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**TEACHING PRONUNCIATION THROUGH SYNTHETIC PHONICS**

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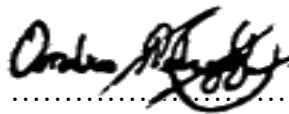
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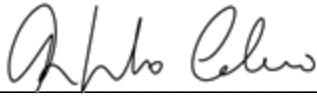
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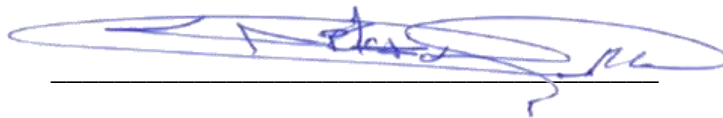
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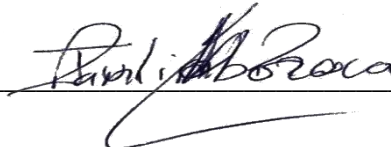
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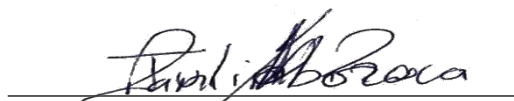
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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this paper work, first and foremost to my only reason that can give me the meaning of my life, she is even more important than my own expectations or accolades that I can receive during my lifespan. You are my never-ending happiness and my long-lasting rejoice of having you. You did not choose me to be your father but I am so full of the joy of spring to have you as my everlasting and appreciated daughter, I have so much love to give you Noelia Carolina Roca Yagual.

This work is also dedicated especially to someone that has given me her shoulder to lay on, supported me without asking her help, loved me through my transgressions and the list goes on, I can't thank you more for what you have done Hisury Nallely Gavilanez Rodriguez.

Last but not the least I still hold the privilege to have by my side, those who have brought me up with their imperfections, those who have loved with all their actions, and those who feel that this flawless person is on the right path. I owe you more than you think. To my mother, Maria Josefina Panimboza Balon and my father Pedro Segundo Roca Gonzalez.

Ultimately, I really appreciate the help of all my brothers and my unique sister that have planted the seed based on their standpoints.

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## GLOSSARY

**Phonemes:** One of the smallest units of speech that make one word different from another word. Cambridge dictionary.

**Graphemes:** The smallest unit in a system of writing a language that can express a difference in sound or meaning. Cambridge dictionary.

**Phonological awareness:** The ability to recognize and distinguish between the sounds used in spoken language, including syllables, rhymes, and phonemes. Dictionary.com.

**Phonemic awareness:** The ability to recognize and distinguish between the different phonemes in spoken words. Dictionary.com.

**Segmentation:** The division of something into smaller parts. Cambridge dictionary.

**Blending:** A word formed by combining two other words. Cambridge dictionary.

**Phonics:** a method of teaching people to read, based on learning the sounds that letters represent. Cambridge dictionary.

**Synthetic phonics:** A method of teaching people to read by training them to pronounce sounds associated with particular letters in isolation and then blend them together



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**Tema: TEACHING PRONUNCIATION THROUGH SYNTHETIC  
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**RESUMEN**

El propósito de esta monografía breve sirve para abordar una información valiosa y bien equilibrada lo más que se pueda con respecto a la enseñanza de la pronunciación a través de la fonética sintética. Los estudiantes ecuatorianos poseen un bajo nivel de suficiencia en Inglés; por tanto, la pronunciación es una necesidad primaria para ser mejorado. En la actualidad, existe un gran número de investigaciones que tienen otros enfoques; además, hay poca atención en la pronunciación debido a su complejidad. Para resolver este inconveniente, el uso de la fonética sintética ha sido presentada como una posible solución. El marco teórico ha sido seleccionado para resaltar puntos importantes que se debe considerar cuando se enseña pronunciación. De hecho,

aparte de la revisión de la literatura, el autor ha tomado la iniciativa de presentar una forma de enseñar la fonética sintética en actividades de clases

**Palabras clave:** Pronunciación – fonética sintética



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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this brief research is to gather as much as possible some well-balanced and valuable information with regards to teaching pronunciation through synthetic phonics. Ecuadorian learners have a low level of proficiency in English; thereby, their pronunciation is one primary necessity to be improved. Currently, there is a great number of researches that are focused on other issues; moreover, little attention is drawn on pronunciation due to its complexity. In order to sort this problem out, the use of synthetic phonics has been put forward. The theoretical framework has



been chosen to highlight some important points to be taken into account when teaching pronunciation. In fact, besides the literature review, this author has taken the initiative to expose one way to use the synthetic phonics as class activities.

**Keywords:** Pronunciation – synthetic phonics

## INTRODUCTION

Not only is English pronunciation well known as an essential skill of English as a second language (ESL) learners must firstly acquire for their comprehension (Lambacher, 1999), but also it is of the utmost importance of spoken English as cited in (Gilakjani, 2011). Even though it is not high time ESL learners could speak English as a native speaker, at least pronunciation needs to be understandable (Jersy, 2005). In addition, low level of English pronunciation decays the communicative competence that is vital in the relationship between speakers and listeners (Lin, 2014).

Non-native English speakers mainly and commonly make mistakes on long vowels and voiced consonants and specifically Spanish speakers find them difficult to recognize (Case, 2012). Furthermore, it is evident that every mother language has differences in their phonological system (Huang & Radant, 2009) which means that these aspects bring about difficulties between their native language (L1) and their second language (L2) (Brown, 1994). Needless to say that there are other differences such as the nucleus of English syllables, Spanish final consonant clusters and direct correspondence in Spanish as opposed to English that has one grapheme with different pronunciations and others are not much less pronounced (Martinez, 2011).

With all being said, this paper consists of the use of synthetic phonics. Phonics is focused on acquiring the letter patterns and the sounds they represent which teaches students to recall the sounds through visual symbols system (Goouch & Lambirth, 2007). Many researchers support the phonics approach that benefits learners from direct instruction with regards to letters,

syllables and corresponding English sounds (Rose, 2006). All in all, ESL learners get involved in the acquisition of synthetic phonics in support of the current problem of pronunciation.

By and large, readers will encounter a great variety of valuable contents that respond to how to teach pronunciation through synthetic phonics. By means of the development of content, teachers will be given a brief description of every aspect either in pronunciation and synthetic phonics. Furthermore, there is an alternative way to teach synthetic phonics by grouping the sounds and the procedures of developing English pronunciation. Conclusions and recommendations are based on the literature review and the development of activities.

## DEVELOPMENT

### 1.1 Pronunciation

This is one way to distinguish them through the Oxford Dictionary and the Cambridge dictionary. Concerning phonetics, this terminology is defined as “the study and classification of speech sounds” (Oxford Dictionary, 2021). Regarding pronunciation, this word is defined as “how we say words” taking into account not only different dialects and accents but also stress, intonation and rhythm when communicating (Cambridge dictionary, 2021).

Other authors have come up with some explanations related to phonetics. For instance, Phonetics comes from the core linguistics that has to do with the study of speech and production of sounds (Singh & Singh, 2006). Moreover, words are pronounced by the representation of sounds which is an element part of phonetics, this is applied in the task of reading and constructing words (Bald, 2007). Thus, this might come to a conclusion that Phonetics is the science of speech sounds (Kreidler, 2008). On the other hand, pronunciation can comprise more individual sounds, a way of speaking, a way of communication and a graphic representation of spoken words through the use of phonetic symbols (Kurniati et al., 2015). Thereby, they are not alike, still it can be inferred that phonetics might be helpful in learners’ pronunciation.

ESL learners have a natural tendency to perceive the unfamiliar sounds and sound patterns of their first language (Crystal, 1987) as cited in (Jahan, 2011) that pronunciation in target languages are influenced by sound patterns of every mother language. These problems are evident due to the fact that there are no guidelines neither course books available (Griffiths, 2011) and this leads to teachers feel no confidence and much less develop a lesson where

pronunciation is predominant owing to the fact that they are not capable enough to do so (Dixo & Pow, 2000).

Having a right pronunciation may be advantageous to contribute to students' skills. One benefit might be that the given messages can be understood more quickly among people. Indeed, there can be less misinterpretation and miscommunications, in that, people might not give the benefit of doubt and avoid asking for clarification. Not only can be helpful for reading, writing and general communication, but also this can increase learners' level of confidence when speaking.

Every language has variations and dialects regarding places, era or occasion (Kreidler, 2008). Thus, understanding pronunciation variations ought to be present to support ESL learners when acquiring English (Lin, 2014). Another important point to highlight is that there are some words that can be pronounced differently such as either, garage and tomato (Kreidler, 2008).

When it comes to reading, what learners tend to do is to reconstruct words by blending the sounds that are represented by letters. Indeed, learners apply a great amount of strategies to decode symbols into sounds and to comprehend (Kurniati et al., 2015). Thereby, it is compulsory that English instructors must be mindful of the use of diverse sound structures and insights into pronunciation variations (Lin, 2014).

## **1.2 Sound features**

According to (Schuelke, 2020) stated that features are used to describes sounds (vowels and consonants) and are represented by phonetic symbol. Vowels are produced by the tongue, jaw and lips; and are defined by their frontness/backness, highness/lowness, and the roundness of

the lips. Unlike consonants that are used to describe in terms of place of articulation, manner in which they are articulated and configuration of the glottis and vocal folds.

Place of articulators are divided into two kinds. Active articulator makes the tongue and lip move such as bottom lip, the tip and back of the tongue, the uvula and the glottis; whereas passive articulator involves upper lip, upper teeth, the alveolar ridge, the palate, the velum and the pharynx.

The manners of articulation make reference to how sonorous sounds are. In the following table shows the most and the least sonorous with some examples.

**Table 1**

*Sonority hierarchy*

	Class	Examples
Sonorants	Glides/semivowels	/w/ , /j/
	Liquids	/l/ , /r/
	Nasals	/m/ , /n/ , /ŋ/
Obstruents	Fricatives	/f/ , /v/ , /s/ , /z/
	Affricatives	/tʃ/ , /dʒ/
	Stops/plosives	/p/ , /b/ , /t/ , /k/

*Designed by. Peter Schuelke*

### **1.3 Phonics**

These are three definitions to better comprehend the term ‘phonics’. Phonics denotes the relationships of word form and sound or sound-symbol (Allen, 2008). The use of phonics instructions comprises the relationship between letters and sounds to transform the text into pronunciation (Shanahan, 2005). Phonics is the teaching of the sound pronounced through letters systematically by combining and blending to read (Kurniati et al., 2015). Overall, these definitions tend to describe letter-sound correspondence connection.

Phonics is a fundamental component to comprehend the English Language. In fact, phonics is indispensable for learners to recognize the relationships between the phonemes of speech and their representations in written text (Wheldall & Buckingham, 2020).

### **1.4 Phonics instruction**

This is an attempt to offer guidance and teaching that every ESL learner is in need to acquire in order to comprehend how phonics works. According to (Castles et al., 2018), phonics instruction has not been the center of attention, much less a talking point due to its complexity. Notwithstanding, as psychological science gives out the value of phonics instruction, this makes available suggestions to such instructions.

Within the teaching of phonics, spellings encode the phonemes that link to letters or group of letters. One highlighted point is when the use of the very morphemes can result in different phonemes sounds. For example, the word wanted ends with the morpheme (ed), and the word worked as well finishes with the same morpheme (ed); these have different phonemic form

as in wanted /ɪd/ and worked /t/. Sure enough, phonemes instruction cannot be applied in every aspect (Bowers & Bowers, 2017).

There is another aspect in reference to words ending with *e*. Words such as love, have and give finish with *e* and yet based on phonics instruction one-syllable word that ends with *e* means a long vowel. However, this writing system which is about the kinds of letter sequence, lays out the rareness of some words ending with *v* helping itself with letter *e*. In short, this pattern might be helpful for learners to understand why bake has a long vowel sound and have does not.

### **1.5 Synthetic phonics teaching**

The term synthetic refers to “place together” (Oxford Dictionary, 2021). This is also known as explicit phonics where students take individual sounds of words into word pronunciation (Shanahan, 2005). ESL learners are familiarized with grapheme-phoneme correspondences and blending phonemes throughout the word so as to produce the word sounds. When it comes to synthesizing letter sounds it is about acquiring them and as soon as possible starting to blend new unfamiliar words rapidly (playing with sounds) (Johnston & Watson, 2005). This is why some authors recommend, for instance, synthetic phonics provide the best way to go through and become skilled readers and he stated that it is a must that teachers involve them in the regular education courses (Rose, 2006).

Synthetic phonics is very helpful to children where they can recognize all the phonemes, decode and blend words. For instance, if children are taught these phoneme-grapheme correspondences /m/, /s/, /a/, /b/, /t/, they will be able to blend these sounds to form words such



as at, sat, am, bat and so forth, they can even pronounced words that they are familiar with yet (Reading Eggs, 2012).

In synthetic phonics children read by recognizing the smallest unit sound (phonemes) and blending them to pronounce the target word which is dissimilar to other approaches. In addition, synthetic phonics is highly recommended due to its effectiveness and mastering the skill of decoding, in that, this enables it to read unfamiliar words (Glazzard, 2017). Teachers’ standards are emphasized on synthetic phonics so as to ensure a good knowledge of them (DfE, 2011). All in all, the intervention of systematic synthetic phonics programme is suggested by teachers’ standard for those who are getting behind in pronunciation (Glazzard, 2017).

**Table 2**

*Comparison of pre-test and post-test between analytic and synthetic phonics*

Research group	Pre-test scores	Clue word reading scores	Post-test scores	Irregular words
Analytic phonics control, n=104	2.9 (12.0)	6.3 (18.3)	2.6 (9.3)	21.4 (19.5)
Analytic phonics + phonological awareness, n=75	4.9 (15.8)	11.4 (27.3)	5.5 (16.2)	15.3 (23.1)
Synthetic phonics, n=113	16.9 (25.7)	30.5 (32.9)	22.7 (23.7)	30.2 (25.4)

*Designed by. Johnston Rhona*

The benefits of teaching phonics are disseminated for learners' well-being. The benefits are the following; ESL learners are aware of spelling the words correctly, they are conscious the sounds in words, they can associate sounds of the alphabet letters, they will boost their reading skills efficiently and quickly, they will be able to comprehend what they read, they will obtain more vocabulary and they will be more confident to vocalize better (Panel et al., 2000). Globally, phonics is considered as one of the most powerful tools to improve pronunciation grappling with all single letter sounds combined with letter names and this universal agreement of these obvious benefits related to automatic word recognition might support students' comprehension (Ren & Ma, 2017).

According to (Blevins, 2006), claimed that the teaching of synthetic phonics follows a three-step methodology where student first and foremost can get familiar with letters, afterwards they can blend words, and as a result they can ultimately read connected words. This author also exemplifies a sequence to teach English sounds:

1. Letters are taught.
2. Each letter sound with rules and generalization.
3. Blending sounds to construct words.
4. Blending unknown words in context.

## **1.6 Key terminology to teach Synthetic Phonics**

### **1.6.1 Phonemes- Graphemes**

Phoneme is the smallest set of speech sounds that are formed by speakers (Ren & Ma, 2017). English language consists of 26 letters, roughly 44 phonemes and a huge number of graphemes which are a combination of letters that represents a phoneme. English phonemes are

pronounced identically by different grapheme whilst other phonemes are pronounced differently by identical grapheme. For example, /f/ sound is pronounced with these graphemes “f”, “ph” and “gh” whereas “ea” grapheme is pronounced differently ‘dear and pear’ (Baker, 2008).

### **1.6.2 Phonemic awareness**

Phonemic awareness (PA) refers to the manipulation of phonemes in spoken words. In order to be sure learners have improved their PA, these common instructions and practices facilitate the assessment. Learners must be able to recognize individual sounds in words (phoneme isolation), common sounds in different words (phoneme identity), the word with the odd sound in sequences (phoneme categorization), to listen individual sounds and blend them into a word (phoneme blending), to break down into sounds (phoneme segmentation) and to recognize the remaining word when a phoneme is removed (phoneme deletion) (Panel et al., 2000).

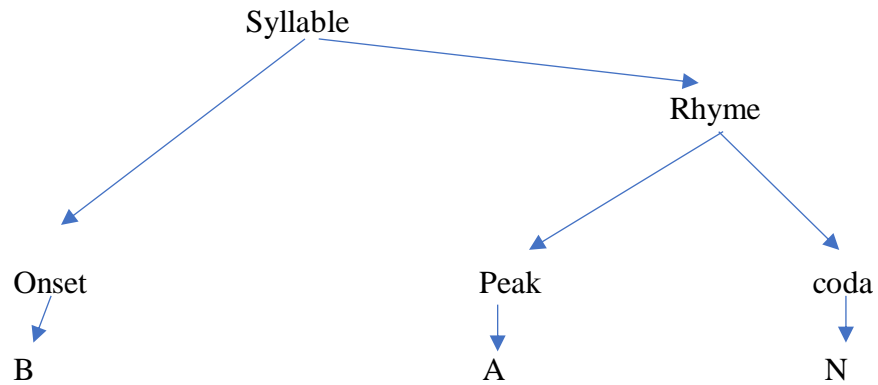
For instance, the word bat has three phonemes and three graphemes /b/ /a/ /t/. On the other hand, the word take has three phonemes and four graphemes /t/ /ei/ /k/; it is important to remark how phonemic awareness takes place in the previous example, in that, this refers to be conscious about sounds and not letters (Treiman , 2018).

### **1.6.3 Phonological awareness**

The phonological awareness involves the ability to set apart words into a spoken syllable, onset-rimes segments and individual phonemes. The nucleus and the coda are gathered together in order to form the so called rhyme. The Rhyme falls into two main parts; the peak is formed with vowel and the coda is formed with a consonant.

**Figure 1**

*The syllable structure*



*Designed by. Roca & Johnson.*

The phonological awareness can be included with a variety of activities whether in direct or a brief practice. This can be utilized for reading, spelling, or even vocabulary. In order to fortify the phonological awareness, these following ideas can be helpful;

1. ask students to recognize whether words have been pronounced correctly.
2. ask them to watch you as you pronounce new words.
3. ask them to say vocabulary words aloud and to pronounce them correctly.
4. highlight, describe, segment and pronounce individual speech if similar sounding words are confused.
5. Gesture to remind students of a sound
6. Segment syllable and speech sounds before spelling words or to correct misspellings
7. Orally rehearse repetition of phrases (Moats & Tolman, n.d.).

In short, it can be understood that the phonological awareness gathers the ability to hear, recall and manipulate the sounds every time learners are on the verge of listening spoken words (Jolliffe et al., 2019).

#### **1.6.4 Segmenting and Blending phonemes**

Sure enough, the process of segmenting and blending sounds are fundamental either for reading and for writing. These two elements are part of the phonological awareness skills so as to understand that words are built up by sounds which work together to create words. Segmenting is the process of breaking down a word into individual sounds; on the contrary blending is the process of combining sounds together to build a word (Literacy, 2020).

### **1.7 An alternative way to teach synthetic phonics**

#### **1.7.1 Sound grouping**

The English language has 26 letters in the alphabet, albeit, there are 44 sounds (Phonemes). These are the 44 phonemes.

**Table 3**

*Consonant sounds*

/b/ Boat	/l/ Low	/ʃ/ sure
/d/ Drive	/tʃ/ Chat	/z/ Division
/g/ Green	/dʒ/ Jog	/s/ See

/p/ Pen	/ŋ/ Sing	/j/ Yet
/t/ Ten	/θ/ Bath	/h/ His
/k/ King	/ð/ That	/r/ Round
/m/ Mom	/f/ Photo	/w/ West
/n/ Never	/v/ Vase	/z/ Buzz

*Adapted by. Julio Roca*

**Table 4**

*Vowel sounds*

/ɪ/ live	/ɜ:/ Turn	/ɔɪ/ Choice
/i:/ Leave	/ʊ/ Should	/əʊ/ Road
/e/ Weather	/u:/ Boot	/aʊ/ Powder
/æ/ Sat	/ɒ/ Hot	/ɪə/ Fear
/ə/ The	/ɔ:/ All	/eə/ Stair
/ʌ/ Enough	/eɪ/ Maid	/uə/ Poor
/ɑ:/ Half	/aɪ/ Sight	

*Adapted by. Julio Roca*

Both table 3 and 4 show all the 44 sounds of the English language. Every phoneme has one example to clarify how the sound works in each of them.

The author of this study has decided to group the sounds into 6. The following tables are represented by phonemes and examples.

**Table 5**

*Group 1: Phoneme Classification*

Phonemes	Examples
/b/	Ban, bed
/p/	Pencil, pig
/d/	Dad, do
/l/	Lip, less
/t/	Tell, top
/v/	Van, vet
/æ/	Bad, had
/ɒ/	Not, lot

*Created by. Julio Roca*

**Table 6***Group 2: Phoneme Classification*

Phonemes	Examples
/g/	Gas, go
/k/	Call, chemistry
/n/	Dinner, nap
/m/	Man, drummer
/ɑ:/	Start, hard
/ʌ/	Until, some
/ɔ:/	Cough, ball

*Created by. Julio Roca*

**Table 7***Group 3: Phoneme Classification*

Phonemes	Examples
/tʃ/	Chop, feature
/dʒ/	Joke, change



/ŋ/	Thing, young
/θ/	Think, both
/ð/	Them, there
/f/	Tough, photo
/ɪ/	Ship, this
/i:/	Leave, sleep
/ə/	Away, upon

*Created by. Julio Roca*

### **Table 8**

#### *Group 4: Phoneme Classification*

Phonemes	Examples
/ʃ/	She, sure
/s/	Face, seat
/h/	Hall, hill
/w/	Week, quick
/r/	Arrange, cherry

/e/	Bed, fed
/ɜ:/	Work, girl
/ʊ/	Put, took
/u:/	Boot, flu

*Created by. Julio Roca*

### **Table 9**

#### *Group 5: Phoneme Classification*

Phonemes	Examples
/ʒ/	Television, version
/j/	Use, music
/z/	Size, zoom
/eɪ/	Date, great
/aɪ/	Life, night
/ɔɪ/	Boy, moist

*Created by. Julio Roca*

**Table 10**

*Group 6: Phoneme Classification*

Phonemes	Examples
/əʊ/	Know, home
/aʊ/	Down, south
/ɪə/	Here, near
/eə/	There, fair
/uə/	Hour, tour

*Created by. Julio Roca*

**1.7.2 Developing the first group of synthetic phonics**

Taking into consideration the first group of phonemes, ESL learners are gathered together to get familiar with the following phonemes and the common grapheme that can be possibly represented. This phoneme /b/ is denoted by the grapheme b as well as /p/ by p, /d/ by d, /l/ by l and ll, /t/ by t, /v/ by v, /æ/ by a; and /ɒ/ by a and o.

Once ESL learners have got acquainted with all the phonemes of the first group. In the image from the (**appendix A**) shows the procedure of the familiarity of the sounds. It starts with the phoneme and grapheme identification, then they listen how the sound is produced, after that,

they are given how synthetic phonics is utilized and ultimately have a short practice of the sound learned. In addition to that, this procedure is repeated throughout the whole first group.

From (**appendix B**), Learners are now able to blend sounds to form the following words such as tab, bad, pat, tap, dab, top, pot, tall, doll, poll, pal, lap, ball, pat, plot, lot, dot, plod, and more others. Not only can learners pronounce words they have from their bank of vocabulary, but also they are able to produce unknown words.

## CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this paper, the researcher has found valuable information that respond to the objective which is to find a path to teach pronunciation through synthetic phonics. Within the development was primarily tackled what pronunciation involves and is. Evidently,

- Pronunciation is defined as how people say words, albeit, there are more things that are convoluted.
- Factors such as how people articulate to produce sounds and English variation that embrace dialects, accents, stress, intonation, social factors and forces, rhythm and others are essential to highlight when it comes to pronunciation.
- Phonics is well-defined as letter-sound correspondence connection in forms. Therefore, through the use synthetic phonics, ESL learners can get around to phoneme-grapheme correspondences so as to decode and blend sounds to form words.
- It is of great importance to remark some key terminology that learners must differentiate, these are graphemes, phonemes, phonemic awareness, phonology awareness, segmenting and blending that are commonly used when teaching synthetic phonics.
- Based on the brief research, the author makes an exertion to create one way to direct the teaching of pronunciation through synthetic phonics. The phonemes are divided into 6 groups whereby learners once master the phonemes of each group, they will be able to blend sounds and read English words confidently.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Authors as the well-known Rose exposed that he does not support that synthetic phonics is better applied with better results than analytic phonics, neither that the phonics can be effectively received in isolation. This means that there are some drawbacks utilizing synthetic phonics.
- The way of grouping sounds is not certainly the only form to separate them. Students' background regarding their accents, dialects and variations in language must be considered to have them classify the easiest and most difficult ones.
- Teaching pronunciation bears a great difficulty in deciding the best method to choose. Although synthetic phonics is advantageous in many ways, the orthographic consistencies makes learners hard to acquire more easily.
- Teachers must bear in mind that when introducing phonics, they ought to be careful how to sound phonics, how to blend sound phonics, differentiate related sounds and distinguish same grapheme with different sounds.
- As final recommendation, teachers have a must in finding the way out to teach pronunciation. This is not the unique way to conduct learners to acquire the ability to read and pronounce properly, yet, this might be so much of a help.

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Annex A

**/b/ SOUND**

This sound is represented  
by the letter **b**

Let's practice this sound



Examples using synthetic phonic



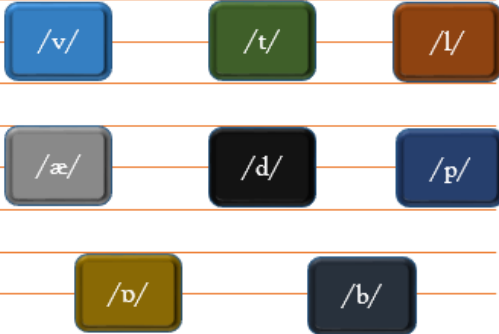
**Beginning:** bus, bed, but

**Middle:** husband, public

**Ending:** web, lab, describe

Annex B

Choose these sounds to blend  
words



TAB, BAD, PAT, TAP,  
DAB, TOP, POT, TALL,  
DOLL, POLL, PAL,  
LAP BALL, BAT, PLOT,  
LOT, DOT, PLOD,

## Annex C

### Certificado Sistema Anti Plagio

En calidad de tutora del Trabajo de Integración Curricular denominado “ **TEACHING PRONUNCIATION THROUGH SYNTHETIC PHONICS** “ elaborado por el estudiante **Lic. JULIO ANDRES ROCA PANIMBOZA** de la Carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros, de la Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación e Idiomas, de la Universidad Estatal Península de Santa Elena, me permito declarar que una vez analizado en el sistema anti plagio URKUND, luego de haber cumplido los requerimientos exigidos de valoración, el presente trabajo de investigación, se encuentra con 0% de la valoración permitida, por consiguiente se procede a emitir el informe.

Atentamente,



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Msc. Andres Rodriguez Caamaño

TUTOR