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Difficult features of English segmental pronunciation for Finns  
and related exercises in the third grade workbooks

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**ABSTRACT**

Tutkielman tavoitteena on selvittää, mitä niistä englannin segmentaalisen ääntämisen piirteistä, jotka ovat vaikeita suomenkielisille oppilaille, sekä ovat tärkeitä ymmärrettävyyden kannalta, on otettu huomioon kolmannen luokan työkirjojen tehtävissä. Segmentaalisen ääntämisen lisäksi on huomioitu sananpaino sekä englannin ja suomen puhuttujen ja kirjoitettujen muotojen eroista johtuvat vaikeudet. Tutkimusaineistona ovat vuosina 2001–2009 julkaistut kolmannen luokan oppikirjasarjojen työkirjat ja niissä tehtävät, jotka on suunniteltu äänteiden ja sananpainon harjoitteluun. Myös kirjasarjoihin kuuluvia opettajan oppaita on käytetty materiaalina. Metodina on todettujen ongelmallisten ja ääntämisen ymmärrettävyyden kannalta tärkeiden piirteiden ja kerätyn aineiston määrällinen vertailu.

Tutkimus osoittaa, että segmentaalisisista ongelmallisista piirteistä eniten huomiota on kiinnitetty englannin obstruenttien fortis/lenis oppositioon, mutta ainoastaan sanan alussa. Kuitenkin myös sananloppuinen oppositio aiheuttaa ongelmia ymmärtämiseen ja tähän tulisi kiinnittää enemmän huomiota. Äänteen oikeaan muodostamiseen ja sen kuulemiseen kiinnitettiin toiseksi eniten huomiota, mutta vain kaksi kuudesta oppikirjasta sisälsi harjoituksia siihen liittyen. Englannin kielen foneettinen kirjoitus on mukana oppikirjoissa opetuksen alusta lähtien, mutta sen käyttöä ja merkitystä ei selitetä oppilaille, vaikka se on täysin uusi asia suomenkielisille oppilaille. Allofonisiin eroihin kiinnitettiin hyvin huomiota. Vokaalien osalta huomioitavaa on, että pitkää vokaaliäännettä verrattiin tehtävissä suomalaiseseen pitkään vokaaliin, vaikka vokaalin pituus ei englannin kielessä ole sanoja erottava piirre samalla lailla kuin suomen kielessä. Vokaalin pituus ei kuitenkaan ole merkityksetön englannin kielessäkään ja liittyen esimerkiksi fortis/lenis oppositioon, se vaikuttaa puheen ymmärrettävyyteen. Enemmän huomiota pitäisi kiinnittää siihen, miten englannin vokaalin pituuseroa opetetaan. Sananpainon opettamiseen ei tutkitussa materiaalissa kiinnitetty ollenkaan huomiota, vaikka se on ongelmallinen suomenkielisille oppilaille ja vaikuttaa ymmärrettävyyteen.

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**KEYWORDS:** allophones, fortis/lenis opposition, obstruents, phonemic symbols, phonemic transcription, segmental pronunciation, vowel length



## 1 INTRODUCTION

Teaching English pronunciation is a complex subject. A teacher does not only need to take into account all aspects of the English pronunciation itself but the learners and differences between English and learners' native language. Because Finnish and English belong to the different language families, they are remote languages which differ much from each other in each language areas. Concerning the pronunciation, there are many features that are not familiar to Finns and accordingly cause difficulties for Finnish pupils. In addition, when Finnish-speaking pupils start learning of English in the Finnish formal school settings at the primary level, they are already literate in Finnish. Because Finnish has nearly one to one correspondence between letters and sounds, pupils have never seen or used phonemic transcription with their native language. However, they are introduced to the spoken and written form of English and exposed to phonemic symbols and transcription at the beginning of the learning. Due to the complexity between the written and spoken forms of English beginning learners must be confused and it is logical to them to try to learn to speak English by pronouncing its written form in the same way they are used to do in Finnish. However, spoken and written English should be considered separately.

Referring to the pronunciation placing the main stress some place other than on the first syllable, for instance, is strange to Finnish speaking pupils. They may change the place of the main stress when emphasizing a part of a word, a phrase or clause but the main stress in ordinary Finnish speech always lies on the first syllable. Narrowing the spoken form to the single sounds, there are difficulties caused by differences between these two languages concerning the different realisations of phonemes i.e. sounds that change the meaning of a word. In one language, a sound can be a phoneme and in another one an allophone i.e. a slightly differently pronounced sound of one phoneme due to the different environment. Furthermore, in Finnish vowel length is a distinctive feature that differentiates many minimal pairs i.e. pairs of words that only differ by one phoneme from each other. In English, however, the vowel length has other functions. It is distinct from the Finnish vowel system also because it is not visible in spelling. There are always double letters with a long vowel in Finnish. The differences concerning the

sound systems of these two languages then cause many problems for Finns. Research shows that inaccurate habitual pronunciation is difficult to change later on no matter whether it is caused by interference from the native language or the inaccurate perception of a sound and resulting poor production or both of them.

What also makes the teaching difficult is the lack of systematic and pedagogically appropriately planned syllabus for teaching pronunciation during the basic education. English subject teachers in Finland follow the guidelines given in the National Core Curriculum (NCC). It does not, however, explicitly dictate what, when and how to teach of English pronunciation but instead gives outlines and objectives for the subject. It then leaves teachers themselves to take the initiative in pedagogic planning and this is fine with some teachers. However, to be able to do this a teacher needs to be an expert in this area and yet the knowledge of English pronunciation may vary much among teachers. Those who lack the necessary expertise to teach pronunciation may experience it difficult and burdensome. Even when the teaching of pronunciation is narrowed to include the single sounds only, the teaching may still remain complex due to the differences between Finnish and English.

In addition, English is spoken in a variety of accents among native speakers and in many different ways as a second language or a foreign language around the world. There are then no exact models for teaching pronunciation and whether to start with single sounds or features beyond them. Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin (1996:10) state that there is not so much debates any more which one is more important, segmental or suprasegmental level, but both are seen as important. The main objective of pronunciation teaching should be that the speaker could speak it intelligibly and in a listener friendly way. Accordingly, those features that the most affect the intelligibility, need to be paid attention to and it is also the learner's native language that always needs to be taken into account when deciding where to start.

For those English teachers who lack the important knowledge about Finnish and English phonetics and phonology, it may be tempting to think that pronunciation is a skill that can be acquired while other areas of language like grammar and vocabulary

are practised and when there is a large amount of spoken English provided for pupils as a model. Some pupils learn excellent pronunciation skills in this way; they only need high-quality English listening materials in the form that is provided by the teaching materials such as texts, songs and rhymes, and vocabulary lists used in lessons. In addition, many children today have many possibilities to hear and use English in different situations and through the different media outside the classroom.

However, all pupils are not talented mimics who are able to absorb English pronunciation in this way and many of them do not have the same possibilities to do so either. As a result, there are pupils who are not able to perceive the accurate pronunciation of an English word and neither to produce it properly. As a subject teacher of a vocational institute, I have noticed many times that the pronunciation skills acquired through the comprehensive school are very uneven. There are students whose skills are excellent but there are also students who speak English more in the way they speak Finnish; pronouncing words as they are spelled and using sounds that are only found in the Finnish sound system. In addition, there are students whose skills are somewhere between the extremities of these two. More than the listening to the models is then required for all Finnish speaking learners of English to be able to achieve the accurate pronunciation skills. With Finnish formal education and its unified comprehensive education provided with qualified teachers and free of charge and high-quality teaching materials for every pupil it should also be a possible and achievable objective.

My hypothesis is that to the teaching of English pronunciation is not paid enough attention with the beginning learners in the Finnish basic education. In my study I will examine this hypothesis by first discussing what ought to be taught and then examining what have been taught to beginning learners. Because English pronunciation is such an extensive subject, I have narrowed my study to concern segmental features. In addition, I have included the word stress in it. I ended up in this narrowing because of two main reasons. First, I think that it is important to learn to perceive and produce the single sounds accurately at the beginning of the learning as early as possible. This is because, as I will discuss later in my study, it is difficult to change inaccurate habitual



pronunciation later. Second, I regard suprasegmental features like word stress, sentence stress, and intonation important but difficult features to teach to beginning learners who are just introduced to the first words and phrases and who also have to understand why the written and spoken form of English are so different. It is also unclear when and how intonation, for instance, enters the pedagogical process and how the individual abilities in general affect its acquisition. In addition, word stress is relatively close to the standard segmental feature, a phoneme, because it concerns one syllable only. Furthermore, word stress is regarded as a major stumbling block for Finns. In my view, concerning the beginning learners it is logical to start with segmental features. It is the phase when sounds, first words, and short phrases are learnt. Besides, learning the accurate production of single sounds first provide learners with a proper base for learning longer utterances later.

In the second section, I have discussed the features that are difficult for Finns and are simultaneously regarded important for intelligibility. This discussion is based on the previous studies and critical examination of them. The main studies are made by Michael Peacock and Ian Wilson-Morrison who both have taught English for Finnish university students for years and are also experts in the teaching English pronunciation for Finns. Peacock, in his study, examined four areas of pronunciation of the Finnish university students of English that were causing most problems. The aim of his study was to examine the role and the effect of formal pronunciation training on the learner's performance in a formal and communicative context.

I have also used the study made by Pekka Lintunen. He examined Finnish university students' pronunciation and its relationship to the phonemic transcription. In addition, I have used research made by Minna Paananen who examined Finnish comprehensive school pupils and their pronunciation of English obstruents. There are interesting studies made by James Emil Flege. He created a tenet of the Equivalence Classification when examining the adult second language learners' pronunciation skills. I have discussed related problems of the Finnish-speaking learners and Flege's research has been an inspiring source for my study.

## 1.1 Material

I was then interested in to find out which of these features that were difficult for Finns and also important for intelligibility in spoken English were taken into consideration with the beginning learners of Finnish comprehensive school and more precisely which features were practised in intentionally designed exercises of the workbooks.

My data was collected from third grade workbooks published during 2001–2009 and the teacher's guides related to them. Currently, there are six different textbook series available for English teaching in elementary comprehensive schools. All these series consists of approximately the same items. For pupils, the teaching materials comprise the textbook and the workbook, often consisting of CD for listening to some materials at home. In addition, the newest ones offer wide online material in spoken and written form. For teachers there are teacher's guides, CDs, tests, and wide additional material to use in lessons, also ample online materials and the development and use of it is currently increasing. The teacher's guide includes the ready-made syllabus for the whole schooling year. It may also include ready-made suggestion for each lesson and the complete content of pupils' books i.e. texts from the textbooks and answers of the exercises. In addition, there are tests for assessing pupils after a defined period. These tests include material to evaluate listening, reading, and writing skills. There are also oral tests included but it is up to the individual teacher whether to implement oral tests or not. The evaluation of pronunciation may therefore be either ignored or carried out depending on the teacher. One textbook package is designed for one grade and for one academic year at a time.

These teaching materials are provided by commercial publishers and designed by textbook writers who are language learning and teaching experts. These designers follow the objectives given in the newest NCC and teaching materials are regarded to be of high quality. Even though there are six different textbook series available, all of them have quite similar content due to the guidelines given in the NCC. These teaching materials then help teachers to achieve the objectives with ready-made syllabuses, tests, and they also facilitate teachers' workload and enable them to focus more on the

individual learners and the teaching itself. Accordingly, teaching materials are popular among teachers and teaching is mostly carried out by following them. However, it is up to the individual teacher to design the content of the lessons and to decide whether to use or how much to follow the ready made syllabus given in the teacher's guide.

One workbook generally includes exercises for listening, speaking, and writing on topics introduced in the textbooks. If there is some grammatical item to be learnt, workbooks also contain the explanations of that item and provide grammar rules, exercises and other activities to practise it. In addition, workbooks include the vocabulary lists of words used in the texts of the textbooks. The content of the workbook then generally reflects the content of the textbook and both are designed to practise those language areas that are prescribed in the current NCC.

In my study, all exercises that are designed to train any feature of the segmental pronunciation of English are taken into consideration and instructions given in teacher's guide are also referred to. All but one of these six series has these kinds of exercises in their workbooks. This exception, however, contains segmental pronunciation training material at the end of its textbook and this textbook is included in the data. These five workbooks and this one textbook are all referred to as workbooks or simply as books in the study.

Some remarks on the material need still to be done. Only the workbooks designed for Finnish-speaking learners are taken into account. In Finland, pupils have options to choose other languages than English as their A-level foreign language which generally starts in the third grade. However, nearly all Finnish speaking children choose English. Finland-Swedish pupils, however, generally choose Finnish as their A-language and do not start learning English until in the fifth grade. Accordingly, distinct materials are needed and published for beginning Finland-Swedish learners. This is not, however so only because they are older when starting their English learning but also because English and Swedish derive from the same language family and are cognate languages. It results that Finland-Swedish children have a special status in relation to Finnish speaking children when they start learning English (Ringbom 2006: 36). Only teaching

materials published for the Finnish-speaking beginning learners of English is therefore taken into account. In addition, there are teaching and learning materials provided for earlier Finnish-speaking beginners too. The local authorities of municipalities may decide to start English learning in the second grade and there is distinct material designed for these pupils by the same publishers. These materials are either included in the study.

## 1.2 Method

My method is a comparatively one. In my theoretical section, I discuss those features that are regarded as difficult but are important for spoken English and from my data I examined every segmental feature that was taken into account. Data from workbooks is arranged into the table which shows all items gathered from each book. From this table, the items that were related to features discussed in section two are then picked up. The exercises of each problematic area are displayed in a bar chart and discussed in the results section.

## 2 FINNISH-SPEAKING LEARNERS' PROBLEMS WITH ENGLISH SEGMENTAL PRONUNCIATION

There have been different methods and approaches how to teach foreign languages in the field of language teaching over the last few decades. A brief discussion about some prominent approaches is given before the features of English segmental pronunciation that cause most problems for Finns and are regarded important for intelligibility in the speaking form are discussed.

An early approach to teach foreign languages is Contrastive Approach. It is based on the hypothesis what is different from native language is difficult for learners and teaching should concentrate on these differences. However, Contrastive Approach could not predict all the problems made by learners when learning foreign languages. It was also noticed that learners made errors which could not be explained by contrasting the native and foreign languages. Therefore, more research was conducted to for understanding the foreign language learning processes better. (Mitchell & Myles 2004: 32.)

The focus shifted from the differences between native and foreign language to the language that learners produced. Errors made by learners were emphasized and systemically looked into and research was carried out for understanding and explaining these errors. As a consequence of these studies, Error Analysis approach was accepted in the field of foreign language learning approaches. (Ibid. 29–39.) Error Analysis Approach could not either reveal the reasons why learners who for instance had the same background learnt differently and faced different problems.

More emphasis was then sifted from simple errors that were made by learners to the learners who made them. Ideas that there could be some inner mental mechanisms in the brain that guided the learning of the first and other languages were presented. This approach is called Universal Grammar. According to it, all learners possess the same basic understanding about the basic grammar of the first and other languages. (Ibid. 94.) However, some questions were related to the Universal Grammar approach. If there were some kind of special area in the brain that was specialized in language learning,

would it be more easily available for children than adults? This was considered because, concerning especially the spoken form of foreign languages, research has shown that when children learn foreign languages they may learn to speak them without a foreign accent and adults nearly always retain a foreign accent in their speech. (Mitchell & Myles 2004: 84–85.)

These findings have resulted in the critical period hypothesis. According to it, adults have less ability to learn the spoken form of a foreign language than children because the areas of the brain related to the spoken form of a second or foreign language in general are not available after children mature teenage years. (Ibid. 84–85.) These views were supported by many researches and accordingly adult learners were regarded more limited in learning the spoken form of foreign languages than children. However, critical period hypothesis met criticism because researches have also shown that it is possible to learn accurate pronunciation after the critical period but for adult learners it is not as easy as it is for little children. (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin 1996: 15.)

It then seems that the age affects the learning of pronunciation but not by preventing it because of some changes in the brain. Instead, it seems that it is difficult to change habitual inaccurate pronunciation or if learners have just started learning foreign language it is probably their native language and the distinct sound system of it that prevents the learning. Perhaps the difficulties of adult learners' pronunciation on the segmental level can be explained by James E. Flege's hypothesis of Equivalence Classification which is discussed more in subsection 2.5 below. Studies conducted by Flege indicate that similarities between native and foreign language cause difficulties and this is especially so with pronunciation.

Concerning young adult Finnish university students', an interesting study of the affects of formal training to difficult areas of English segmental pronunciation was made by Peacock (1990). He found out that accurate pronunciation of difficult sounds can be acquired by young adult learners in formal settings. However, students could not maintain newly acquired skills for instance in communicative situations in which they could not entirely focus on the sound in question. Why is it difficult for adult learners to

keep up the newly learnt performance in demanding situations? Peacock came to the conclusion that sounds which are repeated inaccurately for years are difficult to change later and they have to be trained for a long time to become ‘automatic’. (Peacock 1990: 54–55.)

Language transfer is then understood to affect the learning of the spoken form of a foreign language. Transfer may be positive and help learners in acquiring foreign language or it can be negative and inhibit learning. In the latter case, the term ‘interference’ is used. Similarities may then either contribute to or suppress the learning. Concerning Finnish speaking learners’ segmental difficulties, they are partly caused by differences between these distinct languages but research also shows that similarities confuse and interfere in the learning of English pronunciation. Finnish and English are different because they are not cognate languages. Finnish belongs to the Finno-Ugric language family and English to the Germanic family. Consequently, English differs considerably from Finnish. Fortunately, there are some same features between English and Finnish. They both use almost the same Latin alphabet in their orthography. Concerning segmental pronunciation, there are many obstruent and sonorant sounds that are similar. Both languages, for instance, have many vowel sounds and diphthongs and also other sonorants like nasals are the same.

As was stated earlier, segmental pronunciation mainly refers to speech sounds. It is common to divide these sounds into consonants and vowels. However, according to Roach (2000: 10) and Morris-Wilson (2004: 45) it is not easy to define what consonants and vowels are in English because they are regarded differently with the writing system and with the spoken form. Roach (2000: 11) also states that different languages define consonants and vowels differently. In Finnish, according to Suomi, Toivanen and Ylitalo (2008: 22–26) there are eight vowel sounds and compared with the English vowel system, the Finnish system is a simple one. Differences between the vowel systems of these two languages are discussed in more detail later. Considering Finnish consonant system Suomi et al. (2008: 23–26) divide consonants into three classes according to their manner of articulation. These groups are obstruents, glottals and resonants. Considering English speech sounds, I have used Morris-Wilson’s (2004: 41)

division as a basis when discussing English sounds. According to it, they are divided into obstruents and sonorants. These terms are generally used yet alternatively terms vowels and consonants are also used.

The main group of English sounds that cause problems for Finns is obstruents. Obstruents are also regarded more important sounds to be taught. This view is supported by Paananen's (1998: 124) quotation from O'Connor who states that consonants are more important for the speech intelligibility because they are the basis of English words. Peacock (2004: 100) and Morris-Wilson (2004: 12–155) state that the pronunciation of English consonants is stable in different variations of English around the world and accordingly it is sensible to teach their accurate pronunciation. Nearly all English obstruents form fortis/lenis pairs and when it is taken into account that obstruents are regarded important sounds to be taught, fortis/lenis opposition is a remarkable feature when teaching English segmental pronunciation. It is also one feature that causes difficulties for Finns.

Obstruents also cause allophonic problems and some difficulties are caused by novel sounds. Concerning the sonorants of English, the main problem is caused by the central glide approximant /w/ because it is an allophone for Finnish *v*. Some problems are caused by vowels which also belong to the group of sonorants. Difficulties are further on caused by differences between English and Finnish spoken and written forms and by the word stress, an important feature in the spoken form of English. I consider it as an important item that should be taught in the initial stages of learning. It affects strongly listening comprehension and is also difficult to 'unlearn' after once learnt inaccurately. Furthermore, it is easy to point out in the initial stages of learning because its place is readily visible in the phonemic transcription in the third grade textbooks.

## 2.1 Fortis/lenis opposition

English sounds are then divided into two main groups, obstruents and sonorants, by the manner of their articulation. Obstruents are further on divided into plosives, fricatives,



and affricates and again into different categories by the place of their articulation. All but one English obstruents form voiceless/voiced pairs. The sounds of these pairs have the same place and manner of articulation only differing by one sound being voiceless and another voiced. (Morris-Wilson 2004: 41–42.) Voicing is a feature caused by vocal cords vibrating and creating audible sound while the air flows out from the lungs through the speech organs. The voiceless sound is formed without this vibration. However, these terms are not precise because a voiced sound is not always voiced since its environment affects how much voicing is used. The voiceless sound is still always voiceless regardless of the environment. (Ibid. 43.)

Voiced sounds then may be partly or fully voiceless depending on the preceding or following sound or empty space and called as devoiced. When a voiced sound is fully devoiced, there is no difference to its voiceless counterpart. However, some distinction is essential between these sounds because there are minimal pairs that only differ from each other by this difference related to voiceless and voiced sound. Consequently, the voiceless sounds are said with more power. Accordingly, it is called fortis which is a Latin word for strong. Correspondingly, voiced sound is called lenis, a Latin word meaning weak. This difference is called fortis/lenis opposition and it is an important feature of English obstruents because there are a lot of minimal pairs in English in which the only difference is in voiceless and voiced sounds. (Ibid. 43-45.)

Plosives, the first group of obstruents, form three voiceless/voiced pairs which are /p/ /b/, /t/ /d/, and /k/ /g/. (Ibid. 42.) All of them exist originally or in loan words in Finnish too. Voiceless bilabial /p/ is a common sound in Finnish but the voiced bilabial plosive /b/ occurs only in loan words and is not an original Finnish sound. Both sounds of alveolar plosive voiceless/voiced pair /t/ /d/ are original Finnish sounds and the voiceless one is also very common while the voiced sound often occurs in inflection forms and never in the initial or final positions in original Finnish words. It may only occur as word central and often in consonant gradation to the sound /t/ as for instance in the genitive case for the word *katu* which is *kadun*. The same is true with the sounds of the third plosive pair, /k/ and /g/. The voiced sound does not occur in the initial or final position in original Finnish words and it may occur as word central in consonant

gradation. Accordingly, the genitive case for the word *kenkä* is *kengän*. The voiceless sound is very common in Finnish words yet it does not occur on the word final positions.

The places of articulation of the English plosives do not then cause problems for Finns and the problem is that Finns do not give enough strength to the English voiceless phonemes /p k t/. Finns may manage to create and hear the voiced/voiceless difference in plosive sounds. They can, for instance, create the audible difference between such pairs as *paari* and *baari* and may try to make this difference in English minimal pairs as well. Native English listeners however, cannot hear the difference based on voiceless/voiced contrast only because they are used to fortis/lenis opposition and how it affects these sounds. Accordingly Finns may ignore aspiration, the important feature related to voiceless plosives in the initial position. Aspiration is a puff of air that is used with all word initial plosive voiceless sounds in a stressed syllable. If it lacks, a native listener only finds out of the context whether it has been said voiceless or voiced sound for instance with such pairs as *goat* or *coat*, *pig* or *big*, and *pear* or *bear*.

The difference with the voiced stop in the word final position will help the pupils learn to make the proper distinctions between a minimal pair such as *right* /raɪt/ and *ride* /raɪd/ whose phonemic transcription is identical only differing in the last sounds former being voiceless and latter voiced. The difference that a native listener hears between the words of this minimal pair is not a fortis and lenis opposition as was the case with initial position but the longer vowel sound preceding the lenis sound. According to Morris-Wilson (2004: 44) vowel sound is longer because voiced sound needs less power (it is the weaker one) to be pronounced and there is more time to pronounce the preceding vowel. The lengthening the preceding vowel of voiced sound in the word final position is the feature which occupies all words.

The second group of obstruents is fricatives. There are eight fricatives in English and they form four voiceless/voiced pairs /f/ /v/, /θ/ /ð/, /s/ /z/, and /ʃ/ /ʒ/. What is difficult for Finnish learners is to use more friction noise with all fricative sounds. Concerning labiodental fricatives /f/ /v/, Finnish speakers automatically tend to use friction noise

with the fortis labiodental fricative /f/ sound. It does not occur in original Finnish words but is familiar to Finns because it is used in loan words like *fariini* and is pronounced with enough friction noise. Friction noise is not, however, used with voiced sound /v/. Finnish *v* is pronounced without friction in all positions in a word, for instance with the words *vaari* and *kiivetä* there is no friction. According to Morris-Wilson (2004: 55), English /v/ however, cannot be said without it. Furthermore, it is the lenis sound of the voiceless/voiced /f/ /v/ pair and accordingly even there is more strength with fortis sound there is always some friction noise with /v/. This voiced labiodental fricative sound then causes difficulties because Finns do not tend to join fricative noise with it and because Finnish does not have a distinct phoneme /w/. The sound /w/ is familiar to Finns but it causes allophonic difficulties which are discussed below.

English fricatives include two sibilant voiceless/voiced pairs which are alveolar pair /s/ /z/ and palato-alveolar pair /ʃ/ /ʒ/. Sibilant is a fricative sound which is pronounced with more energy than other fricatives (Morris-Wilson 2004: 64). Finnish has only one original sibilant sound, alveolar sound *s*. Its voiced pair *z* also occurs in Finnish but only in loan words like in *zeppeliini*. Labiodental /f/ /v/ and alveolar /s/ /z/ fricative pairs cause problems in the word final position. In word pair *safe* /seif/ and *save* /serv/, the main difference is not in voiceless or voiced sound but in the preceding vowel which is clearly longer with the voiced sound. This feature is common among all voiced/voiceless pairs in the word final position as was with plosive pairs earlier. The alveolar fricative pair has another important feature in the final position; the suffixal consonant is adjusted to preceding sound. The suffix of the present tense of verbs in singular 3<sup>rd</sup> person is pronounced as voiced if the verb's pronunciation ends with voiced sounds and with voiceless ending accordingly pronunciation adjusts to being voiceless. Fortis/lenis opposition also affects the pronunciation of other grammatical suffixes in the same way in English (Morris-Wilson 2004: 43–44).

The last group of obstruents is affricates. There is one fortis/lenis pair and difficulties that Finns have related to this pair mainly concern their accurate pronunciation. According to Morris-Wilson (2004: 71), when a learner can accurately pronounce

palato-alveolar sibilant sound /ʃ/ and its voiced pair /ʒ/, affricates can also be acquired easily only by practising them sufficiently.

Finnish-speaking Finns are not familiar with the fortis/lenis opposition and how it affects English pronunciation. It means that they are not used to produce voiceless sound in a way that it is understood by native speaker or any speaker who is familiar with fortis/lenis opposition. Accordingly, when a Finn says the voiceless part of these pairs, it is often heard as a voiced. Consequently, this speaker may easily be misunderstood. Thus it is important to learn that English stops are produced in contrasting voiced and voiceless' pairs. Ringbom (2006: 52) points out that the fortis/lenis distinction between stops in the Germanic languages is a significant cause for difficulties when Finns are learning English pronunciation.

According to Paananen, more problems are related to word final lenis sounds. In her study on English obstruents and Finnish comprehensive school pupils, she (1998: 121) found out that Finnish pupils have difficulties with vowels and nasals preceding word-final obstruents. She pointed out that vowels were either too short or too long. This feature caused the second most problems for Finnish pupils according to the results of her research (1998: 116). Subjects were Finnish speaking comprehensive school pupils in Helsinki region. In addition, this feature also caused problems for Finland-Swedish learners of English. Morris-Wilson (2004: 44) states, that Finns do not pronounce English fortis sounds strongly enough.

According to my own observations while teaching English to the vocational school students in Northern Ostrobothnia region, aspiration is often accurately used with familiar words but omitted with the strange words. The lengthening of the vowel preceding lenis obstruent in the word final position is also used with some familiar words and similarly omitted with unusual words. In accordance with Morrison-Wilson's studies are my observations of the too less use of friction noise with fricative labiodental lenis /v/ sound. The foremost difficulties for the Finnish learners of English with fortis/lenis opposition are then to learn to use stronger friction noise with fortis fricatives, and to use aspiration with word initial voiceless plosives, and the accurate vowel duration with the obstruent sounds in the word final positions.

## 2.2 Allophonic differences

Even though all spoken languages are based on audible speech sounds and many languages have the same sounds, these sounds may vary in a number and a way how they are used in that particular language. Sounds that distinguish the meaning between different words are called phonemes. Phonemes are not always pronounced in the same manner in different words because the preceding or following sounds or an empty space affect the pronunciation of this phoneme. In the cases discussed above, aspirated fortis bilabial plosive was a phone variety of English phoneme /p/ in the word initial position. Regardless of the aspirated variation, the sound is still regarded as the same phoneme by a native language user. There may be many variants of one sound and all together these variants form the complimentary distribution of that phoneme. The complimentary distribution of a phoneme then shows all variations of this phoneme i.e. the possible realisations of it in the different environments. (Roach 2000: 41.) Consequently, in an ordinary speech there are no precise phonemes but more or less different variations of abstract ones.

These different realisations of one phoneme in different environments are called allophones and the term 'phonology' of a language refers to these allophonic variations (Ibid. 44). Allophones then do not change the meaning of a word and one allophone can be substituted by another and native language user still recognizes it to be the same phoneme. What, however, is difficult for foreign language learners is that sounds that are phonemes in one language may be allophones in another language. The phonologies of Finnish and English are different and this causes difficulties for learners. Concerning English /v/ and /w/ sounds, Finnish learners do not need to learn a new allophone of a phoneme but change the allophonic realization of Finnish phoneme /v/. They have to realize that these two sounds that do not change meaning in Finnish, and are thus allophones of Finnish sound /v/, do so in English. In English, bilabial fricative obstruent sound /v/ and bilabial central approximant sound /w/ are separate phonemes. They both have their distinct manner and place of articulation and cannot be used in any other ways. The phoneme /v/ is always created by upper teeth connecting lower lips and air flowing from the mouth creating friction noise. Its sound is created by this friction noise

and because it is also a lenis sound of fricative labiodental voiceless/voiced pair it may be fully or partial voiced depending on its environment. With sound /w/ lips are rounded and sound is created like Finnish /u/. It is important that these two phonemes are distinct from each other and pronounced in an accurate way in English. There are minimal pairs in which the only difference is created by these distinct phonemes, as for instance such pairs as *vet/wet* and *vine/wine*.

In Finnish these sounds and even letters can be used in a word without changing the meaning. In Finnish, sound *v* has different allophones depending on its phonetic environment. When *v* precedes *u* its allophone is [v], which resembles English /w/, for example in word *sauva*. In word *savua* [v] is labiodental fricative because the sound is preceded by *a* and followed by *u*. This allophone is close to English labiodental lenis fricative sound. In both cases Finnish *v* is fully voiced but there is no friction noise in the former one and little if at all in the latter allophone. Accordingly, due to this interference of their native language Finnish pupils tend to pronounce English /v/ as Finnish [v] when it precedes the rounded vowel as in word *over*. Peacock (1990: 7) states that this is a phonological problem and not caused by primary perception. It is not problematic for Finns to learn to produce these sounds accurately when they are instructed to do so. Morris-Wilson (2004: 57) also states that Finnish pupils' problems with English /v/ are due to the interference from Finnish.

English sibilant sounds also cause allophonic difficulties for Finns. Finnish has only one original sibilant sound and as a result, as Morris-Wilson (2004: 64) points out, Finns are used to varying their sibilant sounds in quality meaning they may pronounce it in different places. However, in English there are two distinct positions to the voiceless sibilant sound meaning there are two distinct phonemes. Alveolar voiceless sibilant sound /s/ is pronounced nearly in the same manner as the only Finnish sibilant sound /s/. English palato-alveolar sibilant sound /ʃ/ is used among Finns for instance in expressions like *shh* when someone is asked to be quiet and in loan words in which the sound *h* follows *s* as in *shakaali*. However, the symbol of it is unfamiliar to Finns even though they may be familiar with the sound itself.

Because Finns are familiar with both forms, the problem is caused by the fact that in Finnish these two sounds do not differentiate the meaning of the words as they are the allophones of alveolar sibilant sound /s/. In English, however they are distinct phonemes and there are many minimal pairs that differ from each other only by these two sounds like *sea* and *she*. The allophonic problem in this case is a problem of initial perception and production. When Finnish learners are instructed to produce expression *shh*, the English palato-alveolar /ʃ/ sound is formed accurately. It is also important to protrude the lips and to place the tongue in a right manner. However, the spelling of the sound causes a lot of difficulties. The sound is often spelled with *s* following *h* as in *she* and *shoe* and is easier to pronounce accurately in these kinds of words. Still, many other letter combinations are pronounced as palato-alveolar sibilant sound and this makes the recognizing the correct sound from written form difficult. However, this is not always so and for instance in words *sugar* and *sure* the orthography does not reveal the accurate pronunciation. In addition, the sounds in minimal pairs may vary in words even though the orthography may be identical as in words *missing* /'mɪsɪŋ/ and *mission* /'mɪʃn/.

In his licentiate thesis Peacock (1990: 46) states that sibilants as the most difficult sounds of English for Finnish students. According to him, palato-alveolar sibilant /ʃ/ and alveolar sibilant /s/ cause difficulties because the place of articulation is different, the position of lips is different and the place and position of tongue are different. Consequently, Finns have difficulties with palato-alveolar fricatives /ʃ/ which is, when not trained to position the tongue and lips in the right place pronounced more or less like /s/. Finnish pupils may often substitute Finnish /s/ for /ʃ/ and she may be heard as sea by the listener.

Paananen (1998: 116–117) in her study done in the capital area Helsinki found that there were not severe difficulties with sibilant sounds among ninth grade comprehensive school pupils. The different findings compared with Peacock's findings may refer to regional differences. Sibilant may cause the main problems in northern and eastern part of Finland and may be more familiar in the south and coastal areas where Swedish is more used. In Swedish has equivalent or near equivalent sound for English voiceless palato-alveolar sibilant /ʃ/ (Swan & Smith 2001: 26).

### 2.3 Difficulties related to vowel sounds

Vowels are sonorant sounds and the air flowing from lungs is not prevented by any speech organ but can flow freely out through the mouth. Vowels are also voiced sounds and their audible voice is created in the same way as was described with voiced obstruents ( see p. 15). Differences between vowels are created by moving the tongue from front to back and in these positions the terms front, central, and back are used. Distinctions are also made by moving the tongue from down to up and the terms open, open-mid, close-mid, and close are used. More differences with vowel sounds are produced by varying the lip positions from rounded to unrounded and in the latter case also the term spread is used. However, the exact place of articulation of vowels cannot be determined because there is not a precise place where the sound is formed. However, to be able to describe the vowels the extreme points in front, back, low and high positions for the tongue in the mouth are determined and vowels in these positions are called the Cardinal Vowels. (Morris-Wilson 2004: 129–131.)

Finnish is a vowel language meaning it has many vowel sounds. Its vowel system comprises eight single vowel phonemes which are *i e y ö ä a o u*. Characteristic of the Finnish language is that all these vowels can occur either short or long and double letters always represent longer sounds. In addition to these single vowel sounds, Finnish has 18 diphthongs i.e. the sequences of two dissimilar vowels. English also has many vowel sounds. Its system comprises six short vowels /ɪ/ /e/ /æ/ /ʌ/ /ɒ/ /ʊ/, five long vowels /i:/ /ɜ:/ /ɑ:/ /ɔ:/ /u:/ and eight diphthongs (Roach 2000: 15–21). In English, short and long vowels differ more in quantity than in quality and the English vowel system is therefore different from the Finnish one. Differences in quality mean that these vowels are said in slightly different places and are distinct sounds. By comparison, there are fewer vowels in Finnish and more space to use with each vowel than in English. Finnish vowels are said by using only three dimensions in up–down range but for English vowels there are four areas. In front–back range Finnish vowels need two areas whereas English vowels are said by using three dimensions. In Finnish, lip rounding is also used more compared with the production of English vowels. (Morris-Wilson 2004: 135.) Accordingly, it may be difficult for Finns to say English vowels in an accurate quality.



However, the defect in the precise quality of vowels does not cause serious problems for intelligibility in oral communication. Besides, even though the vowel system of one English accent is once properly acquired there will be many problems for learners when trying to learn how vowels are pronounced in another accent. Peacock (2004: 2–3) states that it is not sensible to use much time for teaching accurate vowel quality if there is short of time because learners will face a great number of problems when trying to learn how vowels are pronounced in other accents of English. According to him, consonants are pronounced nearly always in the same way in different accents of English worldwide. Paananen (1998: 124) too points out, that consonants are more important for intelligibility than vowels and accordingly the teachers should concentrate on teaching them. The consonant systems, however, remain the same among different accents. Besides, due to the wide range of vowel sounds in Finnish, the Finnish learners do not have significant problems when producing English vowels.

Even though English vowels do not cause serious problems for the intelligibility of the speech, there are still some features that need to be paid attention to. The English vowel length system causes some remarkable problems for Finnish learners and these difficulties are the consequence of the Finnish system of contrasting long and short vowels. In Finnish the vowel length is an important feature and it has a distinctive function. A word with the short vowel is different from the word with the long vowel as in word pair *tuli-tuuli*. In spelling Finnish vowel length is always visible by doubling the single vowel and there is a vast range of minimal pairs that differ from each other only by one word having short and another long vowel. Even though the English vowel system lacks this contrastive feature with long and short vowels, the matter is not insignificant. The duration of vowels in English also differs and such factors as speech tempo, stress position and phonetic environment affect the vowel length. As mentioned earlier, vowel duration is, for instance, to create the difference between voiceless and voiced pairs in the word-final position. The vowel that precedes lenis sound in the word final position is longer than the vowel preceding fortis sound in the same environment as for instance in minimal pair *bag back*.

In addition, concerning the precise quality of short and long vowels there is one pair which is regarded important. Lintunen (2004: 201), Peacock and Morris-Wilson, state that /i:/ - /ɪ/ is a vowel tense-lax pair which has a wide occurrence in English. There are many minimal pairs with /i:/ and /ɪ/ sounds that are differentiated by the difference in quality, not in length. According to Flege (1997: 18), the distinction between tense and lax vowels /i:/ and /ɪ/ is sometimes represented by using these different symbols but often the only difference being the duration mark. He also mentions that this latter version is often used in languages in which the vowel duration distinguishes words from each other. This is the case in Finland and symbols for these two sounds are /i:/ and /i/. Some English pronunciation teachers concern this regrettable because Finns are not able to realize these sounds being different in quality.

Problems are also caused by the spelling of English. In English, the spelling system does not indicate whether the word consists of a long or short vowel. The situation can be quite the opposite as for instance the minimal pair *loose* /lu:s/ and *lose* /lu:z/ shows. The Finnish learner automatically considers former word to have longer vowel sound because of double *o* in its writing. Phonemic transcription however shows that both words have as long vowel sound /u:/. The lenis sound at the end of the latter word lengthens the preceding vowel and in the accurate pronunciation of these words the vowel sound is longer in the latter case.

The English vowels system also differs from Finnish systems because it is related to the rhythm of spoken form. In Finnish, the main stress is on the first syllable of a word. In English, the place of stress varies but concerning the word stress it is often on the syllable that contains the vowel which is stressed. In Finnish, vowel length is not related to stress in the same way as in English (Suomi et al. 2008: 39). If a syllable that includes vowels is not stressed, its vowel is reduced and called schwa /ə/. According to Morris-Wilson (2004: 141 – 142), Finns do not have difficulties in learning to produce the accurate pronunciation of a schwa but the problem is that they are not learnt to use it even though it is the most often used vowel in the weak unstressed syllables.

## 2.4 Novel sounds

Ringbom (2006: 2) states that it is generally accepted that learner's first language has an influence on the second language learning and the transfer i.e. the use of similarities promote the learning of foreign languages. If two languages are cognitive languages, learning is easier and faster. Research done among Finnish speaking and Finland-Swedish speaking students show that this is the case (Ringbom 2006: 51–52). Mitchell and Myles (2004: 19) also emphasize the effect of the transfer in learner's pronunciation of a foreign language. They state that according to different theories the transfer can also cause errors and is then called interference. The native language then can either promote the acquisition of the pronunciation or inhibit it.

In addition to language transfer, Mitchell and Myles (2004: 24–27) analyse learners' individual differences which affect the outcomes of learning. These differences are divided into cognitive factors and affective factors. Cognitive factors include intelligence, language aptitude and language learning strategies. Affective factors consist of language attitudes, motivation, language anxiety, and willingness to communicate. Some learners then may acquire oral skills only by listening to the target language if they are exposed to a great amount of high-quality input. A person may be good at mimicry and accordingly he or she can imitate all distinctions of the sounds of a foreign language. Foreign language learners then are different and concerning the production of the spoken form of a language there are many reasons why some learners learn foreign language pronunciation seemingly without any difficulties and some cannot produce accurate speech sounds or longer utterances of a foreign language.

Concerning the pronunciation it might seem that cognitive factors do not have an influence on the learning of the pronunciation and affective factors affect more. However, there are research results that show that the age of the learner and learner's cognitive development may be an important factor when learning a foreign language pronunciation. It has already been stated earlier that the learning of accurate pronunciation is easier for younger learners than adults. Concerning the age factor, why is it easier for a little child to learn the spoken form of foreign language than for adults?

Some research has been done by Catherine Best. She states that if a learner has become literate in her or his native language when the learning of a foreign language begins the perception and accurate production of the phonemes of a foreign language may be limited or shortened by the time because of the learning “the higher-order aspects” such as the syntactic structure or morphological features of that foreign language. It means that sounds that are learnt at early ages are not processed with cognitive abilities. Cognitive abilities are used to learn more difficult features of a language. (Best 2007: 25–26.) Children who learn literate early may not have the same possibilities to percept and discriminate foreign sounds as accurately as those who learn literate later.

According to Flege (1986: 31–32), many errors that are made by learners, have a perceptual basis. He states that for adults it is more difficult to learn those sounds of target language which have near similar in native language. Flege’s Speech Learning Model (SLM) is an interesting approach which concerns the difficulties occurring when learning similar sounds. According to Equivalence Classification, hypothesis related to SLM, learners categorize the similar sounds of the foreign language to being the same as close native language sounds. Flege also states that after the phonetic categories for native language have developed through childhood learners become limited to perceive close foreign language sounds. It is easier for them to recognize clearly different sounds and form more accurate pronunciation for them. When a learner does not perceive and recognize foreign sound accurate enough, he or she categorizes it to be the same as a close native sound. The reason for this is not understood but it is assumed that older learners do not percept acoustic information as accurately as smaller children because they recognize whole words more rapidly and do not process sounds as accurately as children as was discussed above. (Flege 1997: 13–15.)

According to Flege, it is then easier for the learner to learn the pronunciation of new sounds that bear no resemblance to native sounds than the near similar sounds of the foreign language. Flege (1997: 18), when considering whether the vowel sound is new or similar states that one criterion considering a sound as similar is to compare IPA symbols used. However, the usage of this comparison causes problems because there are different transcription systems currently in use. One example is the different

symbols for short and long vowels as was discussed above. Symbols used with obstruents are, however, similar among different English accents. English novel obstruents for Finns are dental fricative fortis/lenis pair /θ/ /ð/ and palato-alveolar fricative fortis/lenis pair /ʃ/ /ʒ/. These sounds, even though being new to Finns, still bear some resemblance to Finnish sounds and first pair is often substituted by *t* and *d*, and fortis sibilant sound by *s*.

When English novel obstruent sounds that are new but still similar to some Finnish sounds are learnt by Finnish learners, the age is an important factor. Concerning the Finnish-speaking beginning learners of English they may then categorize those English sounds that have near equivalents in Finnish to be the same sounds. It is then important to pay enough attention to the accurate perception and production of these sounds from the initial stages of learning. When the accurate place and manner of articulation are instructed, the listening and practising the sound gives all pupils possibility to acquire precise pronunciation. This instruction needs to include illustrative pictures of articulatory organs and how they are placed when the sound is pronounced. The manner of the articulation also needs to be explained.

## 2.5 Difficulties of erasing inaccurate habitual pronunciation

In his Licentiate Thesis Michael Peacock examined Finnish university students who had been selected to study the English language as a major subject at the University of Jyväskylä. His aim was to examine whether formal instruction could improve students' pronunciation at segmental level. All these students had difficulties in one or more of four areas that Peacock had chosen to be examined on the basis what was his own experience during ten years period of teaching pronunciation for the Finnish-speaking students. He had chosen these areas because they were important for intelligibility in oral communication and he had noticed that Finnish students constantly had difficulties with them. According to him, the Finnish learners of English have problems with consonants because of the interference from Finnish and especially with these four areas; palato-alveolar sibilants, syllable-initial "voiced" and "voiceless" stops

(fortis/lenis opposition), the English labial continuant [w] and labio-dental fricative [v], and the English “voicing contrast made syllable – finally” which is related to fortis/lenis opposition. (Peacock 1990: 46–49.)

In his study it was shown that formal instruction affected the university degree student’s pronunciation and improved it and learners were able to learn the accurate pronunciation of a sound which they pronounced inaccurately earlier. However, he also noticed that it demanded a lot of practise and it was still difficult for them to maintain the newly acquired skills especially in a communicative situation in which they had to focus on others areas of language like vocabulary and grammar too. Students then retained their inaccurate version in conversation situations when they could not focus on the problematic sounds only. (Peacock 1990: 155–178.)

Peacock’s research then shows that it is difficult for young adult Finnish learners to “unlearn” the inaccurate pronunciation of English speech sounds even though the learners are skilled in English. It can be assumed that these students had good cognitive and affective factors since students were chosen to study the English language as their major subject. Accordingly, a lot of emphasis should be laid on the importance of teaching accurate perception and production of segmental pronunciation as early as possible. This would ensure the more correct pronunciation of sounds that are in danger to be assimilated to close native language sounds.

Flege’s SLM and in it used Equivalence Classification hypothesis support Peacock’s results of young adult learners’ abilities to change the way they have pronounced sounds they categorized to be the same as similar Finnish sounds earlier. When palato-alveolar sibilant sound for example is regarded to be the same as Finnish alveolar sibilant sound, changing this pronunciation is burdensome later and requires first the training of accurate production of the sound and second a lot of training in different environments and situations to become automatic.

I have also noticed the difficulties to change inaccurate pronunciation later in adulthood while teaching Finnish as a second language for adult immigrant students. If students’

native language for example lacks the distinctive feature of differentiating words by using short or long vowels, students manage to produce the difference with Finnish words when they say them in isolation. However, they are not able to pronounce the difference when they are in a communicative situation even though they have been training this feature for a long time. It is obvious that if the learner cannot concentrate on the length of the vowel only but have to pay attention to the other demanding aspects of Finnish such as vocabulary or word cases, the vowel is inevitably produced short when longer form is needed. Students are, however, able to say the longer version in accurate manner shortly afterwards while focusing on that feature only.

## 2.6 Phonemic symbols and transcription – a novel feature for learners

Some languages have one letter per one phoneme and speakers of languages of this kind can quite easily write what they can say. These languages do not need additional symbols for writing down its spoken form. Finnish is this kind of language. Standard Finnish has 21 letters which are *p, t, k, d, s, h, v, j, l, r, m, n, g, i, e, y, ö, ä, u, o* and *a* and these letters have near correspondence with spoken sounds and sounds nearly always refer to one letter only. According to Löflund, Rosenberg and Vuorsola (2010: 139), this correspondence is not quite complete and one exception is that Finnish has no letter for nasal sound /ŋ/. When it occurs for example before velar plosive /k/ as in word *kenkä*, its letter is *n* yet pronounced as /ŋ/ and in word *kengässä* *ng* is pronounced as /ŋŋ/. Despite this exception Finnish is generally considered as a language which is spoken as it is written and having a consistent and nearly perfect correspondence between pronunciation and spelling.

However, there are languages in which the spoken form differs slightly or more, even strongly from its written form. In English, the spoken form is extremely different from its spelling at least from the point of view of the Finnish beginning learner of English who has just learnt literate in Finnish language with nearly one to one correspondence between letters and sounds. There are 26 letters in standard English which are *a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r, s, t, u, v, w, x, y* and *z*. There are no letters for *ö* and *ä*

as in Finnish even though these sounds are common sounds in English. The English sound system has at least 36 sounds (Morris-Wilson 2004: Appendix 1) and accordingly its relation to spelling is very complex. Some sounds are represented by corresponding letters but there are sounds which are different from familiar Latin alphabet and new special symbols for writing these sounds are needed. Besides, all languages, however, contain phones that are not represented by letter because phonemes are pronounced differently in different environments. This means that spoken sounds in any language are more complex than the simple letters of its alphabet.

Phonemic symbols and transcription have been developed that it could be possible to write down spoken forms of languages sound by sound (Lintunen (2004: 9). The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) is a universally agreed system how the sounds of languages are written with symbols and it is based on the Latin alphabet. It represents all sounds which are used in languages. If this transcription is broad only representing the phonemes of a language symbols and transcriptions are enclosed with forward slashes like /phonemic/, and in the cases of narrowed symbols and transcriptions the square brackets are used as [phonetic]. Spelling forms are commonly enclosed with angle brackets < orthographic >. Besides alphabetic symbols, there are additional and smaller marks to indicate for instance allophonic distinctions and these symbols are called diacritics. There are also symbols for marking the primary stress and other suprasegmental features. There are more than one transcriptions based on IPA as was mentioned in the subsection concerning difficulties with vowels.

English is then different from Finnish in that the letter from the alphabet does not always represent the same sound but may represent another sound. Celce-Murcia et al. (1996: 39) give some good examples of the complex relationship between the spelling and pronunciation in English. Letter *c* is pronounced in four different ways in words *cat*, *city*, *ocean* and *cello*, and sound /s/ is written as *s*, *ss*, *c*, *ce*, *sc* and *ps* in words like *sit*, *ass*, *city*, *face*, *descent*, and *psychology*.

When Finnish pupils start their formal foreign language learning in the third grade, they are already literate in their own native that has nearly one to one correspondence



between letters and sounds and no phonemic and phonetic transcription are needed. Accordingly, pupils are not familiar with the use of the phonemic transcription and may not have ever seen any phonemic symbols before only being familiar with letters used with spelling. The phonemic transcription is then completely the new feature to them. The complex correspondence between the phonemes and letter in English then causes confusion and difficulties. When Sajavaara and Dufva (2001: 244) point out two potential sources that cause difficulties for the Finnish learners of English, they state that the complicated relationship between the spoken and written words of English is one.

It is quite possible to teach English pronunciation without introducing learners to the phonemic symbols or phonemic transcription. Lintunen (2004: 9) states that the purpose of the transcription is to transform the spoken form of the language into the written. For the beginning learner it would be ideal to learn some spoken language first. However, the use of textbooks and workbooks with beginning learners means that pupils are learning the spoken and written forms of English simultaneously and in addition they are given exposure to phonemic symbols and phonemic transcription too at the beginning of the learning. According to Nikula (2003: 146, 149) who examined English classrooms in both cases when English was either object or the medium of studying, the textbooks have an important role in classrooms when English is an object. This means that there is no option to ignore these symbols and transcription from instruction.

Phonemic symbols and phonemic transcription are then included in the teaching materials. There is usually a brief period at the beginning of the third grade when only the spoken form is used and schoolbooks only consist of pictures of the subject. Still, it is quite soon as the written form with phonetic symbols is introduced to the pupils. The pedagogical proficiency is needed when implementing the explanation of what these symbols are and why they are important when studying English. It is logical to think that if pupils have to address these symbols without understanding what they are the language learning is confined.

## 2.7 Variation in English word stress

Finnish and English word stress systems are very different. All Finnish words are stressed in a regular way and the main stress is placed on the first syllable of a word (Suomi et al. 2008: 75). In English, however, the word stress can be placed on the first, second or on a later syllable of a word and this place is quite firm. As Peacock states (2004: 130), there is no general rule for placing the stress in English words. Roach (2000: 100) too, states that the control of the word stress is vital for speakers if they aim at to speak English intelligibly. He also points out that English stress system is problematic for many learners and is therefore a feature that needs to be taken into account.

Finns are not then familiar with the fixed place of word stress on other syllable than the first one. Variation in main stress pattern in English words may then be difficult for Finnish learners if this feature is not pointed out and practised. The problem is that in Finnish, stress serves a different function to the one it serves in English. In Finnish, the stress is used to emphasize words and for the semantic purposes.

Another problem for learners is that in English the main stress affects the quality of the vowel. In the unstressed syllable, the vowel is reduced and when the vowel quality changes the word sounds different. If this is ignored by the speaker, it may cause problems with intelligibility. One example of vowel reduction and its effect on is a word *photograph* /'fəʊtəgrɑ:f/ and its different forms like *photography* /fə'tɒgrfi/. If the main stress is misplaced and the followed vowel quality ignored the learner's speak may become unintelligible.

It is important for the Finnish learners of English to pay attention to the word stress right from the beginning stage of learning because it has a strong impact on the listening comprehension and on the intelligibility of spoken English. The learning of the accurate word stress place or becoming at least aware of this phenomenon from the very beginning, facilitates the listening comprehension and the speech in general. This feature is not even difficult to teach in formal education because of the use of teaching

materials. Pupils are already exposed to phonemic transcription in which the word stress is already marked with the primary stress mark, a small vertical line ['] high up, just before the syllable it relates to. Mark can be found at any time when stress is placed after the first syllable. It is then possible to familiarize pupils with this feature from the earliest stage of learning and to pay attention to this little mark of word stress without causing much further trouble. In order to learn to use stress appropriately in English, pupils have to be able to recognize it and use it.



### 3.1 Exercises designed to practise fortis/lenis opposition

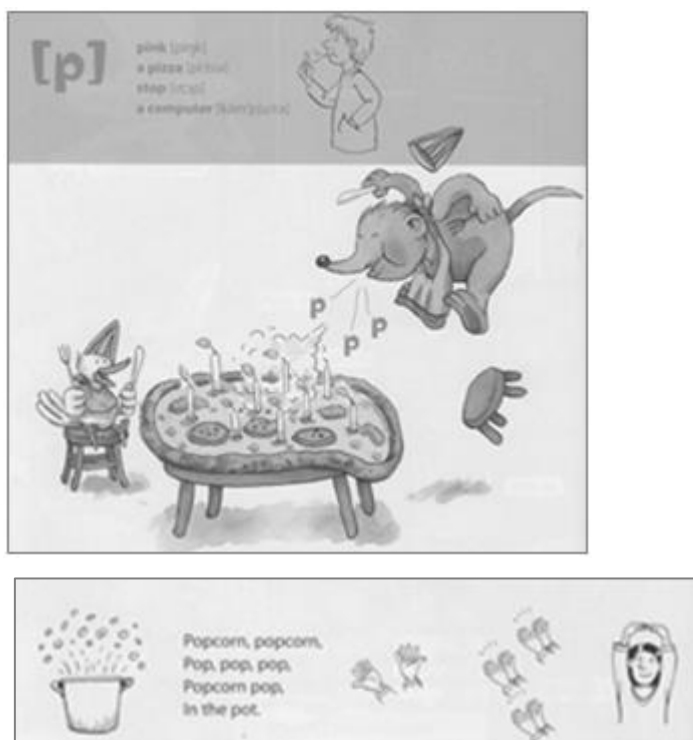
All workbooks pay attention to the fortis/lenis opposition and the total number of exercises related to this feature is 74. That is nearly half of all exercises. The fortis/lenis opposition is practised in pairs or by individual sounds. Fricatives are paid attention to in each analysed workbook, plosives and affricates all but one. Exercises related to the fortis/lenis opposition can be seen shaded in Table 2 below.

**Table 2.** Exercises designed to practise fortis/lenis opposition

|                                               | 1                       | 2                 | 3                | 4                 | 5                | 6                       | 7                       | 8                 | 9                 | 10                | 11               | 12        | 13         | 14        | 15        |           |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <i>Yippee! 3<br/>Writer<br/>2009</i>          | 3x<br>[t]<br>[d]        | 3x<br>[k]<br>[g]  | 4x<br>[p]<br>[b] | 3x<br>[s]<br>[z]  | 3x<br>[ʃ]        | 2x<br>[f]<br>[v]<br>[w] | 3x<br>[tʃ]<br>[dʒ]      | 2x<br>[θ]<br>[ð]  | 3x<br>[æ]<br>[ə]  | 2x<br>[ʌ]<br>[ɔ]  |                  | 3x<br>[ɪ] | 3x<br>[ː]  | MP        | 3x<br>PT  |           |
| <i>Let's Go! 3<br/>Activity Book<br/>2009</i> | 2x<br>/t/<br>/d/        | 2x<br>/p/<br>/b/  | 2x<br>/k/<br>/g/ | 2x<br>/s/<br>/ʃ/  | 2x<br>/θ/<br>/ð/ | 2x<br>/tʃ/<br>/dʒ/      | 2x<br>/v/<br>/w/        | 2x<br>/ʌ/<br>/ɑː/ | 2x<br>/i/<br>/iː/ | 2x<br>/ɔ/<br>/ɔː/ | 2x<br>/ə/<br>/æ/ | 2x<br>/ɪ/ | 2x<br>/ɜː/ | 2x<br>/æ/ | 2x<br>/z/ | 2x<br>/r/ |
| <i>All Stars 3<br/>Reader<br/>2008</i>        | 2x<br>[p]               | 2x<br>[b]         | 2x<br>[t]<br>[d] | 2x<br>[k]<br>[g]  | 2x<br>[s]<br>[z] | 2x<br>[θ]<br>[ð]        |                         |                   |                   |                   |                  |           |            |           |           |           |
| <i>Wow! 3<br/>Busy Book<br/>2002</i>          | [p]<br>[b]              | [t]<br>[d]        | [k]<br>[g]       | 2x<br>[θ]<br>[ð]  | 2x<br>[ʃ]<br>[z] | 2x<br>[tʃ]<br>[dʒ]      | 2x<br>[w]<br>[v]<br>[f] | 2x<br>[æ]<br>[ə]  | 2x<br>[ɪ]         | 2x<br>[ʌ]<br>[ɔ]  | 2x<br>[*]        | 2x<br>[ː] | 2x<br>PT   |           |           |           |
| <i>What's On?<br/>Do It<br/>2002</i>          | 3x<br>/tʃ/              | 3x<br>/k/         | 3x<br>/w/        | 3x<br>/t/         | 3x<br>/θ/        | 3x<br>/r/               | 3x<br>/z/               | 3x<br>/ʃ/         | 3x<br>/v/         | 3x<br>/dʒ/        | 3x<br>/ɪ/        | 3x<br>/ð/ |            |           |           |           |
| <i>Surprise 1<br/>Workbook<br/>2001</i>       | 2x<br>[ɔ]<br>[ʌ]<br>[ː] | 2x<br>[æ]<br>[əː] | 2x<br>[ʃ]<br>[ʒ] | 2x<br>[z]<br>[dʒ] | 2x<br>[ð]<br>[θ] | 2x<br>[ɪ]               |                         |                   |                   |                   |                  |           |            |           |           |           |

As mentioned earlier, there are three plosive fortis/lenis pairs in English. They are, according to their places of articulation, bilabials /p/ /b/, alveolars /t/ /d/, and velars /k/ /g/. Plosive bilabials /p/ and /b/, in which the air flowing from lungs is prevented by closing lips, are practised in four books. The focus in all exercises is on the training the difference in the initial position by using the aspiration. This feature is trained in each case and exercises may contain illustrations of aspiration such as the drawings shown in Picture 1 below. In it, the fortis sound is said with a force that makes a candle blow out. The teacher's guides also provide instruction about how to demonstrate aspiration. A common advice in them is to ask pupils to set a paper in front of the mouth and

pronounce fortis sound so strongly that the paper moves forwards. One older teacher's guide instructs to use strong *h* sound with aspiration. This may be because letter *h* was earlier taught to pronounce with a puff of air when pupils were taught to read in Finnish.



**Picture 1.** Exercises in *All Stars 3 Reader*

The teacher's guides also use Finnish-English pairs of words to help the teacher demonstrate initial fortis/lenis opposition differences with plosives. There are pairs like *pony – poni* and *pizza – pitsa*. The use of these pairs shows pupils the difference clearly but requires Finnish words that have the same orthography with comparable English words.

Exercises concerning this labial plosive fortis/lenis opposition then focus on training the aspiration and teachers are aided with advice provided in teacher's guides. *Yippee! 3 Writer*, *All Stars 3 Reader*, and *Wow! 3 Busy Book* also use minimal pairs to help pupils to identify the differences between these sounds. In pictures 2 and 3 below can be seen the examples of these exercises. In *Lets's Go! 3 Activity book* there are no minimal pairs included in the exercises and there is neither information about the accurate place and

manner of articulation of this pair leaving it up to individual teacher to decide how to instruct the production of this difference with this bilabial plosive pair.



**Picture 2.** Exercise in *Wow! 3 Busy Book*

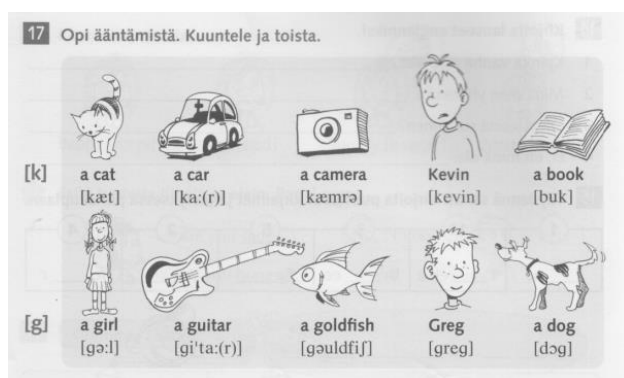
16 Minkä sanan kuulet? Merkitse rasti.

|                                   |                                 |                                  |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 tennis <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 coat <input type="checkbox"/> | 3 jeans <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Dennis <input type="checkbox"/>   | goat <input type="checkbox"/>   | cheese <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| bee <input type="checkbox"/>      | three <input type="checkbox"/>  | shoe <input type="checkbox"/>    |
| 4 sea <input type="checkbox"/>    | 5 tree <input type="checkbox"/> | 6 two <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| pea <input type="checkbox"/>      | tea <input type="checkbox"/>    | Sue <input type="checkbox"/>     |
|                                   |                                 | zoo <input type="checkbox"/>     |

**Picture 3.** Minimal pair exercise in *Yippee! 3 Writer*

The alveolar plosive pair /t/ /d/ in which the obstruction of flowing air is prevented by front part of the tongue touching alveolar, is practised in 12 exercises. This fortis/lenis opposition is also trained mainly in the initial position by using the aspiration with the fortis sound and using minimal pairs to practice this difference in a similar manner than was done with bilabial plosives. In some teacher's guides, there are also used word pairs in which one word is in Finnish and another in English like *Toni – Tony* and *taksi – taxi* with the instruction to emphasize aspiration with English version like it was done with the bilabial pair.

Velar plosive sounds /k/ and /g/, in which the tongue creates the obstacle for air in the velum, are in a similar way trained also in 12 exercises and again in all but one book. The aspiration with the fortis sound is also trained with this pair. In the exercises of *Yippee! 3 Writer* and *What's On? Do It*, see Picture 4 below, there are also words in which a lenis sound is in the final position as in words *Greg* and *dog* but no attention is paid or advice given in teacher's guides to the lengthening of the preceding vowel even though these words have been chosen for training lenis sound in word final position. It is then left for the individual teacher to take care of the pupils' pronunciation and give a model for the accurate pronunciation. One word included in the exercises is *book*. Pointing out the vowel length difference between Finnish and English could also have been mentioned here emphasising the vowel length difference between these two languages. English spelling does not correspond to the spoken form like it does in Finnish and vowel length has not the same function as it has in Finnish. The pronunciation of a doubled vowel is quite short in this word because of the following fortis sound. The teacher who is interested in teaching the spoken form and pronunciation in general pays attention to this feature and knows how to teach it to the beginning learners. However, some information and advice for teachers in teacher's guides would be beneficial for pupils and teachers too.



**Picture 4.** Exercise in *Yippee! 3 Writer*

The total number of all exercises designed to train fortis/lenis plosives was 33 and all these exercises paid attention to the plosive fortis/lenis opposition in the initial position of words. In addition there was one minimal pair exercise which included all plosive pairs (see Picture 3 above). Plosive fortis/lenis pairs were then regarded all to be equally



important in each book even though separate books put emphasis on these pairs differently.

There are four fricative fortis/lenis pairs in English. Fricatives are sounds which are audible because two speech organs inside the mouth move so close to each other that the air coming from lungs has a very narrow gap to pass and friction noise is produced. Those sounds that have stronger fricative sound are further divided into subcategory and called sibilants. There are two fortis/lenis sibilant sound pairs, /s/ /z/ and /ʃ/ /ʒ/. All workbooks pay attention to one or more sibilant sounds but not always to the fortis/lenis opposition and how it affects pronunciation. The total number of exercises designed to focus on these two pairs and opposition between them is 7. In addition, the minimal pair exercise mentioned above (see Picture 3) includes sibilant fortis/lenis pairs.

Alveolar fricatives /s/ and /z/ form a fortis/lenis pair which is practised in 5 exercises. Exercises in *Yippee! 3 Writer* includes words that have these sounds in initial, medial, and final positions. The teacher's guide instructs to compare the fortis sound to Finnish *s* and to produce the lenis sound by mimicking a buzzing bee. In one exercise, there are plural forms of words *books* and *toys* and pupils are instructed to listen to which sound is heard. However, teachers are not instructed how the plural suffixes should be pronounced and how the preceding sound affects the pronunciation. Suffixes adjust to the preceding sound; if it is fortis the plural suffix is also pronounced as fortis i.e. /s/ and when lenis the suffix also pronounced lenis i.e. /z/. It could have been instructed how the length of the vowel is pretemined by the preceding fortis or lenis sound. In *All Stars 3 Reader* both exercises focus on training the voiced and voiceless pairs of these sounds in different positions of words but no plural forms were included in the exercise.

Palato-alveolar fricative pair /ʃ/ and /ʒ/ was only taken into consideration in one book and its exercises focused on phonetic symbols and phonemic transcription. Both sounds of this pair cause problems for Finns. First, they are sounds that are not used in Finnish and Finns need to learn the accurate place and manner of pronunciation of these sounds. Second, problems concerning this pair are not caused by the fortis/lenis opposition but are related to allophonic differences between Finnish and English and are analysed in

more detail below. The lenis sound of this pair is not used much in English (Morris-Wilson 2004: 70) and accordingly it does not cause much unintelligibility when pronounced inaccurately. This may be the reason it is not focused on much and occurs only in two exercises related to fortis/lenis pair.

Neither of the dental fricative fortis/lenis pair sounds, /θ/ or /ð/, is used in Finnish and there are no sounds that are similar to them. However, the common spelling of these sounds i.e. letters *th*, often make Finns substitute them for Finnish *t* and *d*. All books of my material have these sounds in their exercises. Their total number is 16. These sounds are not, however, trained with fortis/lenis opposition but more because they are sounds which are unfamiliar and novel for Finnish-speaking pupils. These sounds and exercises related to them are accordingly analysed more in the subsection that emphasises on the learning the accurate perception and production of the sounds below.

There is one more fricative fortis/lenis pair left. It is labiodental fortis/lenis pair /f/ and /v/. In analysed exercises, however, these sounds do not occur as a fortis/lenis pair and are not analysed in this section but in the following subsection which concerns exercises related to sounds that cause allophonic difficulties.

The last fortis/lenis pair consists of palato-alveolar affricates /tʃ/ and /dʒ/. The fortis affricate /tʃ/ sound is a combination of plosive and fricative fortis sounds. It is, according to Morris-Wilson (2004: 99), trained by English children by pretending the sound of a train. Some workbooks use the same idea. Pupils are told to imitate the old steam train when producing this sound. This sound combination does not occur in Finnish and Finns have problems when producing it. The main problem is due to the palato-alveolar fricative sound /ʃ/ which is difficult for Finns and as Morris-Wilson (2004: 102) states the accurate pronunciation of the sound /ʃ/ is a prerequisite for the correct pronunciation of /tʃ/. When the pronunciation of palato-alveolare sound is acquired, the palato-alveolar affricate can be pronounced without problems. The same is true with the lenis affricate sound /dʒ/. The total number of exercises that took this pair into consideration was 14.

### 3.2 Exercises designed to practise allophonic differences

Sounds can be said differently because their environment affects the pronunciation. These sounds do not, however, change the meaning of the word and their phonemic symbols are the same in all environments. These sounds are called allophones and are said slightly differently because of adjacent sounds or following empty space. This difference caused by the environment can be added to the symbol and these added marks are called diacritics. The transcription that includes allophones is called phonetic. One phoneme may have many allophones in different environments. In this subsection, exercises that are designed to take into account allophonic differences between Finnish and English are analysed.

Exercises designed to pay attention to these allophonic problems are found in each book and the total number of them is 23. All these difficulties are caused by English having phonemes that are allophones in Finnish and exercises designed to pay attention to this feature can be seen shaded in Table 3 below. There are also allophonic problems concerning the vowel sounds. However, vowels are not taken into account in this connection and are analysed more with other features in the next subsection. Phonemes related to allophonic problems are either exercises concerning sibilant sounds or exercises including labiodental fricative lenis sound /v/ and velar central approximant sonorant sound /w /.

**Table 3.** Exercises designed to show allophonic differences


|                                               | 1                       | 2                 | 3                | 4                 | 5                | 6                       | 7                       | 8                 | 9                 | 10                | 11               | 12        | 13        | 14        | 15        |  |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--|
| <i>Yippee! 3<br/>Writer<br/>2009</i>          | 3x<br>[t]<br>[d]        | 3x<br>[k]<br>[g]  | 4x<br>[p]<br>[b] | 3x<br>[s]<br>[z]  | 3x<br>[ʃ]<br>[ʒ] | 2x<br>[f]<br>[v]<br>[w] | 3x<br>[tʃ]<br>[dʒ]      | 2x<br>[θ]<br>[ð]  | 3x<br>[æ]<br>[ə]  | 2x<br>[ʌ]<br>[ɔ]  | 3x<br>[ŋ]        | 3x<br>[:] | MP        | 3x<br>PT  |           |  |
| <i>Let's Go! 3<br/>Activity Book<br/>2009</i> | 2x<br>/t/<br>/d/        | 2x<br>/p/<br>/b/  | 2x<br>/k/<br>/g/ | 2x<br>/s/<br>/ʃ/  | 2x<br>/θ/<br>/ð/ | 2x<br>/tʃ/<br>/dʒ/      | 2x<br>/v/<br>/w/        | 2x<br>/ʌ/<br>/ɑ:/ | 2x<br>/i/<br>/i:/ | 2x<br>/ɔ/<br>/ɔ:/ | 2x<br>/ə/<br>/æ/ | 2x<br>/ŋ/ | 2x<br>/ɪ/ | 2x<br>/z/ | 2x<br>/r/ |  |
| <i>All Stars 3<br/>Reader<br/>2008</i>        | 2x<br>[p]               | 2x<br>[b]         | 2x<br>[t]<br>[d] | 2x<br>[k]<br>[g]  | 2x<br>[s]<br>[z] | 2x<br>[θ]<br>[ð]        |                         |                   |                   |                   |                  |           |           |           |           |  |
| <i>Wow! 3<br/>Busy Book<br/>2002</i>          | [p]<br>[b]              | [t]<br>[d]        | [k]<br>[g]       | 2x<br>[θ]<br>[ð]  | 2x<br>[ʃ]<br>[ʒ] | 2x<br>[tʃ]<br>[dʒ]      | 2x<br>[w]<br>[v]<br>[f] | 2x<br>[æ]<br>[ə]  | 2x<br>[ŋ]         | 2x<br>[ʌ]<br>[ɔ]  | 2x<br>[*]        | 2x<br>[:] | 2x<br>PT  |           |           |  |
| <i>What's On?<br/>Do It<br/>2002</i>          | 3x<br>/tʃ/              | 3x<br>/k/         | 3x<br>/w/        | 3x<br>/t/         | 3x<br>/θ/        | 3x<br>/r/               | 3x<br>/z/               | 3x<br>/ʃ/         | 3x<br>/v/         | 3x<br>/dʒ/        | 3x<br>/ŋ/        | 3x<br>/ð/ |           |           |           |  |
| <i>Surprise 1<br/>Workbook<br/>2001</i>       | 2x<br>[ɔ]<br>[ʌ]<br>[:] | 2x<br>[æ]<br>[ə:] | 2x<br>[ʃ]<br>[ʒ] | 2x<br>[z]<br>[dʒ] | 2x<br>[ð]<br>[θ] | 2x<br>[ŋ]               |                         |                   |                   |                   |                  |           |           |           |           |  |

Pupils face difficulties with sibilant sounds because Finnish has only one original sibilant sound *s* whereas English has three voiceless/voiced pairs; /s/ /z/ and /ʃ//ʒ/ and affricate sounds /tʃ/ /dʒ/; fortis and lenis palato-alveolar pair. The Finnish learners of English have difficulties in discriminating between separate English sibilant sounds. The problem for Finns is that they tend to use Finnish alveolar *s* when palato-alveolar sibilant sound /ʃ/ should be used. Sibilant sounds are trained in 10 exercises and the only one Minimal Pair exercise that can be seen in Picture 3 above also contains sibilant sounds. All these exercises include this sibilant sound /ʃ/. It occurs on its own or is joined voiceless alveolar sibilant sound /s/ or voiced alveolar sibilant sound /z/. Picture 5 below shows exercises from *Yippee! 3Writer*. Teacher's guide advises to produce this sound by putting a forefinger in front of the lips and asking pupils to be quiet and to create the hissing sound *sshhh* and to protrude the lips slightly. It is important to round the lips when pronouncing this sound.


**14** Kuuntele ja toista loru.

Sheila's sheep is sleeping.  
Shh! Shh! Shh!

Sharon's sheep is sleeping.  
Hush, hush, hush.



**15** Opi ääntämistä. Kuuntele ja toista.



|     |        |         |           |           |        |          |
|-----|--------|---------|-----------|-----------|--------|----------|
| [ʃ] | a shoe | a sheep | shampoo   | sugar     | a fish | English  |
|     | [ʃu:]  | [ʃi:p]  | [ʃæm'pu:] | [ʃugə(r)] | [fi:ʃ] | [iŋgliʃ] |

**16** Kuuntele ja merkitse rasti, kun kuulet [ʃ]-äänteen.

|                              |                              |                              |                              |                              |                              |                              |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1                            | 2                            | 3                            | 4                            | 5                            | 6                            | 7                            |
| [ʃ] <input type="checkbox"/> | [ʃ] <input type="checkbox"/> | [ʃ] <input type="checkbox"/> | [ʃ] <input type="checkbox"/> | [ʃ] <input type="checkbox"/> | [ʃ] <input type="checkbox"/> | [ʃ] <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Picture 5.** Exercises in *Yippee! 3 Writer*

In this teacher's guide, it is also instructed to produce all these three sibilant sounds one by one to discern the difference between these sounds. The last exercise (see Picture 5 above) also consists of words including varying sibilant sounds like *ship*, *sea*, and *shirt*. The minimal pair exercise in *Yippee! 3 Writer* (see Picture 3 on page 38) practises sibilant sounds with the words like *shoe*, *Sue*, and *zoo* including all single sibilant sounds except palato-alveolar lenis sound /ʒ/ which is a sound not used frequently in English words (Morris-Wilson 2004: 70).

In *Let's Go! 3 Activity Book* voiceless alveolar and palato-alveolar sounds are practised but there is no additional information in the teacher's guide how to do this training. It is up to the teacher then to choose the method and instruction of its production for pupils. The Finnish learners of English have problems to perceive the accurate production of these sibilant sounds because the only Finnish sibilant sound does not have the precise place and manner of articulation and may be articulated close to this English palato-alveolar sibilant.

The total number of exercises related to the distinction between English fricative obstruent sound /v/ and central approximant sonorant sound /w/ is 12. This feature is paid attention to in four workbooks. The Finnish learners of English are familiar with the use of both sounds as allophones of Finnish /v/. Exercises of two workbooks combine the fricative fortis/lenis obstruent pair /f//v/ with the central approximant sonorant /w/ sound. Two other books only take into consideration the lenis labiodental fricative sound /v/ and the central approximant sonorant /w/ sound. Exercises including all three sounds /f//v/ and /w/ together train the accurate production of /f/ and /v/ and the distinction between /v/ and /w/. In *Yippee! 3 Writer*, there is one minimal pair, *a vet/wet*, included in the first exercise. *Wow! 3 Busy Book* practises the production of sounds and the teacher's guides of both give advice to form friction noise with the fricative obstruent sounds and round lips when pronouncing the approximant sonorant sound.

In *What's On? Do It*, training is concentrated on practising the correct production of sounds which are allophones in Finnish but distinct phonemes in English. The production of /w/ is first practised by using pictures in which there is action that is expressed by using sound that resembles English /w/. There is a boy in the picture who is surprised at something and exclaims *wau*. Another picture shows a dog wagging its tail and barking *wow*, *wow*. The sound /v/ is trained in a similar manner; a man is pictured freezing with his teeth chattering even though warmly dressed in the woollen beanie and mittens.

### 3.3 Exercises designed to practise vowel sounds

There are four books that contain exercises in which the vowel sounds are paid attention to. The total number of these exercises is 28 and can be seen shaded in Table 4 below. Each exercise book of these four includes vowel sounds /æ/ and /ə/ either in the same exercise or in a separate one and there are 11 exercises altogether concerning these sounds. Each of these four books also contains exercises designed to train vowel length and all but one pay attention to the vowel length mark whose symbol is /:/. The total

number of exercises related to vowel length is then 17. Other exercises consisting of vowel sounds include sounds [ʌ] and [ɔ] which are trained in six exercises altogether.

**Table 4.** Exercises designed to practise vowels

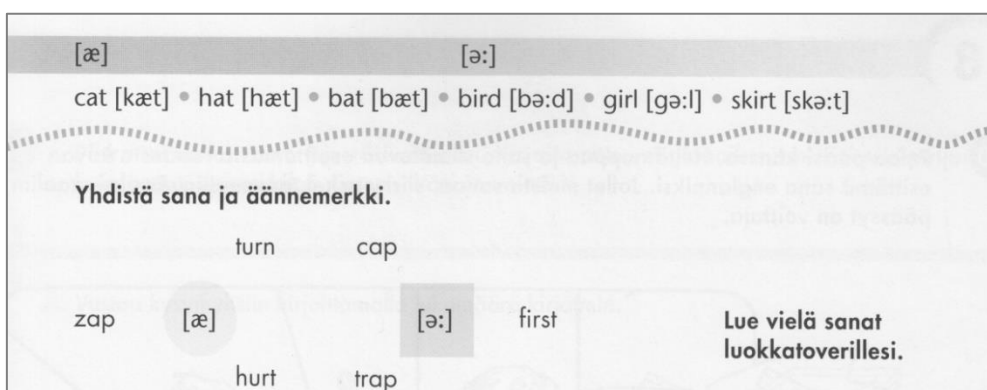
|                                                                    | 1                       | 2                 | 3                | 4                        | 5                | 6                       | 7                       | 8                 | 9                 | 10                | 11                | 12                | 13               | 14        | 15        |  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------|-----------|--|
| <b><i>Yippee! 3</i></b><br><i>Writer</i><br>2009 <b>A</b>          | 3x<br>[t]<br>[d]        | 3x<br>[k]<br>[g]  | 4x<br>[p]<br>[b] | 3x<br>[s]<br>[z]         | 3x<br>[ʃ]<br>[ʒ] | 2x<br>[f]<br>[v]<br>[w] | 3x<br>[tʃ]<br>[dʒ]      | 2x<br>[θ]<br>[ð]  | 3x<br>[æ]<br>[ə]  | 2x<br>[ʌ]<br>[ɔ]  | 3x<br>[ŋ]<br>[:]  | 3x<br>[:]         | MP               |           | 3x<br>PT  |  |
| <b><i>Let's Go! 3</i></b><br><i>Activity Book</i><br>2009 <b>B</b> | 2x<br>/t/<br>/d/        | 2x<br>/p/<br>/b/  | 2x<br>/k/<br>/g/ | 2x<br>/s/<br>/ʃ/<br>/dʒ/ | 2x<br>/θ/<br>/ð/ | 2x<br>/tʃ/<br>/dʒ/      | 2x<br>/v/<br>/w/        | 2x<br>/ʌ/<br>/ɑ:/ | 2x<br>/i/<br>/i:/ | 2x<br>/ɔ/<br>/ɔ:/ | 2x<br>/ə/<br>/ə:/ | 2x<br>/æ/<br>/æ:/ | 2x<br>/ŋ/<br>/z/ | 2x<br>/z/ | 2x<br>/r/ |  |
| <b><i>All Stars 3</i></b><br><i>Reader</i><br>2008 <b>C</b>        | 2x<br>[p]               | 2x<br>[b]         | 2x<br>[t]<br>[d] | 2x<br>[k]<br>[g]         | 2x<br>[s]<br>[z] | 2x<br>[θ]<br>[ð]        |                         |                   |                   |                   |                   |                   |                  |           |           |  |
| <b><i>Wow! 3</i></b><br><i>Busy Book</i><br>2002 <b>D</b>          | [p]<br>[b]              | [t]<br>[d]        | [k]<br>[g]       | 2x<br>[θ]<br>[ð]         | 2x<br>[ʃ]<br>[ʒ] | 2x<br>[tʃ]<br>[dʒ]      | 2x<br>[w]<br>[v]<br>[f] | 2x<br>[æ]<br>[ə]  | 2x<br>[ŋ]         | 2x<br>[ʌ]<br>[ɔ]  | 2x<br>[*]<br>[:]  | 2x<br>[:]         | 2x<br>PT         |           |           |  |
| <b><i>What's On?</i></b><br><i>Do It</i><br>2002 <b>E</b>          | 3x<br>/tʃ/<br>/dʒ/      | 3x<br>/k/<br>/w/  | 3x<br>/w/<br>/t/ | 3x<br>/t/<br>/θ/         | 3x<br>/θ/<br>/r/ | 3x<br>/r/<br>/z/        | 3x<br>/z/<br>/ʃ/        | 3x<br>/ʃ/<br>/v/  | 3x<br>/v/<br>/dʒ/ | 3x<br>/ŋ/<br>/ð/  | 3x<br>/ð/         |                   |                  |           |           |  |
| <b><i>Surprise 1</i></b><br><i>Workbook</i><br>2001 <b>F</b>       | 2x<br>[ɔ]<br>[ʌ]<br>[:] | 2x<br>[æ]<br>[ə:] | 2x<br>[ʃ]<br>[ʒ] | 2x<br>[z]<br>[dʒ]        | 2x<br>[ð]<br>[θ] | 2x<br>[ŋ]               |                         |                   |                   |                   |                   |                   |                  |           |           |  |

English /æ/ is a front and open vowel articulated with lips neutrally open and spread (Morris-Wilson 2004: 140). Finnish *ä* is said in the same way yet lips less spread and less tense. Accordingly, the phonemic symbol for Finnish *ä* is also /æ/ when the IPA is used. These sounds are also dealt to be the same sounds in both languages in all exercises. It is also instructed to train this sound and its pronunciation by substituting Finnish *ä* for IPA symbol /æ/ in Finnish words like “[æiti]” and “[isæ]” for *äiti* and *isä* in some Teacher’s guides.

In some exercises that include sounds /æ/ and /ə/ together, Finnish *ö* (whose symbol when using IPA is /ø/) is also compared with English /ə/ sound. English /ə/ is a central sound and it is said with lips spread. Finnish /ø/ is a more front sound and is pronounced with lips rounded or pouting. Teachers are again instructed to write some Finnish words by substituting Finnish *ö* for English /ə/ like “[mørkə]” for *mörkö*. This advice is given in *Wow! 3 Busy Book*. However, English /ə/ is not the same sound as Finnish /ø/. They

sound, however, quite similar yet are different in the place of articulation Finnish sound being more front than the English one. Many other exercises of these books also refer to Finnish /ø/ when the English /ə/ sound is trained. For example, in the word *thirteen*, sound /ɜ:/ is in unstressed syllable and is said shorter than in *thirty* in which it occurs in stressed syllable. Finnish /ø/ is a near front and close mid vowel said lips rounded or pouted. English /ɜ:/ is a long vowel placed central and the tongue is open mid and pronounced with lips not pouting but slightly spread. English /ə/ is central and close mid and it is close sound to English /ɜ:/. However, /ə/ is very common sound in weak unstressed syllables and it usually replaces the sound on a stressed syllable when that turns unstressed. For instance *have* is pronounced as /hæv/ on the stressed syllable but as /həv/ on an unstressed one. According to Morris-Wilson (2004: 141–142), Finns do not have problems when learning the correct pronunciation of sound /ə/. However, they do not use it as often as it should be used. This sound has a name of its own; it is called schwa.

The oldest book joins long vowel mark to the schwa sound symbol (see Picture 6 below). This is confusing because the sound symbol /ə/ is an unstressed sound and is mainly used on unstressed syllables. Stressed syllables are more prominent and hence often longer in duration. The lengthening mark is used to show the duration in these exercise books and accordingly here it implies this sound to be longer. All these three sounds, Finnish /ø/, English /ɜ:/ and /ə/, are quite close in their pronunciation but when pointing to the longer duration another symbol than /ə/ should be used.



Picture 6. Exercise in *Surprise 1 Workbook*



One of these books uses short and long pairs when introducing English vowel sounds. It includes short /ɪ/ and long /i:/ but due to the use of Daniel Jones' way of marking these short and long vowels there is no quality distinction visible and only the distinction in length (/ɪ/ /i:/). As it was mentioned before, this way of marking is not beneficial for Finnish learners because in the Finnish vowel length has a very important function; it separates words from each other. As can be seen in the Picture 7 below, this exercise includes words in which the environment affects the vowel length and it is difficult to hear any duration difference between some words. If we take a closer look at the words *sleep* /sli:p/ and *a lizard* /lɪzəd/ it is difficult to hear any difference in the length of vowels in these words. However, the purpose of this exercise is to introduce pupils with short and long vowels and their phonemic symbols.











**Picture 7.** Exercise in *Let's Go! 3 Activity Book*

Vowel length is taken into account in 17 exercises of total number 28. This implies that training the length of vowel sounds is regarded as an important feature. Some exercises focus on English short and long vowels showing both in one task. In words chosen for these exercises all long vowels are pronounced as long too.

As can be seen in Table 4 (p. 46), the emphasis in these exercises is to focus on the phonemic symbol of the vowel length. In the teacher's guides teachers are instructed to write down Finnish words including long vowels and substituting the latter vowel with this mark to make the purpose of this mark more intelligible for pupils.

Vowels that are also taken into account in these four books are [ʌ] and [ɔ]. According to Morris-Wilson (2004: 140) the English vowel sound /ʌ/ may be difficult for Finns because Finnish has not exactly the same vowel sound in Finnish. This English vowel is quite close to the Finnish vowel *a*. English has a long vowel /ɔ:/ whose corresponding short vowel is /ɒ/. Short and long vowels are different in Finnish and English systems. In Finnish there is no other difference between short and long vowel than the duration, they are even marked by doubling the same symbol. In English, there is also quality distinction between short and long vowel pairs. In exercises there is that feature omitted and symbol used for /ɒ/ is /ɔ/ ( see Picture 8 below). English /ɒ/ is between Finnish *a* and *o* (Morris-Wilson 2004: 141). However, there are differences in its pronunciation among English accents as there are a lot of differences concerning vowel sounds pronunciation. Considering the pronunciation of a word *what* which is included in the exercise below, it is pronounced as /wɒt/ in Standard British English and its vowel sound is close to Finnish *o*. In Standard North American English, however, it is pronounced as /wɑ:t/ or /wʌt/ and both these vowels are close the Finnish *a*. In the teacher's guide it is supposed that there are not be problems with producing accurate vowel sounds and the purpose of the exercise is to introduce the recognition of these phonemic symbols. However, the teaching of these phonemic symbols of vowels is confusing and difficult for the beginning learners of English.

**19** Opi ääntämistä. Kuuntele ja toista.

|     |                                                                                                           |                                                                                                        |                                                                                                        |                                                                                                           |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| [ʌ] | <br>up<br>[ʌp]         | <br>love<br>[lʌv]   | <br>a bus<br>[bʌs] | <br>the sun<br>[sʌn] |
| [ɔ] | <br>an olive<br>[ɔlɪv] | <br>a fox<br>[fɔks] | <br>a dog<br>[dɔg] | <br>what<br>[wɒt]    |

**Picture 8.** Exercise in *Yippee! 3 Writer*

### 3.4 Exercises designed to practise perception and production of sounds

To be able to produce novel and strange sounds of English, pupils need to know what is the accurate place and manner to articulate these sounds. Some pupils may acquire the correct pronunciation by listening to the model but for those who are not talented mimics there need to be enough knowledge and muscular training for unfamiliar sounds. Pupils need to be demonstrated the accurate places and manners of these sounds and need a lot of practise to enable the good pronunciation manner to develop. Otherwise, pupils may categorize the new sound to the nearest sound of their native language and without noticing any inaccuracy in their own pronunciation may create inaccurate habitual pronunciation which is difficult to change later.

In this section, the data is analysed to find out whether the perception and production of the new sounds of English is paid attention to. Only obstruent sounds are taken into consideration because they are regarded as the sounds that cause difficulties that most affect the intelligibility and are difficult for Finns. In addition to this, vowels are difficult to teach systematically because they are pronounced in varied ways among different accents of English. In addition, Finnish includes many vowels and Finns are able to pronounce important English vowels and in general English sonorant sounds do not include novel sounds for Finns.

There are six obstruent sounds in English that are not original sounds of Finnish and all of them are trained in these books. These sounds are fricatives /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /θ/, and /ð/ or affricates /tʃ/ and /dʒ/. Novel fricative sounds are paid attention in each workbook and the total number of exercises is 30. Affricates are paid attention to in all but one book and there are 15 exercises concerning them. These sounds can be seen shaded in Table 5 below. The total number of the exercises for training the novel sounds is then 40. Most of the exercises including novel sounds relate to English sibilants and specifically to voiceless palato-alveolar sound /ʃ/.

The fricative fortis/lenis pair which is not found in Finnish in any form and which does not have near similar sounds is /θ/ /ð/. However, when Finns do not recognize the

accurate place and manner of these sounds production they may substitute these with Finnish /t/ and /d/ (Morris-Wilson 2004: 61, 62). In spelling these sounds are represented by letters *t* and *h* and a Finnish learner may tend to pronounce them as /t//d/ without friction noise and also think that the letter sequence ‘th’ is pronounced with aspiration. (Ibid. 63.)

**Table 5.** Exercises containing novel obstruent sounds

|                                                             | 1                       | 2                | 3                | 4                       | 5                | 6                       | 7                       | 8                 | 9                 | 10                | 11               | 12               | 13        | 14        | 15        |  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--|
| <i>Yippee! 3</i><br><i>Writer</i><br>2009 <b>A</b>          | 3x<br>[t]<br>[d]        | 3x<br>[k]<br>[g] | 4x<br>[p]<br>[b] | 3x<br>[s]<br>[z]        | 3x<br>[ʃ]<br>[ʒ] | 2x<br>[f]<br>[v]<br>[w] | 3x<br>[tʃ]<br>[dʒ]      | 2x<br>[θ]<br>[ð]  | 3x<br>[æ]<br>[ə]  | 2x<br>[ʌ]<br>[ɔ]  | 3x<br>[ɪ]<br>[ʊ] | 3x<br>[ɪ]<br>[ɪ] |           | MP        | 3x<br>PT  |  |
| <i>Let's Go! 3</i><br><i>Activity Book</i><br>2009 <b>B</b> | 2x<br>/t/<br>/d/        | 2x<br>/p/<br>/b/ | 2x<br>/k/<br>/g/ | 2x<br>/s/<br>/ʃ/<br>/ʒ/ | 2x<br>/θ/<br>/ð/ | 2x<br>/tʃ/<br>/dʒ/      | 2x<br>/v/<br>/w/        | 2x<br>/ʌ/<br>/ɑ:/ | 2x<br>/i/<br>/i:/ | 2x<br>/ɔ/<br>/ɔ:/ | 2x<br>/ə/<br>/æ/ | 2x<br>/æ/        | 2x<br>/ɪ/ | 2x<br>/z/ | 2x<br>/r/ |  |
| <i>All Stars 3</i><br><i>Reader</i><br>2008 <b>C</b>        | 2x<br>[p]               | 2x<br>[b]        | 2x<br>[t]<br>[d] | 2x<br>[k]<br>[g]        | 2x<br>[s]<br>[z] | 2x<br>[θ]<br>[ð]        |                         |                   |                   |                   |                  |                  |           |           |           |  |
| <i>Wow! 3</i><br><i>Busy Book</i><br>2002 <b>D</b>          | [p]<br>[b]              | [t]<br>[d]       | [k]<br>[g]       | 2x<br>[θ]<br>[ð]        | 2x<br>[ʃ]<br>[ʒ] | 2x<br>[tʃ]<br>[dʒ]      | 2x<br>[w]<br>[v]<br>[f] | 2x<br>[æ]<br>[ə]  | 2x<br>[ɪ]<br>[ʊ]  | 2x<br>[ʌ]<br>[ɔ]  | 2x<br>[*]        | 2x<br>[ɪ]        | 2x<br>PT  |           |           |  |
| <i>What's On?</i><br><i>Do It</i><br>2002 <b>E</b>          | 3x<br>/tʃ/              | 3x<br>/k/        | 3x<br>/w/        | 3x<br>/t/               | 3x<br>/θ/        | 3x<br>/r/               | 3x<br>/z/               | 3x<br>/ʃ/         | 3x<br>/v/         | 3x<br>/dʒ/        | 3x<br>/ɪ/        | 3x<br>/ð/        |           |           |           |  |
| <i>Surprise 1</i><br><i>Workbook</i><br>2001 <b>F</b>       | 2x<br>[ɔ]<br>[ʌ]<br>[ɪ] | 2x<br>[æ]<br>[ə] | 2x<br>[ʃ]<br>[ʒ] | 2x<br>[z]<br>[dʒ]       | 2x<br>[ð]<br>[θ] | 2x<br>[ɪ]               |                         |                   |                   |                   |                  |                  |           |           |           |  |

In the theoretical section of this study, it was discussed why the proper perception and production of new sounds are equally important whether they are similar or dissimilar from native language sounds. Pupils may be talented mimics and are able to product the sound perfectly only by listening to them a few times. This is not the case with all the pupils and the age and cognitive skills also have an impact on the learning of these sounds. According to language learning experts, if sounds are not properly perceived they cannot be accurately produced.

Table 6 below shows all those exercises in which attention is paid to the production and perception of sounds. In general, there is more advice how to train sounds given in

teacher's guides but this data only includes exercises from workbooks in which the instructions for perception and production are trained. The total number of these exercises is 48 but there are only two books that especially concentrate on this important issue. A couple of exercises from *All Stars 3 Reader* can be seen on page 38 (Picture 1). The first of them emphasizes the proper training of the production by using a pedagogically designed picture to demonstrate how the sound is accurately produced. Another one provides a rhyme in which the sound is often repeated and also includes illustrating drawings related to the sound or to the function that creates this sound.

**Table 6.** Exercises designed to pay attention to the accurate perception and production of the sounds

|                                                             | 1                       | 2                 | 3                | 4                       | 5                 | 6                       | 7                       | 8                 | 9                 | 10                 | 11                | 12                | 13               | 14               | 15               |                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <i>Yippee! 3</i><br><i>Writer</i><br>2009 <b>A</b>          | 3x<br>[t]<br>[d]        | 3x<br>[k]<br>[g]  | 4x<br>[p]<br>[b] | 3x<br>[s]<br>[z]        | 3x<br>[ʃ]<br>[ʒ]  | 2x<br>[f]<br>[v]<br>[w] | 3x<br>[tʃ]<br>[dʒ]      | 2x<br>[θ]<br>[ð]  | 3x<br>[æ]<br>[ə]  | 2x<br>[ʌ]<br>[ɔ]   | 3x<br>[ɪ]<br>[ɨ]  | 3x<br>[:]<br>[ɜ]  | MP               |                  | 3x<br>PT         |                  |
| <i>Let's Go! 3</i><br><i>Activity Book</i><br>2009 <b>B</b> | 2x<br>/t/<br>/d/        | 2x<br>/p/<br>/b/  | 2x<br>/k/<br>/g/ | 2x<br>/s/<br>/ʃ/<br>/ð/ | 2x<br>/θ/<br>/dʒ/ | 2x<br>/tʃ/<br>/dʒ/      | 2x<br>/v/<br>/w/        | 2x<br>/ʌ/<br>/ɑ:/ | 2x<br>/i/<br>/i:/ | 2x<br>/ɔ/<br>/ɔ:/  | 2x<br>/ə/<br>/ə:/ | 2x<br>/æ/<br>/æ:/ | 2x<br>/ɪ/<br>/ɪ/ | 2x<br>/ɜ/<br>/ɜ/ | 2x<br>/z/<br>/z/ | 2x<br>/r/<br>/r/ |
| <i>All Stars 3</i><br><i>Reader</i><br>2008 <b>C</b>        | 2x<br>[p]               | 2x<br>[b]         | 2x<br>[t]<br>[d] | 2x<br>[k]<br>[g]        | 2x<br>[s]<br>[z]  | 2x<br>[θ]<br>[ð]        |                         |                   |                   |                    |                   |                   |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| <i>Wow! 3</i><br><i>Busy Book</i><br>2002 <b>D</b>          | [p]<br>[b]              | [t]<br>[d]        | [k]<br>[g]       | 2x<br>[θ]<br>[ð]        | 2x<br>[ʃ]<br>[ʒ]  | 2x<br>[tʃ]<br>[dʒ]      | 2x<br>[w]<br>[v]<br>[f] | 2x<br>[æ]<br>[ə]  | 2x<br>[ɪ]<br>[ɨ]  | 2x<br>[ʌ]<br>[ɔ]   | 2x<br>[*]<br>[:]  | 2x<br>[:]<br>[ɜ]  | 2x<br>PT         |                  |                  |                  |
| <i>What's On?</i><br><i>Do It</i><br>2002 <b>E</b>          | 3x<br>/tʃ/<br>/tʃ/      | 3x<br>/k/<br>/k/  | 3x<br>/w/<br>/w/ | 3x<br>/t/<br>/t/        | 3x<br>/θ/<br>/θ/  | 3x<br>/r/<br>/r/        | 3x<br>/z/<br>/z/        | 3x<br>/ʃ/<br>/ʃ/  | 3x<br>/v/<br>/v/  | 3x<br>/dʒ/<br>/dʒ/ | 3x<br>/ɪ/<br>/ɪ/  | 3x<br>/ð/<br>/ð/  |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| <i>Surprise 1</i><br><i>Workbook</i><br>2001 <b>F</b>       | 2x<br>[ɔ]<br>[ʌ]<br>[:] | 2x<br>[æ]<br>[ə:] | 2x<br>[ʃ]<br>[ʒ] | 2x<br>[z]<br>[dʒ]       | 2x<br>[ð]<br>[θ]  | 2x<br>[ɪ]<br>[ɨ]        |                         |                   |                   |                    |                   |                   |                  |                  |                  |                  |

Exercise from *What's On? Do It* can be seen below (Picture 9). In it, the aspiration with the velar plosive fortis sound is practised by instructing to produce the accurate sound by coughing or imitating the cockoo's singing.



**Picture 9.** Exercise in *What's On? Do It*

### 3.5 Exercises designed to practise phonemic symbols and phonemic transcription

All these different series of the third grade teaching materials use phonemic symbols and phonemic transcriptions in the textbooks and workbooks as was discussed earlier and pay attention to both. The phonetic symbols i.e. narrowed symbols to indicate for instance allophones are not used in any materials and quite a contrary, symbols are tried to keep simple at least those concerning the vowel sounds. In general, the collected data consists of exercises designed to train the pronunciation of the single sounds whereas exercises analysed in this subsection concerns exercises especially designed to pay attention to the phonemic symbols and transcriptions.

Textbooks for pupils mainly contain spelled forms starting with single words and short phrases and longer texts are gradually added. However, all textbooks have alphabetical wordlists added at their end. These lists are in English and in Finnish and all these lists also include the phonemic transcription of each word. Phonemic transcription is placed at the end of the English word inside the slashes or square brackets. Some textbooks do not include phonemic symbols or transcriptions elsewhere except in these alphabetical wordlists. The others have these symbols for instance joined with the core vocabulary of each unit. Every workbook, however, includes phonemic transcriptions as a part of the vocabulary list of each unit. All these series also include the lists of English phonemic symbols either in their textbook, workbook or in the teacher's guide. No one of them has the complete list of every 36 symbols of English phonemes but instead there are

varieties in which most symbols of those consonant sounds that are not found in the Latin alphabet are generally included and some vowel sounds. Phonemic symbols are then present in workbooks nearly on every page. When a new word occurs, its phonemic alphabet is given.

In this subsection, I looked at the exercises which were particularly designed to train phonemic symbols or transcription. In Table 7 below cells concerning these kinds of exercises are shaded. There were some exercises particularly designed to pay attention to phonemic transcription and these exercises are shaded in a darker tone. There were then 5 exercises for training especially phonemic transcription and 30 exercises that were designed to train phonemic symbols as can be seen in the table below.

**Table 7.** Exercises designed to pay attention to phonemic symbols and transcription

|                                               | 1                       | 2                | 3                | 4                 | 5                | 6                       | 7                       | 8                 | 9                 | 10                | 11               | 12        | 13        | 14        | 15        |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <i>Yippee! 3<br/>Writer<br/>2009</i>          | 3x<br>[t]<br>[d]        | 3x<br>[k]<br>[g] | 4x<br>[p]<br>[b] | 3x<br>[s]<br>[z]  | 3x<br>[ʃ]<br>[w] | 2x<br>[f]<br>[v]<br>[w] | 3x<br>[tʃ]<br>[dʒ]      | 2x<br>[θ]<br>[ð]  | 3x<br>[æ]<br>[ə]  | 2x<br>[ʌ]<br>[ɔ]  | 3x<br>[ŋ]<br>[ɪ] | 3x<br>[ɪ] | MP        | 3x<br>PT  | WS        |
| <i>Let's Go! 3<br/>Activity Book<br/>2009</i> | 2x<br>/t/<br>/d/        | 2x<br>/p/<br>/b/ | 2x<br>/k/<br>/g/ | 2x<br>/s/<br>/ʃ/  | 2x<br>/θ/<br>/ð/ | 2x<br>/tʃ/<br>/dʒ/      | 2x<br>/v/<br>/w/        | 2x<br>/ʌ/<br>/ɑ:/ | 2x<br>/i/<br>/i:/ | 2x<br>/ɔ/<br>/ɔ:/ | 2x<br>/ə/<br>/æ/ | 2x<br>/ɪ/ | 2x<br>/ŋ/ | 2x<br>/z/ | 2x<br>/r/ |
| <i>All Stars 3<br/>Reader<br/>2008</i>        | 2x<br>[p]               | 2x<br>[b]        | 2x<br>[t]<br>[d] | 2x<br>[k]<br>[g]  | 2x<br>[s]<br>[z] | 2x<br>[θ]<br>[ð]        |                         |                   |                   |                   |                  |           |           |           |           |
| <i>Wow! 3<br/>Busy Book<br/>2002</i>          | [p]<br>[b]              | [t]<br>[d]       | [k]<br>[g]       | 2x<br>[θ]<br>[ð]  | 2x<br>[ʃ]<br>[z] | 2x<br>[tʃ]<br>[dʒ]      | 2x<br>[w]<br>[v]<br>[f] | 2x<br>[æ]<br>[ə]  | 2x<br>[ŋ]         | 2x<br>[ʌ]<br>[ɔ]  | 2x<br>[*]        | 2x<br>[ɪ] | 2x<br>PT  |           |           |
| <i>What's On?<br/>Do It<br/>2002</i>          | 3x<br>/tʃ/              | 3x<br>/k/        | 3x<br>/w/        | 3x<br>/t/         | 3x<br>/θ/        | 3x<br>/r/               | 3x<br>/z/               | 3x<br>/ʃ/         | 3x<br>/v/         | 3x<br>/dʒ/        | 3x<br>/ŋ/        | 3x<br>/ð/ |           |           |           |
| <i>Surprise 1<br/>Workbook<br/>2001</i>       | 2x<br>[ɔ]<br>[ʌ]<br>[ɪ] | 2x<br>[æ]<br>[ə] | 2x<br>[ʃ]<br>[ʒ] | 2x<br>[z]<br>[dʒ] | 2x<br>[θ]<br>[θ] | 2x<br>[ŋ]               |                         |                   |                   |                   |                  |           |           |           |           |

The oldest workbook *Surprise 1 Workbook* trains the recognizing of phonemic symbols and the diacritic mark related to vowel length (see Picture 10 below). First exercise is concerned in introducing symbols that are not familiar to Finnish pupils because they are not letters in the Latin alphabet. It includes the symbol, the spelling of an example

word and the phonemic transcription of that word. In the second exercise pupils are instructed to match the introduced symbol with different words whose phonemic transcriptions are not included in the exercise and they can neither be seen on the same or adjacent pages. The first introduces the phonetic symbols and below each symbol there is a spelling of a couple of words including this sound with its phonemic transcription. After that, pupils are instructed to match the spelling and phonemic symbol introduced earlier after listening to six words. The designer of this exercise supposes that pupils are able to recognize these sounds and related symbols after hearing the model and are also able to relate the vowel length symbol to the correspondence sound.

[ɔ] [ʌ] [:]  
 dog [dɔg] • pot [pɔt] • hut [hʌt] • mug [mʌg] • door [dɔ:(r)] • ball [bɔ:ɪ] • bee [bi:]

Yhdistä sana ja äänne-merkki.

cup seed  
 lot [ɔ] [ʌ] [:] tunnel  
 mop floor

Lue vielä sanat luokkatoverillesi.

**Picture 10.** Phonemic symbol exercise in *Surprise 1 Workbook*

In the exercises of *Wow! 3 Busy Book*, it is instructed to practice phonemic symbols besides the pronunciation of these sounds (see Pictures 11 and 12 below). The teacher's guide also advises the teacher to substitute letters in Finnish words for phonemic symbols one example being '[miθθæ θe θi:li θyə] Missä se siili syö?'.



14 Harjoittele ääntämistä ja äänne-merkkejä. Kuuntele ja toista.

[θ]

3 three [θri:]      13 thirteen [θæ:'ti:n]      thirsty [θæ:sti]      Kenneth [keniθ]

[ð]

this [ðis]      that [ðæt]      a mother [mʌðə\*]      Heather [hedə\*]

● Harjoittele sanojen ääntämistä parisi kanssa.

Picture 11. Phonemic symbol exercise in *Wow! 3 Busy Book*

15 Kuuntele. Merkitse rastilla, kuuletko [θ] -äänteen vai [ð] -äänteen.

|     | 1                        | 2                        | 3                        | 4                        | 5                        |
|-----|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| [θ] | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| [ð] | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Picture 12. Phonemic symbol exercise in *Wow! 3 Busy Book*

Phonemic transcription was practised in two books, one published at the beginning of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and another at the end of it. In the older one *Wow! 3 Busy Book* the first exercise of phonemic transcription is placed below exercise which trains alveolar nasal sound /ŋ/ and this exercise is comprised of words related to this sound as can be seen in Picture 13 below. In this exercise, the pupil is instructed to match the phonemic transcription with drawing. Second exercise is related to the exercise practising the long vowels of English with lengthening mark.

11 Yhdistä äännekirjoitus ja kuva.

[fi:ŋ] [driŋk] [raidŋ] [ski:iŋ] [biŋgəu] [fiŋgə\*]

**Picture 13.** Phonemic transcription exercise in *Wow! 3 Busy Book*

In *Yippee! 3 Writer*, there are three purely phonemic transcription exercises in which pupils need to match transcriptions with the correct drawings (see Picture 14 below).

17 Yhdistä kuva ja äännekirjoitus viivalla.

[hæmstə(r)] [sneik]  
 [fi:f] [maus]  
 [zebrə] [ʃi:p]

**Picture 14.** Phonemic transcription exercise in *Yippee! 3Writer*

### 3.6 Exercises designed to practise other features

Finnish and English both have three nasal sounds. Nasals are sonorants i.e. there is no closure for air when it flows out from lungs through the speech organs. Air does not flow out through the mouth but through the nose and accordingly these three sounds are called nasals. (Morris-Wilson 2004: 103–106) The Finnish and English nasals are then pronounced in the same manner and the place of the articulation is close too; /m/ is bilabial, /n/ is alveolar and /ŋ/ is velar. Accordingly, Finns do not have problems with



The pronunciation of English /r/ was paid attention to in three books. In *Wow! 3 Busy Book*, the emphasis was very much on the asterisk mark which is used in the place of omitted /r/ sound in non-rhotic accents. The teacher's guide of this series also advises the teacher to explain the rhotic accent of English and instructs to give the examples of the North American accent. *What's On? Do It*, on the contrary only instructs to train /r/ sound and its difference compared with Finnish /r/ which is often trilled. In its exercise there is a purring cat and the teacher's guide points up that English sound is not produced in the same way. The use of the asterisk mark is left out of exercises but mentioned in the teacher's guide only pointing out the non-rhotic accent. *Let's Go! 3 Activity Book* trains /r/ sound in its first exercise and non-rhotic accent in its second exercise but gives no guidance in teacher's guide.

All exercises that included the phonetic transcription of a word also included the mark of the primary stress in every transcription when the stress fell on the second or later syllable. However, there was no mention what this mark was and why it was used or what was the effect of it on the pronunciation. Finnish-speaking learners always stress the first syllable automatically due to the Finnish stress system. It was then left to the individual teacher to decide whether to point out how the word sounds different due to placing stress in other place than on the first syllable. The ability of saying words accurately stressed and hearing the place of the main stress affects the listening comprehension and comprehensibility of the spoken form of English in general.

Word stress was not then mentioned as a feature of English pronunciation to be taught in these exercise books. However, for example English cardinal numbers i.e. numbers that refer to the size of a group, are taught to the beginning learners and each workbook includes these numbers and has exercises related to them. Picture 15 below shows one exercise of this kind. It includes some teen numbers and corresponding numbers in tens. The pronunciation of these numbers is closely the same differentiating mainly by the different position of the main stress. The distinctive and accordingly important feature of English stress could have been easily pointed out with this exercise and others like this one. It is obvious that there are teachers who train this feature with these exercises but there may be teachers who do not consider it important.

**8** Kumman numeron kuulet? Ympyröi.

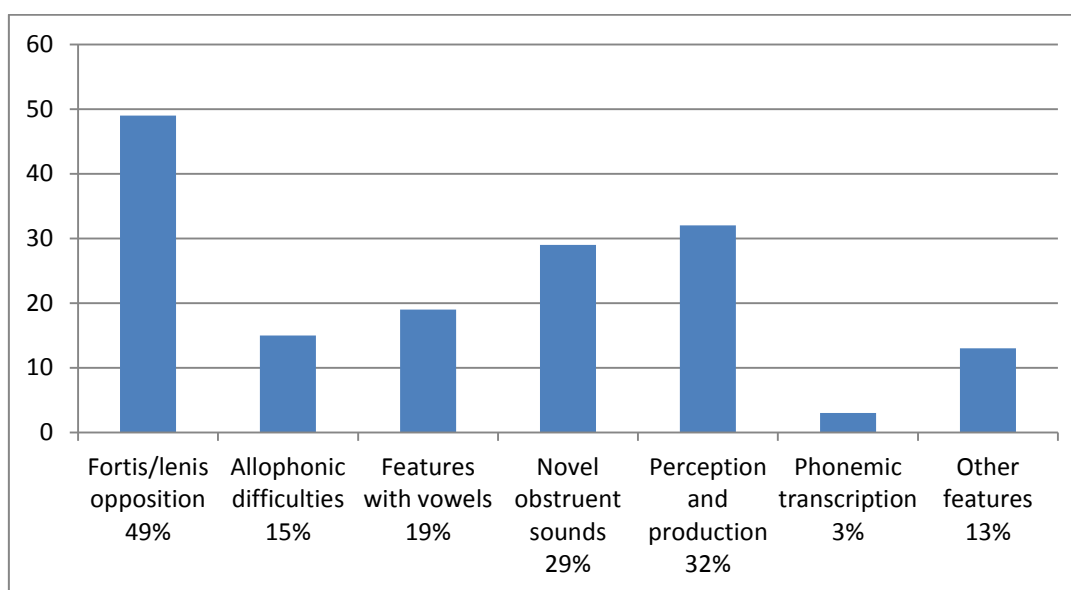
| 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6   |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|
| 19 | 18 | 15 | 13 | 12 | 10  |
| 90 | 80 | 50 | 30 | 20 | 100 |

**Picture 15.** An exercise for training the numbers

#### 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

All in all, these six books included 151 exercises that were designed to pay attention to segmental pronunciation. Exercises were comprised mainly of obstruent sounds; a major proportion, 68.9% of the data related to them. 31.1% concerned sonorant sounds and were divided into vowels (18.5%), alveolar nasal sound /ŋ/ (8.0%) and post-alveolar approximant /r/ (4.6%) focusing especially on its pronunciation among non-rhotic accents. Central Approximant bilabial sonorant /w/ was trained alone and included in labiodental fricative obstruent sound exercises. The fact that so many exercises were related to obstruent sounds is not a surprising result. As it was stated earlier (see p. 14) the teaching of vowels is complicated because of the varieties among different accents and they may be too confusing for the beginning learners. Besides, Finnish language has many vowel sounds and accordingly Finnish learners can already produce many English vowels and as a result vowels only cause a little unintelligibility to oral communication. On the contrary, there is not much variation within obstruent sounds.

Concerning those segmental features that are problematic for Finns and are important for intelligibility, Chart 1 below shows the summary of exercises categorized according to each difficult feature and expressed as a percentage of the total amount of exercises. As the chart shows, fortis/lenis opposition is trained most and nearly half of all exercises relate to this feature somehow and every textbook series has taken it into consideration. Word initial aspiration with plosive fortis sounds was practised in all but one book. However, no one of these books paid any attention to the word final fortis/lenis opposition and its influence on the lengthening of the preceding vowel sound. This feature, however, is difficult for Finns because of different vowel systems between these two languages and causes unintelligibility if not taken into consideration.



**Chart 1.** Summary of the exercises of difficult features expressed as a percentage of the total number of all exercises

The second most trained feature is the perception and production of difficult sounds and more than one third of all exercises concerned this matter. However, it is important to point out that only two of these six books paid attention to it. There were then four books that did not give any instructions in their exercises of how to accurately produce sounds. When facing a sound that is close to some native sound, pupils may categorize it to be the same sound if not given information on how to articulate this particular sound and instructed how it differs from a similar Finnish sound. It is particularly important to pay attention to this feature with beginning learners to enable them to get a good start in their English pronunciation acquisition. The explicit production of a sound and drilling it till its pronunciation becomes automatic is important to prevent incorrect pronunciation habit from taking place. This proper initial training also needs to be equal to all pupils not depending on the teachers or teaching materials or any other factor.

Approximately one fifth of all the exercises related to the vowel sounds and these exercises were found in four books. Even though English has more vowels than Finnish, Finnish learners do not face significant difficulties in pronouncing English vowels (Morris-Wilson 2004: 139–144). There are, however, some features concerning English vowels that could be paid more attention to when pronunciation is taught for the

beginning learners. First, vowel length has a different function in English than it has in Finnish. Vowel length mark is introduced in all these four books. Sometimes, teacher's guides instruct to compare English vowel length with the Finnish one and they even instructed to train vowel length mark with Finnish words by substituting one of the Finnish double vowels with this mark as in word *saari*. It was trained as [sa:ri]. In English, vowel length has, as Morris-Wilson (2004: 136–138) states, importance only when there are minimal pairs in which the environment of two sounds is identical. The environment affects the duration of a vowel sound in English and in this relation it is different from Finnish in which vowel length always differentiate words from each other. In English then a long vowel may be shorter than the corresponding short vowel as for instance in the case it precedes fortis sound as in words *beat* /bi:t/ and *bid* /bɪd/ or in pairs *hid-heat*, *peak-pig* or *wig week*. The way the vowel length is addressed should be systematised whether to point it at all with beginning learners or explain how it is different from the Finnish system. As these examples show, it is a complicated task to address and especially so with the beginning learners to whom the phonemic symbols even alone are the novel and difficult feature never used in their native language.

In four books there were 23 exercises altogether in which the allophonic differences were practised. Exercises were designed to practise the difference between labiodental lenis fricative /v/ and velar central approximant /w/ which are allophones in Finnish yet distinct sounds in English. There were also exercises to train alveolar and post-alveolar sibilant sounds which may be substituted with Finnish /s/, the only original Finnish sibilant sound.

Novel obstruent sounds were practised approximately in 30% of all exercises. Dental fricative voiceless/voiced pair /θ//ð/ was paid most attention to and it was taken into account in each of these books. However, the accurate perception and production of the sounds of this pair were only practised in two books. In general, the perception and production of sounds were trained second most; over 30% of all exercises were designed for this purpose. However, there was only two books in which the proper perception and production were trained. In these two books all exercises paid attention to this feature.

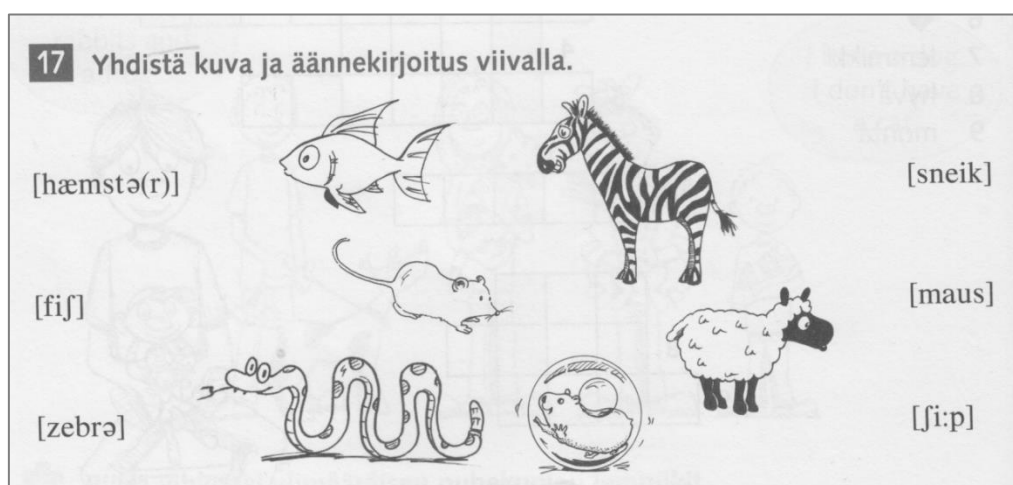


Concerning the other features, there were 12 exercises that included the nasal /ŋ/ sound. Teachers were not advised to point out the difference between Finnish and English pronunciations with this nasal sounds in different environments. When Finnish words include the letter combination *ng* in words such as *kaupungissa* or *bingo*, it is always pronounced as /ŋ/. It is pronounced in the same way in many English words like *young* and *sing* but it is also pronounced like /ŋg/ in some words as in *English*. Word *bingo* is a loan word in Finnish and pronounced /binŋo/ and could easily have been used to show the difference compared with the English word in which it is pronounced as /'pɪŋɡəʊ/ and sounds very much like /bɪŋkou/. On the whole there were 16 exercises related to these other features and 4 of them were related to rhotic r.

The explanation of what is phonemic transcription and why it is used was paid the least attention to. Only 3% of all exercises especially addressed this feature and only two books included exercises related to phonemic transcription to make this feature understandable for pupils. Even though pupils are exposed to phonemic symbols right from the beginning of the learning and all exercises included these symbols, there is always a spelling of a word displayed first. Pupils are then expected to learn the spelled form simultaneously with the spoken form and are also introduced to the phonemic symbols and phonemic transcription without any explanations given to them. It is then up to the teacher how to explain the relationships of these three forms. Pupils, whose native language has nearly the same spoken and written form may really be confused with all these forms and especially so if there is no explanation of what these phonemic symbols are and why they are used.

Picture 1 below shows extract from *Yippee! 3 Writer*. In this exercise, the spelling of word is omitted and a pupil is instructed to match the picture with its phonemic transcription. Pupils who only see this version without simultaneously joining the spelled form are able to relate this form to the Finnish written form. They are allowed to realize that if they train symbols that are not known yet they can read this version as they are used to read in Finnish i.e. one symbol only represents one sound. It should also be stressed that the spoken form is to be learnt first and after that the spelled form. This is also a way to make them understand how English is a different system from

Finnish and understanding that there is a good reason for phonemic symbols and transcriptions and what these strange symbols are made for. Because Finnish pupils are literate when they start learning English they are able to read the phonemic transcription after novel sounds and their symbols are introduced and trained. Both versions, spelling and transcription, however, need to be taught because pupils have to learn to communicate in English by speaking and by writing right from the beginning of the learning.



**Picture 14.** Phonemic transcription exercise in *Yippee! 3 Writer*

The shortage of systematically and carefully designed exercises and teaching materials for teaching phonemic transcription to beginning learners in Finnish basic education then needs to be paid more attention. The currently used system that introduces all three forms simultaneously and leaves to the individual teacher to decide how to explain the complex relationship between spelling and spoken English or whether to leave it without explanations is burdensome to teachers and it also leaves pupils uncertain which may affect negatively their learning of English. More attention needs to be paid to introducing phonemic transcription in a pedagogically sensible way for the beginning learner with earlier knowledge of Finnish which has nearly complete one to one correspondence between letters and sounds. One possible way to do this is by omitting the spelling from the initial stages of learning and only introducing the phonemic transcription of a word first as is done in the exercise in Picture 14 above.

Word stress is an important feature for intelligibility in oral communication and due to the Finnish stress system pupils may have great difficulties of hearing English stress appropriately unless it is paid attention to. It is a feature that inevitably affects the speaker's intelligibility because the word sounds different depending on the place of the main stress. Its recognition in listening comprehension helps the learner to hear the word accurately. The use of phonemic transcription in the teaching materials from the beginning of the learning enables the teaching of this feature effortlessly. There are examples of exercises in which the main stress is an important and distinctive feature and the teaching of it could be instructed. Learners need extensive practice in recognizing the accurate place of word stress of the words because they automatically stress a word initially as in their native language. Furthermore, there are no simple rules relating to word stress in English and the correct stress pattern needs to be learnt for each new word. Accordingly it should be learnt simultaneously when a word is first introduced to pupils. Unfortunately, the place of the main stress in English varies among different accents but it is a feature that can be explained pupils later.

The results then show that many of the difficult features of English segmental pronunciation discussed in Section 2 are practised with beginning learners. However, there are still areas that need to be emphasised more. It would be beneficial for teachers and learners if there was a systematically designed syllabus for the teaching of English pronunciation starting with the beginning learners in the third grade of Finnish comprehensive school and going on through the whole comprehensive school education. If the content of that syllabus was dictated by the NCC, it would increase the equality of the learning for all pupils not depending for instance on the use of different textbook series or the knowledge of English and Finnish phonetics and phonology of the individual teachers.

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