Dr. Henrichsen throughout several meetings. Some of the first suggestions were made on the video scripts that were going to be included in the website. The scripts were a little bit long at the beginning. Dr. Henrichsen suggested shortening them a little and helped me figure out a more engaging opening line for the introductory video. After seeing the firsts video clips produced, my advisor counseled me to find a way to improve the quality of the video clips. That was when I was directed to the ArcLite crew at BYU, who helped shoot high quality video clips.

Dr. Henrichsen counseled me on the editing of the guide's text and the survey questions. He provided me with the resources I needed to conduct a readability test on the website content, which I explain in detail later in this chapter. The survey needed some adjustments, and Dr. Henrichsen made several recommendations. For example, there were about four questions that inquired about the usefulness of the guide, its strengths, and weaknesses that needed to be relocated to the beginning of the survey. In this way, students got to respond to the most important questions when their minds were fresh and excited to give feedback. Dr. Henrichsen also recommended highlighting key words within each questions, so that students could keep focused on what was important.

These are just some of the recommendations my advisor gave me about my pedagogical thesis.

Readability. To check the level of difficulty of the text, I used a combination of first language (L1) scoring systems: Flesch-Kincaid, Gunning-Fog, Coleman-Liau, SMOG and Automated Readability found in a website program at: http://www.readability-score.com. There is research (Greenfield, 2004; Hamsik, 1984 as cited by Greenfield, 2004) that shows that L1 readability indices using the formulas mentioned above are valid for ESL use. In Greenfield words, "the formulas work very well to predict the relative EFL/ESL difficulty of English academic texts" (p. 11). I checked the readability scores for every phase of the website, as well as questionnaires, and activities suggested, etc. to see if they matched the grade levels 8-9, which are the lowest levels newspapers and other sources generally use to facilitate comprehension for the general public.

The Flesch-Kincaid reading ease scores go from 0 to 100. The higher the number, the easier the text is. The average grade level is a combination of the indices mentioned above. The score for the Planning Phase is 58.7, and the grade level it corresponds to is 10.3. The Instruction Phase has a score of 67.4 with a grade level of 9.3. There is a similar amount of words per sentence for the two phases, but phase two has half the number of words phase one has. This is not the only reason for phase one to be a level higher than phase two since the former has more academic words—such as segmental, suprasegmental, self-efficacy, metacognitive—than the latter. The score for the Evaluation Phase is 62.9, and its grade level is 9.3. The words per sentence are reduced to 11.6, and the whole phase has fewer words than the other two phases. However, it still needs improvement as well as the other sections.

The extended section has a score of 63.5 and a grade level of 7.6. The link that explains the characteristics of SMART goals in phase one has a score of 73.2 and a grade

level of 8.2. However, the section in phase one that talks about types of activities has a score of 51.9 and a grade level of 11.4. This document needs editing, especially of the vocabulary, to decrease the difficulty by two or three levels. The questionnaires are the easiest documents, 78.7 (5.5 level) for the self-motivation questionnaire and 68.9 (6.6 level) for the self-evaluation questionnaire.

With respect to the activities suggested for the three main areas of pronunciation—general speaking habits, suprasegmental and segmental features—the scores are 70 for the general speaking habits, 71 for the prosodic features, and 57.8 for the segmental features. The grade levels that correspond to each are: 8.1 for the first group, 8.1 for the second, and 8.3 for the third group of exercises.

In sum, readability levels for the three phases and complementary documents need to be edited so as to decrease their difficulty indices one or two levels, and thus be more comprehensible for ESL learners at an intermediate level.

Evaluation: Survey

Students took a survey at the end of the pilot-testing phase. This survey contained 38 questions, which included quantitative data and qualitative responses (to see the survey, refer to Appendix E). The first few questions concerned with the purpose of the project, a second group of questions was related to the usefulness of different parts and links the website contains, and a third section had to do with the design and organization of the website and information.

Results. In this section, I share the comments and suggestions students gave me when they took the survey.

Question 1. Does the website fulfill its purpose of guiding you to create your own plan to improve your English as an independent student? All 30 students answered 'Yes' to this question. They all said that this website helped them create their own plan to improve their English.

This is one of the core questions of the survey since the main purpose of this project was to guide learners in their process of creating their improvement plan. The fact that students thought the website fulfills that purpose means that the project is on track and can prove to be very useful for other ESL learners.

Question 2. Explain how the website helped you to improve your English as an independent student. The purpose of this question was to find out what aspects of the website assisted students as they strived to learn English independently. The most common answer to this question was that the website helped students set better and more specific goals (N^1=9) as noted in this comment, "It's helpful for help us to plan goal." Another student commented, "I think the website helped me to set goals and helped me understand what is the purpose of learning." Another student said, "It helped me to set better goals and improve in my weaknesses. i had a good experience with it."

The second most common answer was that the website helped learners to identify and improve their weaknesses (N=8) as mentioned by one of them, "It helped me to find my weakness exactly, and it also showed me what should I do specifically." Another student mentioned, "it help me because i had specific goals and activities and i can improve in my specific weakness. because with the activities i can improve my daily."

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[1] *N* refers to the number of students that provided a specific answer. N=9 means that there were nine students that gave the same or similar answer.

The next aspect that seemed to have helped students' autonomous effort to improve their English were the strategies (N=7) presented and explained in the website. One of the answers described, "This website is good describer of strategy how to practice English and this strategy helped me." Other students mentioned specific strategies they found helpful, "It have helped me by teaching me how to develop good strategies for self assessment study" and, "website helped me: organized my time wise - review my goals and see my mistakes - work with natives more - asked for advises and feedback - improve my pronunciation -focus on the positive - self-control".

Another group of answers (N=6) shows that students found the explanations, directions and examples of the website helpful as they developed their plan to improve their English. For example, "it has good examples and explanation to let me know how to improve my english in different areas." Another student said, "It's helpful for help us to plan goals, principally pronunciation skills that we want to improve, so is a complete plan that help you step by step to achieve your goals", "It helped me with instructions, directions and ideas to work on my projects."

Some students (N=5) said that the website was helpful because they could create their own plan. As one learner mentioned, "it help me in making a good plan." Another student said, "I think this website is very helpful for the students who wants to improve their English. It is very clear and coherent. Following the steps I discovered a lot of interesting things about English. This site allowed me completely to work on my weaknesses, creating my own plan to improve my English. So I practiced and I practicing, and I hope I will practice all of the activities given by Ms Carreno with my pleasure. I want to go back to the links which seemed me wonderful."

A similar number of students (N=4) mentioned that the activities in the website helped them improve their English as they strove to become independent learners. This student mentioned, "The web site help me with my plans of learning english, especially the part about being doing activities and check myself."

Question 3. What are some strengths of this website? The most common adjectives that were used to describe the strengths of the website were that it was *helpful* (N=7) and *informative* (N=7). Some students said, "In my opinion, this site is informative, educational, and practical. It would be very beneficial for teachers to help students create their personal pronunciation plan and follow it," "it's the Idea they give about what you can do, they have the good idea idea in the website."

The second most popular aspects of the website were its organization (N=5) and the plan consisting in three phases (N=5), which technically would be part of the organization. However, to find out specifically whether students liked going through a certain number of phases or not is important for the final completion of the project. Students commented, "This website is organized pretty well," "It is organized and easy to use," "i like that this website has a three phases."

Some students (N=5) mentioned specific sections of the website they found as solid aspects of the project, for example, "I like the part of self- evaluation," "Goals. Planning activities. Motivation and personal beliefs," "For me was very effective part of learning about self-control."

Other students (N=3) felt that the main strength of the website were the examples. One of the students said, "The examples to make a plan to improve," or "that… give you examples of how to do the activities." A few other students (N=3) liked the resources found

in the online guide. One of the students mentioned that there are "a lot of resources to know what to do."

Question 4. What are some weaknesses of this website? A few students (N=6) mentioned that they thought there were no weaknesses in the website, and one student was not sure what to suggest to improve the website. However, the most common answer (N=6) was that the website had too much information or text, "To many words maybe put more pictures," "long explanation." Some students (N= 5) had some recommendations to improve the website, such as including more pictures and making the website more interactive. For example, "A lot of text, it need to be more interactive," "I think that the layout presentations should be better, in a more graphic way, more visual to work with the follow steps. Kinda of a main diagram show all the structures."

The next common suggestion was that the students (N=4) would like to have the possibility of filling out papers and saving their work in the actual website. One student said, ".... it would be better if we can fill all the paper in the computer though the website than printing and writing on hand. That's all." Another student said, "Maybe can be useful to fill some papers online in the website, and watch online the dates and progress."

Other answers fluctuated between clarity (N=2) of the directions and information, and various design and programming issues (N=6). For example, one student said, "sometime the direction was not clear." With respect to the design and programming some students said, "a lot of page," "having to press start now every time that you want to check the steps," "Sometimes, I couldn't open files."

Question 5. What are other suggestions to improve this website? Nine students did not have any other suggestions besides the comments they had already made for the

previous questions. Among those who did have more comments, the most common pieces of advice were: to include more examples (N=4) and more activities (N=4), and to make the guide more entertaining or interactive (N=4). One student said, "More interactive. More examples." Others said, "put some videos and examples of the other student's experience. it makes it interesting. now it is kind of boring," "More easy examples for goals, I prefer more entertainment sites for learning English," "gets stressful the ways it is need to be tracked," "This website needs to be more complete by specific activities, not only suggestions about that, more activities that helps student be motivated," "give me some exercise".

Keeping track of progress and filling out worksheets online (N=3) were again advised for the improvement of this website when one student said, "include a evaluation via online or one way of recording the progress…. something that already talk to you, that can be possible to fill the paper online and at the same time see the information to learn about goals."

Three other students made reference to the organization of the website, but were not specific as to what exactly should be better organized. One student, however, proposed that the website should have more visuals, such as diagrams and charts presenting the overall structure of the guide. She said, "I think that the layout presentations should be better, in a more 'graphic way', more visual to work with the follow steps. Kinda of a main diagram, showing all the structures."

Other students suggested that I should include "… a listening [of the] website's content," "new resources and strategies," and "[activities targeting] individual study style." One of the students made a very valuable suggestion. He said, "take more time to explain the concept (video is better than text…I think.) In my opinion, the person whom we report

to and get feedback from is the key of success. So, reporting system also needs to be simple."

The survey had 30 more questions related to the content, design and proper functioning of the website that are not presented in full in this thesis report. Instead, a summary of the results from those 30 questions will be discussed in the next few paragraphs. To read a full report of the results, refer to Appendix F.

Regarding the website's layout and design, most students agreed that it was good. Only one student did not agree, and five neither agreed nor disagreed. Most students thought that white space and color were used appropriately, though there was one student that said the website should be more colorful. Also, most students thought that the website matched graphics and text appropriately. Only three students neither agreed nor disagreed. The most common student suggestion for improvement was to include more graphics. Students said that the site is aesthetically pleasing, but that it should include more images. Most students agreed that the text was readable, and that the text size and style were appropriate. There were three students that said that the text needed more variety. But all students except for two (who did not agree or disagree) agreed that the website was professional. The only suggestions for improvement in professionalism were one, that the website looked incomplete, and two, possibly adding sponsors' logos, such as BYU.

In addition to design aspects, students were asked about the mechanics of using the website, as well as the effectiveness of the directions and commands. Students reported that the website ran properly, and that it was easy to navigate. Only two students mentioned that surfing the site was complicated, and that they got lost. A couple of students mentioned that they had a hard time finding the *start now* button to begin the

goal-setting process. Most students agreed that the directions and commands were consistent, except for one student that neither agreed nor disagreed. All students except one agreed that the website guided them well.

With respect to the downloadable materials, students were asked if they thought that the logs, worksheets, checklists, questionnaires, and activities in the website were useful and interesting. Most students agreed that they were. Responses included, "they give me feedback," "[they helped me] measure someway how you are improving and when you write on a paper you can see your improvement and realize what you need to do better," "In my opinion this is the best way to improve my english. without logs or worksheet i could not improve my skills to speak English," "i could control better all my process of learning."

However, two students disagreed, saying that there were too many papers. This does not necessarily mean that the materials were not useful; these students simply may not have seen the need for extra logs and papers. It is probable that explaining the importance of the included PDFs would help learners understand their usefulness. When asked what suggestions they would give to improve logs, worksheets, checklists, questionnaires, and activities, students mentioned that they wanted more activities, examples, and videos showing how to do the exercises.

In regard to the presentation of information in the website, most students agreed that the presentation was clear, concise, and interesting. Only four students did not give an answer. A few students suggested adding more visuals to the website and adjusting the text for different proficiency levels. One of those students said, "As a visionary learner i prefer more pictures on the website." Another student commented that the vocabulary was

difficult, but it was "good practice" and an opportunity to use more "academic terms." Another student expressed that it would be a good idea to add more details for higher-level students. Nonetheless, all students (except two who did not give opinions), thought that the instruction level was appropriate. One student said, "Yes because for me is super easy to read and follow, and for my companions too." Other students said, "because, if you are not student at the ELC, and you found this web side you can follow all the steps and it is very useful," and "In my opinion the website was appropriate for our level, because it wasn't imposible to follow and work won it, but also it required an effort of us."

In relation to the video clips, students were asked if they thought they were helpful. Students unanimously agreed that they were. Some students said that they liked the videos because they explained the purpose of the website and introduced students to it. Other students said that the video clips contained useful information. Some of these comments were: "because the introductory videos is clearly to let me understand what the purpose is," "helps us with explanations, pronunciation," and "the videos are awesome!"

Twenty-one out of thirty total students said that they would like to have more video clips. Some students mentioned that they would like to find a video for each phase guiding them through every step. Other students expressed that they would like to see more activities and examples being demonstrated instead of having to read them. A few students indicated that they would like to watch videos with more pronunciation instruction such as "exercises to improve pronunciation and fluency." One student suggested having other ESL learners share their experiences on the website. It was not clear, though, if he was referring to experiences with the website or experiences as ESL learners.

In general, according to these results, the website seems to be a success, even though there are different aspects of it that could be polished and improved. I expand on those aspects later in this chapter.

Limitations of the survey. The results of this survey were very positive and encouraging. Suggestions and comments as to what needs to be improved were also uplifting and constructive. However, data collection methods generally have limitations that can affect the results. One of this survey's limitations may be related to the Halo Effect (Mackey & Gass, 2005; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977), which refers to the phenomenon of participants giving responses they think the investigator expects from them. The students that used *Sofia's ESL Pronunciation Lab* and gave feedback for this study were my students. Since I am the creator of the guide as well their teacher, students may have been more cautious with how they expressed their opinions. In addition, my students may have approached the website more optimistically because they knew me. Assuming they had positive opinions of me, they may have given answers more encouraging than they would have had they not known me. However, students did make a lot of suggestions regarding things they felt could be improved, and they seemed unafraid to mention what they did not like about the website.

Limitations of the website. One of the limitations of this website is that it only provides students with information as to how to create their personal plan to improve pronunciation, but it does not provide a reward system for learners to keep them motivated. It does not provide a space for meaningful interaction with other ESL learners. All those aspects that are discussed in the guide, making use of strategies such as self-reward, asking for help to other people, ideal L2 self visualization, etc. need to be

materialized by the learners themselves. Learners need to find ways to self-reward and

people that will help them be accountable. Learners themselves have to create their own

support system. One way this can be improved in the website is by adding to the list of

links, in the Extra Information section, websites that offer learners the opportunity to join

an ESL community.

A second limitation to this website is the fact that it does not provide high levels of

dialogue and structure which would aid those students who are less self-regulated and

motivated (Andrade & Bunker, 2009). In their study, Andrade and Bunker (2009) explain

that a successful model for self-regulated distance language learning should provide

sufficient dialogue, interaction between the learners and the teacher, and structure,

lessons, objectives, projects, etc. As learners gain experience from these two aspects,

dialogue and structure, they develop self-regulation skills. As a result, learners will have

learned to "reflect on and monitor their performance, set new goals, and continue to

improve" their L2 (p. 54).

Suggested future edits. Throughout the process of creating my pronunciation

website, I received feedback from both students and advisors regarding aspects that should

be adjusted in the online guide. In the following paragraphs I discuss future adjustments I

plan to make in the content and design of *Sofia's ESL Pronunciation Lab*.

Content edits. Some of the content edits I intend to make include adjusting the text

length and difficulty level, correcting errors, and adding more examples, activities, links,

and videos.

Text length and difficulty. One of the most common suggestions from participants of

this study was to reduce text length, especially in the Planning Phase, and in some of the

files (such as *SMART Goals* file*)*. To reduce the word count, several options have been

presented. First, I could use charts and other graphs instead of to present material

currently contained in paragraph format. In this way, students would at a glance have a

general idea of what is being said in the section, thus reducing reading time. Also, I could

reduce text on the main page by providing hyperlinks to more specific and detailed content.

Editing the difficulty of some portions of the text would respond to not only to the

students' feedback, but also to the indices of readability. There are files and section in the

website that are appropriate for intermediate level readers. I plan to change this in order to

ensure that sentence structure, phrasing, and number of words per sentence are adjusted

so as to facilitate comprehension for ESL learners.

Errors. My advisors have pointed out mistakes in the website there were not evident

to the students that participated in the pilot testing of the website. Spread out throughout

the online guide, there are small typographical errors as well as minor grammar mistakes

that need to and will be fixed. These adjustments, together with improving text length and

difficulty, will be some of the first to be addressed, as it is my goal to provide ESL learners

with a high quality learning experience.

More examples, activities, links, and videos. Several students mentioned that they

would like more examples, activities, links and videos in the website. The quantity and

quality of examples and activities therefore need to be reviewed. Students could benefit

from various activities that target different learning style and preferences. Providing a

more extensive list of reference links for students to refer to would prove very helpful for

tow main reasons; first, it could help create the variety of activities students are looking

for; and second, it can help them save a lot of time. They would not have to search online

for hours for a website that would suit their needs if instead they could use the list of websites I created.

Some students also suggested that it would be very helpful for them to see videos of other students that sharing their experiences, videos explaining the whole process of creating a plan, or videos that explain how to do the exercises. Though it is not clear whether experiences refers to experiences with the website or experience learning English. The suggestion is valid since personal testimonies from other students could make the website more personal and accessible to all learners.

The second suggestion, adding more videos to the website to explain the process of creating the improvement plan, is an idea that was considered even before the survey was administered. Creating a video explaining how to use the website and how to perform the different steps would be very useful for any learner.

Categorization of websites. Some useful advice I received during my thesis defense was to group the websites listed in the Extra Information section, into categories so that learners can go straight to the category of resources they want. For example, if they are looking for a website that instruct them how to articulate sounds, they could go to a category named *Articulation* where they could find *Rachel's English* website, for example. In this way students would save time by not having to read the description of all the websites currently listed in *Sofia's ESL Pronunciation Lab*.

Design Edits. Several design adjustments will take place as a results of the feedback received from students and my advisors. These include changing the name of the website, adding more visuals, making sure that it is easy to access the different phases, making the website more interactive, and providing the possibility of saving students' work online.

Name of the website. One of the issues that was discussed in my thesis defense was the fact that the name of the website does not reflect the fact that my website is focused on providing students with a guide to create their personal plan of improvement, and that it does not focus on providing a series of videos for students to use to practice various aspects of pronunciation. In my website, I do introduce students to the main aspects of pronunciation and include the definitions of important concepts as well as links to other websites, but all these features are included to empower students to work autonomously when addressing their individual needs. This may be misleading for some ESL learners that may be looking for videos on how to pronounce the /r/ sound, for example.

Therefore, a possible name for my website could be *Sofia's Self-Improvement Guide for Second-Language Pronunciation*. This name includes the word *guide* which helps learners know that my website is actually a guide, first of all. Second, the word *self* suggests the idea that students will be working independently, that they will be making decisions on their own, or that they will be helping themselves. The terms *second-languag*e and *pronunciation* show that the website can help learners of any second language, not just ESL, improve their pronunciation. There is one word that is not included in this new name, *plan*. I will have to keep on brainstorming until I can find a better name for the online guide.

Graphics and visuals. One prevalent suggestion from the ESL student participants was to make the website more visual by adding more graphics. One student suggested making one graph to represent the whole process of planning. In this way, students would get the whole picture and would go into the plan with a clearer understanding of how they needed to proceed. I feel a chart such as this would be perfect to include chart in the home

page. It will also be helpful if learners could look at that chart and click on the phase they desired to work on that day.

Interactive features. Students were not very specific about explaining what they meant by making the website more interactive. Bringing up interactiveness, however, suggests that learners would like a more active experience than just reading a text, printing worksheets, and completing them. Several ideas come to mind as to how to solve this issue. An initial idea could be to have a voice over, that can be paused as desired, to guide learners throughout the various steps in the website. Students could then pause the guide while they complete logs or worksheets. In addition to these modifications, one could implement a reward system in which the learners get a star or win points for every entry they make in their logs. This would make the experience more interactive as well as motivating.

Work online. A few students mentioned that it would be very convenient to be able to complete worksheets on the actual website instead of having to download the documents. It would be great to give students the option of having an account so that they can save their work online. A similar comment was the suggestion of embedding the logs in the actual text, so that students would not have to look for the box where the link was located. Students said that they would like to see the log and not a link to the log on the online page. This, however, could make the text seem longer, which would not be desirable.

Guide's access. In the survey, some students shared that they were confused about how to start using the guide, and that they did not know where to click. The *start now* button that leads to the three phases was at the end of the home page. A few students did not realize that they had to scroll down to see it. To make the website more user friendly,

students could have the option of clicking on the phases they want to access as they look at the initial graph introducing the plan. For example, they could click on the P (Planning Phase), the I (Instruction Phase), or the E (Evaluation Phase). It would be less confusing and more practical if a *start now* button was at the beginning of the home page as well.

Report system. There was one student that suggested including a report system in the website. Right now, reporting is only mentioned as an important element of making progress; however, it is up to the student to decide to whom, when and how he is going to report. It would be more convenient for users of this guide to find a pre-established reporting system in the website. This report system could also serve as a support system if a community were created where other ESL learners come together on line to share what they are working on, their improvements, concerns, etc.

Conclusion

Based on my own observations and feedback provided by my committee, students, and readability indices, the revisions discussed above are some of the most important changes that need to take place for the website to be more user-friendly and meaningful for ESL learners. Further feedback will be used for the continued improvement of the website. It is important to note that, as demonstrated in the results of the survey, this website is currently useful, and has been successful in guiding students in creating their improvement plans. *Sofia's ESL Pronunciation Lab* will, however, have a lot more to offer when these have adjustments taken place.

Chapter Six: Lessons Learned and Recommendations

This chapter discusses some of the lessons I learned throughout the process of developing my pedagogical thesis and writing it. It also contains some recommendations for future MA students developing instructional projects and writing their thesis report.

Lessons Learned

Writing a thesis. Writing a thesis has been one of the most challenging experiences of my life. I have never been much of a writer. During college it took a lot of practice and dedication to do well in my writing classes. When the time came to write a thesis for my master's program, I felt completely confused and inadequate. I did not know where to start.

Linguistics 620 Research and Methodology with Dr. Henrichsen provided useful guidance as to how to find relevant literature and how to organize my literature review. The class was extremely helpful. In spite of being acquainted with the overall format of a review of literature, I struggled with the organization of my own literature review. I decided to go to the ESL writing lab on campus and ask for help. Upon meeting with a tutor on a weekly basis, I was able to write my literature review and get valuable feedback from him. I know there is still a lot of room for improvement in my document, but I have learned a lot from this writing process. I confident that when I have to write an article in the future, it will be a much faster process because of the experience I have gained through this thesis.

Tailoring my pedagogical thesis to the audience. From the creation of my project, I learned how to simplify information to meet the students' needs. One of the concerns that arose from the pilot testing data was that there was a lot of text, even though most students found the information useful. Despite the fact that I synthesized the information before

including it in the website, it still needed more work so that learners do not feel overwhelmed to see that amount text.

In addition to that, I adjusted the product to make sure there were enough visuals and videos to help learners in their process of developing their own plan. Even though there were some images, a couple of videos, and charts to aid the learners, several students suggested adding more visuals and videos.

Proceeding in faith. At the beginning of the creation process, I did not know what the product was going to look like. I could not fully envision it. This worried me, and I spent a lot of time trying to figure out exactly what the end product was going to be. I often felt overwhelmed by the great task that I had in my hands. The two processes of creating a whole product as well as writing a thesis were new and very intimidating for me. Consequently, I stressed out a lot and felt anxious many times, which led to negative and paralyzing feelings.

However, when I silenced those worries and focused on working just one step at a time, I was able to have more positive feelings, motivation, and make progress. I learned the importance of proceeding in faith, knowing that I was going to be able to create something valuable, even if I did not have the final product fully envisioned. I learned that I only needed to have one thing in mind, and that was if I desire to find the best way to help my students. I also learned that if am willing to work until I discover the solutions to difficulties that come along, I will receive inspiration and guidance to reach my goals in the end.

Recommendations

In this section, I briefly share a recommendation for other TESOL MA students that are planning to create a pedagogical thesis. I also share some pieces of advice regarding writing a thesis.

Recommendations for project development. In this section, I give suggestions for future projects similar to my pedagogical thesis. More specifically, I talk about some measures that cold be taken to improve and expand my website.

Expand the website. My thesis provides a guide to help learners create their own plans to improve their intelligibility. Focusing on other skill areas was beyond the scope of my thesis. However, this guide can be used as an example for ways to improve any areas of any language, as well as to improve any aspect of a person's life. Therefore, it would be very interesting to see a similar website but applied to other skill areas. This product can be easily expanded to areas such as writing, reading, and listening. It could also be translated into other languages and help learners to improve other languages.

Design a feedback system. It would be interesting if the website could provide learners with feedback about their motivational level, beliefs as learners, and their pronunciation. Learners could complete a motivational questionnaire and get immediate feedback about their level of motivation and their beliefs as learners. They could also be informed about what areas need improvement with respect to their attitude and beliefs. It would be even better if the website could provide with suggestions for students of what to do to increase their motivation and beliefs as learners.

With respect to providing feedback about learners' pronunciation, learners could take a test that makes a diagnosis of their weak areas. The same test could be use to assess

their progress. Justin Shewell's POSE test (2004) could be used to diagnose both segmental—vowels and consonants—and suprasegmental—stress and intonation—features. This test does not require students to speak, but to identify or perceive speech features. It is assumed that if students cannot identify certain features, they cannot produce them either. One of the advantages of this test is that students can carry it out online at any time any where.

Recommendations about writing a thesis. Writing a thesis is a demanding and challenging task that requires approaching it with strategies rather than trying to write it without planning ahead. Some lessons I learned in the process are the importance of keeping track of the work done, of taking it little by little, and of asking for help.

Keep logs. I would recommend other students to keep logs to track how much time they spend working on their projects. When I found out some students had done this in the past, I wished I had been able to do the same. It can be very useful to know how much time you are really putting into your thesis. By keeping logs, you can also find out whether you need to make changes, such as dedicating more time or finding ways to use your time more efficiently,

You can also keep logs to track suggestions, comments, and feedback that you get from your committee. This will help you realize the progress you have made throughout the whole process of completing your thesis. In addition to that, you will have all that information ready and available for when you have to finish your thesis report. Creating a product is a long process with a lot of editing. Keeping a log of what has been done first and next is going to simplify the writing process later on when you explain how you developed your product.

Work on your thesis every day. I also suggest MA students to work on their thesis little by little and devote time to the thesis every day. It is sometimes difficult to see the difference it makes when you write only one paragraph every day. At times, we feel that a paragraph is very little work and is not significant. However, it quickly adds up to pages in only a week. In a few weeks you can have a whole chapter of your thesis finished. As Monica Macaulay suggested in her book *A Guide for Graduate Students* (2011), the only way to approach such an overwhelming task of writing a whole thesis report is tricking our minds into thinking "that [a] small chunk is all you need to do" that day (p. 80).

Working on your thesis every day helps with motivation in two ways. First of all, as you work a little every day, you can see how fast you are progressing. Realizing you are progressing at that speed can be very encouraging. Second, thinking about your project or research every day can help you visualize the end product. Unfortunately, I was not this consistent. I had periods were I would not would work on my thesis every day—especially at the beginning of my second year when I was still taking classes—and other periods where I would be more consistent. Those were the times when I made the most progress in the least time. Now I have learned my lesson. It is better to start now than tomorrow and to work everyday consistently rather than once in a while.

Ask for help. Do not be scared to ask for help. Learners are all different. People have varying levels of experience. It is not about being more or less intelligent; it is about what you have learned in the past and what you have not. If you need more guidance now to create a product because you have never done something similar, it is OK. You will be experienced in the future. Asking for help will save you a lot of time and energy.

In my case, I hired a web designer to set up my website. I did not know how to do that and, even if I knew I could learn it, I knew it was going to take a lot more time than I had to do everything by myself. So, I knew I needed help and it was worth paying a specialist to program my website.

Lead a balanced life. I also recommend leading a balanced life, where you make time to eat healthy, exercise, and have positive social interactions. This is something I also learned first hand. In my first two semesters, I was so concerned about doing my best in the classes that I did not make time to take care of other aspects of my life. My performance and motivation started to suffer as well as my health. I had repeated headaches, and concentration difficulties among other issues. A lot of the times, I felt guilty if I worked on anything else that was not my thesis or classes. At one point, I even thought that it was supposed to be that way in a Masters program and there was nothing I could do.

Upon receiving advice, I started to take classes that would help me release stress and have positive experiences. Also, with the example of Dr. Henrichsen and other professors, I realized of the importance of healthy eating and regular exercise. As I started to do this, my health improved, my headaches decreased, and my motivation increased. I became more positive and more hopeful that I could accomplish the gigantic task of completing a Master's program.

These are just a few of the many lessons I learned and recommendations I give to other MA students.

Conclusion

This thesis originated with the need to assist ELC intermediate and advanced level students with the creation of their plans to improve specific skill areas in English. Three of the main concerns at the ELC were that students struggled mainly with their productive skills, writing and speaking, with the design of their own improvement plans, and with motivation especially toward the end of the semester. The needs analysis confirmed that students felt confused and did not know how to improve their weak areas. It also revealed that learners felt frustrated because they could not communicate with native speakers successfully. Students felt that pronunciation was the key factor to help them become more communicative competent. Based on these results, I narrowed down the focus of this thesis to helping learners become more self-sufficient as they strive to develop their intelligibility.

Since intelligibility is (or at least should be) the goal of most, if not all, ESL learners, I chose a broader target audience than students at the ELC for this product. Most ESL learners will struggle with intelligibility at some point in their language learning process. Then, why not create something that will assist not only ESL students of one specific community but ALL ESL learners? This is when the idea of developing a website emerged and led to a shift in the target audience from a specific group of students to a more general ESL audience. I decided to create an online guide—*Sofia's ESL Pronunciation Lab*—to lead ALL ESL students step-by-step in the creation of an improvement plan for intelligibility. Also, creating a computer-aided product makes the learning experience more visual and interactive for students, as well as more flexible since they can use the website whenever and wherever they want.

Now in its finished form, *Sofia's ESL Pronunciation Lab* can benefit all ESL learners who are looking to improve their English in a more autonomous way. This means that many people can become more independent learners who are in charge of controlling how they improve their English pronunciation. If that takes place, the work that I put into this thesis and website will have been worthwhile.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Focus Group and Teachers' Interview Questions

Questions for focus group with students:

- What are some feelings and thoughts about developing your own plans?

- What worked for you? What didn't work?

- What was useful for you?

- What worked during the directed studies? What resources did you use? (resources and activities)

- What resources were useful for you?

- What was frustrating for you?

- How motivated were you throughout the semester? What kept you motivated? What didn't?

- What do you recommend teachers should do to better assist you?

- What would you recommend the teachers to do to help you develop the plans?

- Help you improve the speaking skills?

- What do you think would have been helpful to know at the beginning of the semester?

- What recommendation you would give to a new student

- What do you think ELC should do?

- Any more comments?

Questions for interview with teachers:

First interview with teachers:

- What do you hope students would do?

- How prepared do you think students are?

- What is your goal as a teacher in this class?

- How motivated do you think the students are to start working on their own plans?

Second interview:

- What is working so far?

- What is not working?

- How motivated do you see the students at this stage?

- How effectively are they using their time and resources?

Appendix B: PDF Files from Sofia's ESL Pronunciation Lab

<u>Strategies</u>

Category	Phase	Strategies	How to use them
Metacognitive	Phase 1	goal setting	• decide what you want to learn and be SMART about it
		planning	• decide what you will do, how you will do it, for how long, and when. Make sure you write everything down.
		directed attention	• decide in advance to concentrate on general aspects of a task
	Phase 2	self-monitoring	• check your performance by keeping a journal, a log, or some sort of record. Keep track of results, and thoughts and feelings as well.
		selective attention	• paying attention to specific aspects of a task, for example, is you are having a conversation you apply selective attention by paying attention to intonation instead of your grammar.
	Phase 3	self-evaluation	• identify the progress you have made. Resolve if you have achieved your goal.
		problem identification	• identify areas that may be the cause of not getting the results wanted
		self-reinforcement	• rewarding oneself for success
Affective	Phase 1 Phase 2 Phase 3	Lowering anxiety	• use progressive relaxation • deep breathing • meditation • use music • use laughter
		Encouraging yourself	• make positive statements • take risks wisely • rewarding yourself
		Taking your emotional temperature	• listen to your body • use a checklist • write a language learning diary • discuss your feelings with someone else
Social	Phase 1	Asking questions	• asking for clarification or verification. You can your teachers, or other native speakers.

		Phase 2	Asking questions	• asking for clarification or verification • asking for correction to friends
			Cooperating with others	• cooperating with peers such as practicing together • cooperating with other proficient speakers of the new language
			Empathizing with others	• developing cultural understanding • becoming aware of others thoughts and feelings
		Phase 3	Asking questions	• ask native speakers or other advanced non-native speakers to give you feedback on your performance.
Cognitive		Phase 2	repetition	• repeat the pronunciation of a word. Use words in a sentence several times. Repeat after a
			resourcing	• using dictionaries and other materials
			translation	• find out the equivalent of a ward in your own language
			note-taking	• write down what you listen to
			deduction	• conscious application of L2 rules. Focus on the rules you are trying to use.
			contextualization	• when embedding a word or a phrase on a meaningful sentence.
			transfer	• use knowledge acquired in your native language to remember and understand facts and sequences in the L2
			inference	• apply rules to other words that are new for you. Infer rules from patterns.
			question for clarification	• ask the teacher or other people you are talking with to explain something you didn't understand, etc.
			noticing	• pay special attention to how words are said, what happens when certain sounds are next to others, etc.
		Phase 3	reflection	• Think about what you have been doing to improve your English, think about the things you do better, things you need to improve, etc.

O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Cook, 1993, Wenden, 1998, Oxford (1990), Little (1997), Schmidt (1990) and Robinson (1995)

Goals Worksheet Sample

Goal	Start date	Due date Report to	Frequency	For how long	Activity type	Self-instruction	Strategies
Learn the pronunciation of 6 new words about foods	Monday	- Saturday - Report to my roommate	Every day I will add a new word and practice the previous word.	10 min	1	-I will identify (find) 6 words I want to learn about food (I can find them in a textbook, a recipe, internet, etc.) -I will look for the pronunciation of each word in an online dictionary, and I will learn how to say them and how to use them.	-Use online dictionaries -Notice native speakers pronunciation and use of the words -Lowering anxiety* -Checking emotional temperature* -Encourage my self*
					2	-I will watch a cooking show and listen actively to identify the new words I learned.	Meta: -Selective attention
					3	-In the online dictionary, I will repeat after the audio making sure I use the same pronunciation. To check, I could record myself and later listen to both audios and compare.	Meta: -Self-monitoring Cognitive: -Repetition
					4	-You could reproduce a dialogue where someone is using those words you set to learn. You could also create your own dialogue and act it out making sure you use those words correctly.	-Check sentences with native speakers

					5	-You plan to have a conversation with a native speaker in which you share a recipe that contains those words you learned.	-Asking questions for clarification -Asking for feedback

Activity Types (Under task analysis page)

1	Analysis: Choose instructions that help you know how and when features occur. For example: If you are learning about intonation of questions, you want to find out whether there are different intonations and when they occur (rising intonation for yes-no questions, and falling intonation for wh-questions).
2	Listening discrimination: Choose activities in which you practice identifying the features you are learning. For example, you could listen to questions and say which ones are rising or falling.
3	Controlled practice: You can practice reading questions aloud with the correct intonation.
4	Guided practice: You can start producing some conversations but with a guide so that you can better pay attention to the feature you are practicing (intonation of questions).
5	Communicative practice: Now it is time to use question intonations without having to have cards or clues for you to monitor intonation. You need to pay attention to not only how you say something but also what you are saying. For these activities you could have debates, problem-solving conversations where what you are talking about is also very important.

Figure 1: Adapted from Teaching Pronunciation: A Course Book and Reference Guide (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Goodwin, 2010).

<u>Self-Motivation Beliefs</u>

1- Do I believe I can develop/improve _____ (your goal:

intonation/rhythm/stress/ etc.? _____

2- How well do I believe I can accomplish my goals? _____

3- What is the source of those beliefs? _____

4- Are my beliefs positive or negative? _____ If negative, how can I change

them? _____

5- How do I visualize myself at the end of my improvement plan? Am I successful? or I

picture myself failing? _____

6- How much do I value learning this specific English aspect (from your goals)? _____

7- Do I enjoy practicing English? _____

8- How much more important is for you to attain your goal compared to the time and effort

you need to spend? Is it worth it your time, effort, and other costs? _____

9- What are the reasons for my past failures? _____

10- What are the reasons for my past successes? _____

<u>Exercises for General Speaking Habits</u>

You want to sound confident and clear. To do so, you need to pay attention to your articulation, pitch, volume, rate of speech, and facial expressions (Teaching American English Pronunciation, Avery & Ehrlich, 2012). To improve all those aspects you can do the exercises below:

<u>Articulation</u>

To articulate clearly you need to engage your facial muscles as well as the articulators (lips, tongue, velum, etc.). For you to be able to use your muscles appropriately, you need to be relaxed. You know that when you are nervous, your hands and knees shake. Something similar happens with your mouth, and what you say is not clear anymore. So, for you to speak clearly, you need to relax your facial muscles. To relax your muscles you can do the following exercises:

<u>Chew gum</u>: Move your lips and jaw as you were eating gum. Exaggerate ☺

<u>Smile and kiss</u>: Make a big smile and then blow a kiss ☺

<u>The lips</u>:   i   u   i   u   i   u   etc.

<u>Lips and jaw:</u> i   a   u   i   a   u   etc.

<u>The jaw and middle of the tongue</u>: say /yu/ as in 'yuppie'

        1-open and close jaw

        2-move only tongue

<u>The back of your tongue and velum:</u> a   g   a   g   a   g   etc.

<u>Consonants</u>: pi   pi   pi   pi   pi   pi   pi   pi   pa

Repeat with t, k, b, d, g, m, n and other consonants.

If you do this exercises everyday, you will activate all the muscles necessary to speak clearly in English and eventually you will be able to use the sounds correctly under more stressful situations.

<u>Pitch, Volume and Rate</u>

For listeners to find what you say interesting, you need to use varied pitch, changes in volume and rate. Pitch makes reference to the tone of your voice, volume is how loud or soft you speak, and rate is how fast or slow you speak.

Pitch: If your voice does not change in pitch, it'll sound monotonous and it will be very hard to keep listeners interested in your message. Also, you won't show other meanings through the tone of your voice, such as happiness or sadness. If you are happy or excited, generally your pitch is higher. Whereas if you sad, tired or bored, your pitch is lower. Therefore, if you speak at a low monotonous pitch, people may think you are bored or not interested in conversing.

One exercise you can do is to count from 1 to 5 changing your pitch higher with every number. When you go back to 1, go from high to low. Also, instead of going up from 1-5, you can down in pitch and then back up.

For more practice, you could find conversations, listen to and repeat them imitating the speakers. For example, identify changes in pitch in the following conversation: http://esl-lab.com/intro2/intro2.htm. Then, practice repeating parts of the conversation using exactly the same tones of voice. You can choose any other conversations of interest from the same or other websites.

Volume: Americans tend to speak louder than speakers of other languages (ex. Japanese or Spanish). To sound confident you may need to speak louder.

To practice, you can say one vowel and start from very soft to very loud. In this way you can get used to listening to your own voice louder.

Another activity you can do is to practice lines with a lot of emotional burden. For example: 'I didn't do it!', 'It's not my fault!' or 'How you dare!'. You could also, read poems and increase the volume of your voice as you go to the next line.

Another useful activity could be to use conversations like the following to practice speaking louder: http://esl-lab.com/call/911rd1.htm

Rate: If you speak too fast, people may miss some information and it will be more difficult for you to pronounce clearly. If you speak slow, people may get bored, lose attention and stop listening. Therefore, try to speak at a normal speed. However, when

people are excited about something, people tend to speak a bit faster. If people are relaxed, they speak a bit slower.

To practice choose any conversations and read it at different speeds. ☺ Also, you can repeat after the speakers in the conversations from the following website: <u>http://esl-lab.com/</u>

Eye Contact and Gestures

To communicate in English, it is very important to keep appropriate eye contact. When you look at the listener's eyes when communicating your ideas, it shows that you are sincerely interested in having a conversation with the person. Also, you will show that you are confident about what you are saying and how you are saying it. It is awkward and strange when people don't make eye contact at all.

You can practice making appropriate eye contact by recording yourself answering a question and then analyzing the video. If you are looking away most of the time, practice spending more time looking at the camera.

Gestures are also important because they communicate meaning. They can reinforce what you are saying with words or say the opposite to your words if you want to be sarcastic, for example. You can practice making different facial expressions. Practice smiling and looking excited if you are sharing good news, for example. Or you can look sad or worried after hearing bad news.

*Ideas from 'Developing Natural and Confident Speech: Drama Techniques in the Pronunciation Class' by John Archibald.

<u>Suprasegmental Features</u>

Giving priority to suprasegmental features is a good choice on your part because;

1. Research shows that they (intonation, stress, pausing, etc.) have greater impact on intelligibility than individual sounds. This means that native speakers can understand you better when your intonation and stress are correct and you mispronounce some sounds than when your intonation and stress are incorrect but you say the sounds correctly.

    If you mispronounce a sound, the meaning can be inferred from the context. However, this is not so easy if you make a mistake in the prosodic features. People cannot infer from the context if prosodic mistakes are made. Watch the following video illustrating the difference in meaning between rising and falling intonation: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=29g6sQOAH90.

2. Prosodic features communicate attitude and intentions. It would be wise to learn how to communicate intentions and feeling through your tone of voice. You want to make sure you are not communicating feelings or attitude that you do not want to and cause native speakers to misinterpret you. The following video is an example of how intonation conveys attitude and meaning: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KoFNoLW1XCg

Some prosodic features;
- Stress
- Rhythm
- Intonation
- Linking
- Pausing

<u>Stress</u>

Stress refers to when syllables sound louder, longer and higher in pitch. Words with two or more syllables have one syllable that is stressed as in 'TAble'. Some longer words may have two syllables that are stressed, in which one is lightly stressed as in CLAUstroPHObia (CLAU is the secondary stress and PHO is the primary stress). Sentences have stressed and unstressed words with one main stress as in:

LINda could have DRIVen TImothy's CAR.

To learn and practice stress you can do the following activities.

Type 1 activities (analysis):

a) To learn how to stress words, you could find words that you already know in the dictionary to see where they are stressed.

b) Also, you could find out some basic rules of word stress that will help you identify how to stress words you don't know. For example;

Prefixes are generally not stressed. You should stress the first syllable of the root: unDO, outDO, overLOOK, underSTAND, diSCUSS, proCLAIM, exIST, etc.

c) For sentence stress you can find out what words tend to be stressed in a sentence, for example, content words vs. function words. Content words are nouns, adjectives, adverbs and verbs. Function words are prepositions, pronouns, articles, etc. Content words tend to be stressed where as function words tend to be unstressed. There are exceptions, however, where function words can be stressed to show emphasis or contrast. For example: that's my book, not yours.

Type 2 activities (listening discrimination):

a) You can use the online dictionary to listen to the pronunciation of words.

b) To practice listening for sentence stress, you can use Rachel's English and Randall's ESL Lab and other sites. In the first site, you will find explanations about both word and sentence stress. With both sites you will have a lot of opportunities to listen and identify stress. You can underline the syllables that are stressed.

c) To practice identifying words that should carry stress, you can use a poem for instance and predict the words that will be stressed. Then you can practice reading it to a native speaker to check for correct stress pattern.

d) A fun activity to identify stress and rhythm could be to listen to songs and mark stress. You can either underline the stressed syllable or put an apostrophe where the syllable starts.

Type 3 activities (controlled practice):

a) You can do these activities simultaneously with type 2 activities. As you listen to the pronunciation of words from the dictionary, you can repeat after playing the sound.

b) You can repeat as you listen to the videos and conversations in the website.

c) Practice reading poems, jazz chants, etc. Dr. Seuss books are very useful and entertaining to practice stress. As you try to read emphasizing stressed words you can clap on each stressed syllable.

d) Sing to a song you have previously identified stress for.

Type 4/5 activities (guided/communicative practice):

a) You can plan to practice specific phrases and words and use them in conversations with friends and native speakers. You may want to move from using prompts such as cards or notes to guide your practice to having a conversation without those aids.

Rhythm

Rhythm in English is stress-timed. This means that the time it takes to say a group of sounds from one stress to the other should be the same independently of how many syllables you have. For example, LYNN USED TIM'S CAR. In that sentence, there are 4 syllables and all of them are stressed. To say the sentence it takes 4 beats.

LINda could have DRIVen THImothy's CAR. In this sentence, there are 10 syllables of which only 4 are stressed. To say the sentence, it should also take 4 beats, and the time it takes to go from LIN to DRIV should be the same as the time to go from DRIV to THI. Note that there

are 3 syllables between LIN to DRIV, but only 1 syllable to go from DRIV to THI. That means that the 3 syllables between LIN to DRIV should be said pretty fast so as to keep the rhythm.

Also, as you say a certain number of syllables faster to keep the stress-timed rhythm of English, you will have to shorten some words. For example, to say: LINda could have DRIVen THImothy's CAR, you wont say /kʊd hæv/, you will say / kʊdəv/. You will delete the /h/ sound and reduce the /æ/ vowel to /ə/ which is shorter and weaker.

To practice rhythm, you can use the activities you prepare for sentence stress. You just need to make sure the time it takes you to go from one stressed syllable to the other is the same. One of the activities you can do is to practice reading poems or books and clap when you hit a stressed syllable. Make sure you keep the rhythm.

Intonation

Intonation is the movement of the pitch of your voice. Intonation conveys meaning as in a declarative sentence that is used as a question (e.g. He is going to France?). It also shows attitude of the speaker towards what is being said. Intonation can express surprise, shock, disbelief, disappointment, happiness, etc.

The most common pattern of intonation is falling, which is used for:

- statements
- commands
- Wh-questions

Rising intonation is used for:

- yes-no questions (e.g. Are you ok?)
- some tag questions (e.g. Today we have the writing test, don't we? - seeking for an actual answer)
- declarative sentences that function as questions (e.g. She is studying engineering?)
- echo questions (e.g. He bought what?)
- a partial repetition of an sentence (e.g. ...an accident?)
- etc.

To convey different emotions you will use:

- Surprise, excitement, and happiness: High pitch, either falling (e.g. He won the lottery!) or rising (e.g. He won the lottery?)
- Disinterest, boredom, and tiredness: low pitch and monotone

Activities:

- To find out the different intonation patterns used in English and practice them you can use Rachel's English videos.
- Also, you can take advantage of the media, such as TV shows, the news and other programs to identify and learn more intonation patterns conveying intentions and attitudes.

Exercises for Segmental Features

1) <u>Minimal pairs</u>: Repeat the pairs making sure you pronounce correctly the one sound that is different. Check out the following website:

http://www.rachelsenglish.com/search/node/minimal%20pairs

http://www.espressoenglish.net/minimal-pairs-english-pronunciation-exercises-vowels/

http://www.manythings.org/pp/

2) <u>Sammy's graphics:</u> Go to the following website and imitate the pronunciation of the different sounds. http://www.uiowa.edu/~acadtech/phonetics/english/english.html

Also, for more videos on the different sounds, you can go to

http://www.rachelsenglish.com/

3) <u>Exaggeration:</u> Try exaggerating articulation of the sounds so that you can get a feeling of how to pronounce them ☺

4) <u>Mirror:</u> While you practice any of the activities above, you can use a mirror to check how you are articulating the sounds.

5) <u>Video recording:</u> You can also record yourself and compare your video with the examples in the websites I shared with you above.

6) <u>Imitation techniques:</u> Try imitating native speakers or the models presented in some of the websites. You can also try to practice imitation using the dialogues in this website:

http://esl-lab.com/

Self-recording log

Week 1

Day	Activity	Length	Thoughts and feelings	Experiments	Results
Thursday	Mock talk: I will listen to a conversation from Randal's English website and imitate the accent.	10 minutes	It's fun. It requires concentration to be able to listen to the different tones. The more I do it, the easier it gets though.	This time I decided to focus on certain expressions, besides going over a whole conversation. So, I repeated expressions that caught my attention, either cause I have heard them before and seem to be useful, or because they were new. I made a special effort to understand how the new words were used (meaning, etc.) and spent some time listening and repeating till I felt comfortable saying the new expression at the same speed the speaker was saying it.	I can speak faster and use new vocabulary easier. That means I can remember how to use new words better when I have used them in context, even if it is repeating somebody else's conversation. I feel more confident using the expressions I learnt. I have noticed that people ask me to repeat less than before when I just used to repeat conversations without paying special attention to new phrases.

Self-evaluation Questionnaire

1-How is my performance different after my (amount of time you took) plan? Have I seen

improvement? How do I know? _____

2-Did I achieve my goal? Have I succeeded? Have I partially succeeded? Have I failed?

_____

3-How did my performance differ as I changed different variables?

_____

4-When did I perform better? Under what environment, using what strategies, and carrying

out what type of activity? _____

5-What could I do better next time? _____

6-What new strategies could I experiment with? _____

Causal Attribution Questionnaire

1-What choices and/or actions led to my outcome? _____

_____

2-What should I adjust to attain better results? _____

_____

3-What should I keep doing? _____

_____

Appendix C: Scripts for Video Clips

Video Clip 1: Introduction to Sofia's ESL Pronunciation Lab

Do you want to improve your pronunciation so that you can communicate with native speakers better? Are you looking for a custom program tailored just for you so that you don't have to rely on a generalized learning plan? If so, then you are in the right place! Like you, I don't speak English natively and I know what it takes to be understood by native speakers. Because I know how frustrating it can be to learn a foreign language, I have created this website to help make your journey easier by sharing with you what I have learned along the way.

Sofia's English Pronunciation Lab will help you create your own learning plan to improve your pronunciation in a way that fits your:

1. needs and
2. preferences.

As an independent learner you will:

1. manage your own learning process
2. select which topics to study
3. choose which learning activities to use

As you learn to become an independent student, you will increase your:

1. motivation
2. productivity
3. level of proficiency

This guide has 3 main phases for creating and implementing your plan:

1. Planning
2. Instruction
3. Evaluation

As you begin each phase, you will use prepared worksheets to fulfill your plan.

Also, there is a separate section that has:

1. <u>definitions</u> of key concepts of pronunciation and
2. <u>links</u> to sites with additional activities and exercises.

Let's get started!

Video Clip 2: Introduction to Aspects of Pronunciation

   Research shows that general aspects of pronunciation, such as clarity of speech, speed, stress and intonation have greater impact on how much native speakers can understand you than more specific features such as individual sounds. This is why I suggest that you put emphasis on those aspects first and then start incorporating sounds along the way. So, you may want to start with:

1- <u>General speaking habits</u>
2- <u>Prosodic features</u>
3- <u>Individual sounds</u>

1- Some general speaking habits are:

- <u>clarity of speech or articulation</u>
- <u>tone of voice or pitch</u>
- <u>loudness or volume</u>
- <u>speed</u>
- <u>eye contact</u>
- <u>gestures</u>

   These aspects are very important to communicate with native speakers successfully. For example, if you pronounce the sounds correctly, but you speak very soft, like this, people will not hear what you are saying. Also, if you don't make eye contact when talking to somebody, that person may lose interest or may feel awkward.

 2-   Besides improving general speaking habits, you may want to work on what I call the 'music of the language', which is called prosodic or suprasegmental features. Some keys aspects of the music of English are:

- o stress
- o intonation
- o rhythm
- o pausing
- o linking

For example, if you say the sounds correctly but you stress the incorrect words or syllables, as in syLLAbles, or you speak in monotone, or pause after every word, it'll be very difficult for native speakers to understand you.

3- Finally, as you work on your general speaking habits and the music of the language, you may also want to add to your plan the study of individual sounds, like:

- consonants and
- <u>vowels,</u>

which are also called segmental features. if you use those sounds incorrectly, you may have some communication problems.

You will find more information and activities about these 3 types of features in the Planning Phase.

Appendix D: Google Forms

<u>Planning Phase</u>

1. What is your name?

2. Did you read the characteristics of SMART goals?

3. Did you complete your goals worksheet with your goals, activities and strategies?

4. Did you use the goals checklist?

5. Did you go over the 5 types of activities? Did you understand the explanation for the types of activities?

6. Did you read the strategy chart?

7. Did you read Step 2: Motivation and Personal Beliefs as a Learner

8. Did you do the motivation and beliefs questionnaire?

9. Did you use any of the other links from the '+' section?

10. What did you learn form Step 1: Task Analysis?

11. What did you learn from Step 2: Motivation and Personal Beliefs as a Learner?

<u>Instruction Phase</u>

1. What is your name?

2. Did you go over Step1: Self-control?

3. Did you apply the four principles to exercise control when implementing your plan?

4. How did you apply those principles in Step1?

5. Did you read Step 2: Self-observation?

6. Why is it important to keep track of what you do when you implement your plan?

7. Why is it important to experiment with different activities and strategies?

8. Did you use the self-recording log or any other way to keep track of your instruction phase?

9. Was the self-recoding log helpful? Why?

Evaluation Phase

1. What is your name?

2. Did you read Step 1: Self-evaluation?

3. What did you learn from it?

4. Did you do your self-evaluation and casual attribution questionnaires?

5. What did you learn from them?

6. Did you read Step 2: Adaptation?

7. What did you learn from it?

Appendix E: Survey

1-Does the website fulfill its purpose of guiding you to create your own plan to improve your English? Yes/ No

2-Explain how the website helped you to improve your English as an independent student.

3-What are some strengths of this website?

4-What are some weaknesses of this website?

5-What are other suggestions to improve this website?

6-Does the website run properly (no bugs, crashes, etc.)?

7-If you responded "No" to the previous question, please mention what went wrong when you used it. Type your answer in the box below.

8-How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"The website provides clear directions for starting, navigating, and stopping."

- ○ Strongly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

9-If you had difficulties following the website's directions, please describe them. Type your answer in the box below.

10-How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"The website use consistent commands and directions throughout"

- ○ Strongly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

11-If there were inconsistencies in the commands and directions, please describe them.

Type your answer in the box below.

12-How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"The logs (such as the self-recording log) were useful."

- ○ Strongly Agree

- ○ Agree

- ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree

- ○ Disagree

- ○ Strongly Disagree

13-How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"The worksheets (such as the goals worksheet) were useful."

- ○ Strongly Agree

- ○ Agree

- ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree

- ○ Disagree

- ○ Strongly Disagree

14-How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"The checklists and questionnaires (such as the goals checklist or the self-evaluation questionnaire) were useful."

- Strongly Agree

- ○ Agree

- ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree

- ○ Disagree

- ○ Strongly Disagree

15-How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"The activities (such as Exercises for General speaking habits) were useful."

- Strongly Agree

- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

16-Describe how logs, worksheets, checlists/questionnaires and activities were or were not useful? In other words, give reasons for your answers to the previous questions.

17-How useful do you think the two introductory videos are?

- ○ Very Useful
- ○ Useful
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Useless
- ○ Very Useless

18-Why do you think the videos are _____ (your answer to the previous question)?

19-Would you like to see more videos? Yes/No

20-What information would you include in the videos?

21-How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"The website presents the information well (clearly, concisely, interestingly, etc.)"

- • Strongly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

22-If the information wasn't well presented, please give examples. What would you suggest to improve it? Type your answer in the box below.

23-How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"The website guides the student well."

- • Strongly Agree

- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

24-How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"The website Is free of content errors."

- Strongly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

25-If you have found errors, would you please mention them in the box below?

26-How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"The website provides instruction at a level appropriate for the target audience."

- Strongly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

27-Please, give reasons for your previous answer.

28-How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"The website uses appropriate readable text (size, style, variety, and continuity)."

- Strongly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

29-Please, give reasons for your previous answer and describe what you would improve .

30-How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"The website employs "white space" appropriately and is not too busy."

- Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree

31-How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"The website utilizes a pleasing, appropriate color scheme."

- Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree

32-How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"The website exhibits a good layout and design (in terms of balance, emphasis, etc.)."

- Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree

33-How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"The website matches graphics and text appropriately?

- Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Neither Agree nor Disagree

- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

34-How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"The website is aesthetically pleasing in general."

- Strongly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

35-If you don't agree with the previous statement, what would you change?

36-How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"The website looks professional."

- Strongly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

37-If you disagree with the previous answer, what would you change to make the website look more professional?

Appendix F: Survey's Results

Question 6. Does the website run properly (no bugs, crashes, etc.)?

All students answered 'yes' to this question.

Question 7. If you responded "No" to the previous question, please mention what went wrong when you used it.

Only two students mentioned that there were some files they could not open. One of these students had mentioned before in a previous question the same issue.

Question 8. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The website provides clear directions for starting, navigating and stopping."

Fifty percent of students agreed with the previous statement. Thirty percent strongly agreed and there was a 17 percent that neither agreed nor disagreed. A total of 83 percent of students were happy or content with the directions to use the website.

Question 9. If you had any difficulties following the website's directions, please describe them.

When asked for an explanation and examples if students were not happy with the directions, there were only two students that gave an explanation from those that answered neither agree nor disagree. They mentioned that the organization was complicated to understand. The other student said that he would like to see more links in the website, which was not related to the websites directions. However, from the students that agreed with the statement, there were a couple that mentioned some difficulties. There was one other student that said that he "lost the order" when he was reading the website. Another student said that it was "hard to find the start button" to begin working in the website. Two other students mentioned how the vocabulary was difficult, but they saw that as "good practice" and an opportunity to use more "Academic terms".

Question 10. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The website use consistent commands and directions throughout." Question 11. If there were any inconsistencies in the commands and directions, please describe them.

Only a two percent neither agreed nor disagreed. The rest of the students either agreed (57 %) or strongly agreed (37 %) with the statement. These results are very encouraging and suggest minor revisions and adjustment. When students were asked to mention those inconsistencies in the command and directions, one student said that the website should have more visuals. The rest of the comments, however, were positive towards the website, its commands and directions.

Question 12-15[2]. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements: "The logs (such as the self-recording log) were useful." Question 13. The worksheets (such as the goals worksheet) were useful." Question 14. "The checklists and questionnaires (such as the goals checklist or the self-evaluation questionnaire) were useful." Question 15. "The activities (such as Exercises for General Speaking Habits) were useful.

With respect to the logs, there was a 43 percent (N=13) that agreed with that statement and a 37 percent (N=11) that strongly agreed that logs were useful. However, 13 percent (N=4) neither agreed nor disagreed and a seven percent (N=2) disagreed with the statement, which means that did not think it was very useful. When asked why the logs were not useful for these students they said that there were too many papers. So, it seems that they disagreed with the quantity of the paperwork, not as much with the functionality of the logs.

Regarding the worksheets, most students were happy with them, and thought they were useful. 47 percent strongly agreed (N=14) and 37 percent agreed (N=11) with the statement. 17 percent (N=5) neither agreed nor disagree with it. The reason why there were not students that disagreed with the worksheets usefulness may be that they felt the goals worksheet for example was crucial in the process of creating their own plan, whereas

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[2] Questions 12 to 15 were separated in the survey, but for space purposes, they have been reported all together.

logs had the function of assisting in organization and record performance for future feedback. Even though keeping record is also an essential part of the program, students may have perceived it as less important and therefore a couple of them felt they were not as useful.

In relation to the checklist and questionnaires, 80 percent of the students agreed (N=12) or strongly agreed (N=12) that they are useful. Whereas 17 percent (N=5) did not decide on either way, and there was one student who disagreed with the statement. This one student is the same that motioned that there were too many papers.

Finally, when students were asked whether they thought the activities were useful, 87 percent of the students (N=26) thought they were. Twelve students strongly agreed with the statement and fourteen students agreed with it. Three students (10 %) didn't agree or disagree, and one student disagreed.

Throughout different questions students suggested that they either want more activities or more examples, with videos showing how to do the exercises.

Question 16. Describe how logs, worksheets, checklists/questionnaires and activities were or were not useful.

Eight students mentioned again how they thought that all the papers were useful and interesting. SIx students stated how all the papers and activaties helped them to keep track of their progress and to improve. To quote some, "they give me feedback", "[they helped me] measure someway how you are improving and when you write on a paper you can see your improvement and realize what you need to do better", "In my opinion this is the best way to improve my english. without logs or worksheet i could not improve my skills to speak English".

Other students revealed (N=4) that because of all the papers, they could control better what they were doing. The could also see "how you are doing with your plan", "i could control better all my process of learning, follow my goals, checking my work time, did my conclusions what is was useful what is not."

Other students (N=2) declared that the logs, worksheets and other suggested materials helped them to have more order "i things all the activities was good   my improve and necessary to have order and identifay   weakness and correctr".

There were a few students (N=3) that mentioned that there were "too many papers" and "too much to do". These three students could be the ones that either disagreed with any of the questions from 12 to 15.

Question 17-18. How useful do you think the two introductory videos are? Why?

Most students (70 percent) thought the videos were useful. 30 percent of the students thought the videos were not helpful or unhelpful.

When asked to give reasons for the answers a few students (N=7) mentioned that the videos were useful because they explained the purpose of the website, one of the students said, "because the introductory videos is clearly to let me understand what the purpose is".

Other students (N=6) thought that the videos helped them understand better the process, 'because it is a new website, and the videos explained how to use it and the purpose of it", "useful because I can understand better what I need to do", "well it gives us the direction about the page thatss good'.

Other students (N=6) mentioned how the videos are a brief introduction, but "it is just talking about general ideas but not give specific examples and detailed information", "because you listen the videos just once and then its not necessary to watch them again,

A similar number of students (N=6) just mentioned that the videos had useful information, "explained very well", "helps us with explanations, pronunciation", "the videos are awesome!"

There was one student that said the videos "made [him] curious to do this program."

Questions 19 and 20. Would you like to see more videos? What information would you include in the videos?

Most students (N=21) would like the website to include more videos. When asked what kind of information they would like to find in the videos, the most common answer (N=12) was to have videos for each phase and steps, including the activities and information from the text. Some students mentioned, "some examples of each step", step by step for each paper", "how to use activities and strategies, students examples, experiences", "Instructions about the strategies and how to do it", "how to do your activites". In all students would like to have videos modeling activities and examples provided in the website, as well as a demonstration or guidance to go through each step.

Some students (N=5) would like to see videos where there is pronunciation instruction.   Some learners said they would like to "practice pronunciation", "exercises to improve pronunciation and fluency", "more [information] about giving tips on pronunciation and enunciation", "Lessons about american pronunciation".

Other students were less specific and mentioned they (N=3) would like videos with information to improve English, "how to study", and learn "differents ways of improve". Other students (N=2) would like videos targeting motivational issues or to make the website more "fun".

 Questions 21 and 22. The website presents the information well (clearly, concisely, interestingly, etc.) If the information wasn't well presented, what would you suggest to improve?

The most popular answer was that students (N=16) agree with this statement (53 %). Ten students (33%) strongly agree with that statement, and four students (13%) neither agree nor disagree.

From the 30 students, only 6 gave suggestions as to how to improve the presentation of the information. Two students made reference to the length and difficulty of the text. One said that "the explanation is little bit long" and another suggested to "make

them simple for beginner, and after, upper level people find more details". Another pair of students wanted more visuals to make the website either easier and to make the guide more interactive. Some comments are, "As a visionary learner i prefer more pictures on the website", "writing information is good but other parts are not active…". The other two students suggested, "add[ing] some examples of those steps", "maybe in every below the explanation of the step put the link in order to found it easily". So adding examples and the links right when students need to use them would make the presentation of the information clearer.

In conclusion, the presentation of the information needs improvement to be clearer, more concise and more interesting.

Question 23. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The website guides the student well."

Most students either agreed or strongly agreed with that statement (N=26) which represents 86 percent of the answers. However, there was one student that disagreed and three that neither agreed nor disagreed.

Questions 24 and 25. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The website is free of content errors."

Similarly, 87 percent of students (N=26) either agreed (N=12) or strongly agreed (N=14) with the statement, whereas four students neither agreed nor disagreed.

When asked to give examples of errors, three students mentioned the fact that some links and files did not open for them. There were a couple of logs that were not finished and therefore were not uploaded to the page. This is something that will take part in the final revisions.

Questions 26 and 27. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The website provides instruction at a level appropriate for the target audience."

The vast majority (93%) either agreed (N=18) or strongly agreed (N=10) with that statement. Two students did not decide on one or the other. When asked to give reasons for their answers, students in general approved of the level of the instruction and made positive comments, for example, "Yes, I agree that this website provides everything according to the target audience (everybody who is learning English). This site is written in appropriate Academic language, has well-organized guiding, useful samples", "Yes because for me is super easy to read and follow, and for my companions too", "I like because the website is easy to follow, and almost impossible to be lost", "because, if you are not student at the ELC, and you found this web side you can follow all the steps and it is very useful", "In my opinion the website was appropriate for our level, because it wasn't imposible to follow and work won it, but also it required an effort of us", "The web site is good for many different levels, because teachs the basic way to accomplish many projects!" There was one student that said "Contents was so good. About layout, I recommend to make them simple for beginners."

These comments are very important since they show that the content is at an appropriate level for intermediate ESL learners. However, a couple of students did mention how it required effort on their part, and that it should be simpler for beginner students. It is definitely not too easy but not too difficult.

Questions 28 and 29. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The website uses appropriate readable text (size, style, variety, and continuity)." Give reasons for your answer.

Most students (87%) agreed (N=18) or strongly agreed (N=8) with that statement. Four students neither agreed nor disagreed.

When asked to give reasons, three students mentioned that the website needs more variety, and only one was specific and suggested including more videos. Two other students suggested making letters a bit bigger and two more students mentioned again how there was a lot of information.

A few students didn't answer or didn't have anything to say, and eighteen students said that the text was ok.

Questions 30. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The website employs white space appropriately and is not too busy."

There was a 73 percent that agreed (N=13) and strongly agreed (N=9) with that statement, whereas there were eight students (27 %) that neither agreed nor disagreed with it.

Questions 31. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The website utilizes a pleasing, appropriate color scheme."

The majority of the students (86%) thought that the website used pleasing color scheme. There were three students that neither agreed nor disagreed and one student that disagreed with the previous statement.

Questions 32. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The website exhibits a good layout and design (in terms of balance, emphasis, etc.). "

Ten students (33%) strongly agreed with the statement, and fourteen (47%) agreed with it. Five students (17%) didn't agree or disagree, and one student (3%) disagreed with the statement.

Questions 33. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The website matches graphics and text appropriately. "

Ninety percent either students either agreed (N=15) or strongly agreed (N=12) with that statement. Only three students responded that they didn't agree or disagree with it.

Questions 34. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The website is aesthetically pleasing in general. "

Similar to the previous question, the responses indicated that 90 percent of the students agreed that the website is aesthetically pleasing. Only three students responded that they didn't agree or disagree.

Question 35. If you didn't agree with the previous statements, what would you change?

There were only three students that made the suggestions as to what to change with respect to the design of the website. One student mentioned that the website should include more graphics. A second student said that the website should be more colorful, and a third student said to "Reduce text and information for beginner, and then, upper level person can find more details".

Throughout the whole survey, students were give different suggestions as to what to do better in this website, what to change and add.

Questions 36. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The website looks professional. "

Most students (N=28) believe that the website looks professional, where 43 % (N=13) strongly agreed with the statement, and 50 percent (N=15) agreed with it. There were only two students that didn't agree or disagree with it.

Question 37. If you disagreed with the previous question, what would you change to make the website look more professional?

Once again, there were only three students that made suggestions as to what to change. One of the students suggested including more graphics, and another mentioned that it does not "seems to me not complete website". The last student said, "Maybe having sponsors logos, for example BYU or something like that".