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TEACHING STRATEGIES AIMED AT IMPROVING EFL STUDENTS PRONUNCIATION OF THE / dʒ / ENGLISH SOUND.

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¡A la libertad por la Universidad

Abstract

Although the emphasis of teaching pronunciation on a second language has been downgraded in most foreing language lessons, recent studies have shown that pronunciation plays a key aspect in the second language acquisition process. In his study, a great number of teaching pronunciation strategies are analyzed in terms of how meaningful and effective they are for the pronunciation lesson. This study is conducted in a local school in Nicaragua whose name is Licenciado Miguel Larreynaga School and which is located in Masaya, a City 30 minutes away from the capital city Managua. The students are ten graders taking the 2nd semester 2021.The sample of students selected for this study consist of 30 high schoolers and one English teacher and the instruments utilized to collect data are surveys, interviews and observation. Preliminary results of statistical analyses revealed that the teacher was not incorporating meaningful strategies to enhance their students' pronunciation skills. As reflected in the surveys, there is a great number of learners who stated that the activities and techniques implemented to learn pronunciation are not appealing for them. The results also revealed that there are phonological and psychological factors that hinder the student's acquisition of the English sound systems. In this study, some pedagogical implications of these results are discussed.

Keywords: pronunciation, phonological awareness, merging and substitution mistakes.

Dedicatory

We dedicate this thesis work to God humbly because he has been the fundamental pillar in our lives, and despite all the obstacles we have not given up on following the longest path to be able to become good people and serve God and our beloved Republic of Nicaragua. Furthermore, we would like to thank our family and many friends who helped and supported us so that we are able to reach the top we once aimed. Today that dream is almost a reality thanks to each person who dressed as an angel stood in our way to get there up to where we are today.

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Table of Content

1. Research Scope

1.1 Introduction

What does it mean to speak a language proficiently? What benefits do speakers gain when using a language proficiently? What disadvantages do language users face when they don´t speak a language proficiently? What is a proficient language user? Let's start by answering the last question. Language Proficiency is the appropriate use of a tongue by a person. Such proficiency is related to literacy and education.

On one hand, literacy is the ability to read in, write in , speak and listen to a language to a degree in which communication is proper and effective; whereas education is the possession of "knowledge, skills, values, morals, habits, and beliefs" (Anuradha, 2021). Thus speaking a language entails more than just communication for survival or for work-related basic skills, it also means understanding the world of educated people, expressing personal ideas to others and feeling functional in society and in relationships.

People have always studied languages for different purposes. Some did because their nations were multilingual. From the 6000 B.C. to the 610 B.C. people in the Middle East spoke "Hurrian, Urartian, Northeast Caucasian, Kartvelian (Georgian), Elamite, Akkadian, Kassite, Aramaic, and Sumerian" (Brown, 2017). To keep their business going, some people had to learn two or more languages. To understand the rules of the kingdom, for example, all individuals in the Mesopotamian region had to read Ahkadian to read the Hammurabi Code displayed to the locals and foreigners at a square (History.Com Editors, 2009).

In pre-Columbian Mesoamerica, The Maya in Guatemala kept a mutualistic relationship with Teotihuacans from Central Mexico. They exchanged cultural, economic and political ideas for their own

benefits. Obviously their educated elites had to speak the varieties of Maya in the region and Nahuatl, the lingua franca in Mexico. The exchanges reflected how education and languages interrelate to shape the views and development of nations and individuals. The Maya world had Teotihuacan influence in their ceramics, architecture and god pantheon, and the Teotihuacan had Maya influence in writing, arts and gastronomy (Fergusson, 2007).

Perhaps the learning of one specific language has had the most impact on education since ancient times till today—it is Greek. This language became the lingua franca of educated people way before the Christian era. Philosophers, sculptures, writers, politicians, religious scholars and teachers learned it to read, to teach with and to produce texts for others in all kinds of environments (Bounce, s.f.). Today Greek, as well as Latin, is a mandatory language of the sciences. Most concepts in psychology, biology, politics and natural science come from Greek. Not knowing its roots, prefixes or inflections deprives college students of understanding what scientists publish. Not understanding those shows poor education and even poor literacy.

Nowadays two languages have become the lingua franca for all walks of people—English and Chinese. Although English has been permeating our world with its nuances in the arts, science and business for about two centuries, it is Chinese that is pushing forward to become the second most spoken language in the world. China is becoming the new hub for world business; therefore the world must speak Chinese to partake in its global goods exchange market. This shows us how important languages are for education. There is no whole education without not speaking a language.

1.2 Problem Statement

Characterization of the problem

Teaching English as a second language can be a challenging task for most EFL teachers because many of them are demotivated. Another reason why this task can be very challenging is that the resources at the schools they work for are very limited. In addition to that, it is widely known that the salaries aren't usually the one expected; the average salary of an English teacher in the country is 4 times lower than the average in their Central American region. Moreover, the workload assigned to each teacher tends to be overwhelming at times. For example the number of students per classroom in the public school systems ranges from 40 to 80 pupils per class. Consequently, the mission of teaching EFL is the circumstances described above can present a very demanding task.

A.   Delimitation of the problem

Particularly in the public schools' systems in Nicaragua, the access to resources, the teacher qualifications and the number of students per classroom are factors that affect the students and teachers performance. These factors are clearly observed At Licenciado Miguel Larreynaga where the interactions between the actors of the educational process is not favoring the acquisition of the English language.

One of the language skills that is not incorporated into the regular lessons is English pronunciation. Instead, most of the time the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and subskills (vocabulary and grammar) are prioritized. This decision is typically made by the teacher's belief system in which the role of pronunciation is far from being an important one. The teaching of pronunciation is considered a goal only for those who are traveling to a country in which the language is spoken.

On the other hand, there are also teachers who are very interested in developing their students' pronunciation skills. These teachers tend to take some time off of their lessons to explain the English sound system to their students. It is clear that what these teachers pursue is to avoid any sort of stigmatization of the students as a result of pronunciation errors occurring in the classroom.

In addition to that, it is important to clarify the term pronunciation as a broad concept. For example, pronunciation consists of suprasegmental and segmental features. On top of that, pronunciation consists of stress, rhythm, intonation, vowel sounds and consonant ones. Therefore, improving someone's pronunciation implies the explicit or implicit study of all the above-mentioned features with the quality and the quantity of time and content. Furthermore, it is well-known that every sociolinguistic group such as the Hispanics, Asian, European and many others face multiple and particular pronunciation challenges based on the mother tongue. In simple words, a Chinese speaker learning English may face different challenges than the one a Spanish speaker faces. Consequently, the pronunciation teacher should be well equipped with the strategies, techniques and approaches to address all the learners' needs. This equipment is usually the result of abundant reading, systematic training and thoughtful reflection of their practices.

1. Problem formulation

From the characterization and delimitation of the above-mentioned problem, the following main question of the present investigation arises. How could teachers improve the teaching pronunciation in the articulation of / ʤ / sound in EFL students from 10th grade" A", at Licenciado Miguel Larreynaga institute in the II semester 2021?

2.   Systematization of the problem

1. What are the teaching strategies which improve the teaching pronunciation in the articulation of / ʤ / sound in EFL students from 10th grade "A" at Licenciado Miguel Larreynaga Institute?

2. Which are the problems that are affecting the articulation of / ʤ / sound in EFL students?

3. How can teachers evaluate the right pronunciation in dZ sound and avoid the difficulties that EFL students have articulating ʤ // sound?

4. What are the best strategies for teachers to use in the classroom for teaching pronunciation?

5. What type of tools and resources can be used for teaching pronunciation in EFL students?

1.3 Rationale
1.3.1 Background

Many studies show that pronunciation is very substantial in a language curriculum, and students and teachers should pay close attention to pronunciation. Pronunciation should be taught in second language classes through a variety of activities. (Scarcella & Oxford, 1994). The main reason why pronunciation should play an important role in the EFL lessons is that many of the teachers do not have useful strategies for teaching pronunciation at the moment that they face specific problems with this type of diction and they do not know what strategies could be applied.

However, teaching English language to many teachers that are non -native speakers is more than a dare, due they have problems with their pronunciation making that learners are not capable of communicating with others efficiently and that will provoke mistakes in their pronunciation.

This problem has been present for many years in many schools because in public schools there are not any appropriate resources (e.g. audiovisual equipment, pronunciation bibliography, board games) to the teachers where they can teach a good pronunciation, many researchers argue that this problem never have been solved , and they even postulate that the major areas of improvement are these notions of intelligibility (the speaker can produce sound patterns that are recognizable as English), comprehensibility (the listener is able to understand the meaning of what is said) , and interpretability (the listener is able to understand the purpose of what is said) (Burns 2003). Many teachers do not take importance because there are teachers that present the same difficulties in their pronunciation also, they focus their teaching only in developing grammar or writing skills. Nevertheless, this problem can be solved using strategies or techniques to enhance a good pronunciation in EFL students in public schools.

1.3.2 Justification

Nicaragua has known almost any teaching approach to the development of their population's English skills. All approaches have been seen and observed in the Nicaraguan Classrooms. Although Nicaraguan teachers have had limited access to teaching and learning resources, it is well known that the teachers' creativity has made it possible to graduate many generations of bilingual students from the Public Educational system.

Just recently, in the last four years the Ministry of Education has implemented several programs in which the subject of Foreign Language has been incorporated recognizing its role within the development of language fluency and accuracy. For example, singing contests, best piece of writing awards, National Spelling Bee contest as well as annual teacher training sessions are the new spaces in which all actors, students and teachers can grow professionally and personally.

Even Though the teachers' creativity has led to graduating multiple successful generations of bilingual speakers, the role that the language skills have played in this approach has downgraded one essential one which is the English pronunciation. The emphasis has been placed on the productive and the receptive skills and all lesson plans, curricula, extracurricular activities and parallel events are related to the promotion of these language skills. Similarly, the lessons, the teachers' belief systems, the activities on the textbooks used for the design of classroom assignments and projects are somewhat related to enhancing one of these skills. As a result, Nicaragua does not have a culture of promoting the development of pronunciation skills.

TEACHING STRATEGIES AIMED AT IMPROVING EFL STUDENTS PRONUNCIATION
OF THE / ʤ / ENGLISH SOUND.

In particular, this research is intended to explore the way, the strategies and/or the techniques that the students and teachers find very useful in the teaching of pronunciation skills. One one hand, the teachers will be an excellent source of information in the sense that they are the ones creating these learning experiences. The teachers in the educational systems know by first-hand the way their students are responding towards the pedagogical tactics they are using. Similarly, by creating a space for self-reflection and assessment the teachers also known as facilitators will certainly make some adjustments to the way they deliver their pronunciation lessons. By having the teachers look mindfully at their tactics repertoire they will think of how effective their current strategies are for their learners causing an identification process of their learners real pronunciation needs. I

On the other hand, the students whose teachers' pedagogical practices are questioned will benefit a lot as well. It is a fact that if the teacher is motivated and he or she is enjoying the lesson, then the rest of the class (the students) are enjoying it as well. Once the teachers are empowered with the base knowledge about what strategies are really addressing the student's real needs, the learners will feel totally related to the content, curious about learning more and totally involved. In simple words, the classroom atmosphere will share the same goal which is to improve their English pronunciation.

Finally, this study addresses a common and trendy need which is to be linguistically intelligible so that learners of English can communicate effectively with native-speaker and nonnative speakers of English. This goal will be possible to achieve by exploring not only the different actors of the learning process, but also the decision making process executed by the teaching when delivering their lesson in their context and community.

1.4 Objectives
1.4.1 General objective

To determine the teaching strategies aimed at improving the EFL students' pronunciation of the
/ ʤ / sound from 10th graders at Licenciado Miguel Larreynaga Institute in the II semester 2021.

1.4.2 Specific objectives

1.   To describe the factors that hinder the proper pronunciation of the / ʤ / sound in EFL students
from 10th grade at Licenciado Miguel Larreynaga School.

2.   To analyze what are the best teaching pronunciation strategies teachers can use in the classroom
to facilitate the proper identification and articulation of the / ʤ / sound.

3.   To recommend some tools and resources that can be used in the teaching process for EFL students
from 10th grade at Licenciado Miguel Larreynaga School.

4.   To identify the most useful teaching pronunciation strategies

Hypothesis

English teachers in Nicaraguan public schools do not use effective strategies and tools to develop pronunciation skills in EFL students from 10th grade A, at Licenciado Miguel Larreynaga Institute in the II semester 2021.

2. Theoretical Framework

Being linguistically competent in English entails the capability of becoming fully intelligible. That is, not only to be able to understand what is being said (perceptual level of pronunciation), but also to be capable of producing clear utterances in the target language (production level of pronunciation). Moreover, it is a fact that for non-native speakers of English, perceiving and producing certain English sounds as accurately as possible is always a challenge. In that direction, a common mispronunciation problem found in Spanish-speaking learners of English is the fricative sound /dʒ/. In most varieties of Spanish such sound is substituted by a similar sound or confused with a counterpart one (Lane & Brown, 2010). Consequently, this paper aims at discussing (1) the current situation of the English as a Foreign Language in Nicaragua, (2) the history of the teaching of pronunciation, (3) the most common pronunciation problems found in most varieties of Spanish, (4) and the implications of /dʒ/sound for speakers of such varieties.

2.1 English as a foreign language in Nicaragua

The first documented case study about the situation of teaching English as a Foreign Language in Nicaragua is the ODA ELT project. Such project was a collaborative initiative involving the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) which serves as a branch of the Foreign Office of the British Government, also the Ministry of Education in Nicaragua (MINED), and the two largest universities in Nicaragua, The National Autonomous University of Nicaragua (UNAN) AND The University of Central America (UCA). As stated by Luxon

(1995) the general purpose of the ODA project was to improve the English Language Teaching (ELT) in Nicaragua.

As for the structure of the research conducted in the ODA project with the cooperation of the Ministry of Education the range of the study was as follows: 47 schools were visited in all Spanish speaking regions, 62 secondary schools English teachers were observed, 65 secondary school English teachers were interviewed, 84 teachers were given questionnaires developed at University of Central America (UCA), and 518 students were given questionnaires concerning English. Such an extensive sample was aimed at designing a baseline in order to establish the conditions of the ELT in Nicaragua (Luxon & Luxon, 1995).

In regards to the general findings of the case study, a great number of significant findings were concluded. First of all, one of the most significant findings was that, according to the surveys conducted to in-service teachers, the percentage of untrained teachers in the system was pretty high. Such teachers stated they have developed their teaching skills through the experience doing their job. Another significant finding was that despite the fact that the graduate and non-graduates teachers were observed during the study, there was very little difference in their language level and teaching techniques utilized to deliver their lessons. In simple words, the differences in terms of pedagogical performances were indistinguishable. In addition to that, a significant finding was discovered in the results of the teacher's English performance. According to this study, 80% of the teachers whose level of English was assessed were placed below band 6 of the oral section of the IELTS test. Such test is frequently used by British, Australian and Canadian universities to determine the level of proficiency of the test taker. Although there was

a 5% difference between the graduates and non-graduate teachers participating in the survey, being the graduates who had the highest score, the overall result was pretty similar.

When it comes to the physical conditions in which the classes were delivered in the national context, the study shows that the classes tend to be large. That is, an average of 45 to 80 students were attending the same class in the same classroom. Furthermore, there was no audio-visual equipment available for the teachers to utilize in their classes. Similarly, photocopying machines, cardboard paper or classroom posters were not found in the classrooms visited for this study. Finally, the scenario was that the minimal conditions such as chalk and blackboards were the only materials widely available for the teachers (Luxon & Luxon, 1995).

In terms of classroom examinations, the study concludes that there weren't national tests for English Skills in Nicaragua. Moreover, it was observed that the teachers make their own test, without necessarily following the guidelines provided by MED (MINED). As a consequence of this practice, great variations in terms of testing items and skills being measured were found. Furthermore, the high school diploma awarded to the students means different levels of proficiency, depending on what school they were attending or which teacher designed the test.

The second documented case study about the situation of teaching English as a Foreign Language in Nicaragua was conducted by Chavez (2006) with in-service teachers. The target population was 15 in-service teachers in the Saturday English Program at National Autonomous University of Nicaragua (UNAN-Leon Campus). The participants' age ranges between 30 to 43 years, five of which were female teachers. The majority of the in-service teachers in the study were from the urban area and their teaching experiences ranged from 1 month to 16 years of

uninterrupted practice. For these later teachers, it is stated in the study that they have been studying English for over 20 years. The Saturday program was originally funded with the collaboration of Spanish University of Alcala as a way to provide a space for the unlicensed in-service teachers to develop their professional practices.

In her research, Chavez (2006) describes a very similar panorama to the one found by Luxon's study about a decade ago in 1995. In fact, Chavez's study claims that very few things have literally changed. For example, the consensus on the kind of instructions and the materials to be utilized in the delivery of the English classes has not been reached yet. While private schools were allowed to purchase their own textbooks and materials, in public schools the situation was very different. In that direction, the former National program was still being utilized in most schools. Although the programs haven't been updated, it is noticeable that using the former one brings two clear advantages: (1) a handful of samples are still available in most school libraries, (2) the teachers are very familiar with the textbook and its components.

In this second study there are some significant limitations discussed by Chavez (2006). The first limitation discussed in the study has to do with the urgent need to improve their working knowledge of teaching principles and approaches. As stated in the study, the vast majority of the faculty observed in the study possess a very limited repertoire of teaching strategies and techniques to deliver their lessons. The second limitation encountered in the study is the current conditions presented in the systems. That is, the professional working environment, their corresponding workload, the appraisal procedures and financial retribution are not necessarily appealing for the teachers. It is known that the profession is one of the lowest paying jobs in the

nation because the teacher's salary is five times below the average of other teachers in Central America. Furthermore, it is claimed that 29% of schools do not have running water, 68% do not have electricity and an incredible 75% of schools have textbook and furniture limitations (UNICEF 2006).Interestingly, teachers nationwide are well-known by their capability to create and improvise with the very few resources despite the fact that their working conditions are not the ones expected in quality education.

To conclude, the few documented experiences and context of the English Language teaching in the country are not very promising. The detailed descriptions of the contexts in which the learning of a foreign language is taking place would make every teacher question whether learning is really occurring. Nevertheless, the teachers' commitment and passion for learning have made the task of acquiring a language under such conditions a reality for many generations of learners. Although many changes have been made to the previous learning models, school facilities, and teacher training programs, it is really unfortunate the more recent studies have not been made in order to document such progress.

2.2 Teaching Pronunciation

Throughout the history of teaching pronunciation, a very interesting phenomena has occurred. Linguists have devoted their effort to understand how grammar and vocabulary is learned and acquired. As a consequence, the teaching of pronunciation skills has been continuously downgraded and it has been less understood by most teachers of English (Kelly, 1969). Moreover, teaching pronunciation skills have had two major approaches in the field: (1) an intuitive-imitative approach and (2) an analytic-linguistic approach. The first one rests on the

learner's ability to identify and imitate the phonological features without any explicit instructions. This approach assumes the existence of a role-model that serves as input which could also be present in the form of a record, tape recorders, video cassette or mp3 player. The latter one, lies on the notion that information, tools and materials such as the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), descriptions of the articulatory system, and posters of the vocal apparatus as well as contrastive information can be meaningful for the learning of pronunciation.

In addition to downgrading the teaching of pronunciation skills in the process of second language learning, there has been multiple language approaches such as the grammar translation method and the reading-based approaches in which the role of pronunciation in the development of the linguistic competence is completely irrelevant (Celce-Murcia, et al, 1996). On the contrary, there have been other methods and approaches in which pronunciation is a real concern.

In the direct method, for example, which was popular in the 1800-1900, pronunciation skills were taught throughout the intuitive-imitative approach. In simple words, the students would imitate a role model which could be a teacher or a recording and they would try to do their best to articulate the sound or phrase. Supporters of this method suggest that if the focus is placed on the listening and the speaking skills are delayed, then learners are given much more time to internalize the target sound system (Farrow, 2008).

Later in the reform movement the first linguistic or analytic contribution was made. In that direction, famous phoneticians such as Henry Sweet, Wilhem Vietor, and Paul Passy were able to form the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). There are two major positive

consequences of the creation of the IPA. On one hand, it was possible for the first time to have an accurate consistent one-to-one relationship between the written symbol and the sound it represented. On the other hand, such creation made it possible to study phonology as a science devoted to analyze, study, explore and the sound systems of any language. (Celce-Murcia, et al, 1996).

Then in the 1940s and 1950, immediately after the reform movement, the audiolingualism in the US and the Oral Approach in Great Britain were developed. In such approaches the teaching of pronunciation is very important and it is taught explicitly from the start. In fact, just as in the Direct Method, the teacher or a recording models the sounds, the words or the utterances and the learners try to imitate them (Howatt, 1984). The teaching of pronunciation skills is assisted by visual aids that illustrate the articulation of sounds such as the IPA or a visual transcription of such sounds. Moreover, teachers start using a technique that uses words that differ by a single sound in the same position. Such technique was called minimal pair drill (Bloomfield, 1993)

After that in the 1970's, a method that continued to pay attention to not only the structures, but also the sound was the Silent Way developed by Gattegno (1972). In this period, the multiple features of teaching pronunciation are emphasized. For example, attention is paid to individual sounds, stress, words combined in phrases, blending, intonation and all shapes and forms of an utterance. Supporters of this approach established a clear distinction between the Audiolingualism and the Silent way in terms of how pronunciation skills were addressed. For example, the Silent way focuses its attention on analytic features such as the sound system, the

phonetic alphabet and the explicit instruction. In terms of strategies and techniques developed in this period there are two main ones that can be mentioned. On one hand, the sound-color chart developed by Gattegno in 1985 and on the other the Fidel wall charts which contains all the possible spelling patterns for the sound in the language. When it comes to materials and tools, the Silent Way supporters promoted the use of small colored blocks of wood or plastic which were used for many purposes. From visually demonstrating pronunciation patterns to morphological endings such as past tense and plural markers.

Afterwards, when the Community Language Learning method was widely used in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language several tools and techniques were utilized by the counselors (or teachers). First of all, the usage of audio tapes was a very important tool for the delivery of the lesson in various ways. For example, the students were able to listen to an audio stimulus and then record their own answers using the audio recording tool. From a pedagogical perspective, the fact they were able to distance themselves from their own recording would equip them with a broader perspective for a better analysis. Second of all, the implementation of the "human computer" brought several benefits to the improvement and enhancement of the learners pronunciation skills: (1) the students were able to determine how much input was needed in order to master the accurate pronunciation of a word, (2) the meaningful practiced is initiated by the learner by selecting the word, phrase or item they would like the human computer to repeat, (3) The student controls and decided when he or she is satisfied with their learning.

When it comes to teaching pronunciation today, the communicative approach is the most dominant in the language teaching field. Within the principles of the Communicative approach

the goal of pronunciation is not to make them sound like native speakers of English. Instead, this approach has a more modest and realistic goal which is to help the learners overpass the threshold that will enable them to communicate effectively in English. In terms of the repertoire of strategies and techniques and materials used in this approach the list is pretty long. For example, listen and imitate, phonetic training, minimal pair drills, contextualized minimal pairs, visual aids, tongue twisters, developmental approximation drills, also practice of vowel shifts and stress shifts, reading aloud and recitation and recording of learner's production. With the exception of the last two techniques it is observable that the emphasis is largely on getting the sounds right at a sentence level dealing with words in isolation. In general, nowadays the teaching of pronunciation is moving from the segmental or suprasegmentally debate to a more balanced point of view in which both features are important.

Finally, Makarova (1996) suggests that games in the form of activities or strategies used in the classroom can be very meaningful. Games are a good option in the sense that they create a stress-free environment to practice pronunciation without being stigmatized by their classmates. Learning strategies in the form of games also create the necessary motivation to take risks and obtain a reward for your effort. In other words, when students play games and win they are creating a feeling of satisfaction and their attitude towards the learning of pronunciation is changing gradually. Pronunciation games can also serve as a springboard to boost cooperative learning and mutual understanding. That is, the students can take the role of facilitator and consequently they can assist their classmates in the process of enhancing their pronunciation skills.

In a nutshell, the teaching of pronunciation has been a journey full of pedagogical discoveries. As a matter of fact, it has been a parallel process in which each learning approach has taken a conception and a belief system towards the role of pronunciation in foreign language learning. Pronunciation was downgraded in the early stages of the teaching of English as a foreign language. Particularly, because the other skills were prioritized over this notion that sounding like a native speaker was every learner's goal. Then, further foreign language learning approaches had a different perception about the teaching of pronunciation. Teachers realized that sounding right was necessary in order to improve their students' listening and speaking skills. Therefore, multiple activities, techniques and strategies were created and implemented in the field. Finally, the latest approach to teaching pronunciation was added. That is gamification, the idea that games can be a pedagogical tool for learning a language became very popular really rapidly and most teachers and researchers directed their attention towards this notion. Consequently, games are widely used now to enhance every English learner's pronunciation skills around the globe.

2.2.1 Spanish Speakers Issues with Improving Pronunciation.

In order to become intelligible in English, students try to develop their pronunciation skills in so many different ways, shapes and forms. As a matter of fact, millions of Spanish speakers around the globe want to become proficient in English to be able to communicate with their fellows and counterparts in other parts of the world. Interestingly, Spanish learners of English (SLE) tend to face multiple challenges on their way to become proficient speakers of English. In simple words, learning English when your mother tongue is Spanish and the access

to the target language is limited. Your second language acquisition process can be a difficult experience. One of the difficulties they may find is the access to abundant exposure stated by Krashen (2003). For example, it is known that language starts by the ear. When babies start to talk they do it because they received the input from their moms and they are able to imitate the sound. Therefore, if a baby is born deaf he cannot hear these sounds and therefore he cannot imitate them. In the case of Spanish speakers learning English, they cannot find the access to the target language in the form of aural input within their surroundings which limits their listening stimulus and exposure.

Another difficulty these speakers can find is the widely spread misconception that written and spoken English are the same. In that direction, a clear distinction should be made between written English and the spoken one. While the written English is merely marks and symbols represented on a piece of paper and taken by the eye, the spoken one consists of sounds taken by the ear. As a consequence, supporters of this distinction strongly criticize the use of textbooks for the development of English pronunciation skills because they argue that textbooks cannot talk and therefore learners cannot listen.

Furthermore, Spanish learners of English (SLE) face another difficulty in the age in which they have a first encounter with the language. Research supports this notion that if a child is brought at an early stage to a country in which the target language is spoken, then he/she would find it easier to imitate the sounds and phrases they hear in the surroundings. However, if the same scenario is replicated with adult learners of English or any other language the results might not be the ones expected. In simple words, it is well known that adults have a great difficulty

mastering the pronunciation of foreign languages. It is important to highlight, however, that there are some learners who have the gift to learn languages and it would be pretty easy for them to imitate such sounds due to their innate ability (O'Connor, 2012).

Similarly, the SLE (Spanish learners of English) may find it difficult to master the English pronunciation because of their own mother tongue. By the time we become adults, the complete articulatory systems have been developed and strong habits have been formed. Particularly, such linguistic habits, places of articulation, and manner of articulations have been built from very small sound-units that we use in our mother tongue on a daily basis. These small units dominate the way we create language in our mother tongue and they certainly interfere with the way we produce and pronounce the target language. For example, O'Connor (2012) states that every speaker recognizes a fixed number of sounds which fall into different categories called boxes. Every time they hear these sounds they are placed into these boxes and similarly whenever they are to verbalize a message the information is pulled from such boxes. The utterances become a challenge if one existing sound in one language doesn't have a corresponding equivalent in the other. For instance, three sound units that exist in English are the initial ones in the words "*fin, thin, sin*" and in such cases the first one and the last one has a corresponding box in the most Spanish varieties. Nevertheless, the initial sound of the word *"thin"* does not have a corresponding box in Spanish. Therefore, when the Spanish speaker hears such a sound he has to place it in the boxes whose sound-unit resembles the sound he or she is hearing due to the inexistence of the corresponding equivalent. This linguistic phenomenon makes it hard for the non-native speakers of the language not only to communicate their message

accurately, but also understand the message they are receiving from native speakers or an audio recording.

Furthermore, another difficulty arises when there is a need to decide which English learners are studying and what they mean with perfect English. In general, there are as many kinds of English as there are speakers of this language. Interestingly, there is no evidence that two people can speak exactly alike. That is, it is always possible to observe differences at all levels of their oral and linguistic performance. Consequently, deciding what English pronunciation is considered accurate is a difficult goal to achieve. However, there are some hints that could help us determine what sociolinguistic parameters can be taken into consideration. Initially, the geographical position is very important. In that direction, someone who is learning English in India or West Africa does not need to sound like a native speaker from Great Britain or the United States. Simply because in modern linguistics developed by Chomsky (2020) a more inclusive approach towards this notion of new varieties of English has become more popular. As a result, the varieties of English from this region should be treated as an independent system of sounds.

In the same degree, if the learning of pronunciation is taking place in the western hemisphere or Latin America, learners are more likely to hear the sound of the North American English mostly coming from the United States and Canada. In this sense and because there is a clear contrast between the situation described above in India and West Africa in the notion that Latin America speaks Spanish, then the most logical thing to do is to use the variety of English that is most commonly heard as the role model and the language of instruction.

In a nutshell, developing outstanding pronunciation skills in the English language is determined by multiple factors which can greatly influence the final results. One of them is the fact that the limited access to comprehensible input in the form of real face to face conversation with native speakers of the language. In addition, the misconception that by reading sounds, phrases or even big pronunciation books the ability to perceive and produce the English sounds can be developed effectively. Moreover, learners' age plays an essential role in the ability to imitate the sound-units of the target language. It is now known that the older the learner, the harder it will be to imitate and produce the utterances in the target language. Furthermore, the learners mother tongue which in this case is Spanish, directly affects the capability to produce the sound-units in the target language. It has become evident that once an individual has developed their linguistic habits and procedures, these are really hard to break or substitute for new ones. Finally, the conception about the English pronunciation the learners have in their belief system will determine the perception they have about the English variety and the pronunciation they would feel comfortable with.

2.2.2 Language Interference

Bilingualism means to have a good command or at least a working knowledge of two languages: a native and a foreign one. It is also stated that the degree to which every language is managed can vary from speaker to speaker. Language interference is used to describe the coexistence of two languages in the mind of the same individual, both of which are individuals of one another. Needless to say that when an individual has a good command of the two languages there is no interference between them. Furthermore, from a psycholinguistics

perspective, the phenomenon called language interference is viewed as a negative transfer of habits at a multidimensional level. Meaning that not only the linguistic systems are transferred negatively, but also the linguistic competences and skills. Additionally, from a linguistic point of view, language interference is considered more than interaction, a change is the structures and structural elements of the linguistic repertoire. In simple words it is seen as a change of route in the norms originally stated in the speaker linguistic system.

Many authors tend to agree that two types of interference have been identified: (1) interlanguage and (2) interlanguage. For the first one the mistakes of the interference appear because of a negative transfer caused by the learners' mother tongue into the foreign language. Some other times, the same negative transfer is caused by the first foreign language into the other foreign languages for speakers of multiple languages. For the latter type of interference, it is known that the learners make this mistake as a result of the influence of the already established knowledge and habits in the foreign language. For example, they can master a pattern in the English language systems and they overgeneralize such patterns into the future structures they will learn. Particularly, there is also a notion defined as phonetic interference which consists of the improper pronunciation of sounds in the foreign language. Such interference is caused by the already existing phonological system created by the speaker's mother tongue.

In a nutshell, knowing about the effect of language interference is considered to be an important part of the decision making process for the modern educators. In simple words, the approaches, methods and techniques utilized to enhance a learners' foreign pronunciation are determined by the impact of the language interference theories. In other words, the more

scientific the decision made by the teachers the better the results. Finally, interference mistakes directly affect all the language systems and skills including the phonological one. Therefore, educators are required to be mindful about that powerful impact.

2.2.2 The /dʒ/ Sound

Sibilants have an s-like sound and the problems learners of other languages face can be widely determined by the phonological inventory of their own language. Additionally, the fact that English does not have a one-to-to phonological correspondence makes it harder to understand how the English sound system operates. That is, the way the words are spelled in English versus the way they sound has been traditionally a source of confusion.

One of the sound-units that can create confusion among speakers of other languages is the /dʒ/ sound which voiced palato-alveolar affricate originated by the combination of the pair of consonants /d/ and /ʒ/. The sound is produced when you place the tip of your tongue just behind the hard ridge at the front of the top of your mouth. Then, you vibrate your vocal cords, and push air forward out of your mouth. After that, you stop the air completely at first, and then release it. Finally you release, the air should create friction between the tip of your tongue and the roof of your mouth.

The /dʒ/ sound has a very irregular spelling with makes it very confusing for the learners to master the pattern. This sound can be represented by eight consonant clusters /j/ as in "*jump, reject*", /g/ as in "*magic , gentle*", /ge/ as in "*age, large*", /dj/ as in "*adjacent, adjective*", /dg/ as in "*badger, gadget*", /dge/ as in "*lodge, budge*", /di/ as in "*soldier, cordial*", and /d/ (+u) as in

"*graduate, education*". Although the mastering of the spelling patterns can enhance the learners pronunciation of this sound, the identification of the sound units at the perceptual level remains a challenge for most varieties of languages.

This sound can also be easily confused with its similar counterparts. The first one is the /tʃ/ sound which is a voiceless alveolar sibilant affricate. In words like "*much*" /tʃ/ and "*major*" /dʒ/ the distinction is very complex because both are sounds which start as stops (/t/ or /d/) and are released as fricative (/ʃ/ or /ʒ/). This phonological transformation becomes a challenge for learners of English. A similar challenge is when these two sounds occur in final position at a word level. For example when pronuncianing words like "*much*" and "*age*", the learners of English must know that there is a brief silence provoked by the initial stop sounds /t/ or /d/. Furthermore, a lot of times students confuse pairs like "*much and mush*" or "*major and measure*" because the spelling does not indicate any phonological distinction. However, in a totally opposite scenario, there are a few cases in which spelling can play in favor of foreign language learners. Particularly for Spanish speakers who encounter words such as "*match and mash*" would be less likely to miss the /t/ sound that functions as a natural stop in the word simply because this is a pronunciation pattern that exists in their phonological system.

The second counterpart with which /dʒ/ sound can be confused is the glide or also called semivowel /y/. This latter one is a consonant when they begin a word or syllable, as in the words "*yes*", "*young*" and "*vineyard*". However, it functions as a vowel when they are followed by another vowel sound such as the words "*boy*" and "*now*". The glides can definitely pose some problems for the students whose first language is Spanish. For instance, words like " *yolk, yes*

and *yet*" can be pronounced like the words "*Joke*", ``*Jess*" and "*Jet*". The mispronunciation can lead to confusing situations between speakers with different linguistic backgrounds.

In conclusion, only through the required knowledge of the English sound system as well as the capability to implement a broad repertoire of pedagogical techniques, all of which must be communicative oriented, can the teachers enhance their students' pronunciation skills in English. And as if this were not enough, teachers are to provide a rich model of imitation for their students based on their learners' real needs by administering practical and authentic assessment instruments and activities. As stated earlier in this discussion, the desired objective is the result of the teachers' empowerment with the sound system and the commitment to understand the most common phonological errors that are hindering their students' acquisition of an accurate pronunciation. Therefore, recognizing the history of the teaching of pronunciation, embracing the current national context of the teaching of ELF, and assimilating the difficulties faced by foreign language learners is completely vital.

3. Research Design

3.1 Research Type

This study is a mixed method; qualitative, because it was implemented through an interview and classroom observation and quantitative, because it was conducted by a survey that tries to quantify and understand the problem by the use of graph and percent. In this investigation this method is used to have an overall view of the problem.

3.2 Study Area

This study area was conducted at Licenciado Miguel Larreynaga School. This research was focused on teachers and students of 10mo grade A. There is a population of 40 learners where 25 are women and 15 are men in the afternoon shift. The age range of the students is from 15 to 17 years old.

3.3 Sample

The representative population of this study was EFL students in the tenth grade at Licenciado Miguel Larreynaga School. The number of students belonging to this grade were 40 in total. The sample consisted of eighteen (18) learners which represented the 100 % of the population, who were chosen randomly and one English teacher of this grade was selected.

3.4 Variables Matrix

General objective: To analyze the strategies which improve the teaching pronunciation in the articulation of / ʤ / sound in EFL students from 10th a grade at Licenciado Miguel Larreynaga Institute in the II semester 2021.

Specific objectives	Conceptual variable	Sub variable or Dimensions	Indicator operating variable	Data and information collection techniques and participating actors		
				survey	Interview	Observation
				X	X	X
N 1 To identify the problems that affect the articulation of / ʤ / sound in EFL students from 10th grade at Licenciado Miguel Larreynaga School.	Factors that hinder the clear articulation of the / ʤ / sound in EFL students from 10th.	Phonological factors that restrict the students' pronunciation performance L1 interference Sound to spelling correspondence Lack of direct pronunciation instruction.	Classroom atmosphere Access to material and resources Presence or absence of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation			

		Articulatory system habits				
N 2 To describe the difficulties that EFL students have articulating / ʤ / sound.	Difficulties that the learners experience when articulating the /ʤ / sound.	Psychological factors that impede the students' intelligibility	Attitude towards taking risks. Self-confidence Stigmatization of errors	X	X	X
N 3 To determine what are the best strategies for teachers can use in the classroom for EFL students from 10ᵗʰ grade at Licenciado	There are teaching strategies that enhance the student's pronunciation skills of the	Effective strategies utilized by teachers in order to enhance the students pronunciation skills	Interactive, game like, interesting and fun activities Use of songs, tongue twister	X	X	X

Miguel Larreynaga School	/ʤ/ sound for the EFL students		Repetition drills Transformation drills Minimal pair Use of digital resources Board games Story telling Competitions	

3.5 Methods, data collection techniques

In order to answer the research hypothesis and objectives, research tools have been used for collecting data which are teacher's interview, students' survey and classroom observation. The methods represent the concrete and comprehensive work strategy for the analysis of a problem or question consistent with the theoretical definition of the same with the objectives of the research.

A survey is a research method used for collecting data from a predefined group of respondents to gain information and insights into various topics of interest. They can have multiple purposes, and researchers can conduct it in many ways depending on the methodology chosen and the study's goal. The process involves asking people for information through a questionnaire, which can be either online or offline. However, with the arrival of new technologies, it is common to distribute those using digital media such as social networks, email, QR codes, or URLs (QuestionPro Survey: Definition, Templates and Methods, n.d).

A semi-structured interview is a meeting in which the interviewer does not strictly follow a formalized list of questions. Instead, they will ask more open-ended questions, allowing for a discussion with the interviewee rather than a straightforward question and answer format. It is also described as a more closed type of interview than the in-depth interview in terms of the formulation and order of questions. However, the interviewee is allowed to give an open answer without conditioning his or her opinions to a list of possible answers. It is shorter than the in-depth interview (Doyle, A.2020).

An observation guide is a means of gathering information for research, which may be defined as perceiving data through the senses: sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste. Specific research field. It is sometimes considered as an obtrusive method (Bryant, n.d). It is also a qualitative research technique where researchers observe participants' ongoing behavior in a natural situation (fuelcycle, n.d). Its purpose is 'to gather primary data or first-hand information to get a more accurate description or interpretation.' (Hugo, 2015)

3.6 Instruments

The instruments were designed taking into consideration the variables established for the research problem at 10th grade in Licenciado Miguel de Larreynaga Institute. In order to collect information, three useful types of instruments were designed. These instruments were a students' survey, a teacher's interview and classroom observation. The survey was applied to eighteen students which consisted of four open-and-closed questions and six multiple-choice questions. The survey's questions were written in English but applied in Spanish to get real information from the students since they still have not mastered the target language. The interview was applied to the teacher in Spanish with eleven open-questions (but were written in English) in order to get information about what strategies the teacher implemented to improve the pronunciation of [dZ] sound in EFL students at Licenciado Miguel de Larreynaga Institute. Last instrument was a class observation conducted to one of the English teachers in the school.

3.7 Validation

The instruments were evaluated and validated by two experts Ph.D. Mylvian Lopez from CARCIP, and M.A. Asdrubal Canelo from American University (UAM).

3.8 Application

The instruments were applied at Licenciado Miguel de Larreynaga to students from 10th grade "A" in the afternoon shift in the second semester of 2021.

4. Analysis of the Results

In this research eighteen students and one teacher were selected to provide information about the problems and difficulties that students face when pronouncing with pronouncing the [dz] sound in order

to determine what are the best strategies teachers can use in the classroom for EFL students from 10th grade at Licenciado Miguel Larreynaga School.

4.1 Classroom Observation

In order to analyze the teacher's performance, three EFL classes were observed and notes were taken. The class lasted 90 minutes and it was not specifically a pronunciation lesson. Instead, it was a regular lesson in which one sound was explained within the lesson. To start, it was observed that the teacher used lots of Spanish (70%) in her lesson, and her lesson was more Grammar-oriented. For instance, students were to learn grammar points through completing or writing sentences. Also, no techniques or activities were applied to enhance the students' pronunciation nor any resources such as boom box or computers to support her teaching process or to make her class more appealing. Furthermore, the teacher is usually dealing with large groups (45-60 students) which therefore demotivate her and her students since she is not able to address everyone in the classroom. An example of this is when she wanted to play games that enhance pronunciation and students would become discontent because there was not any control in her class; in other words, poor classroom management was noticed due the students' population. When it comes to correcting any mispronunciation, the teacher would correct students' in a general way, especially when the students were speaking, though this was not often. In addition to that, it was also noticed that the teacher encouraged the students' critical thinking skills, but with a major focus on grammar. In simple words, the activities performed by the teachers pursue to develop the students' metacognitive skills. Moreover, it was observed that the teacher tried hard to encourage the students to participate not only in pairs, but also in groups. In terms of material and additional resources utilized by the teacher in this lesson it was evident that there was a lesson plan and complementary worksheets in the form of black and white copies. Finally, the most common

teaching strategies found in the lesson were a brief repertoire of games for enhancing pronunciation and grammar as well as more traditional techniques such as listen and repeat and listen and write

4.2 Teacher Interview

An interview was conducted as part of the data collection process. Such an interview consisted of ten questions in which the objectives of this research were undertaken. The encounter took place in the school in which the class was observed and only the two researchers and the teacher were present at the moment. The answers were recorded using a smartphone and the teacher authorized the use of his data for academic purposes. Based on the notes taken during the class observation several factors can be discussed. In that direction, the teacher strongly believes that (1) lack of resources as technology-wise, (2) students' intrinsic motivation, (3) lack of family support, (4) the number of students in the classroom, and (4) the student's mother tongue, in this case Spanish, are the factors that directly affect the students pronunciation of the /dʒ/ sound. The teacher also mentioned that due to the number of students in the classroom it is really challenging and even difficult to devise a great lesson plan that incorporates pronunciation since students tend to be more distracted by their surroundings and less involved in the lesson. Yet, she affirmed that she does her best to motivate her students to teach good pronunciation skills. She assured she implements games such as tongue twisters songs and digital resources. Though the teacher has noticed that songs make students feel more anxious. In order for the students to avoid mispronouncing the /dʒ/ sound, she said that she would make students record themselves, have them prepare oral presentations and finally make them read aloud, so she could hear the right pronunciation and rhythm of the words, and correct them when necessary. She suggests that designing lesson plans that combine students' multiple intelligence have a greater impact in improving pronunciation. Furthermore, she considered that the best strategies to boost their pronunciation is through watching videos, debating

specific topics, and choosing the best student to work with a partner as well. Although she would like to work with her students in a lab with an advanced software, listen to audios, work in platforms such as kahoot, quizzes, and live worksheets to better students' pronunciation, she is totally aware of the resources, needs, and conditions of the facilities in the Miguel de Larreynaga Institute do not really contribute for a better teaching-learning experience.

4.3 Students´ Survey

Q1: Are you afraid of pronouncing the /dʒ/ sound in the foreign English language incorrectly? Why?
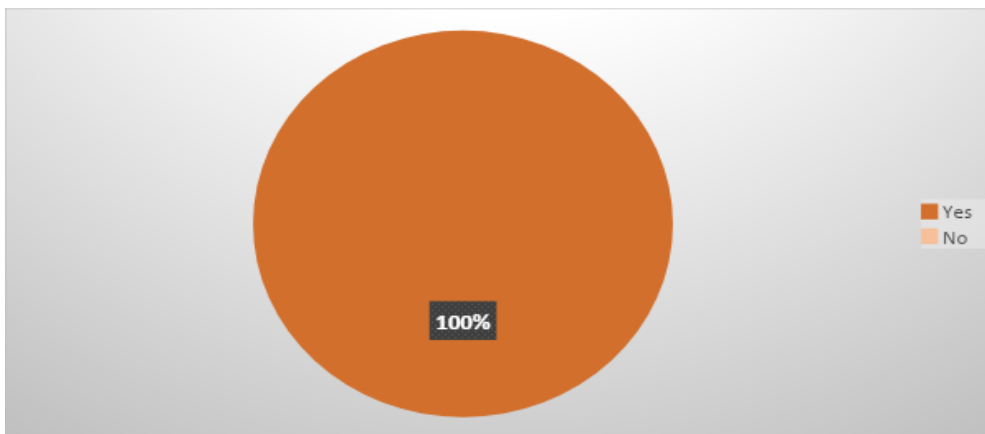
The pie chart above shows that 100% of the students do not feel confident and they become nervous when speaking the target language in front of the class. Their classmates also tend to make fun of their mistakes.

Q2: What makes you feel afraid when you try to pronounce and imitate the /dʒ/ sound? (You can choose more than one)

TEACHING STRATEGIES AIMED AT IMPROVING EFL STUDENTS PRONUNCIATION
OF THE / ʤ / ENGLISH SOUND.
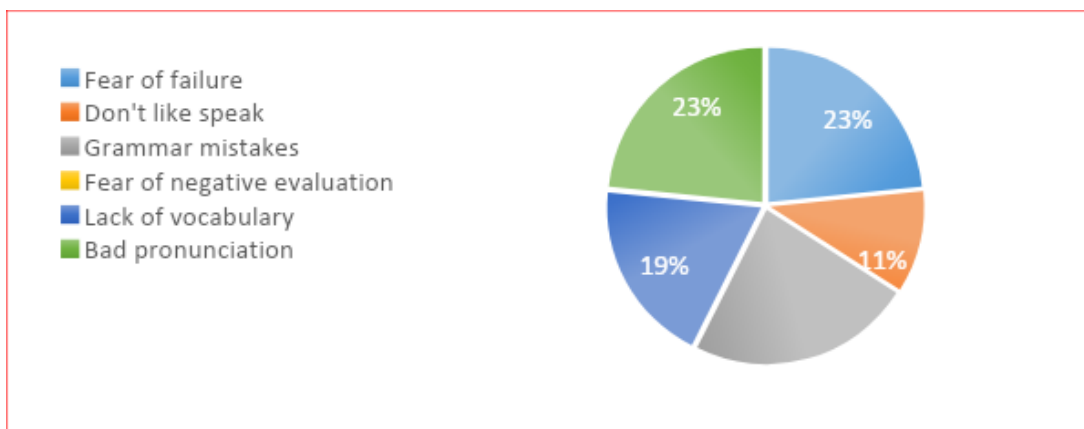
The pie chart shows that (36%) of the students feel afraid of making grammar mistakes when completing exercises on the board. . . Likewise (44%) of the proportion of students feel afraid of mispronouncing a word in front of the class. (20%) said that they have no interest in learning the language whatsoever.

Q3: Which factors do you consider that affect your pronunciation performance when you try to articulate the /dʒ/ sound? (You can choose more than one)
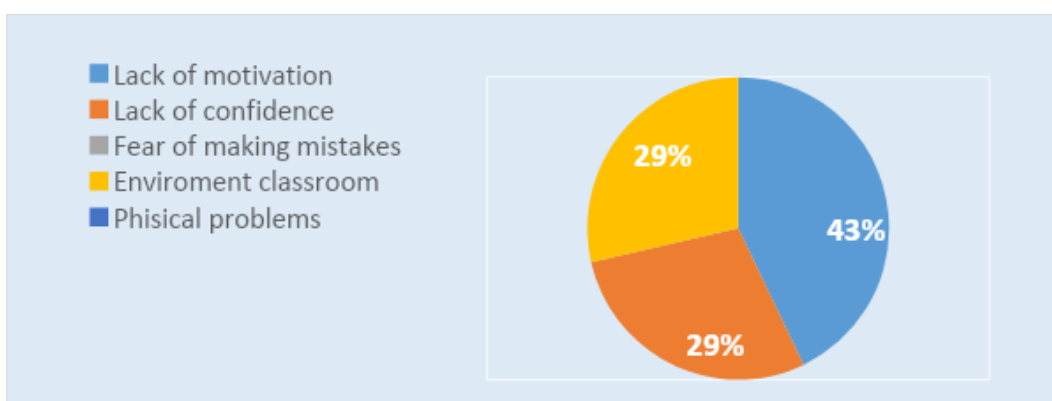
The pie chart shows that (60%) of the students don't feel motivated by the teacher, and (40%) said that the classroom atmosphere is not appealing for them to learn the target language, therefore they feel confident taking risks in participating in the lesson activities.

Q4: Which activities do you consider are more effective in your learning process to practice the /dʒ/ sound in the classroom?
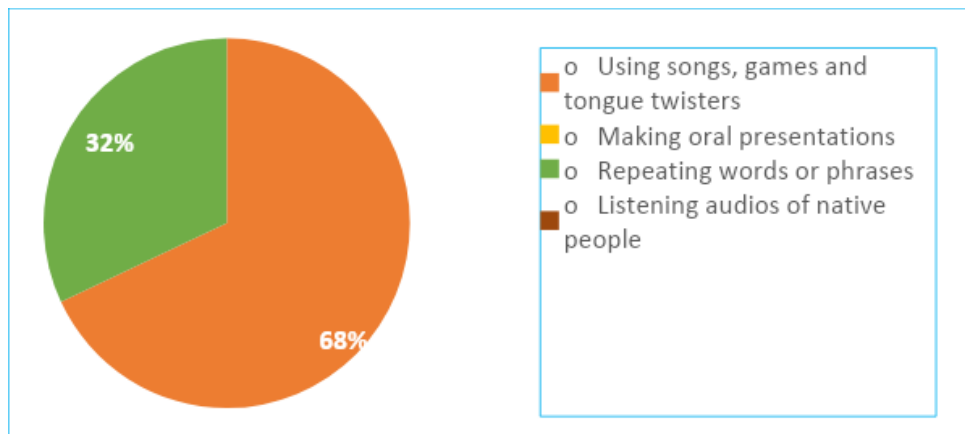
The chart above shows that (38%) of the students believe that using songs, playing games, and practicing with tongue twisters help are really effective to practice pronunciation. (32%) said that repeating words and phrases are more effective since they can also memorize the pronunciation of the words.

Q5: When you are speaking in English do you feel afraid of making mistakes to articulate sounds? Why?

The pie chart shows that (100%) of the students feel afraid of speaking English because there is no correct pronunciation, and their classmates usually make fun of them when speaking in front of the class.

Q6: Do you feel confident when you are talking English with other people who have a good articulation of the /dʒ/ sound in the English language? Why, Why not?
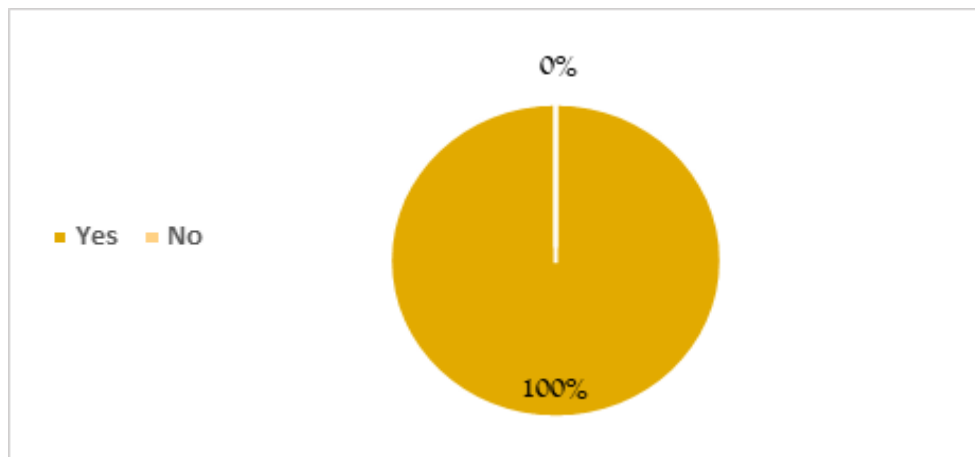
The graph displays that (100%) of the students don't feel confident enough with themselves when they are talking in English because their teacher does not always teach them how to improve their pronunciation and therefore they feel discouraged by the teachers' performance or stimulus.

Q7: What would motivate you to pronounce English correctly?
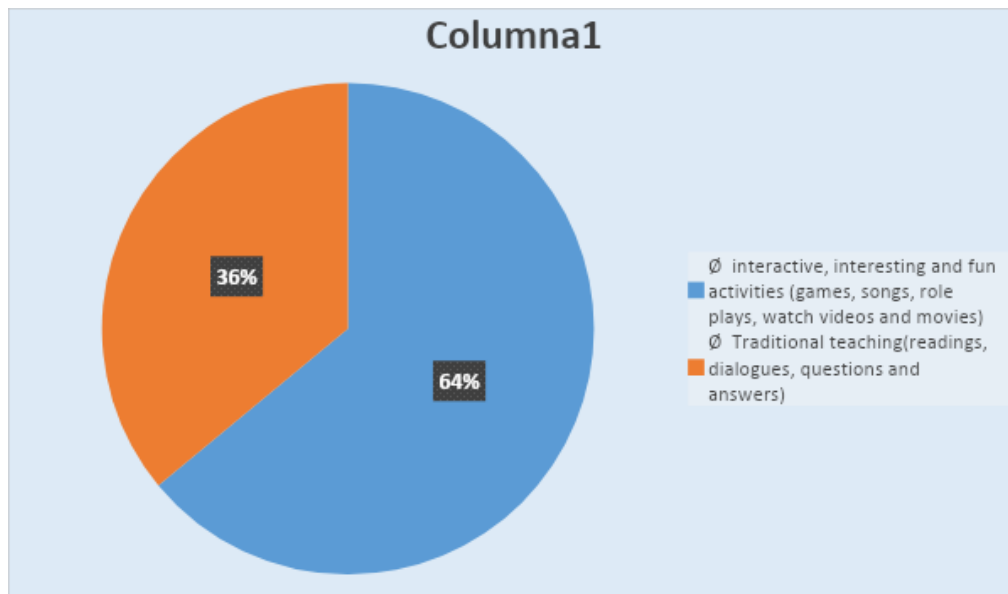
The pie chart reveals that (64%) of the students prefer interesting, interactive, and fun activities since they have more chances to communicate, interact and learn the language better and easier. (36%) said that they prefer the traditional approach because they are aware of the needs, wants, and lacks that the school system has in Nicaragua.

**Q8: Do you think it is important to produce a good articulation of the /dʒ/ sound? Why?**
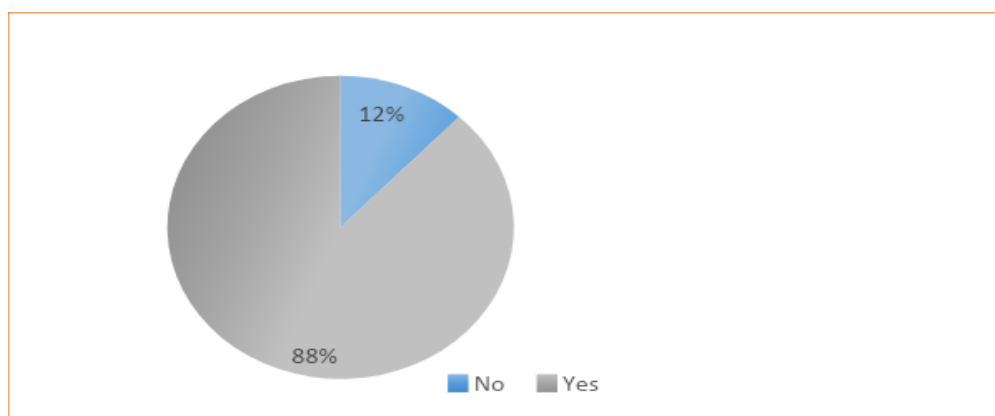
As seen in the pie chart the majority of the participants (88%) think it is important to speak good English or pronounce well since they can possibly work in a different country even though they are aware

of the limitations that the school system in Nicaragua has. (12%) of the proportion is not interested in learning the language.

Q9: How would you like your teacher to develop in his class the pronunciation and articulation of a sound when He/ She is explaining?
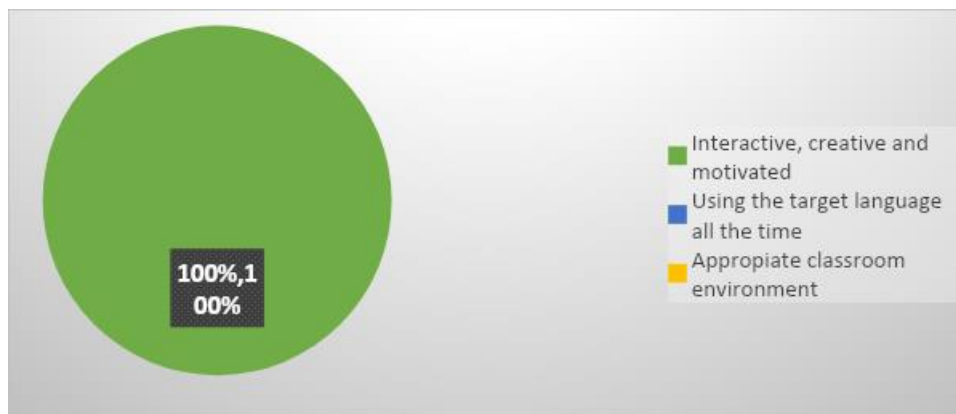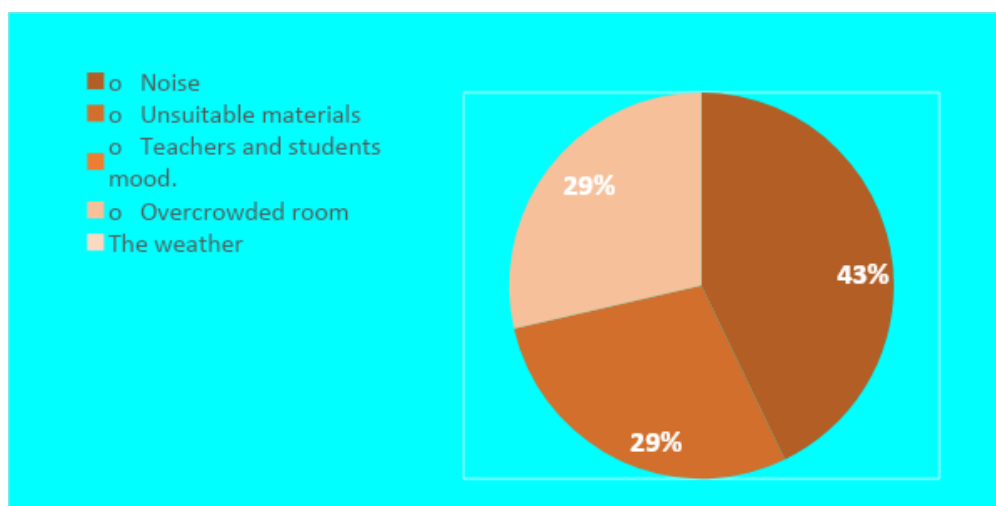

As displayed in the chart all (100%) of the students prefer having their teacher to develop her class more motivated, interactive and creative (with more games)

Q10: What factors of the classroom environment affect your learning process while the teacher is teaching pronunciation of the foreign English language? (You can choose more than one)

The last pie chart reveals that (60%) of the students believe that being in a noisy and crowded classroom affects their learning process while the teacher is explaining her class. (40 %) said that the weather and not having suitable materials are the main factors that hamper their learning process.

4.3.1 Results interpretation

After conducting a detailed analysis of the data collected through the research instruments several significant findings can be interpreted. Generally speaking, it becomes evident that the 10th graders studying at the Licenciado Miguel de Larreynaga School are experiencing multiple psychological and phonological difficulties. In regards to the phonological difficulties, there are a great number of material limitations which hinders the students' exposure to abundant input. In simple words, the learners have no access to audio resources or an accurate role-model that enhances their perceptual pronunciation skills. For example, the classroom where the lesson was taking place had no tape recording or audio equipment in order to have the student listen to the sound. Furthermore, the place that pronunciation skills are playing within the regular lessons is secondary. Simply put, the portion of the lesson devoted to teaching the English sound systems is not enough in order to cause a crucial change. Moreover, the teaching strategies inventory is far from being appealing for the students. For example, the students

argued that a change is needed in the type of activities utilized to deliver the lessons. In that direction, the students reached a consensus on the fact that more interactive, creative and motivated activities should be included in future lesson plans. In a nutshell, the limited access to the target language and the traditional strategies utilized by the teacher to enhance their student's pronunciation skills makes it hard for the learners to master the accurate articulation of the English sounds.

In addition to the phonological difficulties, the learners are also facing some other psychological ones. In that direction, it is observed in the results that although a great number of learners are convinced that English can open the doors for their professional growth, there is still an important number of them whose interest in learning English as a second language. Also, the learners in this study suggest the classroom atmosphere does not welcome the students' errors. Particularly, they argue that making mistakes while participating in class activities can be a stigma for them. Consequently, the student participation is very limited and the teacher to student interaction takes place with very few students. Moreover, the classroom seems to be a place in which no motivation is found. For example, one of the major findings in the students' responses is the statement that students are not motivated neither to learn nor to participate in class. Interestingly, the teacher claims that the student's attitude towards the class causes a negative atmosphere whereas the students argue that it is the teacher's performance the one responsible for this environment. Finally, the context in which these lessons are taking place are the results of the teacher's experience, the students attitude towards learning English as a second language and the resources and materials available to teach the class.

5. Conclusion

Learning the English language has become a priority nowadays for almost all the educational systems around the world. As a consequence of this, the English teachers in public schools are rushed to transform their classroom lessons into more meaningful spaces in which effective learning is taking place at a fast pace. Nevertheless, such transformation is being done without considering multiple factors that can hinder the students' learning. Particularly, for the teaching of pronunciation, this study found that the strategies being used to deliver the lessons were inappropriate and not appealing for the students. For example, some of these strategies involve placing students in front of the whole class and being the center of attention. As a consequence, the learners claimed that they were feeling uncomfortable and unwilling to participate actively during the lesson. The study also found the learners were not being exposed to the target language and this was not found anywhere in the classroom. That is, the lesson was delivered in the student's mother tongue and only the English words were the only input the student got in the class. Needless to say, that this pedagogical practice has a negative effect on the students' listening, speaking and pronunciation skills. Simply, because the students cannot imitate or learn a language they cannot hear. In addition to that, this study concludes there are physical conditions impeding the development of the student pronunciation skills. For instance, it was observed that the classroom is exposed to great deal of noises which directly interrupts the delivery of the class. Another example of this can be found in the type of materials used for the lessons. In other words, there is enough evidence to argue that the limited access to quality and suitable material in the classroom is a key factor that hinders the students' progress. To conclude, this study has determined that the strategies selected to deliver a pronunciation lesson can directly affect the students' performance.

6. Recommendation

After analyzing the results in strategies to improve the teaching pronunciation in the articulation of the /dʒ/ sound in EFL students and with the purpose to better such strategies the following recommendations are presented as follows:

1. English teachers needs to deliver the instructions of the class in the target language. This will create more opportunities for the students to be exposed to the language. If students are immersed in the language, it will be much easier for the students to assimilate or imitate the sounds of the words, especially the sound /dʒ/. This will also give the students to practice more the target language and lower their lack of confidence and motivation. There is a plethora of techniques such as body gestures, repetitions, false cognates or peers' aid to make students understand the target language without using their mother tongue.

2. English teachers needs to create a stress-free environment for the students. They should suggest students not to make fun of their classmates, so they can overcome the fear of speaking in front of the class.

3. Makarova (1996) suggests teachers should also implement more interactive, fun and creative activities such as games, songs, tongue twisters in order for the students to practice the target language and its right pronunciation. This will not only increase students' preparation, participation and collaboration with the teacher in any lesson, but it will make students feel more motivated, self-assured, risk-takers, and the target language will be more appealing for them. By creating this type of atmosphere,

the teacher will have a greater chance to awaken the interest in those students who are not interested in learning the language at all.

4. In order for teachers to improve her English class as an overall, it is imperative to view the classroom within the context of an environmental system. The environment which entails the type of rapport that students have with her teachers, peers and parents. If the teacher creates a personalized and orderly learning environment, builds up a positive relationship, and shows that students are important for her, this will be beneficial for both the teacher and student.

5. English teachers should direct his or her attention towards the instructional system which deals with the curriculum and instruction being implemented in the classrooms. On one hand, the teacher can implement strategies that can engage students academically. For instance, make her classes more meaningful and functional, maximize students' tasks and minimize time on non-instructional activities, and finally maximize the big picture as in English is for their future professional life.

6. On the other hand, the conditions of the facilities, the lack of digital resources, the willingness of adopting better textbooks to teach the target language is a situation that has remained the same for the last two decades and no major changes have been made. Consequently, there should be a radical change to improve the quality of teaching English in the public-school system.

7. Kelly (1969) postulates that a combination of both an analytic-linguistic, and an intuitive-imitative approach should be utilized together to improve the students' pronunciation skills. In order to do that, teachers should incorporate activities in which the students identify English sounds and try to imitate them. Such imitation can be done in small groups or as a whole class. In case the letter one is utilized, a choral repetition of a song or a karaoke activity can be a good choice. In addition to this, Kelly suggests that the use of visual stimulus and resources such as posters of the International Phonetic

Alphabet (IPA), descriptions of the articulatory systems and the anatomy of the vocal apparatus can be powerful material to help them enhance their production of the English sounds.

8. The minimal pair drill developed by Bloomfield (1993) is a technique which consists of using words that differ by a single sound in the same position. For example, the teacher can play an audio clip or read the sentences such as "He slipped on the floor/He slept on the floor." And the learners would be asked to distinguish which of the sentences they heard as the teacher read them aloud. Another use of minimal pair drills is that it can be done in pairs. While one of the students read the pair of sentences or words the other word tries to identify the one his or her partner is reading.

9. The sound-color chart first developed by Gattegno (1985) is a very effective technique for phonetic instruction and practice. Such chart is small a 57 cm. by 42 cm. wall chart with 58 colored rectangles. Thirty-seven of the rectangles are of one color, representing a single sound in English, and 21 are of two, representing two sounds. The vowels are placed above a line nearly halfway down the chart, and the consonants are placed below this line. The two-colored rectangles are divided horizontally and are read from top to bottom. On the consonant side of the chart, the sound made by "qu" in words such as "quite" is made up of a single rectangle whose top half is the color for /k/ and bottom the color for /w/. The chart has proven to be very effective for all types of learners.

10. Gattegno also developed another resource that he called the Fidel chart. This chart is a tool which shows all of the sounds in the English language arranged in columns. Each sound has its own color, and the spellings for each sound are listed in the columns. Examples of each sound-spelling can be found on the Color Key for the American English Fidel. The American English Fidel is available a variety of sizes to suit various teaching and learning environments and has been widely used around the

globe since its creation. Teachers can surely use the Fidel charts to enhance their students' pronunciation. Although this resource can be found in most educational stores, free versions can be found online.

11. During the creation and implementation of the Silent Way approach a new technique to teach pronunciation was discovered: Cuisenaire Rods. These rods are small colored blocks of wood or plastic which were used for many purposes. Teachers can utilize them from visually demonstrating pronunciation patterns to morphological endings such as past tense and plural markers. The strategy has been very popular because the rods can be simply substituted by a something similar and because they are literally a way for the learners to manipulate the sounds of the English language.

12. During the Community Language method a very powerful technique for enhancing the students' pronunciation skills was developed; this one was called the Human Computer. The activity starts by having the teacher provide comprehensible input to the students. The students, then listen to the input and try to imitate it as accurate as they can. The students can ask the human computer who is the teacher to repeat the word or phrase as many times as he need until the learner is satisfied with the amount of input received. One of the main benefits of this technique is that learners get to control how much repetition is needed to achieve meaning learning.

13. The strategies and techniques described in this research paper can certainly serve as a base for future research in the area of teaching pronunciation in the Nicaraguan Public Education System. As a matter of fact, a deeper understanding of the current status and context is highly needed. Therefore, students, in-practice teachers, specialists and all the members of the TESOL community in the country are highly encouraged to continue learning more about the topic.

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8. Annexes

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Observation Form

Instrument 1

Topic: Teaching strategies to improve in EFL student's pronunciation.

TEACHING STRATEGIES AIMED AT IMPROVING EFL STUDENTS PRONUNCIATION OF THE / ʤ / ENGLISH SOUND.

The main objective of this research is to measure the effectiveness of teaching strategies that can improve the teaching English pronunciation performance in students from 10th grade "A", at Licenciado Miguel Larreynaga Institute in the II semester 2021.

Grade: _____   School: _____Date: _____Teacher`s name: _____

Aspects	Items	Comments
	Uses teaching methods, techniques, aids and materials appropiate for the pronunciation teaching context and students characteristics	
	Includes a variety of activities talking into account students learning styles to impove the right articulation of the dz sound …	
	Uses strategies, facilities, resources to enhance the right pronunciation of the dz sound	

The teacher	Has positive rapport with students calls students by their names is respectful when correcting mistakes when the students confused the dz sound while they are talking, shows interest and listens to them	
	Encourages active participation from all students to put into practice the dz sound	
	Lack of o immersion of the English language, they use 70 percent in English and the 30 percent in Spanish when the teacher are teaching pronunciation in the classroom	

	Encourages critical thinking	
	Teacher teaches grammar in a deductive way	
	Maintains discipline	
	Balances students and teacher taking time considering activity and level to practice pronunciation	
The students	Participates freely during the development of the class but some student are shy to participarte.	
	Are engaged to active participation while the teacher is teaching pronunciation in the classrom	
	Feel comfortable asking for clarifications	.

	when they confused the dz sound	
	Do the homework and brings class material for the lesson.	
The lesson	Appropiate time is given to each activity and level to improve the teaching pronunciation of the students	
	Group arrangement is appropiate for activity and level	
	The time that they have to develop the lesson 45 minutes Try to include all the activities durig the mind time...	
Others		

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Teacher´s Interview

Instrument 2

Dear teacher, we ask for your contribution to answer the following questions that will help us to gather information about the present research. Thanks in advance for your help.

Topic: Teaching strategies to improve the pronunciation of the sound /dZ/ in EFL students.

The main objective of this research is to measure the effectiveness of teaching strategies that can improve the teaching English pronunciation performance in students from 10th grade "A", at Licenciado Miguel Larreynaga Institute in the II semester 2021

Grade: _____ School: _____ Date:_____

Teachers name:
_____

1. **How do you develop in your lesson plan the pronunciation of the sounds like /dZ/ to yours students?**

2. **How do you identity a student who has issues with /dZ/ sound in English language?**

3. **When are you delivering your class, what kind of factors affect when you are teaching pronunciation in a specific like /dZ/ sound?**

4. **When a student's participates in a pronunciation activity in your English class which sound does He/ She confuse the /dZ/ sound? Give examples**

5. **How does the environment affect your students when they try to imitate the /dZ/ sound?**

6. **How do you get your students to practice English using a good articulation in the /dZ/ sound?**

7. **What kind of strategies do you consider to be the most effective for your students to obtain a better pronunciation of the /dZ/ sound? What kind of tools and resources would you like to have in a classroom to help your students understand the difference in sounds when they're speaking?**

8. **Which kind of activities you put into practice taking into consideration that students have different types of learning process when you are teaching a specific sound like / dZ/?**

9. **How do you discover that your students are anxious to participate and try to practice the right pronunciation and emitted of the /dZ/ sound? What measures do you take to help them?**

10. **How has been your experience while teaching strategies, techniques and methods to improve the pronunciation of the /dZ/ sound in EFL students?**

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Students' Survey

Instrument 3

Dear student, we ask for your contribution to answer the following questions that will help us to gather information about the present research. Thanks in advance for your help.

Topic: Teaching strategies to improve the pronunciation of the sound /dZ/ in EFL students.

The main objective of this research is to measure the effectiveness of teaching strategies that can improve the teaching English pronunciation performance in students from 10th grade "A", at Licenciado Miguel Larreynaga Institute in the II semester 2021

Grade: _____ School: _____ Date:_____

These surveys was making by 12 men and 13 women at lic Miguel Larreynaga

Questions	Possible Answers	Results

TEACHING STRATEGIES AIMED AT IMPROVING EFL STUDENTS PRONUNCIATION OF THE / ʤ / ENGLISH SOUND.

1. Are you afraid of pronouncing the /dz/ sound in the foregin English language incorrectly? Why?	o Yes o No	
2. What makes you feel afraid of when you try to pronounce and imitted the /dz/ sound ? (You can choose more than one)	o Fear of failure o Being misunderstood o Grammar mistakes o Fear of negative evaluation o Lack of vocabulary o Bad pronunciation Others _____	
3. Which factors do you consider that affect your pronunciation performance when you try to articulate the /dz/ sound?	o Lack of motivation o Lack of confidence o Fear of making mistakes o Enviroment classroom o Fiscal problems Others _____	

(You can choose more than one)		
4. Which activities do you consider are more effective in your learning process to practice the /dz/ sound in the classroom?	o Using songs, games and tongue twisters o Making oral presentations o Repeating words or phrases o Listening audios of native people Others_____	
5. When are you speaking in English do you feel afraid of making mistakes to articulate sounds? Why?	o Yes o No	

6. Do you feel confident when you are talking English with other people who has a good articulation of the /dz/ sound in the English language? Why yes/ Why not?	o Yes o No	
7. What would motivate you to pronounce in English correctly ?	➤ interactive, interesting and fun activities (games, songs, role plays, watch videos and movies) ➤ Traditional teaching(readings, dialogues, questions and answers) ➤ Others _____ __	

8. Do you think is important to produce a good articulation of the /dz/ sound? Why?	5. Yes 6. No	
9. How would you like that your teacher develop in his class the pronunciation and articulation of a sound when He/ She is explaning?	o Interactive, creative and motivated o Using the target language all the time o Appropiate language environment Others _____ __	
10. What factors of the classroom environment affect your learning process while the teacher is teaching pronunciation of the foreign English language ? (You	o Noise o Unsuitable materials o Teachers and students mood. o Overcrowded room o The weather Others _____	

can choose more than one)		