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How do I pronounce this word?
Strategies used among Swedish learners of English
when pronouncing unfamiliar words

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Abstract

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Abstract: This study aimed to identify some of the strategies students used when pronouncing unfamiliar words. Questionnaires were handed out to 94 students in the 9th grade in a medium-sized Swedish town. In addition, two teachers and 13 students were interviewed. The results indicate that the students had acquired some basic knowledge about the English sound system from phonetic training in their past education. However, there seemed to be a tendency among the students to use the trial-and-error strategy to a larger extent than using tools such as phonetic transcription in order to figure out the pronunciation of a word. The results also show that the teachers did not teach planned lessons on pronunciation, but instead it was more common that they responded to errors made by students. In conclusion, the results show that the students' knowledge in pronunciation in general was limited. In addition, there seemed to be a connection between the way the students and the teachers approached pronunciation and the student's ability to solve pronunciation issues.

Nyckelord: Pronunciation, reactive teaching, intelligibility, phonetic training, trial-and-error strategy

Table of contents

1. INTRODUCTION AND AIMS	1
2. BACKGROUND	2
2.1 <i>The main features of pronunciation</i>	2
2.2 <i>A brief historical view of the methods of teaching pronunciation</i>	4
2.3 <i>Intelligibility</i>	5
2.4 <i>Pronunciation in the classroom</i>	6
3. METHODS	8
3.1 <i>Participants</i>	8
3.2 <i>Materials</i>	8
3.3 <i>Design</i>	9
3.4 <i>Procedure</i>	9
4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS	10
4.1 <i>Past education in pronunciation</i>	10
4.2 <i>Time spent on teaching pronunciation</i>	12
4.3 <i>Communication vs. perfect pronunciation</i>	13
4.4 <i>Strategies used by students</i>	15
4.4.1 <i>Listening activities</i>	15
4.4.2 <i>Reactive teaching</i>	16
4.4.3 <i>Reading aloud and speaking activities</i>	16
4.4.4 <i>The trial-and-error approach</i>	17
4.4.5 <i>Phonetic training</i>	18
4.5 <i>Students' contact with the English language</i>	18
5. DISCUSSION	20
6. CONCLUSIONS	22
REFERENCES	24
APPENDIX 1: THE PHONETIC ALPHABET	25
APPENDIX 2: STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE (SWEDISH VERSION)	26
APPENDIX 3: STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE (ENGLISH VERSION)	29
APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW WITH ENGLISH TEACHERS	32

1. Introduction and aims

English is spoken and understood, at least to some degree almost everywhere in the world. In Sweden it is mandatory to learn English as a foreign language and it is one of the main subjects in the national curriculum (Skolverket 2009). However, most students who learn English have a practical purpose for learning the language, and their aim tends to be successful communication rather than the acquisition of native-like pronunciation (Kenworthy 1987:3). On the other hand, for particular learners a native-like accent may be a goal since their work requires that they approximate native-like pronunciation, for example, in the case of teachers. Regardless of the goals students have for learning English, all learners need to strive for intelligibility (Rönnerdahl & Johansson 2005:11). If a learner's speech is unintelligible there will probably be a communication breakdown between the speakers. Some cases of communication breakdown can be avoided if second language learners acquire a good command over the sound system of the target language, with all its sound units, or phonemes (Rönnerdahl & Johansson 2005:95).

Studies that have been done in the field of pronunciation have focused on the teaching of pronunciation, and, as a result, there is a range of methods and techniques available for teachers. Traditional teaching in pronunciation includes phonetic training, which means that students are taught about the main features of pronunciation: the segmental and the suprasegmental. Segmental features are individual phonemes which include vowels, consonants and diphthongs. Suprasegmental features, on the other hand, are features of speech applied to a set of phonemes, such as stress, rhythm and adjustments in connected speech (Celce-Murcia et al. 1996:35). It is difficult to know whether or not students actually make use of any of the available techniques when approaching pronunciation when working on their own. This study aims to identify some pronunciation techniques that are taught in the classroom, and some of the strategies that are used by students when they are about to pronounce an unfamiliar word. This study will also identify some of the techniques preferred among students. Additionally, the study aims to see whether there is a relationship between what is taught by the teacher and what is practised by the student.

2. Background

All human languages are built upon the same properties: sound, grammar and vocabulary. As far as sound is concerned every language has its own sound system. The systematic use of sounds to encode meaning has been described as phonology (Kelly 2000:9). When speaking English one uses about 20 different vowel sounds and 24 consonant sounds. At the same time, writing in English one uses 5 vowel letters and 21 consonant letters. Consequently, the English language lacks a 1:1 ratio between spelling and pronunciation (Kelly 2000:7). However, the creation of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), which was introduced by phoneticians Henry Sweet, Wilhelm Viëtor and Paul Passy, made a one-to-one relationship possible between a written symbol and the sound it represents (Celce-Murcia et al. 1996:3). Another problem is the tendency to apply the sounds of one's mother tongue when learning a second language. In order to avoid interlingual errors, i.e. errors caused by negative transfer from the learner's first language (Celce-Murcia et al. 1996:20), learners of a second language have to identify the differences between the sound systems of the mother tongue and the second language.

This section is divided into 4 parts and will deal with the main features of pronunciation, provide a brief historical background of the field of teaching pronunciation, and finally present different methods and goals for teaching pronunciation.

2.1 The main features of pronunciation

Segmental features include phonemes, which are the smallest distinctive units of speech sounds, for example [ð] as in *they* (Celce-Murcia et al. 1996:35). Phonemes are divided into consonant and vowel sounds, where consonant sounds can be either voiced or unvoiced, unlike vowel sounds which are always voiced. In addition, vowels can be single (like [ɪ] in *fit*), or occur in combinations, as diphthongs like [aʊ] , in *house*). Consequently, a diphthong involves a movement from one vowel sound to another. Lastly, single vowels can be either long, as in *meet* [mi:t] or short as in *sit* [sit]. Long vowel sounds are denoted by the symbol[:].

As mentioned in section 1, pronunciation also involves suprasegmental features, which are features that apply to sets of phonemes. Examples of suprasegmental features are stress,

rhythm and adjustments in connected speech (Celce-Murcia et al. 1996:35). The latter feature refers to pronunciation adjustments that are made when a word occurs in a phrase or a sentence, thus pronunciation in connected speech may differ from pronunciation in isolation (Rönnerdahl & Johansson 2005:75). Word stress means that a word has one or more syllables which are stressed (Celce-Murcia et al. 1996:131) and the symbol ‘ˈ’ indicates main stress, and the symbol ‘ˌ’ indicates secondary stress. Stress features are of importance in the identification of individual words (Kelly 2000:3). Celce-Murcia et al. (1996:133) identify several factors that affect stress placement, such as the historical origin of a word, affixation, and the grammatical function of a word in an utterance. Rönnerdahl and Johansson (2005:95) give the following rules for word stress in English. Words with two or three syllables normally carry primary stress, which means the stress is placed on the first syllable, as in *almond* [ˈɑːmənd] or *specialist* [ˈspeʃəlɪst]. However, this rule does not apply to a large number of non-Germanic words, which have been borrowed into the English vocabulary, like for example, the word *lament* [ləˈment] which is borrowed from Latin (Rönnerdahl & Johansson 2005:95). Words with four or more syllables tend to be stressed on the third syllable from the end (the antepenultimate rule), like *ambiguity* [ˌæmbɪˈɡjuːəti].

As mentioned above, affixation also affects stress (Celce-Murcia et al. 1996:133). As for prefixes, the general rule dictates that the first syllable of the base is strongly stressed like in *unhealthy* [ˌʌnˈhelθi], where *health* is the base. A base consists of one or more syllables bound together which form the basic idea linked to the word, like *health* (Minugh 1991:196). To the base can be added various affixes, i.e. prefixes and suffixes. Prefixes are affixes added before the base, like *un-* in *unhealthy*. Suffixes, on the other hand, are affixes added after the base, like *-y* in *unhealthy*. Thus, *unhealthy* can be divided into the prefix *un-*, the base *health* and the suffix *-y*. However, there are exceptions to the general rule, often in prefixed words that function as nouns or adjectives. In such cases, the stress is placed on the prefix. This is exemplified in the noun *outgrowth* [ˈaʊtˌgrəʊθ] with the prefix *out-* where the word functions as a noun and where the stress is on the prefix *out-*. However, if the prefix is attached to a verb, the stress will be on the base in like *outgrow* [aʊtˈgrəʊ] (Celce Murcia et al. 1996:134f). Suffixes, on the other hand, can be neutral with no effect on the stress pattern of the word, or they can receive strong stress themselves, like the suffix *-aire* in *millionaire* [ˌmɪljəˈneə]. Moreover, the addition of a suffix may cause a change in the stress pattern of the base, as

exemplified in *advantage* [əd'vɑ:ntɪdʒ], which, when the suffix *-eous* is added, changes its stress pattern to *advantageous* [ˌædvən'teɪdʒəs] (Celce-Murcia et al. 1996:136f).

2.2 A brief historical view of the methods of teaching pronunciation

Teaching pronunciation is about providing different methods which students can use when acquiring the pronunciation of a target language. Celce-Murcia et al. (1996:2) discuss two general approaches to the teaching of pronunciation: the intuitive-imitative approach, and the analytic-linguistic approach. Prior to the late nineteenth century, the teaching of pronunciation focused on the intuitive-imitative approach, which emphasizes learners' ability to listen and imitate. The analytic-linguistic approach, which was developed after the intuitive-imitative approach, also focused on listening and imitation; however, it added the use of tools such as the phonetic alphabet.

The popularity of the two approaches has varied over time. During the late 1800s and early 1900s it was more popular to use the intuitive-imitative approach (also called the Direct Method) to pronunciation whereby students imitated a pronunciation model (Celce-Murcia et al. 1996:3). The Direct Method aimed at teaching foreign languages in ways that were similar to a child's first language acquisition, and it therefore introduced learners to listening before speaking. In the 1890, however, there was a reform movement in the field of language teaching. This reform movement added an analytic-linguistic aspect to the teaching of pronunciation. One of the contributions to the reform movement was the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), which was created by the International Phonetic Association formed in 1886. The IPA made it possible for teachers to utilize a visible tool when teaching pronunciation. In addition, by using the IPA, one could for the first time accurately represent the sounds of any language. As a result, the IPA made it possible to have a one-to-one relationship between a written symbol and the sound it represented (Celce-Murcia et al. 1996:3).

In the 1940s another method was developed in the United States (Celce-Murcia et al. 1996:5). It had a combined focus on the teaching of pronunciation, spanning both imitation and the use of tools such as the IPA and was referred to as the Audiolingual Method. One of its most popular techniques was based on minimal pairs, where the teacher uses words that differ only by a single phoneme in the same position (like *sheep-ship*, *green-grin*). In the 1970s the

teaching of pronunciation took yet another direction. As in the Audiolingual Method, the focus was on accurate production of both the sounds and the structure of the target language, however without using the phonetic alphabet. This method was called The Silent Way since the teachers spoke as little as possible, using gestures to indicate what the students had to do instead (Celce-Murcia et al. 1996:5). Since the 1980s it is the Communicative Approach that has been the dominant approach (Celce-Murcia et al. 1996:7). It aims at using the target language as a tool for communication. Empirical and anecdotal evidence have shown that there is a threshold level of pronunciation for learners of English as a second language. There is a tendency that those learners who fall below this threshold will have difficulties communicating, even though they might master grammar and vocabulary well. As a result, Celce-Murcia et al. (1996:7) claim that it is crucial for the teachers in favour of this approach to teach pronunciation.

2.3 Intelligibility

In second language acquisition different pronunciation aims can be set for the learners. Kenworthy (1987:3) identifies two: native-like accent and intelligibility. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, when the Direct Method was popular, a native-like accent tended to be aimed for. However, since there are few second language learners (L2) who manage to acquire a native-like accent this tends to be an unrealistic aim. A more realistic aim for L2 learners is to strive for intelligibility. Then, learners are not expected to acquire perfect pronunciation, but rather one that allows them to make themselves understood relatively well. Moreover, Kenworthy (1987:3) claims that native speakers will automatically make an effort in conversation with non-native speakers, as they do not expect perfect conversation to take place.

Kenworthy (1987:13) discusses to what extent a speaker can mispronounce words and still be intelligible. There are several factors which can cause intelligibility problems, such as sound substitution, sound deletion, sound insertion, links between words and the faulty use of stress (Kenworthy 1987:17). As far as sound substitution is concerned, difficulties may arise when one sound is substituted, especially in cases where the result is a different word. This can for instance be seen in *my boyfriend is thick*, or *my boyfriend is sick*. There might be a problem for Swedish learners to pronounce the sound [θ] as in *thick*, since the Swedish sound system does not contain this sound. Swedish learners therefore tend to mispronounce it, for instance like [s] as in *sick*. As far as sound deletions are concerned, they can also be the source of

intelligibility problems. What happens in cases of sound deletion is that a sound is left out; for example, when the [d] in *hold* is left out, one gets the word *hole* (Kenworthy 1987:17). The opposite situation occurs in sound insertions, where an extra sound is added to a word. An example of sound insertion occurs when *speak* is pronounced as *a-speak*. Lastly, the placement of stress may also cause problems since a change in stress patterns can result in a different word, like if *written* were to be pronounced with the stress on the second syllable instead of on the first it might sound like '*retain*' (Kenworthy 1987: 19).

2.4 Pronunciation in the classroom

Pronunciation can be taught in various ways, depending on the techniques the teacher finds useful, and on the needs of the students. Kelly (2000:13) claims that many teachers approach pronunciation in a reactive way, which means that the teaching in pronunciation is done in response to errors made by students in the classroom. Consequently, traditional teaching in pronunciation tends to be neglected. Kelly (2000:13) suggests that the teaching of pronunciation should be planned rather than reactive. However, there will always be situations where reactive teaching is necessary, though it should not be the main approach used when teaching pronunciation. It can be helpful to start out with planned lessons on pronunciation, such as introducing students to the sound system of the target language, before going into suprasegmental features such as stress patterns (Kenworthy 1987:27). In other words, traditional teaching may be a good starting point as it gives students basic knowledge about the sound system. Such a foundation is helpful when more advanced tasks are to be taken on.

Another way of working with pronunciation is to use phonetic transcription. Kelly (2000:8) claims that teachers should not introduce their students to all of the symbols at once. Instead, the teacher should start out by introducing the symbols that cause difficulties for the learners. In addition, it can be useful to introduce phonetic transcription when working with dictionaries, since the teacher can show that the symbols are indeed used and of great help (Kelly 2000:8). When students can follow and understand phonetic transcription, the teacher can move on to more advanced tasks, such as letting students transcribe words into phonetic script or the other way around (Ur 1991:47). A third way of teaching is drilling, where both listening and speaking take place (Kelly 2000:16). Basically, the idea is to use a pronunciation model who reads out words which the students then imitate. The model is often the teacher, but it can also be a recorded voice. The model does not only teach students the correct

pronunciation, but it also makes students aware of their mispronunciations. The teacher often starts out by drilling the whole class and afterwards students are drilled individually. Students are given a chance to be anonymous in their pronunciation when the whole class imitate the model, while when each one is drilled individually, the teacher can focus on the pronunciation of each student and is able to give individual feedback on mispronunciation (Kelly 2000:16).

Another technique which is useful when calling students' attention to their pronunciation is to make a recording of the students using the target language (Kelly 2000:21). The teacher can test students on different features of pronunciation, for example sounds and stress placement. The students can be asked to perform the same task on two occasions. The first time they are asked to pronounce unfamiliar words without any tools such as a dictionary. The second time students can be asked to pronounce the same words again, but with the help of the phonetic transcriptions in a dictionary (Kelly 2000:21). When listening to the recorded pronunciation students can be asked to listen to how they have pronounced the words the first time and how that pronunciation differed from that of the second time. By letting students listen to the tape and talk about their pronunciation, they are made aware of their problem areas and are able to improve their language.

An additional technique used in the classroom involves the discrimination of sounds, where students are trained to listen for individual sounds in words with similar pronunciations, as the vowels in *let* [let] and *late* [lert]. One way to work with minimal pairs in the classroom would be for the teacher to read out minimal pairs which the students are then supposed to write down. Also, the teacher can ask students to read minimal pairs aloud and listen to whether they manage to discriminate one word from the other (Ur 1991:58). As regards exercises on stress placement, the teacher can read aloud a list of words which the students then have to mark where the stress should be placed (Celce-Murcia et al. 1996:146). If students find this difficult, the teacher can help them identify the syllables of each word before reading aloud.

3. Methods

3.1 Participants

The participants were Swedish students in the 9th grade (15 years old) from a secondary school in a medium-sized town. The motive for choosing 9th graders as a target group was that the Swedish national curriculum expects students in the 9th grade to be able to use appropriate aids in order to improve their English (Skolverket 2009). This study aimed to identify some of these tools that might be valuable for students to use when working with pronunciation. The students came from different classes, A, B, C, and D, and were taught by two different teachers: Teacher 1 and Teacher 2. Teacher 1 was responsible for class A and Teacher 2 was responsible for classes B, C, and D. In total there were 94 students who participated in the study. Out of these 94 participants, 13 were interviewed in small groups. The interviewees came from all four classes and had different levels of English proficiency. The selection of these 13 students was made by the two teachers and based on the criterion that the students were to be on different levels of English proficiency.

3.2 Materials

The testing instruments that were used in this study were questionnaires (appendix 1) and interviews. The questionnaire consisted of ten questions written in Swedish, which is the first language of the majority of the participants. The questions dealt with the way students had been working with pronunciation in the past as well as during the present year (year 9). Moreover, students were asked about which teaching techniques they preferred. Finally, the questionnaire also dealt with some features of pronunciation on which the students were tested.

As for the interviews, there were teacher interviews (appendix 4) as well as student interviews. The teacher interviews touched upon three areas: the way they taught pronunciation, their perception of the national curriculum, and which strategies they thought their students used when approaching pronunciation. The teachers were interviewed individually. The 13 students, on the other hand, were interviewed in three small groups, two containing five students and one containing three students. The questions were similar to those in the questionnaire, although the main focus of the interviews was to clarify results from the questionnaire that had been difficult to interpret. During the interviews, both teachers

and students were recorded with an mp3 player. This way of structuring the interview situation facilitated the process, especially when interviewing the student group, as it was sometimes necessary to use some of the tools that I had with me, for example, the phonetic alphabet and the dictionary.

3.3 Design

This study utilizes both quantitative and qualitative methods. In the case of the questionnaire, the approach was quantitative, whereas in the interviews, where students were tested on the different features of pronunciation, the approach was qualitative. Finally, the interview situation allowed me to identify some of the strategies the students used when they were about to pronounce an unfamiliar word.

3.4 Procedure

Prior to the data collection, a meeting was arranged at the school and dates for questionnaires and interviews were set. In addition, materials such as the text –and workbook that students used in the 9th grade were collected. After that, the teacher interviews were conducted. The student questionnaire was based on the information about how students had worked with pronunciation in the classroom. The questionnaires were handed out before the interviews with the students were carried out. It cannot be ruled out that students from different classes may have talked to each other about the tasks in the questionnaires, or that students helped each other when answering the questionnaire. Since this study aimed at identifying some of the strategies being used by this particular group of students, the results cannot be generalized for the whole population.

4. Results and analysis

This study aimed at identifying some of the techniques used by two 9th grade teachers when teaching pronunciation. In order to give a teacher's perspective, results from teacher interviews will be presented in the three categories: students' past education in English pronunciation, time spent on teaching pronunciation and goals for teaching pronunciation. Additionally, some of the results from the student questionnaire that touch upon the categories above will be presented. Another goal of the study was to identify some of the strategies used by students when they were about to pronounce unfamiliar words. The results from the student questionnaire and the student interviews will be presented under the following two headings: 'strategies used by students' and 'students' contact with the English language'. The questionnaire and the teacher interview questions can be found in Appendices 2, 3 and 4.

4.1 Past education in pronunciation

In the interviews both teachers were asked about their teaching techniques. The results indicate that reactive teaching, i.e. when the teacher deals with pronunciation issues as they arise in the classroom, was the most common way to address pronunciation. Both teachers expected their students to have had pronunciation training in the past. At the same time, both teachers agreed that the basic knowledge that the students had acquired in their past education might have been forgotten in the 9th grade. To complement the answers from the teachers, the student questionnaire identified the teaching techniques that the students had worked with in the past as well as in their present class.

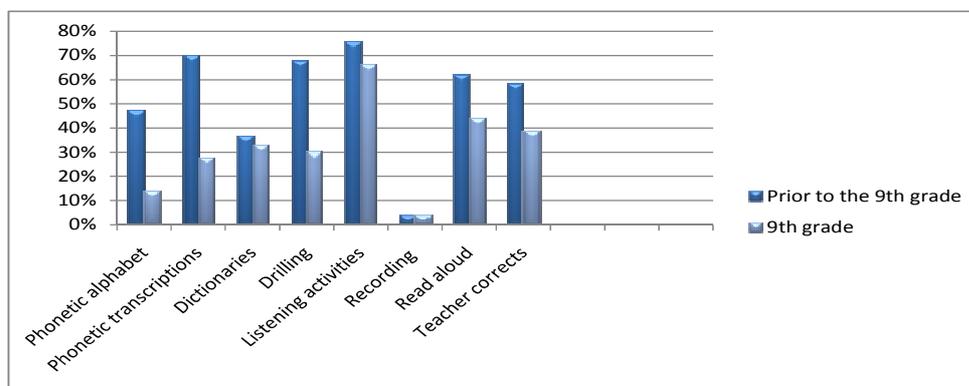


Figure 1 Techniques used by teachers in past education and in the 9th grade, based on the student questionnaire

Figure 1 shows that the teaching technique most frequently used in the 9th grade was listening activities (66%), thereafter speaking and reading aloud (44%), and then reactive teaching (39%). In addition, both teachers said that there was a big difference in how pronunciation was being taught in lower grades as compared to the 9th grade. Also, both teachers stated they had more time at their disposal to teach on the whiteboard in the lower grades than in the 9th grade (appendix 4). According to Teacher 1 this is one of the reasons why the teaching of pronunciation is more common in lower grades than in the 9th grade.

Furthermore, both teachers claimed that pronunciation skills are more homogenous in the lower grades, which makes it easier to teach pronunciation to the group as a whole. By the 9th grade, pronunciation skills has become more diverse, which leads to students working more individually with the tasks in the course books, and the teacher focusing less on teaching pronunciation. Moreover, Teacher 1 claimed that it was important to make students familiar with traditional teaching methods for pronunciation early on, so it would be possible to use tools such as the phonetic alphabet later in their education. Despite this, Teacher 1 did not plan lessons on pronunciation in the 9th grade. This goes hand in hand with the finding from the student questionnaire that as many as 66 of the 94 students (70 %) had worked with phonetic transcription prior to the 9th grade, as compared to 26 of the 94 students (28%) in the 9th grade. Furthermore, Teacher 2 claimed that students had had phonetic training in the past. However, Teacher 2 claimed that he did not teach the English sound system in the 9th grade, nor in the 8th or the 7th grade. Consequently, Teacher 2 did not give students phonetic training at all, and focused instead on reactive teaching. Moreover, both teachers claimed that they use listening activities frequently, for example listening to texts or watching movies. According to Teacher 2, listening activities are useful because students can hear how words are pronounced. Teacher 2 pointed to the importance of correcting or helping students with their pronunciation issues reactively, since Teacher 2 thought students learned best in this way.

Although the reactive method finds support (Kelly 2000:14), one of the shortcomings of this method is that students are not taught to solve pronunciation problems by themselves. Consequently, students may face problems when they are left to their own devices to perform pronunciation tasks, since they might not know how to make use of, for example, phonetic transcriptions in order to figure out the pronunciation of unfamiliar words. Both teachers were asked about this scenario, and what they thought their students would do. Teacher 1 answered that students would probably ask someone at home or a friend, and if that was not possible,

some of them might try to use a dictionary in order to figure out the pronunciation. Teacher 2 answered that he did not give students tasks that tested them on features of pronunciation, since it was not taught in the classroom. However, teacher 2 said that if students still would try to perform such tasks, they would probably ask someone at home or call a friend to help them. Teacher 2 could not see the possibility of students using tools such as phonetic transcriptions in a dictionary. The results from the questionnaire suggest that the student's knowledge of phonetic transcription is indeed rather insufficient. When asked to identify words that were written in phonetic symbols, only 10 students (11%) managed to identify *light* while 30 students (32%) identified *think*, 21 students (22%) identified *they* and no one was able to identify *legible*. A conclusion that can be drawn is that even though Figure 1 shows that as many as 70 per cent answered that they had worked with phonetic transcription in the past, the results from the phonetic transcription task indicate that their ability to make use of such knowledge is poor.

Moreover, when the interviewees were asked about their results on the phonetic transcription task, they claimed that it was difficult to remember the different symbols in the phonetic alphabet. Even though most of them were familiar with the symbols as such, they found it difficult to remember which sound each symbol represented. Some of the students that were interviewed said that they thought that their teachers expected them to be familiar with the phonetic alphabet and that this might have been the reason why they did not teach it in the 9th grade.

4.2 Time spent on teaching pronunciation

According to both teachers it can be difficult to find time to teach a planned lesson on pronunciation. Additionally, both teachers claimed that it takes time to learn the phonetic alphabet, and that they have other priorities. These claims go hand in hand with Kelly's (2000:13) idea that pronunciation tends to be neglected and that teachers tend to make grammar their first concern. As mentioned earlier, the students in this study, to a large extent, work individually with various tasks and the main reason for the teachers to choose to teach pronunciation in a reactive way is that it requires less time. As a result, the teacher becomes the student's 'living dictionary'. In addition, Teacher 2 claimed that it would be too time consuming if students were to consult a dictionary in order to find out the pronunciation of words. Also, students would probably not have sufficient knowledge about phonetic transcription to be able to perform the task. Both the questionnaire and the student interviews

confirmed that reactive teaching can be time saving. In the student interviews, 11 of the 13 students answered that they learn best by asking the teacher to pronounce the word for them, and then imitating. The same students also claimed that looking up words in a dictionary is time consuming and that it is easier and quicker to ask the teacher. A possible shortcoming of this view is that it affects students' English in a negative way, for the reason that students are too dependent on their teacher to be their 'living dictionary'. Additionally, students will face problems in further studies, for example in upper secondary school, since they are not equipped to work independently with pronunciation.

Furthermore, the course book seems to have the same priorities as the teachers. The text book *Happy* (Pettersson et al. 2006:22), which is being used in the 9th grade, does not use phonetic transcription at all, not even in the glossary. On the other hand, the different tenses of irregular verbs are included in the glossary, such as *beat (beat, beaten)*. Consequently, this suggests that the grammar seems to be more important than pronunciation. The same pattern could also be seen in the workbook of the *Happy* series. Pronunciation tasks only cover one or two pages in each chapter in the workbook, and they all occur in section A, which is the section that all students should be able to work through. For the higher levels B and C there are no pronunciation exercises. As a result, teachers may be influenced to think that the matter of pronunciation is of little importance. When the two teachers were asked what they thought was the reason for not including phonetic transcription, they both answered that it might be because pronunciation is less important in the higher grades, and that students are expected to already have basic knowledge of the different features of pronunciation. In the student interviews, the same question was asked, and 11 of 13 students answered that the workbook expected them to know how to pronounce words, without the help of phonetic transcription.

4.3 Communication vs. perfect pronunciation

Teachers have different aims for teaching pronunciation and these aims tend to be reflected in the techniques used in the classroom. The two teachers in this study claimed that their goal for teaching English is that students dare to communicate, rather than acquire a perfect pronunciation (appendix 4). Teacher 1 claimed that it is better for students to have a broad vocabulary with a less perfect pronunciation to have a small vocabulary which they can pronounce perfectly. This emphasis on communication can be found in the national curriculum (Skolverket 2008). Moreover, it also goes hand in hand with the fact that the

Communicative Approach has been the dominant approach since the 1980s (Celce-Murcia et al.1996:7).

As mentioned in the background, sound substitution might lead to communication breakdown, since when one sound is substituted for another it can create a different word. In the questionnaire, students were tested on this feature when they were asked to read the phonetic transcription of four words and then to categorise them depending on their initial sounds. The words were: *cheap*, *chop*, *ship* and *shoes*, and students were asked if the words began with [tʃ] or [ʃ]. Only close to 50 per cent of the students were able to successfully perform the task. The other 50 per cent, who chose the wrong initial sound, actually got new words, *sheep*, *shop*, *chip*, *choose*. It cannot be ruled out that chance played a part in the students' choice. During the interviews, the students were also asked about how they pronounced the 4 words. In cases where one initial sound was erroneously replaced with the other, I pointed out that the sound substitution had resulted in a different word. I used a dictionary to show them the phonetic transcriptions of the words concerned so they could not only hear, but also see the difference. Several of them said that they were not aware of the fact that they got new words when pronouncing the words with a different sound. They thought that they pronounced the words correctly, and did not realise that by substituting [ʃ] for [tʃ] they got new words. Consequently, students might face problems communicating their message if they substitute such sounds. For example, there is a commercial from a Telecom company called Tele2 that makes fun of people who fail to say [tʃ] when pronouncing *cheap* (Tele2's slogan is to be cheap). In order to illustrate this, they have a sheep as the main character in these specific commercials.

The use of the trial-and-error strategy was also seen in another task on the student questionnaire, where they had to categorize the four words *young*, *jolly*, *juice* and *jealous* according to their initial sound. The results show that 50 per cent were able to categorize all the words except for *jolly* which only 24 per cent were able to categorize correctly. A possible reason for placing *jolly* under the category of [j] instead of [dʒ] was, according to one student, that the word *jolly* was unfamiliar to her and that she therefore used the trial-and-error strategy. In addition, she said that the reason why she knew the pronunciation of the other three words was that she had heard them before.

4.4 Strategies used by students

When it comes to identifying which strategies students use when pronouncing unfamiliar words, it was difficult to get information only by using the questionnaire. Consequently, it was necessary to take a qualitative approach and interview students about this topic. The results from the student questionnaire suggest a link between what is taught by the teachers and what is practiced by the students. The strategies that students claimed to learn best from were similar to the teaching techniques most frequently used in the 9th grade. Moreover, the results show that only 14 per cent claimed that their teacher used the phonetic alphabet as a teaching technique. The student interviews suggest that the use of tools such as the phonetic alphabet is considered to be difficult, time consuming and boring, as expressed by 10 of 13 students. Another interesting finding from the student interviews is that 10 of 13 students claimed to apply a trial-and-error approach instead of all the other strategies. In other words, students tried out different pronunciations based on what they thought sounded 'English'. The different strategies reported on by the students will be presented and analyzed individually below in the following sections: listening activities, reactive teaching, reading aloud and speaking activities, the trial-and-error approach, and phonetic training. The findings are based on all three parts of my study: the student questionnaire as well as the student and teacher interviews.

4.4.1 Listening activities

When analyzing the results from the student questionnaire, a link was found between the teaching techniques most frequently used in the 9th grade and the strategies used by students when they were about to pronounce a word. In both cases listening activities were the most frequently used technique. Both teachers claimed that they used listening activities in different ways in the classroom. One way to approach the text book is, according to the two teachers, to let students listen to the text before they start to read it. Furthermore, Teacher 2 believed that this technique is useful because students can listen to the pronunciation of words they find difficult, and this might make them less uncomfortable when they have to read aloud. This way of approaching texts reflects the findings in 4.1 and 4.4, where listening activities was reported as the most frequently used approach to pronunciation in year 9. The students who were interviewed thought listening activities to be useful because they allow them to hear how words are pronounced. This knowledge can then be made use of when pronouncing these

words by themselves. This is especially useful when students listen to texts before they get to read them on their own.

4.4.2 Reactive teaching

Another popular strategy which is also based on the idea of students imitating a model is when the teacher corrects students' pronunciation errors, which was the third most common teaching technique in the 9th grade. Students believed that teacher correction is effective because it makes them aware of their pronunciation at the same time as they are able to hear the correct pronunciation. Moreover, according to the student interviews, reactive teaching is time saving, since it is quicker and easier to ask the teacher than to find out the pronunciation on one's own, for example, in a dictionary. The students also claimed that this strategy is efficient when one is involved in reading or speaking activities, because when the teacher acts as their 'living dictionary' they can quickly continue with what they were doing. Furthermore, the teacher and student interviews showed that students often ask classmates to help them with pronunciation issues. However, students claimed that the one correcting them had to be a friend, as it was more acceptable to admit a pronunciation error to a friend. Both teachers had observed that only students who were friends asked each other for help with pronunciation problems. As a result, one might draw the conclusion that the students were not comfortable about speaking English in class, and that pronunciation problems might lead to insecurity.

4.4.3 Reading aloud and speaking activities

When it comes to reading aloud, both teacher and student interviews indicated that students are not comfortable reading aloud in the classroom, and, as a result, the teachers said they avoided this technique. Nevertheless, many students claimed on the questionnaire that they practise this technique in the 9th grade. Consequently, many appear to read aloud in class, despite the claims of the teachers. According to some of the students who participated in the interviews, texts or words were read aloud in class. However, since this reading was done in pairs, the reading could not be overheard by the rest of the class and the activity was thus considered acceptable. Teacher 2 also claimed that reading aloud to the whole class is avoided for the reason that some students may focus too much on how their classmates perceive their pronunciation, and also that those listening may be too focused on their turn and worrying about whether they will manage to read the text correctly (appendix 4).

4.4.4 The trial-and-error approach

It is not always the case that students have access to a model pronunciation for unfamiliar words. According to the results in the questionnaire, a majority of the students tend to rely on their own ability to decide whether or not they pronounce words correctly. Task number six in the questionnaire tested students on stress placement and the results point towards students applying a trial-and-error approach when performing the task. Almost 50 per cent of all participants were able to place the stress on the correct syllable for the word *incredible*. On the other hand, only 17 per cent were able to correctly place the stress placement in *unhealthy*. Both words have a prefix attached to the root, *in-* and *un-*, but this pattern did not seem to be of much help. The students were interviewed about this task and several of them said that they thought they had to place the stress on the prefix *un-*, in order to emphasize that the word was the opposite of *healthy*. For the word *incredible* students said that they thought the stress placement had to be after the prefix in order to express enthusiasm. Moreover, they claimed their teacher had not taught them the rules of stress placement, and that they did not use any particular strategy, but chose the pronunciation they thought was correct.

There seems to be a tendency among students to try out different ways of pronouncing a word until they believe it sounds correct. Therefore, this way of approaching pronunciation has been described as the method of trial-and-error. Furthermore, this strategy is based on students' ability to decide whether or not their pronunciation is correct. In conclusion, students said that they frequently used the trial-and-error strategy when they were about to pronounce an unfamiliar word. Moreover, when asked about whether or not this strategy works for them, some of them answered that in most cases they felt that it worked. However, a majority said that on some occasions this strategy made them feel insecure, especially if the words seemed difficult to pronounce.

There was one task on the questionnaire where the results were unanimous. It was task number eight where students indicated if the suffix of the four words *played*, *washed*, *lived* and *walked* is pronounced as [d] or [t]. The results did not seem to be based on a trial-and-error strategy, as about 80 per cent were able to give the correct pronunciation for each word. The students' explanation was that they had been working a lot with the different tenses of regular verbs, and that their teacher in the 8th grade taught them how the endings are pronounced. This suggests that students who have recently been taught about pronunciation features have a

better chance of solving pronunciation problems than those who haven't. In addition, the students pointed out that they felt secure when performing this task, since they had worked with it in their past education.

4.4.5 Phonetic training

Even though phonetic training is not given in the 9th grade, there were three students in the interviews who said they found it a useful strategy. These students had had phonetic training prior to the 9th grade, and had continued to use the phonetic alphabet when performing pronunciation tasks. Teacher 2 claimed it to be more common among students who have a higher level of English proficiency to use tools such as the phonetic alphabet. Moreover, Teacher 2 believed that these students perform well because they are aware of how they can improve their English by using different available tools. As mentioned in 3.1, the participants in student interviews were on different levels of English proficiency. The three students mentioned above seemed to be more aware than the others of which strategies they used when pronouncing unfamiliar words. These three students knew how to deal with phonetic transcriptions and how they could use this knowledge when approaching pronunciation. They also claimed that they often looked up words in the dictionary if they were difficult to pronounce. Although they sometimes forgot which sound each symbol represented, they could remember the sound if they looked at a chart with the phonetic alphabet. The question is whether the phonetic alphabet is only used among students who have a higher level of English proficiency.

4.5 Students' contact with the English language

The two teachers who took part in this study shared the idea that phonetic training is becoming less important since, in today's society, students are frequently in contact with the English language. Both teachers believed that students learn best by being in contact with English in their everyday environment such as on the internet, through video games, music and television. Teacher 2 also claimed it to be pointless to teach pronunciation as isolated sounds, since students will never come across the English language in that way. Instead, Teacher 2 claimed it to be better to teach pronunciation in context, for example, when students are involved in reading or speaking activities. Teacher 2 also believed that it is unnecessary to teach pronunciation in the 9th grade as students at that level are already quite good at pronunciation. When it comes to the student views, results from the questionnaire

indicate that they believe that being in contact with English outside school is an effective way of learning pronunciation. When the students were interviewed about this issue, they all claimed that they come across English on a daily basis, when listening to music, watching television or surfing on the internet. Furthermore, in the interviews the students also pointed out how extramural activities helped them with pronunciation issues. For instance, one student claimed that a computer game called *World of Warcraft* had helped him to learn how words are pronounced. According to this particular student, all instructions in this game are given in English, and players from all around the world speak and write on the internet in English. Another student pointed out that it was useful to speak with native speakers through the internet, by using free calls in a program called *Skype*.

According to some of the students, learning pronunciation by listening to music and so on was less demanding than learning the phonetic alphabet at school. Both teachers had noticed that it was popular among students to watch movies in English classes, and they thought the reason was that the students liked to be 'entertained' while learning English. As a result, students find it 'boring' to learn about pronunciation in a traditional way. It can be concluded from the teacher interviews that there might be a shift in teaching methods when it comes to pronunciation. According to Teacher 2, it was more popular to teach pronunciation in a traditional way in the past, when students did not come in contact with English to the same extent as they do today. Consequently, the need to explain the sounds of the English language would have been greater then than it is today.

5. Discussion

A majority of the students who participated in this study did not use strategies based on phonetic training and traditional teaching in pronunciation. On the other hand, results from both the questionnaire and the student interviews indicate that these students instead tended to use strategies loosely based on their own ideas of how words are pronounced. In other words, these strategies are based on students' ability to memorize words they have heard sometime before, uttered either by their teacher, on a tape, CD or on television. I believe that this way of approaching pronunciation is very unstable for two reasons. First of all, there is a possibility that the teachers might pronounce words the wrong way or that the teachers themselves feel insecure about pronunciation, as expressed by Teacher 2. Secondly, I doubt that students can memorize every word being uttered by the teacher or someone else. The results also show that, in general, the students' knowledge of pronunciation appeared to be weak. For example student interviews suggest that the students were not aware of the distinction between some phonemes, like in the case of [tʃ] and [ʃ] (*cheap, ship, shoes, chop*) and that mixing them up might result in different words and consequently communication breakdown.

These results lead us to question the strategies that were being used and whether they can be considered to be of help when students are about to pronounce an unfamiliar word. The results showed that strategies based on the trial-and-error approach might have a negative effect on students' ability to solve pronunciation tasks. The main reason is that this approach does not provide students with rules which they can apply when they are about to figure out the pronunciation of a word. As a result, there is an increased risk that they may make mistakes. Additionally, the results from the tasks in the questionnaire confirm that the students were not sure about their pronunciation since they were not able to perform the tasks successfully. In addition, in the interviews, the students also expressed that they were especially vulnerable when they had to pronounce words that seemed to be 'difficult', for example words, containing many syllables.

Reactive teaching can also be negative when it comes to students' ability to resolve pronunciation issues on their own. When the teacher functions as a 'living dictionary' there is a risk that students may become too dependent on the teacher as a model, and consequently fail to take responsibility for acquiring knowledge by themselves. This problem occurs when students have to face situations where the teacher is not available. If students, till then have

relied on imitating a 'model' each time they approach an unfamiliar word, they will automatically be uncomfortable in situations where they are left to their own devices. On the other hand, students who are familiar with the tools that can help them approach pronunciation tend to have a better chance of solving pronunciation problems by themselves. The student interviews suggested that students who use strategies that go beyond the trial-and-error approach tend to be more successful when dealing with pronunciation. These students were aware of their pronunciation and which tools and rules they could apply to successfully perform pronunciation tasks. I believe that the reason why so few students used phonetic training as a strategy is that their teachers did not practise it in the classroom. It is my personal opinion that it is an important teacher task to teach students how to use different tools which they can apply in order to improve their English.

6. Conclusions

In the present study reactive teaching and listening activities were identified as the most commonly used techniques in the classrooms of two teachers of English. The study also pointed out some of the underlying reasons as to why the teachers choose to teach in a certain way. Reactive teaching was first and foremost seen as a time-saving way to approach pronunciation issues in the classroom. Secondly, the two teachers believed that students learned best by listening to the correct pronunciation and then memorizing it. Moreover, reactive teaching was used to a large extent because students lacked knowledge in phonetics. As a result they depended on their teachers' knowledge in this area. Both teachers claimed that the majority of the students in the 9th grade are knowledgeable about the rules of pronunciation. Their point was, however, that this knowledge should have been acquired in earlier years. Nevertheless, the results from the questionnaire indicate that the students' knowledge about pronunciation is not sufficient. One shortcoming is that students tend to forget how to use tools such as the phonetic alphabet. Nevertheless, in the interviews there were a couple of students who claimed that they were familiar with the phonetic alphabet, and these students also showed great knowledge and awareness of pronunciation. What makes these students stand out from the rest is that they continued to practise the rules of pronunciation that they had acquired in the past, even though their current teacher did not intentionally teach the rules of pronunciation. In contrast to these students, a majority of the participants seemed to apply a trial-and-error approach. The success of this approach relies heavily on students' ability to decide whether or not they pronounce words correctly.

I believe my study provides an insight not only into how two teachers work with pronunciation, but also students' knowledge in this field. The results from my study also show the importance of the field of pronunciation to be studied further, especially how teaching techniques affect students' ability to solve pronunciation problems. However, if a second study in the same field were to be conducted, it would be essential to include a larger number of participants in order to obtain more reliable results. My results have indicated that the teaching techniques might have an effect on how well students perform in pronunciation tasks. A suitable endeavor for further studies would be to investigate the consequences of different teaching techniques. It could be interesting to study three student groups where the teachers use different teaching techniques, instead of two teachers as in the case of my study. One group of teachers could use planned lessons on pronunciation, and the other group of

teachers could use reactive teaching. The third one could use a mix of the above mentioned techniques. Moreover, it would be necessary to follow the three different groups for a longer period of time. It could also be of interest to study different schools and compare how the different teachers deal with pronunciation teaching. These further studies would make it possible to compare how students react to different teaching techniques and what effect it might have on students' performance.

As a future teacher, I believe it is important that students are taught about tools that are available to facilitate second language learning. Teachers tend to make grammar their first priority when it comes to language teaching. Pronunciation as a field of language teaching should also be prioritized among teachers. It is the student who has to practise the target language, and therefore it is important that we make our students independent. Only then can students be confident in their use of their target language.

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Appendix 1: The Phonetic Alphabet

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Key Word</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>	<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Key Word</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>
/ɑ/	hot	/hɑt/	/b/	boy	/bɔɪ/
	far	/fɑr/	/d/	day	/deɪ/
/æ/	cat	/kæt/	/dʒ/	just	/dʒʌst/
/aɪ/	fine	/faɪn/	/f/	face	/feɪs/
/aʊ/	house	/haʊs/	/g/	get	/get/
/ɛ/	bed	/bed/	/h/	hat	/hæt/
/eɪ/	name	/neɪm/	/k/	car	/kɑr/
/i/	need	/nid/	/l/	light	/laɪt/
/ɪ/	sit	/sɪt/	/m/	my	/maɪ/
/oʊ/	go	/gou/	/n/	nine	/naɪn/
/u/	book	/buk/	/p/	pen	/pen/
/u/	boot	/but/	/r/	right	/raɪt/
/ɒ/	dog	/dɒg/	/s/	see	/si/
	four	/fɔr/	/t/	tea	/ti/
/ɔɪ/	toy	/toɪ/	/tʃ/	cheap	/tʃi:p/
/ʌ/	cup	/kʌp/	/v/	vote	/vout/
/ʌ/	about	/ə-baʊt/	/w/	west	/west/
			/y/	yes	/jes/
			/z/	zoo	/zu/
			/ð/	they	/ðeɪ/
			/θ/	think	/θɪnk/
			/ʃ/	shoe	/ʃu/
			/ʒ/	vision	/ˈvɪ-ʒən/
Stress					
/ˈ/	city	/ˈsɪ-ti/			
	dictionary	/ˈdɪk-ʃən-ri/			

Appendix 2: Student questionnaire (Swedish version)

Uttal av engelska ord

Klass: _____

1. Hur har du arbetat med engelskt uttal i tidigare årskurser? Kryssa för minst ett alternativ

Läraren har förklarat vilka ljud som finns i det engelska språket, och lärt mig hur man uttalar ljuden

Jag har jobbat med ljudskrift (ett alfabet med symboler som representerar varje ljud, t.ex. [ð], [tʃ], [ʒ])

Jag har slagit upp ord i ordböcker och tagit hjälp av ljudskriften där (i ordböckerna för att uttala ordet)

Läraren uttalade ordet och jag imiterade

Läraren lät klassen lyssna på ord eller texter på cd, band, film

Jag fick spela in på band när jag uttalade ord, läste en text eller pratade på engelska

Jag fick läsa enstaka ord eller en text högt

Läraren rättade mig när jag uttalade fel och sade sedan det rätta uttalet

Annat

2. Hur arbetar du med uttal i klassrummet i denna termin? Kryssa för minst ett alternativ

Läraren har förklarat vilka ljud som finns i det engelska språket, och lärt mig hur man uttalar ljuden

Jag har jobbat med ljudskrift (ett alfabet med symboler som representerar varje ljud, t.ex. [ð], [tʃ], [ʒ])

Jag har slagit upp ord i ordböcker och tagit hjälp av ljudskriften där (i ordböckerna för att uttala ordet)

Läraren uttalar ordet och jag imiterar

Läraren låter klassen lyssna på ord eller texter på cd, band, film

Jag får spela in på band när jag uttalade ord, läste en text eller pratade på engelska

Jag får läsa enstaka ord eller en text högt

Läraren rättar mig när jag uttalade fel och säger sedan det rätta uttalet

Annat

3. Av de olika sätt som du har fått arbeta med engelskt uttal, vilket/vilka sätt tycker du att du lär dig bäst av? Nämn max tre sätt

4. Har du arbetat med ljudskrift (ett alfabet med symboler som representerar varje ljud, t.ex. [ð], [tʃ], [ʒ]) i klassrummet? Kryssa i rutan för ja eller nej

Ja

Nej

5. Nedanstående finns exempel på engelska ord skrivet i ljudskrift, vad står det?

Skriv det engelska ordet på raden bredvid

[lɑrt] _____

[θɪŋk] _____

[ðei] _____

['ledʒəbl] _____

6. Vid uttal av engelska ord läggs betoning på en stavelse. Nedan finns tre exempel av samma ord. Vilket ord har rätt tyngdpunkt? Kryssa för det alternativ du tycker är riktig. (Stora bokstäver= stavelsen som har betoningen)

UNhealthy

unHEALTHY

unhealthY

inCREDible

INcredible

incredIBLE

7. Vilket/vilka av de följande orden börjar på [tʃ] och vilket/vilka börjar på [ʃ]: cheap, ship, shoes, chop (Du skall alltså avgöra om det hörs ett [t] i början på något av dem.) Skriv in orden på rätt rad nedan

[tʃ]

[ʃ]

8. *-ed* i slutet av engelska ord kan uttalas ibland som ett [t] och ibland som ett [d].
Hur uttalas slutet av varje ord? Skriv på raden om ordet slutar med ett [t] eller som ett [d].

played_____

washed_____

lived_____

walked_____

9. Vilket/vilka av de följande orden börjar på [j] och vilket/vilka börjar på [dʒ]:
young, jolly, juice, jealous. (Du skall alltså avgöra om det hörs ett [d] i början på något av dem.) Skriv in orden på rätt rad nedan

[j]

[dʒ]

10. Om du skulle få välja, hur skulle du helst vilja arbeta med engelskt uttal?

Appendix 3: Student questionnaire (English version)

Pronunciation of English words

Class: _____

1. How have you worked with English pronunciation in past education? Mark at least one of the alternatives

The teacher has explained the English sound system, and how to pronounce each sound

I have worked with phonetic transcriptions (an alphabet consisting of symbols which represent each sound, e.g. [ð], [tʃ], [ʒ])

I have looked up words in dictionaries and used the phonetic transcription there in order to pronounce the word

The teacher pronounced the word and I imitated

The teacher allowed the class to listen to words or texts on CD, tape or film

The teacher recorded me when I pronounced words, read a text or spoke in English

I got to read words or texts aloud

The teacher corrected me when I mispronounced words and thereafter the teacher said the correct pronunciation

Other

2. How do you work with English pronunciation this term? Mark at least one of the alternatives

The teacher has explained the English sound system, and how to pronounce each sound

I have worked with phonetic transcriptions (an alphabet consisting of symbols which represent each sound, e.g. [ð], [tʃ], [ʒ])

I have looked up words in dictionaries and used the phonetic transcription there in order to pronounce the word

The teacher pronounces the word and I imitate

The teacher allows the class to listen to words or texts on CD, tape or film

The teacher records me when I pronounced words, read a text or spoke in English

I read words or texts aloud

The teacher corrects me when I mispronounces words and thereafter the teacher says the correct pronunciation

Other

3. Which one of the above teaching techniques do you think you learn best from? Give maximum three example

4. **Have you worked with phonetic transcriptions in the classroom (an alphabet consisting of symbols which represent each sound, e.g. [ð], [tʃ], [ʒ])? Place a mark for yes or no**

Ja
Nej

5. **Mentioned below are English words written in phonetic transcriptions, what does it say? Write the English word on each line**

[lɑ:t] _____
[θɪŋk] _____
[ðeɪ] _____
['ledʒəbl] _____

6. **When pronouncing English words one stresses a syllable. Below are three examples of the same word. Which one of the examples has the stress placed on the correct syllable? Mark the alternative that you believe is correct (Capital letters = syllable which is stressed)**

UNhealthy
unHEALTHy
unhealthY

inCREDible
INcredible
incredible

7. **Which one/ones of the following words has/have the initial sound [tʃ] and which one/one has/have the initial sound [ʃ]: cheap, ship, shoes, chop (You are supposed to decide whether or not you hear a [t] in the beginning of some of the words) Write the words on the correct line depending on their initial sound**

[tʃ]

[ʃ]

8. **-ed** in the ending of English words might sometimes be pronounced as a [t] and sometimes as [d]. How is the ending of the words below pronounced? Write on the lines if the ending of the word is pronounced as a [t] or as a [d].

playedd
washedd
livedd
walkedd

9. Which one/ones of the following words has/have the initial sound [j] and which one/one has/have the initial sound [dʒ]: young, jolly, juice, jealous (You are supposed to decide whether or not you hear a [d] in the beginning of some of the words) Write the words on the correct line depending on their initial sound

[j]

[dʒ]

10. If you were able to choose, how would you have liked to work with English pronunciation?

Appendix 4: Interview with English teachers

About the teaching techniques

1. Do you teach pronunciation?
2. How do you teach pronunciation?
3. Do you use certain techniques?
4. Can motivate your choice of techniques?
5. Would you describe your teaching as reactive or planned?

About the students

6. Which areas would you say are problem areas for your students when it comes to pronunciation?
7. Have you noticed any difficulties in pronouncing certain sounds in English among your students, due to interference with the Swedish sound system?
8. If so, have you highlighted these specific sounds?
9. Which strategy do you think your students would use in order to figure out how a word is pronounced?
10. How do you think students learn best, when it comes to pronunciation?

About the curriculum

11. Does the curriculum mention anything about pronunciation?
12. Does the curriculum give any guidelines for how to teach pronunciation?

About the text- and work book

13. Each chapter in the text book has a glossary, however without the phonetic transcriptions of the words. What is your opinion about that?
14. How do students figure out the pronunciation of the words in the glossary?
15. The work book has a task called ‘sound check’ for each chapter, how do you work with these tasks?
16. Can you motivate your choice of technique when working with “sound check”?
17. The sounds [θ] as in **tooth** and [ð] as in **further**, can be difficult for Swedish learners of English to pronounce as they do not exist in the Swedish sound system. How would you teach your students about these specific sounds?
18. What is your opinion about following teaching techniques?

- Traditional teaching in pronunciation
- Phonetic transcriptions
- Look up words in a dictionaries and use the phonetic transcriptions to figure out the pronunciation
- Drilling, the teacher ‘models’ the pronunciation and students repeat
- The teacher lets students listen to words or texts on tape, c-d or video/DVD
- Record students’ English
- Students read aloud words or texts
- Students are corrected by the teacher when mispronouncing, and thereafter they imitate the correct pronunciation

19. Have you used any of the mentioned techniques?

20. Comments?