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TEACHERS' NEGATIVE AFFECTIVE AND COGNITIVE FEEDBACK ON STUDENTS' PHONOLOGICAL FOSSILIZATION

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Abstract

Phonological fossilization is recognized as a common phenomenon in foreign language acquisition. Although there are descriptions of fossilized interlanguages, some of the linguistic causes of ceased foreign language acquisition are still being researched. This paper aims to analyse and explain in detail the primary causes of fossilization in the English pronunciation and phonological fossilization of Chilean students from public schools.

Six subjects of study have been proposed for further research in this field: the interlanguage stage, the characteristics of phonological fossilization, the affective filter hypothesis, negative affective and cognitive feedback, in situ observation of an English class, and some techniques to try to overcome fossilization. Each of these subjects will be discussed in the present study. In the case of the observation of an English class, this will be accomplished in a public elementary school, with students from twelve to fifteen years old.

First, the main topic of discussion (phonological fossilization) will be introduced; second, the methodology of the research will be described (qualitative method); third, the theoretical framework will be presented and analysed; fourth, the results of the research will be discussed; and finally, there will be a general conclusion.

Introduction

The lack of approach between students and the English language in Chilean Public schools and teachers' different inadequate feedback procedures make students not learn appropriately the components of the language and even not familiarize quickly with the foreign language. Currently, the English language begins to be taught at seventh grade in Chilean public schools with aproximately four hours of clases per week. That is the reason why students will not become bilingual or even communicate effectively in English, as it was hoped by the Chilean Government plan. Likewise, the few hours of contact make difficult teachers correct all students' errors and provide feedback to each student so that they can communicate effectively. Furthermore, there are teachers who do not teach properly as it is supposed: teaching English through all language aspects.

Eeffective English learning implies students should be in contact with all the language areas (lexicon, grammar, phonology, etc.) by means of different teaching methods and as much time as possible. According to Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) the age which is preferabe for learning another language starts about five years and thereafter (p.10). In Chile, seventh grade learners are between twelve and thirteen years old. Consequently, a study carried out by Cambridge University through the 'Inglés Abre Puertas' program in 2004 proved that students of Chilean public schools have a deficient level of English fluency when they finish both elementary and high schools (Yilorm, 2007, p.2). In relation to private schools, English is first taught while students are children so that they can familiarize themselves earlier with the language because of the early contact. In addition, the main source of reference that students have is from the teacher. It will depend on

teachers' dedication if students succeed or not at the moment of learning a foreign language.

In relation to teaching mechanisms, teachers should look after students' learning procedures so that they do not stop learning or misunderstand the study object. Conversely, teachers' inadequate procedures which provoke students' unsuccessful English learning, would cause that students would learn or form erroneous ideas. In this case, it is necessary to talk about *Fossilization.* It refers to a linguistic phenomenon in which a person stops learning foreign language patterns for any number of reasons. Also, it refers to incorrect linguistic forms which become a habit of speech in a second language learner (Graham, 1981). Therefore, the main focus of study of this paper is mispronunciation, aspect concerned on the phonological area. Therefore, it is necessary to talk about phonological fossilization.

Hereunder, this paper will focus on students' phonological fossilization problem because of teachers' negative affective and cognitive feedback. Mainly, this research will be focused on establishing a connection between teachers and students' phonological fossilization through a literature review of the main topics that concern this phenomenon and class observation, in addition to determining which teaching methodologies are the most effective for overcoming fossilization of pronunciation.

Interlanguage stage

When a person decides to learn or to acquire another language (different from the native language), in this case L2 (the target language), he or she goes through a stage called *interlanguage*. The study of interlanguage consists of an analysis of the language systems present in the language spoken by L2 learners. Several names have been proposed for this, such as *interlingua* and *approximative system.* Corder (1981) refers to learners' *transitional competence* and Krashen (1981a) calls it *interlanguage talk*. Each term focuses on different aspects of the phenomenon. The first two names (*interlingua* and *approximative system*) try to explain that the language produced by the acquirer will show systematic characteristics both of the L2 and of other languages that he or she may be familiar with, most obviously of the native tongue. The *approximative system* stresses the goal-directed stage of the language spoken by the student towards the foreign language system. For the next definition, which is *interlanguage talk*, it is said that "[borrowed] the notion of "competence" from Chomsky (...) emphasizes that the learner possesses a certain body of knowledge which we hope is constantly developing, which underlies the utterances he makes" (Corder, 1981, p.67).

According to Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982), interlanguage is "a term used to refer to the speech or writing of second language learners in the second language" (p.278). In this process, the learner employs the target language in accordance with the structures already established in his or her mind.

In the same situation, the learner creates his or her own lexicon, sounds and grammatical structures which are not necessarily a combination of them or based on the

native language (L1) and the target language (L2). According to the role of the first language, the contrastive analysis (a systematic study of two languages to determine their structural differences and similarities) shows that "the first language has a far smaller effect on second language syntax than previously thought" (Dulay, Burt, Krashen, 1982, p. 5). Therefore, it is impossible for students to learn another language without establishing similarities between his or her L1 and the L2, and during the interlanguage stage learners make mistakes and errors.

Finally, Krashen (1981a) proposes that some teaching methods emphasize role-playing and problem-solving activities, in which acquirers hear a great deal of language from each other. Although it has not been established whether interlanguage talk is helpful or harmful, the input hypothesis, which explains the possibility of a learner to obtaining a great deal of comprehensible input [reading and listening, taught in a special way so that learners can understand them easily], predicts that interlanguage talk will be of some help in early stages, especially referring to the early level of the learner.

In the context of the classroom, Corder (1981) indicates that students do not often use interlanguage in the classroom for what linguists call 'normal' or 'authentic' communicative purposes [in order to learn, students have to make mistakes and errors. If not, they do not have the possibility to check their progress in learning]. The author also makes the following contribution:

> Interlanguages [,] as they develop, *particularly in the unstructured learning situation*, do bear resemblances to each other and that where variability exists, ... it can be satisfactorily accounted for by appeal to particular features of the learning situation or the nature of the learner, as can the variability found in the language of infants acquiring their mother tongue. (Corder, 1981, p.71)

From the explanation given by Corder (1981), it can be said that the phonetic and

phonological systems of the language of the learner undergo several changes in the interlanguage period, such as learning situation or context, sound systems, and grammar patterns, among others.

The study of errors made by students in the interlanguage process is analysed by a hypothesis on the procedure of language learning. This proposes that the acquirer creates a schema of the structure of the target language for him or herself to learn, based on the interaction with the data to which he or she is exposed. The hypothesis consists mainly of a study of the utterances made by the learner in the foreign language when communicating with teachers. One aspect that this hypothesis points out is that the acquirer will continue to elaborate the utterances only if there is a motive to do so. When the student has achieved a determined purpose, then the motive to keep on studying or getting more knowledge disappears, thus leading to fossilization, "where the learner's interlanguage ceases to develop however long he remains exposed to authentic data in the target language" (Corder, 1981, p.74).

When taking into account the interlanguage hypothesis, it is necessary to remember that the original term for interlanguage, proposed by Selinker in 1969 and elaborated in 1972, refers to "a separate linguistic system whose existence we are compelled to hypothesize, based upon the observed output which results from the (second language) learner's attempted production of a target language norm" (qtd in Corder, 1981, p.87). This statement allows us to deduce that during the process of acquiring a foreign language, one is likely to have some sort of grammatical and/or phonetic problems that may be and in some cases permanent difficult to correct or to solve.

By continuing the ideas proposed by Selinker, it is said that the interlanguage continuum is a *restructuring* of the system of the acquirer from the native language to the

foreign *at the same level of complexity*. On one hand, the learner is adapting his or her foreign language based on his or her mother tongue and, on the other hand, the learner is making a parallel between the target language and the context in which the acquirer learns the L2, which can lead in any case to some kind of fossilization due to the fact that the student—as explained previously—compares and combines structures of the L1 and the L2. A common example in Chilean high school students who are in the process of English acquisition is their tendency to say 'people **is**' instead of the correct form 'people **are**', and some pronunciation problems such as pronouncing the word 'teacher' as 't-shirt.' In the same way, the oral performance of some teachers has a similar retardation, and adaptation of their interlanguage to their communicative tasks (Dickerson, 1975, Ervin-Tripp, 1974, qtd in Corder, 1981, p.91). In consequence, if some teachers have this kind of retardation, fossilization of their students' performance will be inminent in some period of time in the interlanguage stage.

Phonological fossilization

Through years, fossilization has been assigned different meanings by the main linguists who have tried to find out the most suitable connotation to this phenomenon. In accordance with this document, this phenomenon will be studied by summarizing the linguists' definitions and then analyzing the phonological aspect. Regarding this feature as the most important in this case, phonological fossilization will be examined in accordance with its characteristics, Chilean setting and possible solutions.

Among the principal authors' definitions, Graham (1981) points out that fossilization is the relatively permanent incorporation of incorrect linguistic forms into an acquirer's foreign language competence (p.10). Moreover, Krashen (1985) argues that fossilization refers to when learners, "stop short of the native speaker level of performance in their second language" (p.43). With respect to fossilization in the interlanguage period, Selinker (1972) mentions that it occurs when progress in the acquisition of the target language is arrested, despite all reasonable attempts at learning (p.32). At this point, this phenomenon takes place when the foreign language learning is intervened by the appliance of the native language structures.

In relation to phonological fossilization, it refers to one normally uses the terms of "problems" or "difficulties." It has already been recognized that pronunciation is a very difficult domain for a foreign language learner to acquire. This is due to the fact that "each language has its characteristic and interrelated mouth positions" (Rivers, 1968 p. 114). From this point of view, the problems or difficulties are related to the absence of features that do not have equivalents in the native language. Besides, the use of the native language phonological structures makes students learn the phonological structures of the target language by using those of their native language. According to Dulay, Burt, and Krashen,

(1982) "the learner makes extensive use of the first language phonological structures as a communicative strategy in the early stages of L2 acquisition" (p.112). For instance, Spanish speakers have difficulties with intonation, vowels and consonants in English. In the case of intonation, Spanish speakers transfer their own intonation patterns into English. An illustration of this is that one normally uses a rising intonation for every kind of question in Spanish. On the other hand, English has a different intonation pattern for Wh-questions (falling intonation) and for Yes-No questions (rising intonation). Clearly, this will cause students to have a substructure of native language sounds. In the case that one student would be talking to a native speaker of the L2, the use of the student`s native phonological structures can lead to a misunderstanding on the part of the receiver, because he or she will realize that the student has changed and modified certain patterns that do not correspond to the target language even though the message is understood.

Regarding Lenneberg`s physiological explanation, it points out that after puberty, accurate target language pronunciation becomes difficult due to brain maturation, and "puberty is the time when foreign accents emerge" (qtd in Dulay, Burt, Krashen, 1982, p.87). He emphasizes that there is a critical age in which language can be acquired accurately. This means that native-like pronunciation is difficult to learn and command successfully after puberty. Likewise, "children appear to be much more successful than adults in acquiring the phonological system of the new language; many eventually attain native-like pronunciation" (Dulay, Burt, Krashen, 1982, p. 94). Therefore, the importance of successfully teaching and learningof phonology depends on students being exposed earlier to the foreign language.

In addition, this specific phenomenon is also related to learners' errors and not mistakes. In this aspect, it is necessary to clarify in what context both of these concepts take

place. First, "errors are the flawed side of learner speech […]. They are those parts of conversation or composition that deviate from some selected norm of nature language performance [of which the student is not principally aware]" (Dulay, Burt, Krashen, 1982, p.138). Second, mistakes mainly refer to when students fail at one moment and then they realize and correct their faults.

Furthermore and with respect to correction procedures, Krashen's hypothesis (1982) refers to the fact that errors should be corrected by students "only when they [feel and want to correct their errors] and when such diversion of attention does not interfere with communication" (p. 117). Thus, students will not feel frustrated and embarrassed about their errors, but rather they will want to correct them on their own.

Conversely, Hendrickson (1987) points out that teachers are responsible for creating a supportative classroom so that students can feel comfortable, and thus their errors can be corrected without being ridiculed in front of the rest of the class. In accordance with Krashen, Hendrickson is also convinced that errors should be corrected only when they interfere with communication and when they are produced frequently. Finally, he believes that group correction or "self correction with teacher guidance" may be more meaningful for students and teachers (p. 66). Likewise, students' unconscious (errors) and conscious (mistakes) performances are developed in the classroom during language acquisition.

In consequence, if English teachers want students to succeed in learning the structure of another language and avoid phonological fossilization, they should teach all language components concerned with that language. As a general definition, "language components include phonology (pronunciation), syntax and morphology (grammar), semantics and lexicon (meaning and vocabulary), and discourse (style)" (Dulay, Burt, Krashen, 1982 p.146). Naturally, these four aspects should be taught simultaneously.

According to the Chilean reality, speaking skills and pronunciation are regarded as less important in the educational system, specifically in public schools. Moreover, the only comprehensible input which students have comes from the teacher, who in Chilean public schools is principally a non-native speaker who does not typically have an accurate command of language patterns. For example, as student teachers, we realized that the teacher in charge of an eight grade class was fossilized in English pronunciation (see p. 32). In addition, the majority of teachers prefer to teach grammar and topics that are easier to assess. Also, the output skill most often evaluated is writing. In this case, teachers carry out the class with written activities and tests, because they can be assessed at any time, such as after classes, or teachers' homes. Conversely, if teachers would assess students' oral skills, they would take so much time evaluating them one by one. For instance, if a class is composed of 45 students and the teacher wants to evaluate a dialogue between 2 students, he or she will probably need 2 or 3 class periods, assuming that a class lasts 1 hour and 45 minutes. In this situation, most teachers would decide to teach topics that do not take so much time in order to achieve their objectives. Additionally, for students, it is difficult to practice and master the speaking skill accurately because English and Spanish do not have identical sound systems. It is established that people learn a foreign language more easily when the structure of what is being learned has a native language equivalent. In this case, as English and Spanish languages are different, students should be exposed more time to the foreign language patterns in order to learn and practice them. Because, "it is not enough for our students to learn words, phrases, grammatical features, if they will not be able to produce these in a way which makes their utterance comprehensible to a native speaker of the language" (Rivers, 1968 p. 112). Consequently, if the students would have few or no

chances to reproduce foreign utterances, they would be more likely to develop phonological fossilization.

All things considered, phonological fossilization is a problem that has different characteristics and is present at the Chilean reality in which there are many situations that make students prone to develop this phenomenon. First, as the pronunciation skill is rarely taught in most Chilean public schools, it makes it difficult for students to practice all of the language components, orally which are mostly learned through the writing skill. Second, as students have only 2 classes per week currently in public schools, most of teachers' syllable consists of teaching units that are easy to assess, and preferably through the writing skill. Third, and according to a physiological explanation, students' age makes difficult the learners' possibility to acquire and assimilate the foreign language components easily due to brain maturation. And as a last point, the difference between both Spanish and English languages patterns makes students learn the foreign language in terms of their mother tongue.

Students' affective filter role in foreign language acquisition

The hypothesis concerning the affective filter, according to Krashen (1981), is a filter that regulates the general conditions—context, level of affectiveness, etc.—in which the students acquire knowledge, and it must be low for the students to learn appropriately. The theory also explains how the affective elements (encouragement, enthusiasm, and tranquility, among others) influence the process of acquiring both the mother tongue and the foreign language. This concept was proposed by Dulay and Burt (1977), and it is congruent with the theoretical work done in the field of affective factors and foreign language acquisition. This last idea, concerning the field of affective factors and foreign language acquisition, has been reviewed by Krashen (1981), and it is proposed that the affective filter can be made up of three main elements: motivation, self-confidence and anxiety.

In the same way, the hypothesis concerning the affective filter focuses on the relationship between affective variables and the process of acquiring a foreign language by suggesting that learners vary with respect to the strength or level of their affective filters. Concerning this point, there is an important situation that must be considered: if there are people who are not yet prepared for foreign language acquisition, they will not only prefer to have less input over all, but they will also have higher or stronger affective filters; even if they are able to understand the message, the input will not reach the specific part of the brain responsible for language acquisition [the left hemisphere of the brain is specialized in language acquisition due to its capacity for language analysis]. On the other hand, people who are more conducive to foreign language acquisition will be more open to the input, and it will strike 'deeper' (Stevick, 1976). Krashen (1985) proposes that:

> Comprehensible input is necessary for acquisition, but it is not sufficient. The acquirer needs to be 'open' to the input. The 'affective filter' is a mental block that prevents acquirers from fully utilizing the comprehensible input they receive for language acquisition (Krashen, 1985, p. 4).

This hypothesis explains how it is possible for a learner to come into contact with a great deal of comprehensible input, and still stop short of the level of the native speaker, fossilizing in the language acquisition process (Selinker, 1972).

Fig. 3. Operation of the 'affective filter' (adapted from Chomsky, 1964a; Dulay and Burt, 1977b, qtd in Krashen, 1981, p.110).

The affective filter hypothesis (Fig. 3) indicates that *input* is the main causative variable, meaning that it causes a lowering of the affective filter—only if the input is comprehensible—in the process of acquiring a foreign language. The hypothesis concerning the affective filter implies that pedagogical outcomes and purposes should not only include comprehensible input, but also contribute to forming an atmosphere that encourages a low filter. The teacher who is effective at teaching languages is someone who can provide input and help to make it easy to understand in a low-anxiety context.

The phrase 'on the defensive' comes from Stevick's well-known book *Memory, Meaning, and Method* (Krashen, 1982). The book discusses the importance of keeping the affective filter 'low', making sure that the student is open to input. First of all, if teachers concentrate on giving comprehensible input, focusing on the message and not on the form, this will contribute to a lower filter (Krashen, 1982). If the topic of the class activity is

interesting and understandable, much of the 'pressure' normally associated with a foreign language class will disappear, anxiety will be diminished, and acquisition is more likely to be successfully carried out. Second, teachers will be able to keep the filter low by not insisting on accurate production too early in the acquisition process. Closely related to readiness for accurate production is the question of errors and error correction. According to Krashen et al. (1978), "a sure method of raising the filter is attempting to correct errors, especially in beginning stages and especially in spoken language!" (qtd in Krashen, 1985, p.74). Considering this statement, what is probably the most serious problem in error correction is the effect that it has on the affective filter. Error correction can be positive if well handled to improve the foreign language learning process, and according to the theory of the affective filter, people acquire language by means of comprehensible input. Krashen et al. (1978) indicates that "improvement will come without error correction, and may even come more rapidly, since the input will 'get in', the filter will be lower, and students will be off the defensive" (qtd in Krashen, 1985, p.76). As it has been said before, the theory related to the affective filter shows that one way to encourage and maintain a low filter is through comprehensible input and an analysis of the main teaching methods for how much they influence foreign language acquisition in students.

In the Grammar-Translation Method, the native language is the base used to explain the rules of the target language through translation from L1 into L2. This method does not allow for the employment of every component of the input hypothesis, in other words, it only focuses on repetition and especially emphasizes writing skills (Krashen, 1982, p.129). Anxiety levels are also raised by some students who are less inclined towards grammar study, as reported by Rivers (1968).

The Audio-Lingual Method is another teaching technique that violates several aspects of the input hypothesis. Students are supposed to answer immediately and without making errors. Excessive use of drills and oral repetition does not allow the students to practice written exercises in early stages, which may cause anxiety and grammatical fossilization, as the students will tend to use the mother tongue patterns to speak in the foreign language. In relation to error correction of all output—writing and speaking—students are expected to speak in the L2 as if it were their native tongue. This issue predicts a high filter for many learners, due to the constant emphasis on grammatical accuracy at very early stages, bad use of error correction, and the fact that the grammatical elements of the class activities may cause anxiety and a high filter for most of the students (Krashen, 1982, p.131).

Focusing on the Natural Approach, it is crucial to mention that this method attempts to remain 'true' to the input hypothesis, and therefore many aspects of anxiety are diminished or eliminated. Students are free to use their native language, error correction is carried out through modelling and special strategies, and topics that are interesting for learners are used as the foundation for instruction. This predicts a lower filter than in most other methods (Krashen, 1982, p. 139).

Total Physical Response (TPR) is very effective in lowering anxiety in students: they are not asked to speak in the L2 until they feel that they are ready to do so. It has been suggested, however, that the necessity of producing physical responses right away can cause anxiety in some learners (Krashen, 1982, pp. 141-142).

The final method to be examined is Suggestopedia, the main purpose of which is to make students relax and become self-confident, and to reduce anxiety. The design of the classroom is meant to produce "a pleasant and warm environment" (Public Service

Commission, 1975, p.29). Another of Suggestopedia's aims for lowering the filter is the teacher's behavior. This method appreciates the teacher's knowledge as "an integral part of the method and not just a desirable characteristic of the teacher" (Stevick, 1980, p. 238). The teacher should be confident so that students build confidence in their capacity to acquire the foreign language and also to take initiative (Krashen, 1982, p. 144).

To summarize these points, it is worth mentioning that subject matter teaching may invoke, and in fact require, a minimum amount of anxiety. Subject matter teachers, those who only base the class on books or strictly on the existing educational programs, can keep the filter relatively low by making the message clear, by not asking for early production, and by not demanding complete grammatical accuracy from learners. Supon (2004) identifies and adds important factors that may help students in achieving high levels of performance and success while diminishing negative and anxious perceptions that inhibit confidence, and in this way, it is possible to balance cognitive and affective processing (processes related to general knowledge and brain working, and the environment or atmosphere of the classroom, respectively) for an optimal learning process, including determination of test anxiety, formative factors, prudence, purposeful learning experiences, and knowledge guidelines.

In addition to the affective filter, there is another kind of filter known as the output filter. It is a device that attempts to explain the reason why speakers of a foreign language do not always perform up to their communicative competences. These learners or speakers seem to be fossilized, but indeed they have acquired more grammatical rules than they commonly perform. This kind of filter is very different from the input, or affective filter. While the affective filter prevents input from reaching the Language Acquisition Device

(LAD), a part or "organ" of the brain that functions as a congenital device for learning symbolic language, the output filter prevents acquired rules from being used in performance (Krashen, 1985, p. 3). The output filter can explain some cases in which learners do not communicate appropriately in the foreign language despite having the competence to do so. In each case, there has been real acquisition, but affective factors do not allow speakers to show this competence. A possibly useful, although not sufficient, requirement for performing up to communicative competence by lowering the output filter is a focus on meaning and a lowering of anxiety. This leads to the hypothesis that the aspects responsible for the establishment and maintenance of the output filter are the same responsible for the input or affective filter.

As pointed out by Krashen (1985), the affective filter is of variable strength and can be lowered to some extent. However, there is a possibility that the acquisition of imperfect forms of language is permanent, and it is not known whether there is hope or not of solving this problem. One possibility is that there could be a way 'around' instead of a way 'out'. While the learner of the foreign language may not be able to forget knowledge previously acquired, he or she may be able to acquire a new language, in the form of a new 'dialect' or type derived from the target language. This theory predicts that the context and conditions required for such new acquisition include comprehensible input and low affective (input) and output filters.

Swain (1983) proposes a version of the output hypothesis based on evidence from immersion. The author notes that children who have undergone immersion (these children have intensively been taught output skills, especially speaking) still have problems in communicating, particularly in grammatical competence, even after receiving for thousand hours of comprehensible input, as compared to native speakers. Swain therefore deduces

that comprehensible input, while necessary, is not sufficient for full development of language. According to her results, input must be supplemented by output reinforcement, which is, in general, lacking in the immersion context. This reinforcement of speaking and writing, respectively, might provoke further foreign language development in one of two ways: either by adding to the learner's hypothesis-testing by providing negative input or feedback, or by encouraging the learner to analyze input in a more syntactic manner. Swain, quoting Krashen (1982a), adds that it is possible to understand input without appealing to syntactic competence, by means of the use of perceptual strategies, situations, and the connotation of individual words. Output reinforcement can encourage a more syntactic approach to input.

To conclude this information about the role of affective filters in foreign language acquirers, it is needed to indicate that the most important contribution of this topic is to show efficient ways to avoid fossilization through a low-anxiety context, comprehensible input, a good use of error correction, and the use of teaching methods that maintain the affective filters low. Remembering that a high affective filter is a mental block that impedes a learner from acquiring the foreign language accurately, a good and effective teacher should, in this case, provide input and should help to make it easy to understand in an appropriate environment.

Feedback

In the teaching context in general, according to Ur (1996), feedback is information that is given to the students about their performance of a learning task, commonly with the purpose to improve their abilities. Feedback has two main aspects: assessment and correction. In assessment, the student is simply informed of how well or poorly he or she has carried out the performance. In correction, some specific information is provided on aspects of the performance done by the student. It is important to indicate that correction should include information on what the student did **right**, and **why**—but both teachers and students usually understand the meaning of correction as referring to improving mistakes, which is how it is commonly used in the Chilean educational system.

Considering the relationship between assessment and correction, it is possible to carry out an assessment without correcting its content; on the other hand, it is not feasible to comment on the correctness of what a student has done without making some kind of assessment. Ur (1996) points out that "teachers are sometimes urged to be 'non-judgemental' when giving feedback; in my opinion this is unrealistic. Any meaningful feedback is going to involve some kind of judgement" (p.242). To complete the author's idea, it is essential to add that teachers must be very careful when giving feedback involving judgement, because some students could feel forced to learn [they could be afraid of being corrected by the teacher], and this situation leads imminently to some kind of fossilization, as fossilization is also a result of psychological pressure. With respect to the use of positive feedback [a mechanism by which output is enhanced], Ur (1996) indicates that "it is true that positive feedback tends to encourage, but this can be overstated... Negative feedback [generally associated with bad error correction], if given supportively and warmly, will be recognized as constructive and will not necessarily discourage"

(p.257).

In addition, by appreciating the relevance of feedback coming from the listener (facial expressions, intonation, tension, interruptions), it is good to mention that this kind of feedback indicates or demonstrates the meaning of the information the student is understanding. Therefore, it is possible to adapt the message emited by the student in mid-utterance, which, according to Rivers (1968), is the way in which "we may change the form of the basic framework; we may expand, omit sections, repeat, emphasize or modify" (p.191). Both teachers and learners can become aware of this situation in the context of the classroom. When someone is speaking, the audience may take notes or simply listen to the speaker attentively. Then, when he or she finishes speaking, others can, if possible, give some kind of feedback, such as written suggestions or orally corrected expressions that could have been misunderstood at first. Thus, if efficiently and respectfully carried out, the speaker can improve his or her communicative skills (especially speaking and listening) and avoid fossilization.

In another situation, Vigil and Ollen claim that there are two kinds of information transmitted between students and foreign language speakers: information about the **affective** relationship between student and audience and **cognitive** information (qtd in Graham, 1981, p.7). Feedback in this case can be positive, neutral or negative (see table 2). The most common types and features of corrective feedback are recast (repetitions, explanations, etc.), clarification requests, and confirmation checks (Chaudron, 1977, 1988, qtd in Drever, n.d.). The acquirer can receive several combined types of feedback with different results. For instance, if he or she receives negative affective feedback, he or she may very well stop trying to communicate in L2, because there is a lack of stimuli on behalf of the teacher to keep on studying the foreign language. On the other hand, if the

learner receives positive affective feedback and positive cognitive feedback on a message, he or she can reinforce his or her linguistic forms (either oral or written). If a student receives positive affective feedback (maintaining the affective filter low), but neutral or negative cognitive feedback (error correction, for example), he or she knows that the message is incorrect, and therefore the student will try again, forming a different hypothesis about the rule. It is understood that reinforcement of unclear forms by the teacher leads to fossilization, and in this situation corrective feedback is compulsory if the student is going to improve his or her communicative skills. Vigil and Ollen add that "frequent instances of negative cognitive feedback...are probably essential to a high level of attainment on the part of the learners" (qtd in Graham, 1981, p. 17). In the same way, Graham (1981, p.19) proposes the following table as a way of making examples that simplify different types of feedback:

TABLE 2

DIFFERENT TYPES OF FEEDBACK

<u>Affective Feedback</u>

Positive: "I like it" (more of the same).

Neutral: "Waiting..." (reaction undecided).

Negative: "I don't like it" (try something else).

<u>Cognitive Feedback</u>

Positive: "I understand" (message and direction are clear).

Neutral: "Still processing..." (undecided).

Negative: "I don't understand" (message and/or direction are not clear).

In conclusion, feedback is, in general terms, infomation given as a way to help students improve their learning tasks. As part of feedback, correction should include information about the good aspects of the student's performance and reasons for that correction, not only negative aspects as usually done in the Chilean setting. Regarding Table 2 (Graham, 1981, p.19), it can be indicated that both positive and negative cognitive feedback are good, if correctly carried out, at correcting errors, because they may be considered a constructive way to improve students' performance in the target language.

Teachers' negative affective and cognitive feedback on students' phonological

fossilization

Assisting in target language acquisition is a challenging job that every English teacher has to confront daily when giving feedback. In addition, he or she is the only person responsible for helping students avoid this process of fossilization and its factors, such as motivation, anxiety, affective filter, etc. However, there are also circumstances in which teachers provide negative affective and cognitive feedback that could directly influence the successful or unsuccessful acquisition of L2 through feedback. Hereunder, several situations will be the object of study and categorization according to the teacher's negative affective and cognitive feedback. According to many authors, negative affective feedback refers to a side effect of a teacher's lack of importance of having a positive attitude towards students and teacher's lack of dedication and expectation of students' output skills, specifically with speaking. On the other hand, negative cognitive feedback in the Chilean public school is often a result of the teacher's lack of an accurate command of English, the exaggerated use of Spanish (L1), and pressure on the teacher to perform.

In one context, the first situation related to teachers' negative affective feedback is the lack of a positive attitude, which does not motivate students to work in class. Naturally, this can influence students' motivation from the very beginning of the school year, as a positive attitude is an important step to facilitating education, even on the first day of class (Sanhueza, 2003, p. 25). Furthermore, the teacher's constant and continual positive attitude helps themselves understand and discipline students' behaviors and attitudes towards the English language. Teachers should explain and talk to their students through a friendly way about the importance of learning English and the advantageous meaning of achieving every class work's objective in all the circumstances as possible without becoming a clown

necessarily. "Teachers, therefore, need to be patient, understanding and respectful of […] particular learning places" (Yilorm, 2007, p. 15).

In addition, the second context is the lack of dedication, which is also associated to the previous characteristic explained above, but with the difference that the teacher does not seem to be aware of students' accurate language learning. As a consequence, this situation leads students to make errors or fossilize. For instance, teachers' lack of dedication refers to when the teacher explains a theme without letting students dispel their doubts, because he or she organizes classes in which only the teacher talks.

Next, the third circumstance is teachers' lack of expectation about students' skills that is related to when he or she considers students unable to perform certain activities or acquire certain language patterns. Sanhueza (2003) establishes that teachers' expectations and teaching methods determine students' results according to students' quantity and quality of knowledge (p. 25). From this point of view, one can see two kinds of teachers in a classroom: one who has high expectations and the other who does not. Preferably, the teacher with a lack of expectations for on students' skills achievement considers almost impossible to teach "something" if an inconvenient thing exits. Regarding a teacher who has great interest in students' speaking skill development, he or she will cope with inconvenient situations successfully. The high expectation refers to when the teacher performs the class at any rate by using or adopting another way to achieve his or her objective, with the conviction that students will be able to perform the class and develop other skills at the same time. For instance, dealing with an inconvenient situation means when the teacher needs a video tape and a television to do an exercise, but the person who is in charge of these things has not arrived yet or they do not work. However, the teacher performs the class by reading the text in front of the class together with body movements.

That way, he or she will still work on listening comprehension at any rate, and students will achieve the class' objective anyway.

Teachers' lack of expectations about students indisputably leads to focus on the development of certain skills by using certain skills only, specifically on input. Additionally, this guides the use of certain methods due to the fact that the teacher considers that there are only certain methods suitable to teach. Moreover, these restrict the development of output skills, specifically speaking, and increase the development of phonological fossilization problems. These methods are Grammar-Translation and Audio-Lingual.

In relation to the first method, students are taught grammar structures through texts which have to be translated afterwards. Additionally, "students are expected to be able to produce immediately, and are expected to be fully accurate (although in writing, and not usually in speaking)" (Krashen, 1982, p. 129). Moreover, teachers show lack of expectations of students` skills when they "strongly believe students must be well-equipped with grammar structures and lexicon in order to be able to produce" in each activity (Yilorm, 2007, p. 17). Next, the Audio-Lingual method is mostly focused on listening and speaking development. Although this method develops the speaking skill, it causes phonological fossilization, because "production is expected immediately and is expected to be error-free" (Krashen, 1982, p. 131). However, the speaking development is related to when students repeat something after the teacher, with normally pronunciation errors because students use their native phonetic sounds. Indeed, the suitable use of these methods will depend on the teacher's objective, but the overuse of them would lead teachers to create an atmosphere of lack of expectations towards students' skills and develop phonological fossilization.

On the other hand, the first situation related to teacher's negative cognitive feedback in the Chilean public school classroom is teachers' lack of an accurate command of English. Undeniably, teachers' mispronunciation causes students to fossilize. Similarly, in the Chilean classrooms a non-native-speaker teacher does not typically pronounce well. In accordance with Sheehan [1] (2004), "there are over 1500 teachers operating at these grades who posses neither appropriate levels of English nor appropriate ELT [English Language Teaching] methodologies" (p.1) (qtd. in Yilorm, 2007, pp. 14-15). At the same time, errors are also acquired and produced by students in the learning process (Krashen, 1985, p. 47). There is a greater possibility that they will make errors without being corrected. This usually happens because students see teachers as knowledgeable people who do not make errors, and should be modeled. Moreover, teachers do not want to admit when they make errors, because it can be seen as a sign of weakness.

Regarding the second situation, the exaggerated use of Spanish (in this situation, L1), teachers mostly use the mother language when they see their students confused, stressed or when they do not understand the topic. In this way, there are teachers who prefer to use L1 in order to achieve their class objectives. However, this situation leads students to acquire a L2 correctly. From a linguistic point of view, these students will learn English in accordance with what they can understand in Spanish, and consequently fossilization will emerge because students will learn the target language in terms of the native language. For instance, the word "sensible" exits in both English and Spanish, but it has different meanings in both languages. In this case, a Spanish first language learner can infer that the word "sensible" can mean "sensitive" in English, and the word "sensible" means "wise"

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[1] "The expert who contributed to analyze the Chilean EFL context in the Public educational sector" (Yilorm, 2007, p. 16)

conversely. In relation to this issue, Krashen (1982) points out that "even if an L1 rule is similar to an actual L2 rule or transitional form, it is not clear that these rules will help the acquisition progress" (p. 28). From the beginning, this can enhance comprehension and input, but not accurate acquisition. When students realize that the two rules are the same, these are better assimilated, because students know that there is an equivalent in Spanish. However, the application of L2 rules is different and errors can be made.

Finally, the last situation related to teachers' negative cognitive feedback is teachers' pressure to perform. When students are pressured into performing and they have not received enough knowledge, they show their psychological factors (affective filter) in the silent period. For instance, this situation leads students to use L1 rules and not trust in themselves and their skills in the use of the L2 rules. In terms of the input hypothesis, the silent period corresponds to when "the child is building up competence in the second language via listening, by understanding the language around him" (Krashen, 1982, p. 27). This period is essential for students to be prepared before they start speaking. Speaking begins by itself when students have received sufficient input.

All things considered, it will depend on the teacher if students succed or not in the foreign language patterns learning. In the case of failure to use L2 appropriately, the teacher provides feedback in one of two ways. First, negative affective feedback involves the teacher's lack of an optimistic approach to students, because he or she is not always respectful and patient to their errors and concerns. In addition, the teacher's lack of dedication refers to the indifference towards students' performance and learning. Thus, teachers' lack of expectation points out when the instructor considers students unable to learn specific language patterns and when teachers strictly follow the syllabus by using

certain methods, such as Grammar-Translation and Audio-Lingual without coping with inconvenient situations.

Second, negative cognitive feedback refers to the teacher's lack of an accurate command of English, which indisputably causes students to fossilize in the speaking skill specifically. In this case, errors will be acquired without being corrected. Another situation is the overstated utilization of the Spanish language (L1) because the teacher wants to achieve the objectives quickly. Consequently, this leads students to learn the foreign language in term of the mother tongue by using written and oral structures that do not correspond to the foreign language. Finally, the teacher's pressure on the students to perform is related to when he or she asks students to give an immediate answer. Students, specifically, demonstrate their emotional features in response to teachers' pressure when they prepare their competence quietly in the silent period in order to reply.

An example of a fossilized English class

In general terms, one can stipulate that phonological fossilization is related, in some cases, to the use of the L1 sound system and intonation, as is the case of the present section. According to our experiences as student teachers, phonological fossilization has been the most noticeable aspect in the classroom. Initially, a public school class was observed for three months and the problem of fossilization was constantly present. One of the illustrations of this kind of fossilization came from the guide teacher, who is 58 years old. She had several problems in pronunciation, as well as in writing. In the majority of the classes, she usually mispronounced—both in Spanish and in English—the most important words within a context. The fundamental words were related to lessons, classwork, and instructions. For instance, when referring to students, she pronounced the Spanish word "chicos" with the English sound /ʃ/, which does not exist in Spanish. In the case of instructions, the teacher said "open your /jua:/ books" instead of /jo:/. When giving feedback, this word itself was pronounced /fibak/ by her with a Spanish intonation, instead of /fiːd.bæk/. Another incorrect word was "which", that was mispronounced /wiʃ/. In consequence, as students had a very poor knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, they could not recognize or differentiate wrongly pronounced words from correct pronunciation in English.

When reading aloud, she also mispronounced words. For instance, the teacher used some vocabulary words in her lessons, such as "bedroom," "yesterday," and "garden," among others. In the first case, she gave the intonation /berum/ for the word /bedrum/. The word "yesterday" was pronounced /jehterðei/ instead of /jestədei /. Finally, the word "garden" was articulated /garðen/ instead of /gaːdn/. As it can be seen, the teacher had a

strong phonological fossilization, which would make it impossible for students to learn the words accurately. In addition, this carries out severe consequences due to the fact that students tend to produce the same utterances at the moment of asking questions and giving answers.

Another type of fossilization seen in the class is related to writing, particularly with vocabulary and grammar. In this situation, she wrote "Wright Leg" instead of "Right Leg" in one of her authentic materials of a human body drawing. Another example was a word related to grammar patterns. She wrote on the board "The computer consist of" instead of "The computer consists of". An additional event was observed when the teacher wrote on the board "The cricket not eating" without using the verb "to be" to say "The cricket is not eating."

Following the same ideas, a teacher can lead students to fossilize due to the assessment process, even in writing. For example, the teacher designed a test with errors in the instructions in an exercise. She wrote "1) Mentions the number of each paragraph" and it should have said "1) Mention the number of each paragraph", because the instruction was a command. In an exercise that was a puzzle, students were asked to find 25 words in which the word "impossible" was implied, but it was written with one "s," as in the Spanish word "imposible."

At this point, it can be seen that the teacher uses many fossilized words, which has had severe consequences on the students' performance. In output activities, students tend to make noticeable errors, especially in speaking. In one of the observed classes, there was evidence that two students had very poor knowledge of English. First, neither of them knew what a pronoun was, nor Spanish neither in English. Second, they, and many of their classmates, mispronounced the pronouns in English by using Spanish phonetics and

intonation. In this case, the teacher did not correct their errors. Within their errors, mispronunciation of some sounds could be found, such as /e/, /i/, /ʃ/, /h/, /Ө/ and /j/. In this situation, the letters e, i, h and y were pronounced in Spanish, as /e/, /i/, /j/ and /dʒ/, respectively. Moreover, the combination of the letters sh and th were also pronounced in Spanish, as /tʃ/ and /t/, correspondingly.

To conclude this point, one can realize that the influence of the first language's sounds and intonation can be one of the problems at the moment of learning and using the foreign language's structure. Therefore, the general and appropriate instructions given by the teacher, whatever the method may be, are essential for the students to study the target language appropriately.

Methods and techniques to overcome fossilization in the classroom

One of the first issues that must be taken into account when trying to overcome fossilization in the classroom is that there is not just one method for teaching languages. The teacher has to adapt his or her methods and techniques according to several elements, such as the age of the students, the goals of the class, the material available for activities, etc. In the case of oral skills reinforcement or pronunciation classes, the teacher should have a special and effective way to show the students the symbols and their corresponding sounds, together with recordings of native speakers, spelling exercises and modulation techniques, among others. Moreover, the main objectives will be to establish the most important tips to solve the phonological fossilization problem that at present is not in line with the goals of the Chilean educational system for its students to become bilingual, and its emphasis on the relevance of teaching pronunciation through communicative activities and their corresponding methodologies. This proposal is based on Harold B. Allen (1965) and Rodney Jones' (1997) suggestions and the methodologies of Julie Hebert (1993), H.G. Widdowson (1978), and Williams Littlewood (1981). The purpose of this paper recommends teaching pronunciation from a beginning level in the curriculum as a means of solving phonological fossilization problems in the classroom through methodologies.

In relation to methodologies, Allen (1965) proposed that "there is plenty of evidence to show that the teacher needs not be a native speaker of x [to overcome fossilization], but she [or he] must be able to use it fluently and correctly" (p.13). In addition to this last idea, it is necessary to indicate that there must be a concentration on speech and its related parts of the input and output skills (hearing and speaking, respectively), and that this has to precede reading and writing. The main reason for this is that "older children or adults are to some extent learning intellectually as well as imitatively the interval between the oral and

visual forms" (Allen,1965, p.14). On the other hand, teaching pronunciation to younger students will depend most heavily on imitation, allowing them to accurately reproduce the foreign sounds they hear.

When teaching pronunciation, the teacher must keep in mind that the mistakes made by the students are based on their habits of thinking and pronouncing the words in their native language. Also, the vocal tract of a learner is adjusted to his or her native language sounds and modulation and, therefore, it could be difficult for him or her to adapt the vocal tract to new sounds. According to Allen (1965) "the teacher must, for this purpose, be able to identify the physiological terms and the particular muscular activity which will be needed to produce the correct foreign sound" (p. 104).

There is another very relevant point in teaching pronunciation that has to be taken into consideration. This is the change that some words can undergo in their meaning:

> Whenever we observe that it makes no real difference whether a word is pronounced in this way or that, when, in other words, we can substitute this pronunciation for that other without disturbing the meaning, we conclude that the features of difference are unimportant, because not significant or meaningful. But when we note that, for instance, in English *neat* cannot be substituted for *knit* without changing the meaning, we conclude that the difference between these two items is significant. Further, since only the vowel element permits us to identify the vowel of *neat* as distinct (significantly different) from the vowel of *knit* (Allen, 1965, pp. 106-107).

In conclusion to this point, it is essential for a teacher to be very careful in correcting mistakes, specifically phonological, so that the learners may avoid being misunderstood or becoming fossilized.

As fossilization regards pronunciation in this case, Jones (1997) points out that communication and pronunciation can effectively improve students' motivation and make it easier to understand the message, but teaching pronunciation makes the message more effective in communication than communication taught alone (p. 183). In the same way,

Pennington (1996) argues that "a language learner needs to attend to not only the strictly mechanical, articulatory aspects of pronunciation, but also to the meaningful correlates of those articulatory features…as well as the larger context of human communication" (qtd. in Jones, 1997, p.183). Therefore, so that students can communicate appropriately in English, it is necessary to teach phonology simultaneously with all the language patterns, such as grammar, lexicon, morphology, and semantics.

Particularly, the problem of phonological fossilization in Chilean public classrooms is due to the lack of implementation of accurate speech activities that emphasize how to say something correctly rather than what to say. Additionally, the lack of consideration for teaching pronunciation in speaking activities, the mispronunciation of words that come from the teacher as well as from students and the lack of opportunities that students have in order to practice their skills are some of the causes of this problem. For these reasons, and in accordance with Littlewood (1981):

> The most efficient communicator in a foreign language is not always the person who is best at manipulating its structures. It is often the person who is most skilled at processing the complete situation involving himself and his hearer, taking into account of what knowledge is already shared between them (p.4).

Therefore, so that students can approach fluency in understanding and communicating (especially oral production) in English, it is necessary that activities are designed to cover all language aspects: lexicon, morphology, semantics, and the most necessary element in this case, phonology.

As it was stated before, phonology is widely brushed aside by teachers who primarily want students to work on comprehension activities, such as lexical items and word order rather than productive skills. Herbert (1993) argues, "words stressed incorrectly or with inappropriate pitch or intonation will impede the learner in getting the intended

message errors" (p. 188). In accordance with this author's point of view, "phonology should be an integral part of any ESL lesson/syllabus" (p.188). As Herbert demonstrates, an inaccurate pronunciation interferes with communication and the decodification of messages.

According to Herbert (1993), a way in which teachers can improve students' productive skills is by implementing pronunciation in communicative activities, especially with those students who have a low knowledge level of English. In general, these kinds of goals are reached by transmitting emotions and feelings, which possess prosodic characteristics of language: "stress and rhythm, intonation, pitch variation and volume" (Herbert, 1993 p.188). In this way, the phonological aspect should be regarded more in the curriculum at the moment of using communicative activities in order to avoid studying phonology parts separately.

In relation to the avoidance of the independent teaching of phonology parts, Herbert (1993) is convinced that teachers must introduce the prosodic aspects of English and the objectives that they want to reach with these aspects, so that students can understand at the beginning the activities what they will cover in the future and be able to measure their progress. Hence, she believes that word stress can be introduced with communicative activities such as the topic of personal identification, which uses lexical terms, for example nationalities. She suggests that students should list nationalities according to similar stress patterns, since these terms have strong or weak pronunciation and the stress is located in the beginning, middle or end of the word. For instance, the word Afghanistan is stressed on the second syllable. Afterwards, it is necessary to make sure that learners understand where the stressed syllable lies and to employ activities in which they can identify the functions of intonation in English. Likewise, Wh- questions and Yes/No questions should be introduced

so that "they may draw that all questions are uttered with rising intonation" (Herbert, 1993 p.189).

For example,

"Where do you come from?

What's your nationality?

Do you come from Afghanistan?

Are you from Afghanistan?" (Herbert, 1993, p. 120)

According to the example, teachers should ask students if the intonation of nationalities goes down or up in order to illustrate intonation and help them with body movements. In communicative activities, this structure can be used with qualifiers, which show pitch variation related to the speaker's attitudes, status and mood (p. 190); for example, "Am I happy?" Consequently, students will discover the phonological function that is carried out in spoken English (p.190).

Moreover, teachers can improve students' pronunciation skills by diagnosing and adding content to the curriculum, such as phonological patterns that are lacking or that students misunderstand and fail to use correctly. In order to fix students' oral difficulties, such as misused phonological patterns, Herbert (1993) suggests that teachers should record samples of students' speech to identify their difficulties which are repeated most frequently. Chiefly, the analysis of the oral production should be based on the suprasegmental and segmental levels. According to the author, suprasegmental level diagnosis consists of assessing clarity, speed, loudness, breathing, fluency, voice, expressive behavior, intonation, stress and rhythm. The segmental level refers to the analysis of the substitution, omission, articulation, reduction, clustering and linking of consonants and vowels. In

addition, the activities which involve these aspects should be provided with feedback and considered essential.

In relation to the context, Herbert (1993) proposes that apart from detecting and repairing students' phonological problems, teachers should take note of the context in which their students use English to communicate contexts. In the case of lower level learners, this can be done with a known topic such as a neighbourhood. In communicative activities, pitch variation will be assessed since the students are expressing their opinions. For instance, the teacher would ask students to draw a map showing where they use English in their neighbourhoods. Then, the teacher draws three faces on the board representing the adjectives *sad, happy* and *neutral* and asks the students to draw the face that matches their feelings in each place of their neighbourhoods. Afterwards, he or she asks about the similarities and differences between the situations and possible reasons for this, and notes down students' comments. Then, the teacher collects students' drawings and selects those pictures where learners are unhappy in order to provide feedback so that they do not refuse to learn and can expand their thinking criteria. Furthermore, the teacher asks the class to vote on the contexts that they would like to cover in the following classes, ranking them from the most to less important. Through this activity, the teacher can demonstrate that there a compromise can be reached between the students and the teacher, so that the class can understand and properly produce utterances in these contexts (p. 192).

As phonology has already been covered strategically, this should be a complement to communicative activities. Certainly, teaching phonology should be regarded as an important objective, because if language structures are the class objective, these should be covered in pre-communicative activities so that learners practice grammar and lexicon. Meanwhile, if the class objective is focused on making meaning and interpretation of ideas,

both of these should be covered via communicative activities, since talking is already contextualized.

For these casesand regarding anorther author, Widdowson (1978) has proposed a hypothesis for teaching spoken language, related to the aural medium and the difference between speaking and talking. The author indicates that if it is thought that spoken language is just a manifestation, through the vocal tract of phonological and/or grammatical patterns, then it is only an association with the aural medium. However, when people speak normally and naturally, not only the vocal organs are involved in communication, but also gestures, movements of the muscles of the face and the whole body. He also said that teachers should be careful not to confuse the teaching of speaking with the teaching of talking. Speaking involves the correct use of grammatical patterns, intonation and pronunciation. Talking, on the other hand, is associated with interpretation of ideas (reported speech), naturalness and fluency. In other words, the speaker has 'more freedom' when talking than when speaking, in linguistic terms (p.93).

In general terms, Widdowson emphasizes that structural and non-structural language can exist in the classroom and the teacher must be concerned themselves with these aspects in order to improve students' strengths and weaknesses. In addition, Littlewood (1981) recommends a communicative approach to foreign language teaching. He mainly focuses on the development of two sequences: pre-communicative and communicative learning activities. The first category consists of helping students with later communication and providing space to practice language functions (speaking). In these activities, learners practice skills separately, because their purpose is "to provide learners with a fluent command of the linguistic system… [and]… (i.e. sufficiently accurate or appropriate)" (p. 85). The second category refers to activities in which students have to primarily

communicate meaning through talking. And, as students are practicing all of their skills in this stage, they will be encouraged to take into account social context and acceptability. "The learner is thus expected to increase his skill in starting from an intended meaning…and producing fluently" (p. 89). In relation to feedback, this author proposes that pre-communicative activities must be focused on providing information related to linguistic forms without necessarily excluding communicative ones, "and thus reinforc[ing] the links between structure and meaning" (p.91). Additionally, feedback in communicative activities must be centred on communicative strategies, so that excessive correction will not motivate "learners to shift their focus from meanings to forms" (p.91). If the problem is structural, feedback or correction must be done at the end of the activity in order not to interfere with the communicative process.

In these cases, the role of the teacher is essential since language is taught structurally (grammar). In the classroom, the teacher must be "a facilitator of learning" (p.92), instead of an instructor. For this reason, Littlewood suggests the following teachers' roles during these two types of activities:

-The teacher must organize the activities so that students can increase their communicative abilities.

-The teacher "is responsible for grouping activities into lessons and for ensuring that these are satisfactorily organized at the practical level" (p.92).

-The teacher "will not intervene after initiating the proceedings, but will let learning take place through independent activity" (p.92), such as a mix of pre-communicative and communicative activities.

-Once uncontrolled learning is produced specifically when students are confused, the teacher must move around the classroom in order to observe students' strengths and weaknesses. Thus, students' difficulties will serve as curriculum content in the future.

-Once students feel comfortable speaking, the teacher may introduce new linguistic forms without altering the class objective previously achieved that moment (p.92).

To conclude, these suggestions and methodologies would create improvement for both those students who have a lower level of English knowledge and for teachers who are not experts in English pronunciation. Likewise, the problem of phonological fossilization is an issue that must be taken into account at the moment of learning another language, because if a language is studied it has to be learned in all its aspects, including phonology. If English phonetics is not taught in the Chilean public classroom setting, the phonological fossilization problem will continue to be present; therefore, these suggestions and methodologies are an excellent way to overcome this issue. In the same way, if phonology is not incorporated into the educational curriculum, it is unreasonable to expect students to become bilingual in our country.

Results

The results of this project are presented in the order that they are discussed. First of all, it has been observed in the Chilean public school English classroom that fossilization is present even after the interlanguage stage, as in the case of a teacher who supposedly has an advanced knowledge and command of the target language. The results of Krashen's research detected some retardation in the performance of the foreign language, and consequently teachers are used to adapting their interlanguage to their communicative tasks. In the case of the students, they can avoid making errors and mistakes through comprehensible input.

In relation to the possible causes of fossilization, research has demonstrated that the causes are related to a deficient amount of reinforcing the four skills (reading, listening, writing and speaking) and poor kinds of content at the moment of teaching and learning the target language. Students may begin to fossilize when learning the target language in isolated or informal contexts, or when the information available is misused by the teacher, such as mispronunciation at the moment of teaching. Another cause refers to students' motivation. It is related to when students decide to employ the target language on their own since they perceive that enough information has been acquired and that they are already capable of communicating in the target language.

In relation to the different causes of fossilization, there are also diverse ways to correct errors. First, errors or fossilization problems should be corrected when students feel the necessity to do so and have time in order to avoid embarrassment. On the other hand, some authors propose that teachers should correct those errors which obstruct communication and occur most commonly.

Phonological fossilization occurs in the Chilean public schools due to the fact that an important output skill, speaking, is not regarded in the curriculum as a main teaching subject. The combination of a large number of students and a lack of time in the class impede teachers' abilities to assess and check students' speaking progress. It is believed that the learning process is insufficient if the opportunity to produce utterances is not given to students. This specific problem refers to difficulties in pronunciation. Its causes consist of the native language's phonology structures that are assimilated according to native language mouth positions, and these interfere with pronunciation of the target language phonology. In addition, the fact that the native and target languages do not have the same phonological patterns emphasizes the problem of phonological fossilization. In general, this leads to a misinterpretation at the moment of pronouncing any word, phrase or sentence.

From a physiological point of view, it might be difficult for students after puberty to pronounce with native-like accuracy, because it has been discovered by scientists that native-like foreign language acquisition, including phonology, is nearly impossible due to brain maturation (Lenneberg, quoting Dulay, Burt, and Krashen, 1982).

In the affective filter study, it was found that learners vary in terms of the strength or level of their affective filters. When there is an atmosphere full of anxiety, pressure, and lack of motivation, the affective filter is extremely high and the learner might not be able to acquire the foreign language successfully. Input must be comprehensible for all students, so the teaching methods chosen to teach the foreign language play an essential role in this purpose. If the affective filter is kept low, the possibility for a student to become fossilized is almost lower, especially in comparison to those students exposed to a high affective filter environment.

In the case of feedback, the person who gives it critically analyses the performance of the learner and chooses specific points that need correction. Feedback is a way to indicate to a foreign language learner that he or she must improve some aspects of the performance. According to our observations of the English class, the process of feedback was simply general reinforcement of previous English classes, without paying attention to individual situations. In general, in the Chilean educational system, feedback is employed in this way, and students are only occationally given the opportunity to provide feedback on the performance of the teacher.

Regarding particular types of feedback, negative affective feedback involves teachers' negative attitudes, which can deeply influence students' phonological fossilization. Teachers' lack of interest and their negative attitude can cause students difficulties to overcome language problems. Mainly, this kind of indifferent teacher is more concerned with achieving his or her schedule than about students' learning. In addition, a lack of expectations is also viewed as a factor that influences fossilization in learners. Not taking certain content such as age and learning level into consideration produces phonological fossilization, because teachers do not develop the abilities at one time and simultaneously. Furthermore, some teachers perform classes in Spanish because they see that this situation is more comfortable for students and therefore they pay more attention. Consequently, the target language is not being acquired in the manner it should be. In addition, the fact that students are pressed to perform even though they are not prepared to do so also causes fossilization. The consequence of these situations is that students have to resort to their native language structures and use them in terms of the target language.

Indisputably, the use of all these negative factors, whether they are affective or cognitive, leads to the increase of students' affective filters, which can be considered the most powerful factor the success or failure of learning the target language structures.

With respect to the observation of a Chilean public school English class, it was found that the teacher had a great amount of fossilized words in English, both written and oral, and it seemed that she was unaware of this situation. As a consequence, students had a very poor level of English. The learners were not able to pronounce a single word in English correctly and their writing skills were too limited to write an entire paragraph. The class was performed in Spanish, so there were no possibilities for the students to practice listening comprehension. Retardation in the performance of the foreign language was present both in the teacher and in the students.

In order to solve phonological fossilization problems, it is necessary to teach content involving the development of the four skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing) simultaneously. The teacher must speak as native-like as possible so that students can familiarize themselves with the target language. Also, it is necessary that the teacher prepares exercises that allow students to articulate the new sounds and correct those errors that interfere with communication and are frequent and common.

Additionally, communicative and pronunciation activities taught simultaneously can improve pronunciation problems and miscomprehension of a message. Teaching pronunciation involves incorporation of stress, rhythm, intonation, pitch variation and volume. In this way, students will learn all the phonological patterns that a phrase or sentence contains. In addition, teaching suprasegmental and segmental aspects will allow the teacher to assess fluency, speed, clarity, voice, intonation, expressive behavior, omission, substitution, linking of consonants and vowels, etc.

When teaching communicative activities, they should be divided into two groups; pre-communicative and communicative. The first group emphasizes the practice of isolated exercises related to language functions, so that once learned, students can use these exercises in context. The second group is related to the stage in which students express meanings, including pronunciation, syntax, and semantics. Also very important is feedback, which should be done at the end of each activity, in order to not interfere with communication, or cause students to feel embarrassed and frustrated.

As an overall conclusion, it is worth mentioning that the results of this project are a consequence of rigorous research done in the field of phonology and grammar. They demonstrate that fossilization is a problem that affects many teachers, as well as students, when performing and acquiring, respectively, the foreign language. However, the results also show that there are different methods and techniques to overcome fossilization and thus improve the good performance in the target language. It is hoped that the information given in the present research will be useful in the future to include speaking activities in the Chilean educational planning system.

Discussion

This study provides information related to the importance of taking into account the implementation of phonology in Chilean public education in order to improve the problem of fossilization, specifically in phonology. This is a serious problem, especially in public schools, in which many experts have been researching for decades in an attempt to find the most appropriate solutions. The results suggest that it is important to include the speaking skill in the curriculum and to provide comprehensible input so that students can correctly produce sounds in English. For teachers, this is useful to assess students' progress in their performance in the target language.

From an achievement perspective, the results indicate that fossilization causes are consistent with what Yilorm's portfolio explains in her "Integrative essay: Possible causes of fossilization in the Chilean public EFL settings" (2007), specifically with her idea that "acquiring deviant forms definitely impacts production in a very negative way" (p.8). It is demonstrated that the better and the more accurate feedback is, the better the learning process. Additionally, the most noticeable negative aspect of negative cognitive feedback is the fact that teachers may cause fossilization when they have scarce academic studies in relation to English teaching, especially because students receive the majority of their information from their teachers. "Regarding High school educators, only a 5 % of them have postgraduate studies and a 7 % of instructors are not academically qualified to teach English" (Yilorm, 2007, p. 13). As a consequence of this point, the correct teaching of information is essential for students to avoid phonological fossilization, but it will depend on "who" manipulates the information. In the same way, another cause is the excessive pressure to perform in the target language, which makes students' affective filters increase.

As students do not have a natural production of the second language, they may fossilize in some part of the learning process.

Regarding methodologies, the exaggerated use of Spanish by teachers, the lack of error correction and the low amount and level of speaking activities are also factors that influence the increase of fossilization in students. For instance, the use of the native language diminishes the acquisition of the target language itself.

In relation to the use of non-authentic materials, textbooks given by the Education Ministry to Chilean public schools are not adequate for all the students because they are designed for those who have previous knowledge of English. In general, "they are not culturally or socially adapted" (Yilorm, 2007, p.19). The fact that the teacher prepares or uses authentic materials reflects that he or she is concerned about students' accurate learning, and thus these materials would be effective at the moment of miscomprehension of the main linguistic aspects in the study of a second language.

Despite the fact that not all of the suggestions by the authors were proved in Chilean contexts, the results point out the importance of including speaking activities related to the phonological area, instantaneous feedback, the maintenance of a low affective filter and the relevance of communicative activities.

Conclusion

As it was stated before, the problem of phonological fossilization is noticeable in teachers and students, which makes the goal of becoming a bilingual country more difficult to achieve. Hence, the purpose of this project is to provide information about the main causes of this problem and some potential solutions to overcome it.

According to Chilean settings, fossilization is due to factors such as teachers' deficient command of English, negative attitudes, and the lack of opportunities that students have to speak in the target language. Likewise, the techniques and materials used in public schools do not meet students' needs, because the resources are not adapted.

As it is well known, phonological fossilization is produced by a high affective filter, negative affective and cognitive feedback, and inadequate methodologies in the interlanguage stage. The purpose of this project is—once the causes of the problem are detected—to improve the quality of teaching techniques, by implementing authentic materials (including for phonology problems) so that students can learn more accurately, and may have, in some future time, the opportunity to speak in the target language at a proficient level. Finally, as future English teachers, it is a must to teach a language in all its aspects: grammar, lexicon, morphology, semantics, and the most important study object of this research… phonology.

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