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Teaching English Phonetics:
a current perspective through
Guido Puccio's studies

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Contents

Preface

First of all, I want to thank my University, which is the University of Calabria, because it helped me learn a lot of things and grow up as a student and a woman.

Now, with the skills acquired, I am confident and ready to go wherever I want without any fears. Furthermore, I want to thank the CLA, the Academic Linguistic Centre of my University. On the 30th of January 2017, my birthday, the CLA announced a public competition on its website: the "Guido Puccio" scholarship that would have been assigned to one of University of Calabria's current master students that covered Guido Puccio's studies in their thesis and have a good knowledge of the English language (at least B1 level, in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). Any eligible student was required to deliver the necessary paperwork. If the paperwork was considered satisfactory by the CLA, he or she would have been invited to an interview with an examination board composed of an English teacher, the President of the CLA, the Responsible of the competition and the President of the Italian-Slavic Association of Rome that offered the scholarship to the students of the University of Calabria. During the interview the invited students had to show their English level, motivate their interest on Guido Puccio's studies. Lastly each one of us had to illustrate a good research project related to Guido Puccio's studies which has been done in England. Luckily, I won and I think it happened because the examination board considered me the best competitor among everybody. I am very happy I had been given this opportunity. It meant a lot to me and I am really grateful.

I want to acknowledge the Italian-Slavic Association of Rome. Also, I would like to give my very heartfelt thanks to Matilde Zinzi, who is the President of the Association, it was surprising to discover that she is usually called Marta in honour of her maternal grandmother Marta Szuch Rydzewska who was Guido Puccio's wife. Last but not least I would like to extend my special gratitude to Guido Puccio's children: Ninì and Gianni (the founder of the Italian-Slavic Association).

Lastly, a big thank you to my parents who encouraged me to compete in the contest, to travel to England and to pursue my interest.

Thank to the scholarship I could stay three weeks in Cambridge during August 2017 where I attended very good English classes at the *Regent School* one of the best schools of English in the UK. I am glad because I had the possibility to improve my English there. In Cambridge I met a lot of students coming from all over the World, I made friends speaking only in English. Obviously, I was very happy to get to know them and discover their

interesting cultures. Furthermore, in that city I had a very pleasant time, it is a lovely city and people speak a very clear and understandable English.

Also, during the time spent in Cambridge I visited some of the best libraries of England, in order to do researches on the topic of this paper. Firstly I went to the beautiful and ancient Cambridge University Library where I consulted some useful handbooks of phonetics and several essays concerning this topic I was dealing with.

Secondly, I went to visit The British Library in London I was really surprised that in that amazing place there were some Guido Puccio's books. In addition to that, I attended with interest every lesson I had at Regent School in Cambridge and I discovered special teaching phonetic strategies.

When I came back Italy, I went to the National Library of Rome, to the National Library of Cosenza and to the BAU that is the humanist library of my University, in order to have access to some of the books written by Puccio himself.

So to write this paper, I also examined the Notes Collection of Guido Puccio's English lessons at La Sapienza University, that Matilde Zinzi kindly gave me. The notes were taken, organized and edited by Umberto Cassinis e Dino Genta, two Puccio's students who created a collection called *Notes of English Phonetics* (1940)[1]. The Collection is composed of two parts, but I was most interested in the first one because it is about English Grammar, Phonetics, Pronunciation, The Accent and The Phonetic Transcription. Infact, one of my goals is to know Guido Puccio's interests and his exemplary phonetics teaching that allowed him to make a name for himself.

This research on Giudo Puccio's life and works and the opportunity of a scholarship to stay in Cambridge was not only an interesting experience for me, it was very useful to me to deepen my skills concerning how to learn and to teach foreign languages. Since in a possible future I see myself as an English teacher I am sure this knowledge acquired through Puccio's works will not be wasted but I will use his advice.

Personally, I think that Guido Puccio and me have some elements in common: I am Italian, I am from Calabria like him, I like foreign languages too and I would like to work in the Education System too. Last but not least, I love England, especially London, where Mr. Puccio lived for a long time. In my opinion anyone who wants to pursue a teaching career or is interested in learning English should at least read Guido Puccio's works because they not just reflect his great wisdom but also contain his ideas that could be useful tools to learn and to teach English.

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[1] Cassinis U., Genta D., *Appunti di fonetica inglese raccolti dalle lezioni di Guido Puccio,* D.u.s.a., Dispenze Universitarie Soc. An., Roma, 1940.

Introduction

<div align="right">

*To speak means
to assume a culture,
to support the weight of a civilization.
(Frantz Fanon, 1952)*

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For a start, the purpose of this paper is to offer a thorough examination of a specific subject that is the *Ways to teach English Phonetics*. I chose this topic because it is one of the most critical themes studied by Guido Puccio during his career.

During the first Teachers Democratic Conference in Rome in 1944 Puccio discussed the common failures in regards to the teaching of foreign languages at schools and at Universities, paying particular attention to the teaching of English. Furthermore, being an English teacher himself at La Sapienza University, Puccio noticed teachers were treating phonetics with widespread disregard which was evident from the poor performances of the students. For this reason, Guido Puccio proposed to create some phonetic laboratories within the Universities, to practice alone or with the teacher's support[2].

Puccio's desire to improve the quality of teaching English in Italy is possibly what led him to write the handbook *Phonetics and English language* (1943)[3]. His collaboration with other renowned English teachers in London proved his devotion to contribute to a higher, and overall superior, level of English being taught in Italy.

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[2] I° Convegno democratico degli insegnanti, Schema della relazione del prof. Guido Puccio dell'Università di Roma, *L'insegnamento delle lingue straniere*, Roma, 2-6 Ottobre, 1944.
[3] Puccio G., *Fonetica e Lingua Inglese,* Tipografia V. Ferri, Roma, 1943.

Guido Puccio

Guido Puccio was an Italian writer, journalist and poet. He was born on 1st March, 1894, in Catanzaro, a city located in the South of Italy. He spent the time of his life living between Italy and England and visiting a lot of places around the world, but he died in Catanzaro on 8th April, 1980.

He was married with Marta Szuch Rydzewska, a beautiful and intelligent Polish woman and they had two children Gianni and Ninì[4].

Guido Puccio studied at the University of Venice "Ca' Foscari" where he got a degree in Comparative Literature in 1920, achieving the best marks and a scholarship. His thesis was related to the English Literature, the topic focused on the Georgian poets: *Masefild, Drinkwater, Rupert Brooke, Walter de la Mare* and others.

He worked with many newspapers around the world, for example, *La Tribuna* which was published in Rome and other Italian ones like *L'illustrazione italiana*, *Risorgimento liberale, Noi e il Mondo.*

Additionally, he worked with some foreign newspapers like the *Daily Express*, published in London, *La Naciòn* and *La Folha de S. Paulo*, the most important newspapers published in Latin America[5]. Also, he worked at the radio *EIAR,* the best institutional radio at that time.

He wrote a lot of books in Italian and in English. It is fascinating that he considered the reader of his books like his partner during the trips narrated in the stories[6].

In this paper some of his works will be mentioned, for instance I can start to mention *Shakespeare in the Chancery Lane archive* (1973) that contains a description of the Shakespeare's testament. Another important book was *The journey into the memory of a journalist* (1974). The book contains information about Guido Puccio's life, his dreams and his personal experiences in Venice, in London and around the World. In the book, Guido talks his childhood and his work as a teacher at La Sapienza University of Rome. The book is also about the writer's homeland, it offers information about the World War II, and also about Malta Isle and the situation of Europe at that time. The work also contains something about the Orient that Guido Puccio loved a lot. Also, Guido added in this book the Lappish world, describing their habits, style of life and their amazing land. Puccio also wrote a book for his students with the title *Customs on the Other Side of the Channel* (1961). In the book Puccio showed its English life within the British Isles and the United

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[4] Puccio G., *Una lezione di vita,* Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2003.
[5] Puccio G., *Calavrisa sugnu e me ne vanto: cose della mia terra,* Scena Illustrata, Roma, 1976.
[6] Puccio G., *Una lezione di vita,* Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2003.

States. It is everyday English life especially his time in London and Cambridge, which this booklet is intended to describe, in some of its typical manifestations. Another important book was *The fight between two worlds* (1942) that is dedicated to his children. It describes the great Imperial Italy and the sacrifices done by the men who were killed during the war. This book contains a lot of interesting information but, probably, the most impressive one is the anticipation of *The Brexit* contained in the 20th chapter[7].

In addition to this, Guido Puccio also wrote about the importance of Italian Language in Malta Isle, in the following books: *Malta Italianissima* (1940)*, The question of the Italian language in Malta* (1928) and *The Anglo-Maltese conflict* (1933)*.

It is well known that Guido Puccio was also a poet, he wrote some collections of poems: *The voices from the deep* (1976), *Words on the sand* (1930) *Other words on the sand* (1971) and *A lesson of the life* (2003). The latter contains in its first part the tale of his experience in Lapponia and (in the second part) some nice verses. The poems in the book are dedicated to Marta, his lovely wife, to the Earth and its future, to London, to the Soviet Union and to its favourite poets: John Masefild (an English man) and Giuseppe Casalinuovo (from Calabria)[8].

Mr. Puccio was also interested in theatre and wrote *The son, a play divided in 4 acts* (1923) set in Oxford. Furthermore, he dedicated some works to Domenico Cimarosa, who was considered the best artist among all the Neapolitan comedians of that time[9].

Moreover, Puccio was interested in Music, so he decided to write some essays about Igor Strawinskij a famous musician from Petersburg and Alfonso Rendano, a musician from Cosenza, in the South of Italy[10]. In Cosenza, there is a theatre *Teatro Rendano* dedicated to this famous musician. The monograph about the artist exalts and enhances the man in a masterful manner[11].

Also, Puccio was keen on studying about Arthur Johns Strutt, a famous English painter and traveller, because he met his son Edward C. Strutt in Rome. Edward was a journalist like Puccio. Arthur Johns Strutt travelled to the South of Italy in 1840; his trip was so interesting that he decided to write a book about it and call it *A pedestrian tour in Calabria and Sicily* (1971). Edward C. Strutt gave Puccio a copy of this book as a souvenir[12].

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[7] Puccio G., *Lotta fra due mondi,* Edizioni italiane, Roma, 1942.
[8] Puccio G., *Una lezione di vita,* Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2003.
[9] Gasco A., *Da Cimarosa a Strawinsky: celebrazioni, critica spicciola, interviste, prefazione di Guido Puccio,* De Santis, Roma, 1939.
[10] Puccio G., *Alfonso Rendano,* Signorelli Angelo, Roma, 1937.
[11] Idem.
[12] Strutt A.J., *A pedestrian tour in Calabria and Sicily,* Ente provinciale per il turismo, Catanzaro, 1961.

Guido Puccio loved it so much that he dedicated a gorgeous preface to this book and decided to translate it in Italian, it is possible to read the translation in Puccio's book *Calabria Sicilia 1840* (1970)*,* which offers also useful information about Strutt and his life. It is well known that Puccio was an active and a clever Journalist, in addition to this he carried out a course of compared journalism in Rome[13]. When he was in London he attended a Phonetic course with the famous teacher Daniele Jones who wrote the *English Pronouncing Dictionary* (1956) that turned on Puccio's interest on this topic[14].

When Guido Puccio taught at La Sapienza University of Rome he paid attention to the difficulty that Latin people found learning English.

According to Puccio (Cassinis, Genta, 1940) most difficult part of learning English was to learn its pronunciation. For this reason, Puccio during his time in London worked with the most ingenious and famous specialists in the world, who were interested in this problem and who helped him to write the handbook *Phonetics and English language* (1943)[15], a very useful resource to study English[16].

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[13] Puccio G., *Viaggio nella memoria di un giornalista:dal boia d'Inghilterra ai misteri di Hong Kong,* La cultura, Roma, 1974.

[14] Cassinis U., Genta D., *Appunti di fonetica inglese raccolti dalle lezioni di Guido Puccio,* D.u.s.a., Dispenze Universitarie Soc. An., Roma, 1940.

[15] Puccio G., *Fonetica e Lingua Inglese,* Tipografia V. Ferri, Roma, 1943.

[16] Puccio G., *Una lezione di vita,* Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2003.

1. Studying and Teaching Phonetics

If you can speak,
you can do anything
(Sir Winston Churchill)[17]

First of all, I would like to say that, from mid-19th to mid-20th century, the field of linguistics and phonetics flourished. It is important to clarify that phonetics is the study of natural human language, the science which analyses and records sounds and other elements of speech and their use and distribution in connected sentences. Furthermore, phonetics is a science that teachers should know and apply in a practical fashion when teaching pronunciation. For the purpose of recording speech sounds, without fear of ambiguity it is necessary to make use of a phonetics alphabet, i.e. an alphabet based on the principle of one letter per phoneme[18].

According to Guido Puccio (Cassinis, Genta, 1940), there are two forms of language: *eye language* and *ear language*. When a teacher is teaching English Phonetics he or she has to start by teaching the fundamental sounds, because the vocal cords, the tongue and the lips have to begin their training, this passage is very useful for the next ones. Puccio stated that it is necessary to start training *the ear* instead of beginning to train *the eye.* So, according to Puccio, the ear has to be free from any distraction and it has to focus on to catch the right sounds. Then, the next step is to write these sounds with special symbols illustrated in The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) that is a set of symbols that represents all of the sounds that humans use in languages[19].

The International Phonetic Association (IPA) was established in 1886, emphasizing, among other things, the importance of speech in language teaching by using phonetic training, conversations and dialogues.

According to Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994), learners were presented with the spoken form of language before seeing it in writing. Speaking, including pronunciation, was emphasized, and the teacher encourage learners to use the foreign language rather than relying on translation[20].

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[17] Sir Winston Churchill, British prime minister.
[18] Cassinis U., Genta D., *Appunti di fonetica inglese raccolti dalle lezioni di Guido Puccio,* D.u.s.a., Dispenze Universitarie Soc. An., Roma, 1940.
[19] Idem.
[20] Dalton C., Seidlhofer B., *Pronunciation,* Oxford University Press, 1994.

Guido Puccio (Cassinis, Genta, 1940), highlighted that the teacher has to give the right pronunciation of the key words and if a student want to study alone he or she can use *The Linguaphone course*[21].

As Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994) point out *Pronunciation* is the term usually given to the process of teaching learners to produce the sounds of a language[22].

As Bowler (1999) stated pronunciation is one of the skills involved in learning any language. There are four terms relating to the whole field, they are: *phonetics, phonology, pronunciation and phonics.*

Firstly, *Phonetics* is scientific, in the sense that it is objective rather than subjective. When we speak to someone, there are three phases of the communication process:

- The speaker uses his vocal organs (lungs, vocal cords, tongue, lips) to produce sounds. This aspect is known as *articulatory* phonetics.
- The speaker sounds are vibrations of air particles (sound waves). The technical study of these vibration is known as *acoustic* phonetic.
- The sound waves reach the listener's ear, travel along his ear canal and cause the ear drum to vibrate. This movement is transmitted to the brain and ultimately interpreted. This aspect is known as *auditory* phonetics.

Secondly, *Phonology* describes the way that the sounds produced by vocal human organs function in particular languages and how sounds occur, function and combine in them[23].

It also assumes an understanding of what constitutes good practice in language teaching, factors such as the motivation and attitude of the learners, etc. One problem with teaching pronunciation is that the whole concept of pronunciation can be analyzed as being composed of many aspects, all of which are present at the same time in speech. Teachers of English need to know about the language, and, about all the various components that make up pronunciation[24].

Thirdly*, Phonics* is a method of teaching reading and writing that relies on phonological awareness. That is, learners are trained in dividing spoken words into their constituent syllables, those syllables into their constituent sounds, and then relating these constituent

[21] Cassinis U., Genta D., *Appunti di fonetica inglese raccolti dalle lezioni di Guido Puccio,* D.u.s.a., Dispenze Universitarie Soc. An., Roma, 1940.

[22] Dalton, C., Seidlhofer, *Pronunciation,* Oxford University Press, 1994.

[23] Wells, J.C. and G. *Colson, Practical Phonetics*, Bath, Pitman Press, 1971.

[24] Jones D., *The Pronunciation of English,* Cambridge University Press, 1956.

sounds to the letters that represent them in writing. In this way, learners are better equipped for dealing with new words[25].

All three aspects; *phonology, pronunciation and phonics* belong to the field of phonetics[26]. The abstract unit of sound which is manifested by different types of sound is known as a *phoneme*. It is put in slant brackets: /_/. The individual sounds that manifest the phoneme are called *allophones* and are put in square brackets: [__]. A pair of words are known as a *minimal pair*.

Nevertheless, in the field of pronunciation teaching, it is clear that many features of learners' speech can be predicted or explained by reference to features of their first language[27].

Learning a second language differs from the process of learning a first language. Second language learners have already learned their first language so, they have therefore already internalized the set of sounds used in their first language, but these sounds will not correspond exactly to those of the second language. Contrastive analysis is based on the principle that the pronunciation problems of English learners can be predicted by analyzing the phonological system of English and that of their first language[28].

1.1. How and Why to teach Phonetics?

There are several methods for teaching Phonetics: *synthetic phonics, analytic phonics or analogy phonics*[29].

In *synthetic phonics*, students learn the letters sounds and then they learn to blend these letter sounds to read the words.

In *Analytic phonics*, students learn to analyse letter sounds relations. In this method, for example, a teacher writes the letter *p* followed by several words: *put, pig, pen, play*. The teacher helps students to read the words by noting that each word begins with the same sound that is associated with the letter *p*[30].

In *Analogy phonics*, students learn to use parts of written words they already know to identify new words. For example, with the word "tent" the onset is "t" and the rime is "-

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[25] Kenworthy, J. *Teaching English Pronunciation,* Harlow, Longman, 1987.
[26] Ashby, P. *Speech Sounds,* London, Routledge, 1995.
[27] Swan M., Smith B., *Learner English,* Scott Thornbury, 2001.
[28] Purcell E., Suter R., *Predictors of pronunciation accuracy: a reexamination,* Language Learning, 1976.
[29] www.teachingenglish.org.uk
[30] Idem.

ent". Students are taught to take the rime "-ent" and blend it with new onsets, e.g. r-ent, b-ent, s-ent[31].

Jo Gakonga thinks that: *"the biggest advantage to study phonetics is to capture the intangible"*[32]. When you learn a language like English, it is possible that the spelling, for historical reasons does not correspond with the sound, so it is helpful to capture what you hear. According to Guido Puccio (Cassini, Genta, 1940), the voice of the teacher plays a very important role in the class. He claimed that the basis of all speech training is ear-training. Furthermore he argued that it is a good strategy to dictate some meaningless words that are nonsense words to train the students' ear, because in this manner students pay attention only to the right transcription of a word rather than to the meaning of it.

The communicative revolution that began in the 1970, emphasized that learners learn a language by using it to communicate. Teaching can thus be *learner-centered*, rather than *teacher-driven*.

Usually, we know that teacher cannot decide to conduct a lesson without using pronunciation, as soon as the teacher opens his mouth in class, the learners are exposed to every feature of pronunciation. Generally, teaching pronunciation should be communicative and it should present authentic materials.

Furthermore it should ensure the transfer of skills outside the classroom[33]. Teachers cannot overlook the importance of individual differences. Many English language teachers treat pronunciation as if it was not important[34].

Richards and Rodgers (2001) state that the effects of teaching pronunciation may not be immediately apparent, because of a restructuring of the phonological system within the learner. But it is also important to remember that the measure of success in teaching pronunciation lies in long-term improvement, outside the classroom and after the course has finished.

It is very important to provide *motivation* to language learners. Teachers should research ways to increase when teaching. Methods of lowering learners' affective filters include: active listening on the teacher's side and make the learner an active member of the class. Also, a conductive and non-threatening classroom environment is desirable[35].

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[31] Idem.

[32] Jo Gakonga is a teacher trainer in the UK. Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xx_X-LDgWfs (In the video the sentence is said at 3:54 minutes)

[33] Richards J.C., Rodgers T.S., *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching,* Cambridge University Press, 2001.

[34] Idem.

[35] Molan Network Project, *Handbook on good practice that serves to motivate language learners,* 2013.

It is fundamental that pronunciation should be a central and integrated part of the curriculum, rather than an add-on.

Guido Puccio (Cassini, Genta, 1940) stated that intonation is very important as it is the music of the words. The phonetic transcription is linked with the value that the words have in the sentence. When we read, we have to imitate the intonation of English people[36]. A clever accent reduction teacher of Regent School whose the name is Simon Gfeller[37] likes to teach phonetics paying attention to *Accent Reduction*. According to Gfeller the general relativity of accents are verbal tokens of a person's heritage, background and life story. Also, linguistic determinism's hidden gems and accents are not a thing to be suppressed as they bring about diversity and different ways of thinking about the world[38]. Yet, Gfeller during one of his lessons at Regent School liked to quote the Centre for economic performance, and he mentioned that: *"Currently, about one in nine children between the age of 5 and 11 do not have English as a first language in the UK"[39]*.

Gfeller aims for greater intelligibility and confidence whilst remaining true to a person's cultural specificity. He analyzed different languages like Latin Languages, he reported that these languages have some specific features. They have *double consonants, shadow vowels, rolled r and schwas in ending.*

Gfeller thinks that to recycle mistakes in new exercises might be a good teaching strategy. Another useful strategy is to put three words in context like Reality, Rarely and Really, then read them randomly and slowly then with increasing speed, in order to enable the students to understand the differences of the words.

Innovations in teaching phonetics flourish in the area of information technology[40]. ICT in general and Interactive Whiteboards in particular, have the potential to impact on and provide benefits for phonics teaching and learning.

The teachers at Regent School suggest some good books, like *English Pronunciation in Use* (2012)[41], *Headway Pronunciation series* (1999)[42] and *Pronunciation Games* (1995)[43]

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[36] Cassinis U**.,** Genta D., *Appunti di fonetica inglese raccolti dalle lezioni di Guido Puccio,* D.u.s.a., Dispenze Universitarie Soc. An., Roma, 1940.
[37] Simon Gfeller is an English man who teaches English at Regent School in Cambridge, particularly, he is a qualified teacher accent reduction.
[38] Lessons Notes at Regent School. August 20017.
[39] Centre for economic performance, LSE.
[40] Almihmadi M.M., *Teaching English Phonetics to Non-native Speakers of English: an innovative Construction Paradigm,* Umm Al-Qura University, Frontiers of Language and Teaching, Volume 3, Saudi Arabia, 2012.
[41] Mark Hancock, *English Pronunciation in Use,* Cambridge University press, 2012.
[42] Bowler B., Cunningham S., Moor P., Parminter S., *Headway Pronuniciation Course Elementary*, Oxford University Press, 1999.
[43] Hancock M., *Pronunciation Game,* Cambridge University Press, 1995.

or some websites for studying phonetics[44]. These resources are very useful, especially for self-studying phonetics. During the lessons, they use to pronounce the words and ask students to repeat it[45].

To identify the weak forms of the words, during the lesson, the teacher gives students a paper containing a dialogue with some gaps, then the students have to fill the gaps with the right words listening to the dialogue.

Guido Puccio (Cassinis, Genta, 1940) argued that to improve students' pronunciation it was useful to have conversations with native English speakers. But it is not always possible, so in alternative he advised to read theatrical English works, because the dialogues are written in a simple and clear manner[46].

2. Speech production

As Brown (2014) says, for students to learn segmental effects, they first need to encounter the rudiments of speech production, especially speech organs and the specific articulation maneuvers that produce the different types of speech sounds. The *organs of speech or the vocal organs* are the parts of the body that are used in producing speech sounds[47].
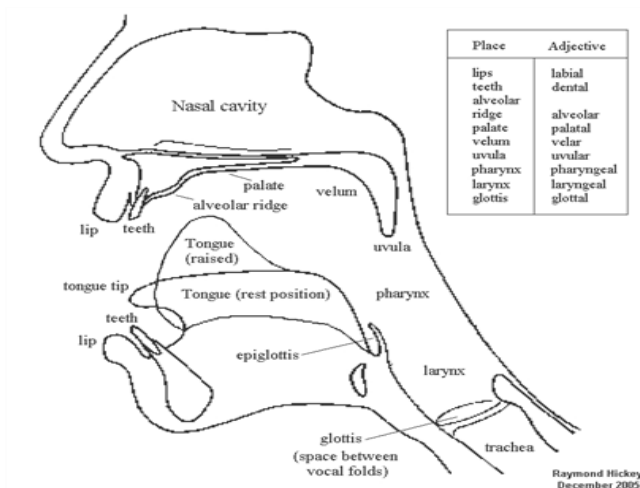
In addition, all English speech sounds are made using air from the lungs. The same apparatus is used in speech and for breathing. The lungs take in air for breathing and, as the air is expelled, it is obstructed and modified in various ways in order to create different

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[44] www.podcastsinenglish.com, or www.englishclub.com
[45] Lessons Notes at Regent School. August 20017.
[46] Cassinis U., Genta D., *Appunti di fonetica inglese raccolti dalle lezioni di Guido Puccio,* D.u.s.a., Dispenze Universitarie Soc. An., Roma, 1940. p.60
[47] Brown A., *Pronunciation and Phonetics, A practical Guide for English Language Teachers,* Routledge, New York, 2014.

types of sound. Since the air comes from the lungs, the airstream is known as pulmonic, and since it travels outwards, it is known as egressive.

All English speech sounds are made on a pulmonic egressive airstream. The first organ that the airstream encounters that can obstruct it in some way is the vocal cords.

The *vocal cords* are two flaps of skin and muscle located behind the Adam's apple, the point at the front of the throat[48]. Men's Adam's apples stick out further than women's or children's, because their larynxes, the area containing the vocal cords, are larger. They grow larger at puberty, and are the reason why men's voices are generally lower in pitch than women's and children's. The surrounding muscles of the vocal cords are: thyroid cartilage, cricoids cartilage, two arytenoid cartilages, two vocal cords. By the action of the muscles surrounding the vocal cords, they can adopt a number of positions.

Moving the small arytenoids cartilages, the two vocal cords may be drawn together. Since they are already together at the front of the throat, this means that the vocal cords cover the windpipe and block the airstream from passing through. Because the air pressure from below is lost, the vocal cords then snap together again. Then they are blown apart again. And so on. In short they vibrate. The vibration is known as *voice*, and sounds involving this vibration are known as *voiced.*

The 44 phonemes of Received Pronunciation based on the popular Adrian Underhill layout — adapted by EnglishClub.com

2.1. Vowels and diphthongs

All vowels and most consonants in English are voiced. There are various ways of checking if a sound is voiced[49]. For instance, make a loud, strong [z] sound, which is voiced, and:

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[48] Cassinis U**.,** Genta D., *Appunti di fonetica inglese raccolti dalle lezioni di Guido Puccio,* D.u.s.a., Dispenze Universitarie Soc. An., Roma, 1940. p. 22

[49] Ladefoged P., Johnson K., *A Course in Phonetics,* Wadsworth Cengage Learning, Los Angeles, 2010.

- Put your finger lightly on your Adam's apple and feel the vibration

- Put your finger in your ears, and hear the booming sound

- Put your hand on the top of your head, and feel the vibration, which is essentially your skull vibrating

- Produce a [z] on a rise in pitch; that is, go from a low pitch to a high pitch.

All English speech sounds can therefore be classified as either *voiced*, with vocal cord vibration, or *voiceless*, without vibration. Because the vocal cords are not vibrating, and thus are not regulating the flow of air through them. While, *voiceless* sounds may have a greater force of air than voiced ones. Sixteen English sounds occur in eight pairs of voiced and voiceless equivalents[50].

The main organ producing the difference between the vowel sounds is the tongue which can adopt various position within the mouth.

There are open and close vowels. *Close* means that the tongue is close to the roof of the mouth (wide oral cavity), while *open* means that the tongue is low (narrow oral cavity). Front and back refers to if they are produced with an advancing/front movement of the tongue or retracting/back movement. Any humanly possible vowel sound is contained in the *cardinal vowels*[51].

The system of the *eight cardinal vowels* takes the shape of a trapezium. It can be used for describing the position of the highest part of the tongue for any vowel sound in any accent of any language.

Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a rounded vowel.

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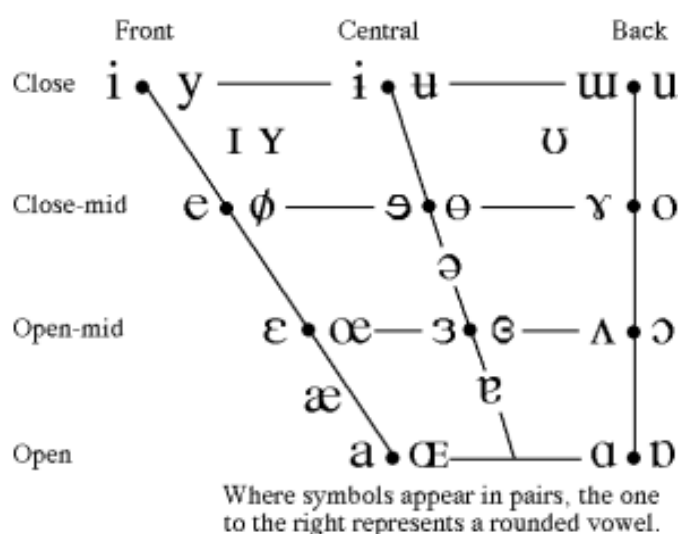
[50] Ladefoged P., Johnson K., *A Course in Phonetics,* Wadsworth Cengage Learning, Los Angeles, 2010.
[51] Jones D., *The Pronunciation of English,* Cambridge University Press, 1956.

Front vowels are on the left, and back vowels are on the right. The combination of the rounding of lips and the tongue position are very important for describing vowel sounds in languages[52].

- [i]> the tongue is as high and as front as possible and unrounded lips
- [ɑ]> the tongue is as low and as back as possible and unrounded lips
- [e] [ɛ] [a]> the tongue is as front as possible and unrounded lips
- [ɔ] [o] [u]> the tongue is as back as possible and rounded lips.

Vowel sounds are made without any great obstruction to the airstream, all English vowels are voiced and oral, English vowel can be divided into *long* and *short* vowels.

According to Simon Gfeller[53] a nasalised sound is produced when the velum or soft palate is lowered allowing air to escape both through nose and mouth. This is a common issue with French, Polish and Portuguese native speakers. Furthermore, long vowels comprise *long monophthongs* and *diphthongs*[54]. The production of monophthongs can be described by stating the vertical height of the tongue, its horizontal position and the position of the lips[55].

The short monophthongs are: [ɪ] [e] [æ] [ʌ] [ɒ] rounded lips [ʊ] rounded lips [ə]

The long monophthongs are: [iː] [ɑː] [ɔː] rounded lips [uː] rounded lips [ɜː]. The *eight diphthongs* are represented by two-part symbols but they represent single sounds.

The diphthongs are: [eɪ] [aɪ] [ɔɪ] the tongue moves towards a high front position [aʊ] [əʊ] the tongue moves towards a high back position [ɪə] [eə] [ʊə] the tongue moves towards a mid-central position[56]. *Schwa* (/ʃwɑː/) is the most important vowel, its symbol is /ə/[57].

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[52] International Phonetic Association, *A guide to the use of the International Phonetic Alphabet,* Cambridge University Press, 1999.

[53] An accent reduction teacher at Regent School in Cambridge who was before mentioned.

[54] www.phonetics.ucla.edu/course/chapter9/cardinal/cardinal.html

[55] Carney E., *A survey of English Spelling,* Routledge, Oxford, 1994.

[56] Cassinis U**.,** Genta D., *Appunti di fonetica inglese raccolti dalle lezioni di Guido Puccio,* D.u.s.a., Dispenze Universitarie Soc. An., Roma, 1940.

[57] Roach P., *English Phonetics and Phonology, A practical course,* Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Diphthongs - two vowel sounds

/aɪ/	/eɪ/	/ɔɪ/	/aʊ/
buy, bite	stay, state	boy, voice	now, town
/oʊ/	/ɪə/	/eə/	/ʊə/
low, phone	near, here	hair, stairs	pure, fewer

According to Gfeller the coordination of tongue, lips, and jaws in a short time frame to pass from one vowel sound to another. To produce the diphthongs might be useful to start slowly and to use vowel scale to track to movement from one sound to another.

2.2. Consonants

Table of English Consonants

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	p b			t d			k g	
Affricate					tʃ dʒ			
Fricative		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ		(x)	h
Nasal	m			n			ŋ	
Lateral				l				
Approximant	w				r	j		

Consonants are divided into two components, they can be *obstruents* and *sonorants*. With obstruents there is always an obstruction in the vocal cavity and so there is always noise, obstruents are then again divided into *plosives, affricates* and *fricatives*. The sonorants are continuous sounds accompanied by extra resonance, sonorants are also divided again into *nasals* and *approximants*[58].

*Consonant*s are typically classified by using three-term labels: *voiced* versus *voiceless, place of articulation* and *manner of articulation*[59].

The places of articulation are:

- *Bilabial:* The lower lip is the active articulator and the upper lip is the passive.
- *Labio-dental:* The active articulator is the lower lip, and the passive is the upper teeth.
- *Dental:* The tongue tip and blade are the active articulators, and the upper teeth are the passive.

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[58] Cassinis U., Genta D., *Appunti di fonetica inglese raccolti dalle lezioni di Guido Puccio,* D.u.s.a., Dispenze Universitarie Soc. An., Roma, 1940.
[59] Roach P., *English Phonetics and Phonology, A practical course,* Cambridge University Press, 2010.

- *Alveolar:* The tongue tip and blade are again the active articulator, but the passive articulator is the alveolar ridge, just behind the upper teeth.
- *Post-alveolar:* It involves the tongue tip curling back and lying opposite the back of the alveolar region.
- *Palato-alveolar:* A relatively large obstruction is caused by the tongue blade/front and the back of the alveolar region and front of the palatal region.
- *Palatal:* The active articulation is the tongue front, and the passive the hard palate.
- *Velar:* The tongue back is the active articulator, and the velum is the passive.
- *Glottal:* For a glottal stop the articulators are the vocal cords.

The manners of articulation are:

- *Stop:* A complete closure between the articulators.
  There are two kinds of Stop, *Oral stop,* that causes the sound called *plosive,* and *Nasal stop,* that causes sounds called *nasal.*
- *Fricative:* One articulator comes towards the other without touching, it creates a hissing noise known as *frication* or *approximation.*

There are two kinds of approximant:

- *Lateral approximant:* The sound is called *lateral*
- *Central approximant:* The sound is called *approximants*[60].

3. Testing pronunciation

The students of a foreign language have to test their pronunciation. A very useful activity is to identify vowels and consonants, connecting sounds with spelling, including rhymes. Also, to check word and phrase stress, sentence stress and intonation[61]. In addition, can be useful to use and understand phonemic script and to pronounce numbers and expressions with numbers[62].

Will Rixon[63] during his lesson said that when students want to find the unstressed form of a word in connected speech, they have to consider the weak and strong forms of words. Generally, weak forms do not carry the main content of the utterance, also they are

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[60] Idem.
[61] Vaughan-Rees M., *Test your Pronunciation,* Longman, Edinburg, 2002.
[62] Idem
[63] Will Rixon is an English man who teaches English at Regent School in Cambridge.

functional words like prepositions, conjunctions, auxiliaries, articles, pronouns and modals. Weak forms are mainly used in connected speech, they have one syllable. While, strong forms are used if the word is stressed, the word falls at the end of the utterance and when the word is referred to in isolation. The exact set of words that have weak forms depends on dialect and speaker[64].

A stressed syllable is louder and longer than the neighbouring syllables, and it is pronounced with a marked change in pitch. Pitch is subjective and it depends on the age, gender and fundamental frequency of the speaker. Every sentence has one peak of stress, a stressed syllable is more prominent than the rest of the word and it is the nucleus of it. *Intonations* can be produced by stretching or loosening the vocal folds[65].

With *connected speech* some cases of *elision* and *assimilation* can occur. Elision means that there are sounds left out. For example cracked pots becomes /kræk 'pots/ when pronounced in connected speech. *Assimilation* means that two words become one. Another thing that happens with connected speech is the *insertion* of an intrusive /r/, linking /r/, /w/ or /j/. For example: *Two eggs* gets a linking /w/, *three eggs* a linking /j/ and *four eggs* a linking /r/[66]. It can be useful to check some diagrams of English sounds[67] and to investigate stress and intonation patterns[68].

3.3. Sounds Production

Fudge (1984) in his works about *morphophonology* examines the way morphemes are pronounced[69]. While regular plural nouns are all spelled, they are not all pronounced the same. Word stress, as it was said before, is an important aspect of English pronunciation, as listeners use it to recognize words. Stress is marked in transcription, as in dictionaries, by a superscript tick at the beginning of the stressed syllable. Stress cannot exist without unstress. Many stress rules are complex and they often have exceptions. The foolproof method of finding out the stress pattern of unfamiliar words is to look them up in a dictionary[70].

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[64] www.onestopenglish.com
[65] Ashby M., Figueroa-Clark M., Seo E., Yanagisawa, K. *Innovations in practical phonetics teaching and learning*. UCL, London, 2005.
[66] https://mybookfile.wordpress.com/2016/01/04/phonetics-101-2/
[67] http://www.uiowa.edu/~acadtech/phonetics/
[68] Ashby M., Figueroa-Clark M., Seo E., Yanagisawa, K. *Innovations in practical phonetics teaching and learning*. UCL, London, 2005.
[69] Fudge E., *English Word-Stress,* Routledge, Oxford, 1984.
[70] Fudge E., *English Word-Stress,* Routledge, Oxford, 1984.

Where there is more than one syllable, English speakers tend to *stress* only one of them. There are various ways in which classroom teacher could represent the stressed syllable graphically, for instance by using capital letters, underlining, bold font circling the stressed syllable, marking over stressed vowel, circling stressed and unstressed syllables. /ə/ is the phonetic symbol of s*chwa* (/ʃwɑː/) and it is linked to the *stress issue* and only occurs in unstressed syllables. It is important to say that the *schwa vowel* is important for signaling unstress. Also, it is the commonest vowel in connected spoken English and it has no regular spelling[71].

   In any teaching situation, there are three distinguishable elements: *the learning* that depends on the teacher, *the teaching* that is the materials that the teacher prepares, and *the way* that they are delivered in class[72]. According to Abercrombie:

> *"Pronunciation teaching should have, not a goal which must be normally an unrealized ideal, but a limited purpose which be completely fulfilled: the attainment of intelligibility. The learner, instead of being taken systematically through each English vowel and each consonant, and later, if there is time, through the complexities of intonation and rhythm, would have presented to him certain carefully chosen features on which to concentrate, the rest of his pronunciation being left to no more than a general supervision"[73].*

As Abercrombie (1956) highlights pronunciation teaching should be communicative, learner-centered and it should respect the learners' affective states.
Language learners' goals can be divided into three broad categories: *intelligibility*, *image*, *identity*. According to Gfeller intelligibility is very important because it is the pronunciation which can be understood with little or no conscious effort on the part of the listener. Jenny Jekins (2007)[74] who studied the importance of English as lingua franca, focused on four main areas which are thought to be essential for students to get right most consonant sounds and one vowel, preservation of most consonant clusters, vowel length, appropriate word grouping and placement of nuclear stress. Sometimes confusion arises between consonant sounds that feature the same mechanical motion of the apparatus where only one of the sound is voiced.

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[71] Cruttenden A., *Gimson's Pronunciation of English,* Routledge, New York, 2014.
[72] Yule G., Powers M., Macdonald D., *The variable effects of some task-based learning procedures on L2 communicative effectiveness, in Language Learning, a Journal of Research in Language Studies*, Vol. 42, pp. 249-277, 1992.
[73] Abercrombie D., *Problems and Principles: Studies in the Teaching of English as a Second Language,* Longmans, Green, London, 1956.
[74] Jennifer Jenkins, *English as a Lingua Franca: Attitude and Identity,* Oxford University Press, 2007.

Image is related to job prospects, because poor language skills, including pronunciation reflect poorly on the professional image of a company. *Identity* is related to the way that you speak. Speakers from a certain country may be proud of their nationality and be happy to speak English with a recognizable accent from that country and language, because they do not want to change their personality and identity[75].

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[75] Brown A., *Pronunciation Models,* Singapore University Press, 1991.

Conclusion

This paper concerns on Guido Puccio's studies, focusing on one main topic: *Phonetics teaching*. This work highlights the way Puccio suggested to study and teach phonetics, as well as explains the structure of speech production and how to test the pronunciation of words.

Alongside Guido Puccio's works, I also quoted some of the other most important researchers in the field and examined their works. I also described some English pronunciation lessons I attended at Regent school in August 2017. I explained the strategies to teach phonetics that were adopted by two teachers, as I found them very fascinating and got me more and more interested in the topic.

Studying English in England was an amazing experience, it is difficult to find the right words to convey how lucky I feel and I would certainly do it again.

Winning this scholarship made me very proud, it gave me the opportunity to learn even more about Guido Puccio and his life.

As we live in an increasingly globalized world it is very useful to know effective ways to learn languages, because everybody should do it. According to Guido Puccio, it is very important to learn languages and the best way to do it is by starting to learn the sound of the foreign words before learning how to write them.

In conclusion, I hope the memory of those days I spent in England will always be with me and I will never forget what I have learnt. I would like to affirm that:

> *Each experience can change our life and improve it. Everyone can teach us something, even if he or she is already dead, because what we do while we are alive can continue living forever through the others memory and lives, so I believe it is possible to affirm that nobody really dies. For this reason, I would like to say: Thank you to Guido and his wife Marta, because I think that they accompanied me during this beautiful experience.*

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List of websites

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