PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY IN LETRAS-INGLÊS: SOME PERCEPTIONS OF BRAZILIAN STUDENTS IN PARAÍBA

Luís Bruno Penha[1], Luana Anastácia Santos de Lima[2] and Leônidas Silva Jr.[3]

ABSTRACT

Phonetics and Phonology study human speech, focusing on individual units (phonemes), syllables, and sentences. This knowledge is essential for teachers when teaching pronunciation. This research addresses the focus on Phonetics of English as a Foreign Language *(Fonética da Língua Inglesa)* in *Letras-inglês* at the State University of Paraíba (UEPB), Brazil, where it is realized that a low percentage of final works were produced in Phonetics and Phonology studies between 2019 and 2023. This work aims to identify students' perceptions when studying Phonetics and Phonology, as well as to assess their importance for English majors, particularly as proficient L2 speakers and future educators. To achieve our objectives, a six-question questionnaire was administered to 22 students from *Letras-inglês* (in the seventh and eighth semesters) to gather their perceptions of Phonetics of English as a Foreign Language courses. This bibliographic research, classified as both qualitative and descriptive, draws on the contributions of Cagliari (1978), Kelly (2000), Alves (2012), Knight (2012), Katz (2013), Souza (2015) Silva Jr. (2018), Rone *et al.* (2023) among others. Several factors may contribute to the lack of motivation among students regarding Phonetics and Phonology studies, such as the terminology used and the perceived differences between L1 and L2 sounds. In addition, it is confirmed by the students that these courses are significant for students aiming to speak accurately and become English teachers.

Keywords: Phonetics and Phonology. Students' Perceptions. Pronunciation Teaching.

[1] Graduado em Letras-inglês
Universidade Estadual da Paraíba
E-mail: luis.penha@aluno.uepb.edu.br
[2] Doutora em Linguística
Universidade Estadual da Paraíba
E-mail: luanalima.uepb@servidor.uepb.edu.br
[3] Doutor em Linguística | Pós-Doutorado em Fonética Experimental e Fonética Forense
Universidade Estadual da Paraíba
E-mail: leonidas.silvajr@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Phonetics is the science that studies human speech (Knight, 2012). Since Phonetics can be analyzed through different domains, such as articulatory, acoustic, and perceptual (Ogden, 2009), learners focus not only on listening and reproducing sounds but also on how speech is articulated in the vocal tract. In contrast, Phonology examines how sound units operate together in speech organization (Katz, 2013), which can be challenging for foreign language (L2) learners.

Therefore, it is quite necessary that educators receive specialized training in teaching English pronunciation to effectively mitigate common errors and enhance the L2 learning process. In this regard, the fields of Phonetics and Phonology are particularly significant, as they provide the necessary framework for understanding and addressing the intricacies of speech sound production and the organization of sound systems within languages.

In *Letras-inglês* Major (an undergraduate major where students receive a degree in English Language Teaching in Brazil, henceforth, *Letras-inglês*), the courses *Fonética da Língua Inglesa* (Phonetics of English as a Foreign Language courses, henceforth, *Fonética da LI*) enable students to learn the properties of speech, the production of vowels and consonant sounds in connected speech, English sound transcription, and the interface between speaking skills and other language abilities. Students also learn about Phonological Transfer and Phonological Awareness, which aid in smoothing L2 sound production misleads and improving pronunciation. Therefore, *Fonética da LI* plays an important role for students majoring in English language, especially when it comes to pronunciation teaching.

According to a bibliographic survey conducted between 2019 and 2023, a total of 135 final works - between monographs and final papers - were produced in - *Letras-inglês* in *Universidade Estadual da Paraíba* (State University of Paraíba – UEPB), Guarabira-PB, with 6% focused on Phonetics and Phonology studies. This suggests that these courses may have not received adequate attention from *Letras-inglês* students during the program. With this in mind, these are our research questions: 1) Why do most students lack motivation in Phonetics and Phonology? 2) Could the study of Phonetics and Phonology meaningfully contribute to the formation of students in *Letras-inglês*, particularly in preparing them to become proficient L2 speakers and future educators?

According to Souza (2015), learning L2 pronunciation is often seen as challenging. Katz (2013) notes that Phonetics can be discouraging because it involves complex biological and physical concepts, such as the anatomy of the vocal tract, and technical terms, such as larynx, vocal tract, speech waveforms, interdental, alveolar, etc. Additionally, practicing the production of L2 sounds (Cagliari, 1978) and addressing some differences between native language (L1) and L2, as revealed through phonetic studies, (such as similar phonemes in both languages and the absence of certain phonemes in the L1 which are presented in the L2), can be challenging for students. These factors may reduce students' motivation in *Fonética da LI* in - *Letras-inglês*.

The study of Phonetics and Phonology facilitates a deeper understanding of the nuances of speech (Knight, 2012), and it helps learners and educators reflect on the sounds of foreign languages. (Katz, 2013) This knowledge enhances their capacity to accurately perceive and correct pronunciation in pursuit of effective communication. It is especially useful for language teachers, as it allows them to model accurate pronunciation and handle pronunciation issues effectively in educational sets.

The objective of this research is to investigate the factors contributing to students' lack of motivation in *Fonética da LI*. The specific objectives are as follows 1) to reflect on the importance and contributions of Phonetics and Phonology in *Letras-inglês*; 2) to evaluate the impact of *Fonética da LI* on future educators' professional development, and 3) to examine the perceived importance of *Fonética da LI* for *Letras-inglês* students while L2 speakers and future English teachers.

This research is relevant as it analyzes the significance of Phonetics and Phonology in *Letras-inglês*. By investigating the factors that affect students' motivation in these courses, the study is an attempt to identify barriers to Phonetics and Phonology studies, particularly regarding students' interest in writing monographs in this research field at the UEPB. Evaluating the impact of Phonetics and Phonology on future teachers' professional development is important for understanding how these courses contribute to their teaching practices. Furthermore, exploring how future educators perceive the importance of these courses can provide insights into how well these courses prepare them for their teaching practices. Therefore, this research seeks to show the effectiveness of *Fonética da LI* to better support both *Letras-inglês* students and future educators.

This research is classified as both qualitative and bibliographic (Gil, 2008), where we relied on the contributions of Cagliari (1978), Kelly (2000), Alves (2012), Night (2012), Katz

(2013), Souza (2015), Silva Jr. (2018), Rone *et al.* (2023), and others. Additionally, the study incorporates elements of quantitative and descriptive research (Gil, 2008), and a questionnaire was carried out to students matriculated in *Letras-inglês*, aiming to gather insights into their perceptions of *Fonética da LI*.

This work is structured as follows: Section 1 presents the introduction. Section 2 presents a review of the literature, showing the specificities of *Fonética da LI*, and the factors that may contribute to students' lack of motivation in *Letras-inglês.* Section 3 outlines the methodology, detailing the methods and data collection process used in this research: a questionnaire was carried out to *Letras-inglês* students to gather their perceptions on Phonetics and Phonology studies. Section 4 presents an analysis and discussion of the questionnaire data, and finally, section 5 provides the Final remarks.

LITERATURE REVIEW

PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY IN *LETRAS-INGLÊS*

Letras-inglês students are required to enroll in the 45 prescribed courses outlined in the curriculum throughout eight semesters of studies. Among these courses, they study English Language Teaching Methodology, History of the English Language, American Literature, English Literature, Translation Studies, Literacy Theory and Criticism, and Phonetics of English as a Foreign Language[4].

According to *Letras-inglês'* Pedagogical Project of Course (PPC), *Fonética da LI* are taught in 2 semesters (the 3rd and 4th) with a total workload of 120 hours.

Fonética da LI enables students the opportunity to develop abilities related to oral speech and the interaction between them, and "shows how an individual's pronunciation is formed through the organization of their speech and what is concerned with the sounds" (Cagliari, 1978 *apud* Silva Jr., 2018). Therefore, we highlight the importance of proper teacher preparation in avoiding such issues.

Additionally, it is important to mention that pronunciation is a complex skill, which involves psychological and physiological processes (Thornbury, 2012). And considering pronunciation as a critical component in oral communication (Barry, 2021 *apud* Jahara; Abdelrady, 2021, p. 195), many L2 students may consider that pronouncing words is a

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[4] Original: Metodologia do Ensino de Língua Inglesa, História da Língua Inglesa e Anglo-Cultura, Literatura Americana, Literatura Inglesa, Teoria e Prática da Tradução em Língua Inglesa, Teoria e Crítica Literária, e Fonética e Fonologia da Língua Inglesa I e II.

problem for effective pronunciation. Thus, pronunciation "is generally viewed as a more challenging task than the acquisition of L2 grammar or vocabulary" (Souza, 2015, p. 90). As a result, for many L2 adult learners, getting accurate pronunciation becomes a very difficult skill.

Pronunciation teaching is often neglected by educators (Kelly, 2006), this way, it has become a controversial issue about what and how to teach (Silva Jr.; Barbosa, 2024, p. 04). Despite numerous studies showing positive outcomes from focusing on pronunciation, it remains underemphasized in both universities and public schools (Silva Jr., 2018). As a result, while some teachers are well-prepared, others lack sufficient training in Phonology (Saito, 2012), which makes the pronunciation teaching process difficult.

According to Paula (2010), some educators view the teaching of pronunciation as an outdated and conservative practice, while others argue that it is essential for ensuring effective communication. Amid these contrasting viewpoints, learners should pursue correct pronunciation (Cagliari, 1978 *apud* Silva Jr., 2018), failing to do so may lead to the internalization of incorrect pronunciation patterns, which can subsequently hinder their ability to reproduce and comprehend speech effectively.

In summary, reflecting on the teaching of Phonetics and Phonology at the university level, educators need to explore new methods to simplify the learning process and actively engage students in discussions and participation. The modern world provides various technological tools, such as apps and software, to enhance this process.

Finally, educators need to master Phonetics and Phonology for effective pronunciation teaching. This knowledge is essential for understanding how sounds are produced and perceived, which supports various listening and speaking activities in the classroom. It enables teachers to guide students toward clearer and more accurate pronunciation.

Despite the importance and contributions of Phonetics and Phonology in *Letras-inglês*, it is noted that these courses have not received much attention, as reflected in the low percentage (6%) of monographs and final papers produced in this area between 2019 and 2023 at UEPB in Guarabira-PB.

FACTORS THAT MAY CONTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS' LACK OF MOTIVATION IN PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY STUDIES IN *LETRAS-INGLÊS*

Motivation has various definitions (Rone *et al.*, 2023), and it is relevant for learners to accomplish their objectives in the L2 acquisition contexts. Thus, motivation is defined as "a state of cognitive and emotional arousal that results in a conscious decision to act and that sparks a period of continuous mental and/or physical effort in order to accomplish a previously defined objective (goals)" (Williams; Burden, 1997 *apud* Rone *et al.*, 2023, p. 636). Therefore, it is important for learners to remain motivated while learning Phonetics and Phonology.

Motivated students can overcome the challenges they may encounter during L2 acquisition (Morley, 1991 *apud* Jasim; Nithyanantham, 2021). In this context, teachers also need to be motivated (Ushioda, 2012), as they are the facilitators of knowledge. Therefore, they are responsible for teaching the language in a way that makes learners feel at least comfortable when learning L2 sound production. This is something that need to be discussed because if the learning of a foreign language has become a requirement, students may lose their motivation to learn it (Jasim; Nithyanantham, 2021).

One of the objectives of this research is to analyze what concerns students' motivation in *Fonética da LI* in *Letras-inglês*. Teaching pronunciation cannot be overlooked (Jahara and Abdelrady, 2021). Thus, when students lack sufficient excitement in classroom contexts, it leads to a decrease in motivation (Sasson, 2019 *apud* Rone *et al.*, 2023, p. 645). Therefore, when *Letras-inglês* students understand the importance of Phonetics and Phonology they are equipped with the tools to teach pronunciation effectively.

In the book Phonetics for Dummies, Katz (2013) explains that Phonetics requires learning about biology and physics, subjects that people may not immediately associate with the study of Phonetics. As a result, topics such as the physiology of speech (e.g., alveolar ridge, lungs, trachea, vocal cords, lungs, jaw etc.), and certain aspects of physics (acoustics and speech waveforms), may discourage people from studying Phonetics.

Teaching is a key strategy to help learners improve their oral abilities and achieve their goals for effective communication (Rone *et al.*, 2023). According to Katz (2013), learning Phonetics requires practicing speaking and listening skills, which can become problematic if students are not accustomed to these types of activities. On the other hand, if students are familiar with activities that involve these skills, it will not be a significant issue.

There is also the stigma of being a phonetician (professional or teacher that works with human speech sounds) because there are lots of stereotypes and beliefs that put phoneticians in embarrassing situations, believing that they are bossy and staying all the time correcting people and telling them how to talk (Katz, 2013). However, learning Phonetics does not mean that, even if it takes time to figure out its specificities, listening and speaking the different sounds can be an enjoyable activity (Katz, 2013).

Since English has specific characteristics in its production of sounds (vowels, consonants), it is understood that "pronunciation errors can affect the meaning of the word and the meaning of the whole sentence" (Smit, 2002 *apud* Jasim; Nithyanantham, 2021, p. 1056). According to Masgoret and Gardner (2003 *apud* Naderifarjad; Yousofi, 2015), there are relations between L2 acquisition and motivation, and it facilitates the acquisition of the language.

Therefore, *Letras-inglês* students need to understand the Phonetics and Phonology importance and that accurate pronunciation is a crucial factor, otherwise, motivation can be negatively affected when speakers struggle with pronunciation issues in communicative contexts.

METHODS

RESEARCH METHOD

The present research qualifies as a bibliographic study, as it was developed using written sources, primarily derived from books and scientific articles" (Gil, 2008). A review of the existing literature in Linguistics, particularly Phonetics and Phonology, was essential to achieving the objectives of this research. Accordingly, the discussion in this research effectively highlighted key elements of Phonetics and Phonology, emphasizing their significance in developing confident speakers, enhancing speaking skills, and preparing educators within educational contexts.

This study is situated within the domain of applied and descriptive research, which one of its more relevant characteristics is the use of patterned techniques and data collecting (Gil, 2008). A questionnaire was carried out to *Letras-inglês* students who matriculated in the 7th and 8th semesters to gain insights into their perceptions of *Fonética da LI*.

According to Kauark, Manhães, and Medeiros (2010, p. 26-27), quantitative research "considers what can be quantified, what means translating opinions and

information to numbers to classify and analyze". Consequently, the results obtained from the questionnaire allowed for the quantification of responses, facilitating a systematic study of the data.

This research also is positioned in the field of qualitative studies, once such methodologies and approaches in this kind of study concerns, therefore, with reality aspects that cannot be quantified, they are grounded in the understanding and explanation of the dynamic social relations[5] (Silveira; Córdova, 2009). Therefore, the data were analyzed to examine participants' impressions and perceptions concerning the questionnaire.

CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE RESEARCH

To achieve the objectives of this research, a questionnaire in Portuguese was carried out via Google Forms with 22 students from *Letras-inglês*. Out of the participants, 73% were in the 8th semester, and 27% were in the 7th semester. Additionally, 37% of the participants were male, and 63% were female. All 22 participants agreed to share their data for this research and signed a *Termo de Consentimento Livre e Esclarecido* (TCLE).

Table 1 presents the questionnaire that was carried out in this research:

Table 1 - Research Questionnaire

01	What research area do you intend to focus on in your final work?
02	Did you experience any difficulties in the courses *Fonética da LI*? If so, which one(s)?
03	In your opinion, is pronouncing correctly synonymous with pronouncing like a native English speaker? Why?
04	During *Letras-inglês*, did you consider writing your final work in Phonetics and Phonology? Why?
05	Did the knowledge gained from the courses *Fonética da LI* contribute to your development as a speaker and/or future English teacher? If so, how? If not, why?
06	Do you consider it important for an English teacher to have a certain degree of knowledge in Phonetics and Phonology? Why?

Source: Personal collection.

The questions focus on students' experiences with *Fonética da LI* and their impact on their academic and professional growth. They explore research interests, challenges

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[5] Original: preocupa-se, portanto, com aspectos da realidade que não podem ser quantificados, centrando-se na compreensão e explicação da dinâmica das relações sociais.

faced, views on pronunciation, and the importance of Phonetics and Phonology for future English teachers. These insights aim to understand how the courses contribute to their development and future teaching abilities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

As previously mentioned in section 1, we investigated the UEPB (Campus in Guarabira-PB) digital repository between 2019 and 2023 and found 135 monographs/articles produced by students of *Letras-inglês*. Out of this amount, 6% (08 works) are counted in the Phonetics and Phonology field as presented in Figure 1:

Figure 1 – Bar plot for the number of final works (Monographs or Articles) of *Letras-inglês* from 2019 to 2023: "Other" and "Phonetics & Phonology" (A). Pie chart containing the intended research areas for final works (B).
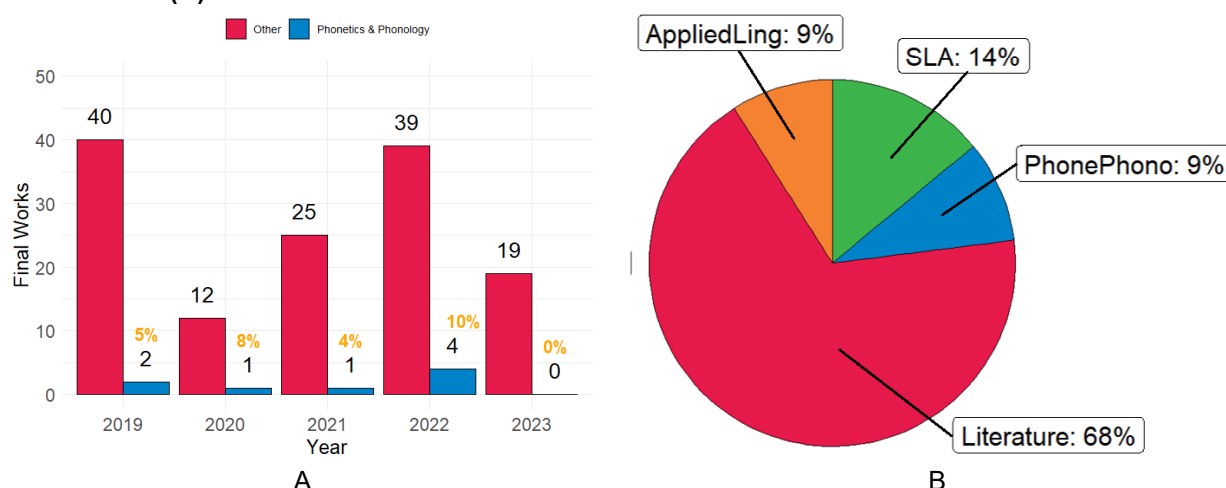
Source: Personal Collection.

The disparity between the total number of final works produced by *Letras-inglês* students between 2019 and 2023, and those specifically focused on Phonetics and Phonology is significant. In 2019, 40 monographs/articles were produced by *Letras-inglês* students, with 2 focusing on Phonetics and Phonology (5%). In 2020, even if the number of monographs/articles in Phonetics and Phonology dropped to 1, the total number of monographs dropped to 12, raising the proportion to 8%. In 2021, the percentage of monographs/articles in Phonetics and Phonology decreased to 4%. However, in 2022, there was an increase to 10%, with five monographs produced in this field, a considerable result as this matches the combined total from 2019, 2020, and 2021.

In 2023, however, no monographs were produced in this area, which warrants further investigation. Cagliari (1978), Katz (2013), and Bettoni and Campos (2017) highlight

that issues such as the terminology in Phonetics and the differences between L1 and L2 sounds can pose significant challenges for learners. Consequently, these difficulties may lead them to a lack of motivation (Rone et al., 2023), prompting *Letras-inglês* students to focus their final works on other research areas.

Table 2 presents the monographs or articles produced in the five-year term (2019-2023) by *Letras-inglês*-CH/UEPB:

Table 2 - Title and date of publications of the monographs/articles in the Phonetics and Phonology studies between 2019 and 2023

2019	A palatização da fricativa alveolar /S/ no inglês como L2 por falantes paraibanos
2019	A relação silábico-acentual no ritmo da fala por falantes brasileiros de inglês como L2
2020	A importância da fonética nos cursos de Letras
2021	Um estudo sobre a produção do *clustering* consonantal /ɹɫ/ no inglês por falantes brasileiros
2022	O ensino de pronúncia do inglês como L2 no Programa de Residência Pedagógica
2022	Reflexões acerca da consciência fonológica e o ensino de inglês como língua adicional
2022	Prosódia e expressividade da fala do inglês - L2
2022	Análise da produção das vogais anteriores do inglês como L2 por falantes brasileiros

Source: Personal collection.

WHAT RESEARCH AREA DO YOU INTEND TO FOCUS ON IN YOUR FINAL WORK?

According to Figure 1B, 68% of the students intend to do their monographs/final papers in the Literature field, 14% in the general works of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), and 9% in both Phonetics and Phonology (PhonePhono) and Applied Linguistics (AppliedLing). This research focuses on the Phonetics and Phonology field, so out of 22 students, 2 of them intend to do their monographs/final papers on Phonetics and Phonology studies.

DID YOU EXPERIENCE ANY DIFFICULTIES IN THE COURSES *FONÉTICA DA LI*? IF SO, WHICH ONE(S)?

Out of the total number of responses (i.e., 22), up to 77% reported difficulties in *Fonética da LI*. Now, we will analyze their answers and how they describe these difficulties.

Participant 2: "*Yes, it was complicated to understand the difference between the physical analysis of sounds (Phonetics) and the functional and abstract analysis of sounds within a language (Phonology)*".

Participant 5: "*Yes, the TH pronunciation and some places of articulation which we are not used to in our routine*".

Participant 22: "*Yes, I encountered some difficulties in the courses Fonética da LI. One challenge was mastering the articulation of various phonetic sounds, especially those that do not exist in my native language* (…)".

When analyzing the responses of Participants 5 and 22, it is possible to relate their difficulties to specific issues commonly experienced by learners while learning the English pronunciation sounds, because there are differences between the English language system and that of Brazilian Portuguese (Alves, 2012; Avery; Ehrlich, 2012 *apud* Silva Jr., 2018).

This way, Participant 5 mentions the difficulty of learning the "TH sound", which can be classified as an interdental, fricative, and voiced phoneme or an unvoiced one, represented by the symbols /ð/ and /θ/. It is important to note that when foreign sounds like these are not properly acquired, speakers may develop Phonological Transfer (Mascherpe, 1970 *apud* Silva Jr., 2018), leading to difficulties in L2 learning and effective communication.

For example, it is possible to mention the interdental, fricative, and unvoiced phoneme /θ/ in the word *thanks* > /θæŋks/, which during the transference and production, the phoneme /θ/ could be confounded by a) the fricative, alveolar and unvoiced phoneme /s/; b) the fricative, labio-dental and unvoiced phoneme /f/; or c) the plosive, alveolar and unvoiced phoneme /t/, obtaining as results of pronunciation /sæŋks/, /fæŋks/, or /tæŋks, respectively.

Another clear example could be the production of the interdental, fricative, and voiced phoneme /ð/ in the word *brother* > /brɒðər/, as seen in the previous example of Phonological Transfer, here the phoneme /ð/ could be confounded by the plosive, alveolar and voiced phoneme /d/, resulting in /brɒdər/ or by the fricative, alveolar and voiced phoneme /z/, obtaining ˈbrɒzər/ as another possible result.

Participant 22 reports challenges in articulating sounds and emphasizes the difficulty of acquiring phonemes that do not exist in Brazilian Portuguese. It is relevant to focus on Phonological Awareness, as learners become more aware of sound production and begin to develop sound perceptions (Alves, 2012) that were previously impossible or very difficult before studying Phonetics.

It is important to note that participants 2, 5, and 22 are aware of the goals of Phonetics when discussing their difficulties, which demonstrates their understanding of sound articulation.

Participant 10: "*Yes, I experienced difficulties in the Phonetics and Phonology courses. Specifically, distinguishing between certain similar sounds led to difficulties in accurately analyzing and identifying phonemes*".

While learning Phonetics, students may encounter very similar phonemes, which can be difficult to distinguish and produce foreign sounds (Steinberg, 1985). A clear example is the phoneme /æ/, a monophone vowel classified as front, low, and unrounded, as in the word *bad* > /bæd/. This phoneme may be perceived as similar to the phoneme /ɛ/ in the word *bed* > /bɛd/. The monophone /ɛ/ is also classified as front and unrounded, but it is classified as mid rather than low. Therefore, students need to receive effective instruction in Phonetics studies to support their understanding of sound patterns and articulation.

Participant 7: "*Yes, the most difficult thing was to learn the IPA, because of its big variety of symbols*".

Participant 13: "*It is a quite hard course, with many symbols, concepts, and sounds that are complex to learn/internalize, but that are essential for the knowledge of the language*".

Participants 7 and 13 report that the variety of symbols was a challenge, as seen (Katz, 2013), beginners may encounter difficulties while studying Phonetics. However, when studying the International Phonetic Alphabet and English vowels and consonants, it is crucial to learn the symbols, as each represents a specific sound, which is essential for mastering English pronunciation.

Participant 13 mentions that the concepts in Phonetics are difficult to learn and internalize. In the initial stages of learning Phonetics, students encounter technical terms (e.g., alveolar ridge, lungs, trachea, vocal cords, pitch, formants of vowels and consonants etc.), that pertain to biology and physics (Katz, 2013) and are not typically associated with Phonetics. As noted, when learners have to "master all this jargon, it can cause students to feel that Phonetics is hard and quickly become discouraged" (Katz, 2013, p. 10). Despite these challenges, the participant says that studying Phonetics is essential for understanding the language.

Participant 14: "*Yes, working with English language sounds is complex; therefore, it is a field that requires much* attention *while studying. Remembering the English language vowels was one of the biggest difficulties* (...)".

In analyzing Participant 14's response, the English vowels are mentioned, and it is possible to highlight a common concern regarding the differences in the number of vowels between English and Brazilian Portuguese. Although both languages have the same number of vowel graphemes (5 vowels), English has a greater variety of vowel sounds, which may be challenging for L2 learners. They soon realize that a single vowel can correspond to more than one sound. For example, in the word *apple*, the grapheme [a] is represented by the phoneme /æ/ > /æpᵊl/, whereas in the words *art* and *make*, the grapheme [a] is represented by the phoneme /ɑ/ > /ɑːrt/ and the diphthong /eɪ/ > /meɪk/, respectively.

Participant 6: "*Yes, sometimes I found certain aspects of these courses difficult, and I didn't feel comfortable expressing my doubts*".

Regarding certain aspects and specificities in the field of Phonetics and Phonology, it is important for students in *Letras-inglês* to feel comfortable while studying these courses. The content of this participant's response does not express the difficulty experienced in the courses, but what they report may highlight an issue among students concerning the L2 learning process: participation and engagement in the classroom. As Jahara and Abdelrady (2021, p. 195) state, "language learning and teaching environments must be learner-friendly and free from stress and anxiety so that learners can feel less stressed and consequently engage in conversations during classroom interaction." As a result, students will gain confidence in the language, both in the classroom and in teaching English. In this context, they may also engage with Phonetics and Phonology, which can be used to improve their pronunciation and pronunciation teaching.

Hence, as analyzed in the participant's responses about the difficulties experienced by them in *Fonética da LI*: a) the technical language used in the field, b) a large number of IPA symbols and their specific pronunciations, c) sounds that are very similar to or do not exist in Brazilian Portuguese, and d) Students' participation and interaction in the classroom concerning their confidence. Therefore, these may be factors that contribute to students' lack of motivation in Phonetics and Phonology studies in *Letras-inglês*.

IN YOUR OPINION, IS PRONOUNCING CORRECTLY SYNONYMOUS WITH PRONOUNCING LIKE A NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKER? WHY?

For this question, up to 95% of the participants agreed that correct pronunciation does not necessarily mean sounding like a native English speaker. This positive perspective may be linked to insights from *Fonética da LI*, where students learn to distinguish between native-like pronunciation, misleads in pronunciation, and a foreign accent.

In *Letras-inglês*, while studying *Fonética de LI*, students learn that Phonology aims to examine the interaction and recognition of sounds during the pronunciation of sentences across various contexts, accents, and dialectal variations (Katz, 2013). For instance, they learn that it is possible to conduct a phonological analysis of different accents, such as American, British, Indian, Nigerian, South African English, and others.

Considering that L1 sounds influence the pronunciation of L2, leading to the development of a foreign accent (Silva Jr, 2018), Brazilian learners will acquire a foreign accent while learning the English language. However, this can be smoothed through the study of Phonetics and Phonology or by being taught using explicit instruction (Alves, 2012; Silva Jr. & Barbosa, 2024). Nevertheless, this does not mean that the accent becomes a barrier to communication or speaker's proficiency.

Participant 2: "*No! In the English language, as in any other language, it is necessary to learn how to pronounce correctly, knowing that different words can have similar pronunciations* (...)".

Participant 2 mentions the similar sounds between Brazilian Portuguese and English, and it may confuse L2 learners (Steinberg, 1985). Thus, the study of Phonetics and Phonology enables learners to distinguish between similar phonemes, reduce misunderstandings, and communicate clearly and accurately, even if their pronunciation differs from that of native speakers.

Participant 8: "*No, because when you dedicate yourself to learning the correct pronunciation of words, you may pronounce them correctly without necessarily being a native speaker or living in an English-speaking country*".

Participant 8 asserts that with dedication, it is possible to achieve correct pronunciation without being a native speaker or living in an English-speaking country. This affirmation is important because it helps learners realize they can effectively learn the

language in their own country. With the advancement of the internet and technology, it has become possible to attend classes and work without necessarily having to live abroad.

Participant 14: "*No, 'non-native' speakers have internalized the L1's phonetic patterns, making it very difficult to dissociate from them and sound like a native English speaker* (...)".

Finally, Participant 14 highlights the difficulty of dissociating the phonetic patterns of one's L1 to sound like a native speaker. However, it is possible to achieve correct pronunciation, which can lead to better expression and comprehension when teaching and communicating. According to these participants' responses, it is important to emphasize that when learning English or any other language, mastering pronunciation and doing so correctly is essential, though it is not synonymous with achieving native-like pronunciation.

Participant 6: "*No, because you have your way of pronouncing words, given the various dialects and accents in the language*".

Participant 7: "*No (...) when individuals transfer the phonological patterns of their first language (L1) to English, they often use L1 sounds to fill in for English sounds that may be unfamiliar. This can result in an accent influenced by the L1, which may be either strong or subtle and is perceptible to native speakers. For example, Brazilians can often detect a foreign accent when a non-native speaker is speaking Brazilian Portuguese*".

Participant 20: "*No, I believe that pronouncing words correctly is associated with the ability to pronounce phonemes accurately. I don't think we should necessarily aim to sound exactly like a native speaker. As an L2 speaker, the L1's influence will likely appear in your accent, intonation, stress patterns, and so on*".

Participant 21: "*No. I think English is a universal language and the primary objective of learning English is to be able to communicate, not to talk like a native. Also, several countries have English as first/second language, so there are several accents in the world, meaning several forms of pronouncing*".

Participant 22: "*In my opinion, pronouncing correctly is not necessarily synonymous with pronouncing like a native English speaker. Correct pronunciation refers to producing sounds accurately according to standard Phonetics rules, while sounding like a native speaker involves nuances, such as intonation, rhythm, and accent that come from cultural and linguistic immersion*".

Participants 6, 7, 20, 21 and 22 also argue that correct pronunciation is different from speaking like a native English speaker. Thus, as stated by Cagliari (1978, *apud* Silva

Jr., 2018), learners should aim for correct pronunciation, as failing to do so may lead to problems in comprehension during communication. As future English teachers, it is important to give priority to correct pronunciation and understand its benefits.

According to the last 6 responses, the concept of accent is mentioned, which is one of the focuses of Phonology studies (Katz, 2013). Among the various English accents (American, British, Indian, Nigerian etc.), noticeable differences can be observed, and the same is true for Brazilian Portuguese, as features of L1 influence L2. However, these differences do not mean that any of these accents are incorrect when compared to standard varieties.

Participant 11: "*In my opinion, pronouncing correctly is not synonymous with pronouncing like a native English speaker. The correct pronunciation is that which enables clear and comprehensible communication for the listeners, whatever the accent* (...)".

According to Participant 11, the accent is not a significant factor when it comes to comprehension and clarity in communication. It is understood that the L1 influences the L2, which results in the development of a foreign accent (Silva Jr., 2018). Therefore, English teachers need to understand the significance of Phonetics and Phonology studies, as these enable them to comprehend Phonological Transfer and Phonological Awareness and help in creating approaches to facilitate the teaching of pronunciation. It is also important for language teachers to emphasize in their practices that it is possible to have a foreign accent while still pronouncing words accurately.

Participant 15: "*No. I believe there is no single correct or fixed way of speaking English; it depends a lot on the context. For example, a native can speak in the way they consider correct, just as a native from another location would. Thus, those who learn the English language must not be concerned about pronouncing everything correctly, if there is communication, everything is ok*".

According to Participant 15, native English speakers pronounce words in the way they believe is correct, suggesting there is no single "correct" pronunciation, and that communication should be the primary focus. However, this view may be misleading for L2 learners, especially for those who plan to teach English, as native speakers do follow pronunciation patterns, whether standard or not, and this does not mean they speak however they choose.

Participant 9: "*No, where there is understanding, there is the correct use of any language*".

Participant 16: "*I believe that speaking a language is effective if you are understood by the other person, even if you do not sound like a native*".

According to these two responses, these participants believe that when being understood by the listener you reach your objective in communication. This idea is similar to Participant 15's affirmation which mentions that English learners must not be concerned about pronunciation.

In this context, it is necessary to consider that during a conversation, people use more than just pronunciation to communicate, such as gestures and facial expressions, in other words, individuals may use these resources to help them while transmitting the message. However, in a phone conversation, speakers cannot see each other, making it essential to pronounce and listen carefully to ensure understanding. This way, being understood does not mean necessarily that the person has developed accurate oral communication skills.

Therefore, English teachers need to be aware of the differences between correct pronunciation and native-like pronunciation and understand the boundaries between these two aspects and their importance to speakers' accents. This way, Phonetics and Phonology studies should not be associated with discouraging courses, rather, it is a tool to help learners achieve their objectives and become proficient L2 speakers.

DURING *LETRAS-INGLÊS*, DID YOU CONSIDER WRITING YOUR FINAL WORK IN PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY? WHY?

Out of 22 participants up to 18% considered doing their monographs/final papers in Phonetics and Phonology:

Participant 4: "*Yes, because it is an interesting and important area to be studied*".

Participant 5: "*Yes, this is a very interesting area that arouses a world of possibilities and discoveries, principally in research*".

Participant 7: "*Yes, because it is a field of study that requires in-depth exploration to understand the nuances of the language, in this case, the English language*".

Participant 20: "*Since the 1st period at university*".

It is important to mention that, according to the first question in the questionnaire "*What research area do you intend to focus on in your final work?*", two students plan to focus their monographs/final papers on Phonetics and Phonology studies. Therefore, it can be confirmed that two of the participants – specifically participants 4, 5, 7 and 20 – have

changed their minds regarding their chosen study area for their monographs/final papers. On the other hand, up to 81% of the participants did not consider doing their monographs/final papers in Phonetics and Phonology. As follows:

Participant 1: "*No, I don't identify myself with this field of study*".

Participant 2: "*No, due to identification issues related to the course*".

Participant 6: "*No, because I don't identify with this field of study*".

Participant 8: "*No, it is not a field of study that I identify*".

Participant 12: "*No, it is not a field of study that grabs my attention*".

According to participants 1, 2, 6, 8 and 12, they did not consider producing their monographs in Phonetics and Phonology due to a lack of identification with the courses. However, analyzing these responses, it is unclear what they mean by "identification", as there may be many factors involved in this process.

The following participants' responses, however, provide more detailed reasons for not choosing to conduct their research in the Phonetics and Phonology field.

Participant 14: "*No. This field of study is full of rules and is very objective; I like to escape and think more playfully, and literature allows me to do that*".

Participant 15: "*No, because I feel more familiar with the field of literature and identify more with it. Phonetics is a complex and intricate field that requires time to understand the sounds, and everything related to them*".

Participant 21: "*No. I consider Phonetics and Phonology as a very specific area of studies* (...)".

Participants 14, 15 and 21 mention that Phonetics and Phonology are full of rules, complex, and very specific areas of study. These observations align with research findings, as Phonetics analyzes how human sounds are articulated (Knight, 2012). Learning to produce foreign sounds accurately requires precision; otherwise, sound production may be hindered, which could complicate communication. As noted by Katz (2013), learners should invest time in understanding Phonetics, as it is both beneficial and enjoyable. Therefore, when learning pronunciation and the correct articulation of L2 sounds, learners may feel motivated if they experience that effective communication is achieved through this process.

Participant 15 also reports that understanding the specificities of Phonetics requires time. In *Letras - Inglês*, students have two semesters of Phonetics, and it would be beneficial if they had more time to explore this field in greater depth. Participant 14 notes

that literature allows for playful thinking, which they find lacking in Phonetics due to its structured and rigid nature. Participant 15 also expresses a preference for Literature studies, which aligns with the fact that up to 68% of the participants intend to write their monograph/final papers in the field of Literature.

Participant 11: "*No, I did not consider doing my final work in the field of Phonetics and Phonology because, although I recognize its importance, the course did not interest me significantly. During the course, I had difficulty engaging in the concepts and practices of this field of study. As a result, I identified more with other courses that aligned better with my interests and academic goals. Therefore, I preferred to focus on fields of study that truly motivate me, where I feel I can make a significant contribution*".

Participant 11 considers the importance of Phonetics and Phonology, however, because of some difficulties with the concepts and practices, they identified more with other courses in *Letras - Inglês*. As seen and stated by Katz (2013), Phonetics technical terminology may be a factor that enables a lack of motivation in learners. However, Phonetics benefits can also be mentioned once it is a tool to help teachers and learners and in pronunciation teaching.

Besides, Participant 11 also implies that they focus on fields of study that motivated them and where they feel they can make a significant contribution. It is relevant to mention that the study of Phonetics and Phonology when used as an approach to learning English in a non-English-speaking country, enables the increasing in the number of proficient English speakers within the community.

DID THE KNOWLEDGE GAINED FROM THE COURSES *FONÉTICA DA LI* CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR DEVELOPMENT AS A SPEAKER AND/OR FUTURE ENGLISH TEACHER? IF SO, HOW? IF NOT, WHY?

Here, up to 23% of the participants reported that *Fonética da LI* did not contribute to their learning:

Participant 9: "*No, the duration of the course was short, and the teaching was not so well absorbed by me*".

Participant 12: "*No, because the classes were not focused on everyday life.*".

Participant 18: "*No, I did not acquire enough knowledge because of various reasons related to the pandemic and remote learning.*".

Participant 19: "*I don't think so, because it was a short period, we needed to see more.*".

Participant 21: "*Not much. I think that systematically learning the sounds of letters and words did not improve my speaking. Maybe if I had practiced the different sounds on my own, it could have helped me speak like a native of a certain country. However, for me, as someone who just wanted to be able to communicate in the language, it didn't make much difference.*".

Analyzing these participants' responses, it is possible to observe that, even if they believe *Fonética da LI* did not contribute to them, their reasons differ. Participants 9 and 19 argue that more time would be necessary to study the courses; however, Participant 9 adds that they did not fully absorb the teaching. Participant 12 mentions that *Fonética da LI* were not approached or focused on everyday life, while Participant 18 attributes their response to the pandemic and remote learning. Among these responses, it is important to note that, despite the challenging situations faced during the learning process, the courses *Fonética da LI* contribute significantly to the teaching of pronunciation for students who want to become English teachers.

Finally, Participant 21 reports that the study of Phonetics and Phonology did not benefit them because their goal was simply to communicate in English, and therefore, delving into Phonetics did not make a significant difference. It is important to understand that effective oral communication requires correct pronunciation, but this does not necessarily mean speaking like a native English speaker (Cagliari, 1978). Therefore, students in *Letras-inglês* need to distinguish between these ideas and focus on the benefits of Phonetics and Phonology to enhance their teaching approach in English language learning contexts.

Out of 22 participants, up to 77% agreed that *Fonética da LI* contributed to their learning:

Participant 1: "*Yes, comprehending the specific sounds of the English language helps improve pronunciation, making it clearer and more comprehensible. It also develops awareness of different sounds and intonation patterns, which can aid in auditory comprehension and oral production.*".

Participant 15: "*Yes (...) In Phonetics, we study its concepts and gain an understanding of how spoken language works. It is interesting to observe the development*

of vowels, consonants, and the movements made by the mouth when pronouncing words in English".

Participant 1 mentions that the study of Phonetics raises awareness of sounds and highlights the connection between understanding these sounds and improving pronunciation. Participant 15 expresses an interest in studying vowels, consonants, and the articulation of the mouth to produce sounds. Therefore, the study of Phonetics, specifically the articulation of human sounds (Knight, 2012), becomes valuable when learners recognize its importance both as speakers and future teachers.

Participant 2: "*Yes, it seems that the professor had a strong understanding of the course, as well as extensive knowledge and confidence in communicating in English. They conveyed these qualities to the class, correcting students' pronunciation to improve both communication and their perception of words in the language.*".

Participant 2 observes that the professor's teaching abilities significantly contributed to the learning process. As Bettoni and Campos (2017) point out, teachers need to be well-prepared and use effective approaches to guide their students in language instruction. In *Letras-inglês* context, well-prepared professors can foster a sense of confidence in their students, which in turn leads to increased motivation.

Participant 5: "*Yes, we realized, as students and future teachers, that the difficulty in conversing in English is common. However, having some knowledge of* Fonética da LI *not only makes communication easier but also boosts our confidence in oral communication and other English skills*.".

When analyzing this participant's response, it becomes clear that they associate improved pronunciation with increased confidence in oral communication. According to Williams and Burden 1997 (*apud* Rone *et al.*, 2023), motivation is a state of cognitive and emotional stimulation that drives individuals to continue making efforts toward achieving their goals. Thus, when students learn how to pronounce words accurately and experience its advantages in oral communication, they get motivated, leading to greater engagement in their studies.

Participant 7: "*Yes, it helped me understand the sounds that I did not know how to articulate correctly and highlighted the importance of Phonetics and Phonology studies for a teacher to guide students to develop their potential in speaking with intelligibility.*".

Based on this participant's response and insights gained from the study of Phonetics and Phonology, it is clear they understand how these fields help students articulate and

manipulate sounds in a language. Hence, Phonetics provides the tools to comprehend sound production (Night, 2012) and supports learners in mastering accurate pronunciation and understanding sounds within a language system.

Participant 8: "*Yes, at university I could improve my English and my pronunciation. Therefore, I believe that I can teach my students the knowledge I did not acquire as a student at the regular school.*".

Even though it is not specified whether the participant studied at a private or public school, it is important to note that, as Silva Jr. (2018) points out, the teaching of pronunciation is often not given significant attention in the teaching approaches at universities or public schools. According to Kelly (2006), pronunciation teaching is often neglected, so the participant's intention to apply the knowledge gained as an English teacher highlights a commitment to addressing this gap. By integrating their Phonetics and Phonology knowledge into their teaching, they aim to emphasize the importance of accurate pronunciation, thereby potentially improving the overall effectiveness of English language instruction.

Participant 11: "*Yes, the knowledge acquired in the courses Fonética da LI contributed to my development as an English speaker and future teacher. These courses provided me with a deep understanding of English language sounds, which is essential for correcting pronunciation and improving auditory perception.*".

Based on this response, this participant mentions that delving into the study of Phonetics and Phonology allows one to grasp the specific nuances of these fields. Therefore, this deeper understanding leads to a more confident and comprehensive grasp of sound systems, which can be applied to improving pronunciation.

Participant 20: "*Yes, I used to speak using sounds from my first language, but when I realized how it sounded, I started to fix my pronunciation and see how I improved my speaking skills. It got easier to explain and teach others.*".

It is evident that this participant initially faced difficulties with English word pronunciation. However, after studying Phonetics and gaining a deeper understanding of the English language, the participant developed Phonological Awareness. This means they became more aware of pronunciation (Alves, 2012), recognizing patterns, and addressing issues related to speech in English. Consequently, they are now better equipped to understand and apply correct pronunciation in the educational environment, especially pronunciation teaching.

Participant 22: "*Yes, the knowledge gained from the courses significantly contributed to my development as both a speaker and a future teacher. I think that equipped me with the tools to diagnose and address pronunciation issues in learners, helping me provide more effective instruction and support for students aiming to improve their English pronunciation.*".

According to this participant's response, the study of Phonetics and Phonology contributed to their development as a speaker. This shows the importance of studying Phonetics and Phonology, as learners gain the tools to improve their pronunciation and achieve more effective oral communication.

Participants 6, 7, 11, 14, 20 and 22 reported that their studies in Phonetics and Phonology have significantly contributed to their development. They also noted that understanding how sounds are produced has made their speech clearer and more accurate. Furthermore, they believe this knowledge will be valuable in their future careers as English teachers, helping them teach pronunciation more effectively and feel more confident in the classroom. This supports Katz's (2013) assertion that studying Phonetics improves learners' speaking skills and enhances their comfort in teaching the language.

DO YOU CONSIDER IT IMPORTANT FOR AN ENGLISH TEACHER TO HAVE A CERTAIN DEGREE OF KNOWLEDGE IN PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY? WHY?

Out of 22 participants, up to 91% agreed it is important, whereas up to 9% have a different opinion.

Participant 21: "*I think having some knowledge of this can be important because it can be useful in class, for instance, to share curiosities about the language or to highlight differences between English and Portuguese. However, I don't think schools must focus heavily on the nuances of students' pronunciation*".

According to this participant's response, while studies in Phonetics and Phonology are useful for specific matters in class, schools do not need to focus heavily on teaching pronunciation to students. It is important to note that university professors should be proficient in Phonetics and Phonology, as they are responsible for training future educators in this area. In regular schools, however, teachers do not need to delve deeply into Phonetics and Phonology; instead, they need to apply these principles to enhance their students' pronunciation. Consequently, rather than deeply studying phonetic concepts,

regular school students will become proficient English speakers, being able to reflect on their pronunciation and recognize the differences between L1 and L2 sounds.

Participant 22: "*I don't believe it's essential for an English teacher to have an extensive background in Phonetics and Phonology. While understanding these areas can be beneficial, the primary focus of teaching should be on communication skills, engaging lessons, and fostering a supportive learning environment.*".

Participant 22 acknowledges the benefits of Phonetics and Phonology but emphasizes that teachers should prioritize communication skills. As an approach, students need first to become familiar with the sounds of a language before learning to write in it (Cagliari, 1978). Therefore, teachers need to recognize the importance of Phonetics and Phonology in teaching pronunciation. This understanding can help integrate effective pronunciation strategies into communication across various contexts, such as professional, cultural, and educational settings.

Participant 1: "*Yes, teachers with knowledge in Phonetics can explain how to produce specific sounds more easily and clearly, which helps students improve their pronunciation.*".

Based on this response, it can be affirmed that when teachers integrate their approaches with Phonetics and Phonology, they will help students improve their pronunciation, leading to more effective and confident speaking skills.

Participant 2: "*Certainly! From the student's perspective, it is very difficult to have a teacher who does not convey confidence and skill in communicating in English.*".

Participant 5: "*Yes, because it is important that the teacher has this knowledge and can transmit to their students adequately, so the listener understands what was said.*".

Participant 11: "*Yes, an English teacher needs to know Phonetics and Phonology. This knowledge is essential for correcting students' pronunciation, improving their listening skills, and explaining phonetic nuances effectively. Additionally, it allows for precise diagnosis and correction of errors, enriching the teaching with a deeper understanding of the sounds of the language.*".

Participant 14: "*Yes. An English teacher needs to know what phonemes are and how sounds are classified in the English language*.".

According to these responses, Participants 2, 5, 11, and 14 believe that teachers must be knowledgeable and well-prepared when it comes to teaching pronunciation. Specifically, when addressing speaking skills, they emphasize that teaching pronunciation

becomes easier when approached through Phonetics and Phonology. This is because Phonetics and Phonology provide a systematic understanding of sounds, enabling teachers to guide students more effectively in mastering accurate pronunciation. By focusing on the sound patterns of English, teachers can offer clearer explanations, helping students speak accurately and confidently.

Participant 10: "*To teach their students how to articulate effectively in everyday life and, importantly, to highlight the differences in speaking skills, teachers should provide correct guidance without discouraging students or labeling them as 'right' or 'wrong.'*".

According to this response, the participant highlights the benefits of Phonetics in keeping students engaged and motivated. Teachers should avoid labeling students' pronunciation attempts as simply "correct" or "wrong." Instead, they should recognize that students learn at different paces – some grasp concepts quickly, while others may take longer (Jasim; Nithyanantham, 2021). Therefore, rather than focusing solely on correctness, teachers should respect each student's progress and development. By doing so, they can create a supportive learning environment where students feel confident to improve and communicate orally in the language.

Based on the results herein presented we will answer the research questions posed in the 'Introduction' of this work.

1) Why do most students lack motivation in Phonetics and Phonology?

According to the responses, the difficulties students encountered while studying *Fonética da LI* in *Letras-inglês*, such as terminology (Katz, 2013), variations, and similar phonemes between L1 and L2 (Steinberg, 1985), may have led to a lack of motivation toward Phonetics and Phonology, resulting in their decision to pursue other research areas for their monographs or final papers.

This aligns with our data, which suggests that the low number of final papers in Phonetics and Phonology may be related to these difficulties. It is also supported by the literature review, which observes that specific aspects of Phonetics and Phonology—such as those cited by most participants—can discourage students.

Besides, our findings are aligned to Ogden (2009), Hayes 2001 (*apud* Silva Jr., 2018), and Roach 2005 (*apud* Silva Jr., 2018), as we noticed that due to these challenges in *Fonética da LI*, students may feel uncomfortable and struggle with tasks when professors assign exercises and experiments related to acoustic and perceptual Phonetics, such as producing and recognizing sounds in L2. Students may attribute their difficulties in

Phonetics and Phonology to exercises involving sound production and perception or to software for acoustic Phonetic analysis, which may lead to a lack of motivation (Rone *et al* 2023), (Masgoret and Gardner 2003 *apud* Naderifarjad and Yousofi, 2015) in developing such tasks.

2) *Could the study of Phonetics and Phonology meaningfully contribute to the formation of students in Letras-inglês, particularly in preparing them to become proficient L2 speakers and future educators?*

Participants' responses indicate that Phonetics and Phonology positively contributed to their development as English teachers by equipping them with tools to teach the language accurately and helping them become proficient speakers through the knowledge gained in *Fonética da LI* in *Letras-inglês.* Therefore, based on this and the literature review, Phonetics and Phonology contribute meaningfully to the formation of students in *Letras-inglês*, both as L2 speakers and future teachers.

Even though they encountered difficulties in *Fonética da LI*, they understood the importance of Phonetics and Phonology and the key issues related to L2 pronunciation. Most of them believe that speaking English accurately is not synonymous with acquiring native-like pronunciation. This is a positive insight, as *Fonética da LI* enables them to perceive, articulate, and produce L2 sounds (Night, 2012), providing essential tools for speaking and teaching L2 pronunciation proficiently, without the expectation of speaking like a native (Cagliari, 1978).

As a student and monitor of *Fonética da LI*, I was able to witness that L2 pronunciation is often approached with respect, challenging the beliefs that there are only two ways to pronounce an L2: like a native or incorrectly. It was emphasized that a foreign accent is not inherently negative when it aims for accurate pronunciation. Therefore, this approach encourages speakers/future educators to embrace their unique accents as part of their language journey, fostering confidence and a more inclusive perspective on language pronunciation/teaching.

Finally, to teach accurate pronunciation and effectively address specific challenges in L2 learning, it is crucial for educators – both professors and *Letras-inglês* students – to have a solid understanding of Phonetics and Phonology. This knowledge will also help increase the number of proficient L2 speakers within the global community.

In summary, analyzing the participants' responses throughout the entire questionnaire, we find that up to 9% of participants plan to focus their monographs/final

papers on Phonetics and Phonology, and a significant portion (up to 77%) found the courses in this area challenging. However, most recognize its importance, with up to 77% stating it contributed to their growth as speakers or future educators, and up to 91% believing it is important for English teachers to have a certain knowledge in Phonetics and Phonology. Additionally, up to 95% agree that proper pronunciation does not mean sounding like a native speaker. Despite the challenges, up to 18% considered pursuing Phonetics and Phonology for their monographs/final papers in *Letras-inglês.*

FINAL REMARKS

This research focused on *Fonética da LI* within *Letras-inglês*. This research is relevant because it identifies barriers to effective learning in these courses and suggests improvements, it is important to understand how these courses contribute to *Letras-inglês* students teaching practices and show the effectiveness of Phonetics and Phonology to better support both students and future educators.

As the general objective, this research investigated the factors contributing to students' lack of motivation in *Fonética da LI*. Regarding the specific objectives, this research (1) reflected on the importance and contributions of Phonetics and Phonology in *Letras-inglês*; (2) evaluated the impact of *Fonética da LI* on future educators' professional development, and (3) examined the perceived importance of *Fonética da LI* for future educators.

The results indicate that the courses *Fonética da LI* are significant for the development of both L2 speakers and future educators in *Letras-inglês*. The majority of participants reported that these courses provided essential tools for proficient oral language use, as the study of Phonetics and Phonology enhances pronunciation skills.

The analysis shows that a significant number of participants reported difficulties in *Fonética da LI*, primarily related to a) the terminology, b) the large number of IPA symbols and their specific pronunciations, and c) sounds that are either very similar to or absent in Brazilian Portuguese phonological system.

As demonstrated by our data most participants disagreed with the notion that correct pronunciation is synonymous with sounding like a native English speaker. They asserted that achieving accurate pronunciation is possible without having a native-like accent, which they believe is crucial for their future careers as teachers. This perspective is important for fostering a comfortable classroom environment while teaching students L2 pronunciation.

The results reveal that nearly all participants affirmed that the knowledge gained from *Fonética da LI* significantly contributed to their development as speakers and future English teachers. They also regard it as important for English teachers to have a certain level of knowledge in Phonetics and Phonology. This is especially notable because, despite facing challenges and not selecting Phonetics and Phonology as the focus of their monographs/final papers, they still recognize the importance of these courses. Additionally, according to data collected, some students are producing their monographs/final papers in Phonetics and Phonology studies in the ongoing semester, which contributes positively to the increasing number of research in the area.

The hypothesis of this research was that Phonetics and Phonology's terminology, along with phonic differences between L1 and L2, might contribute to students' lack of motivation in *Fonética da LI*, and that these courses contribute significantly to *Letras-inglês* students, particularly as proficient L2 speakers and future educators.

In conclusion, the results from the questionnaire are aligned to the literature, as they revealed that *Letras-inglês* students encounter difficulties with the technical terminology of Phonetics and Phonology, as well as the differences between their native language (L1) and foreign language (L2), including variations or absent phonemes.

Finally, to teach accurate pronunciation and effectively address specific challenges in L2 learning, it is crucial for educators – both professors and *Letras-inglês* students – to have a solid understanding of Phonetics and Phonology. This knowledge will also help increase the number of proficient L2 speakers within the global community.

As suggestions for future studies, increasing the number of *Letras-inglês* students as participants could represent a broader impact. Involving teachers currently working in the field of education and extending the research to other UEPB *Campi* could also provide valuable perspectives and insights to enhance the study. Additionally, expanding the research to include alumni whose final papers focused on Phonetics and Phonology could be significant for understanding their current perspectives on the area.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

gratitude to the study participants, whose involvement and contributions were essential for the development and enrichment of the results presented.

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