“Better a Railing at the Top of the Cliff than a Hospital at the Bottom!”

The use of Edward Lear’s nonsense ABC as a didactical tool in the development of pronunciation skills in young learners of English

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Abstract

The development and acquisition of English pronunciation in learners of English is a much neglected area of linguistic study. Research predominantly focuses on the pronunciation skills in adult English learners. However, there is no relevant data pertaining to the pronunciation skills in young English learners. Studies pertaining to pronunciation and oral proficiency are needed in order to fully assess the development and promotion of English language pronunciation in educational settings. It is necessary to encourage the active learning of pronunciation skills in young learners, in order for them to underpin the phonetical and phonological structures of the English language at the earliest stages of their language acquisition. The natural curiosity that young children display for sounds, rhymes and words is a resource that should be exploited by teachers in order to promote and encourage proficient pronunciation at the earliest stage of a child’s Second Language Acquisition (SLA).

The current study focuses on the use of nonsense language in Second Language educational settings in order to introduce phonology and phonetics at the earliest stage of English language acquisition to encourage correct pronunciation in young L2 learners of English. The materials chosen for the study are selected verses from Edward Lear’s nonsense ABC. The nonsense ABC is introduced as a teaching/learning tool to help young primary school children in Sweden develop their pronunciation skills and avoid fossilized language patterns at a later stage of Second Language Acquisition. Young language learners need a solid foundation on which to build their language skills in order to develop as mature Second Language learners.

The findings of this investigation showed that the introduction of nonsense language as a practical and didactical tool for the development of pronunciation had a positive effect on the development of pronunciation skills in the beginner English Language Learners (ELL) who actively participated in the study.

**Keywords:** Phonology and Phonetics; Pronunciation; Nonsense Language.
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Introduction

English pronunciation is one area of language acquisition, which until the beginning of the 1990s had received limited attention by linguistic researchers. There is a need for continued research in this area of phonology and phonetics if we are to fully understand how native-like accents are achieved in Second language Acquisition (SLA) and how teachers, on the practical level can help students develop proficient SL pronunciation. Phonological awareness is essentially how the language acquirer learns to identify and understand the system and patterns of speech sounds. Because of the abstract and complex nature of phonology the Non-Native Speaker (NNS) needs to learn to deal with the mental aspects of the L2 language system. In contrast to phonological awareness is phonetical awareness, which is learning to understand the physical sounds or articulatory structures of the L2 (Yule 2006: 30, 43-44).

“Better a railing at the top of the cliff than a hospital at the bottom!” - Prevention is always more efficient than the cure asserts Ann Baker, in this somewhat humorous quotation. Pronunciation should be introduced at the earliest stage in language acquisition rather than trying to rectify fossilized language patterns at a later stage. The railing represents the active and early teaching of pronunciation. The cliff is the active learning process to which every young learner of English must open themselves; the hospital metaphorically tries to treat fossilized language patterns, including incorrect pronunciation. Ideally, young learners need to be made aware of the important role that pronunciation plays in SL proficiency at the beginning of their Second Language Acquisition in order to speak proficiently and in a native-like manner at a later stage of their language development. But this does not seem to be the case on the practical level and in school settings (1982:1).

The hierarchical position of English pronunciation compared to other areas of language study within the field of applied linguistics should be considered problematic from both the perspective of the learner and the teacher. Problems with pronunciation are not always addressed or dealt with satisfactorily at the earliest stages of language development. Several studies focus exclusively on factors which prohibit or delay proficient pronunciation in mature and adolescent learners. The study of pronunciation problems in L2 speakers is an area of linguistics which has been gradually marginalized by other areas of linguistic study, such as grammar, reading and spelling. Canadian researchers, Tracy Derwing and Murray Munro have since the beginning of the 1990s written several articles and published extensive studies on language fluency, pronunciation, accents and language comprehensibility in mature English Language Learners. Derwing and Munro suggest in their article, Language Accent.
and Pronunciation Teaching a Research-based Approach, which studies in pronunciation skills would greatly benefit and offer both teachers and students valuable knowledge in order to set realistic pedagogical learning goals in educational setting and that, “Challenges in the coming years is an emphasis on greater collaboration between researchers and practitioners to encourage more classroom-relevant research” (2005:396).  

It seems that researchers’ interest in adult Non-Native Speakers’ (NNS) pronunciation skills has increased over the last twenty years, whilst at the same time there is a void of apparent interest in the development and teaching of pronunciation skills in young learners of English. This crucial area of study has literally fallen into a linguistic abyss. International language studies focusing entirely on the development of phonological and phonetrical skills in young L2 learners are almost non-existent. The main focus of research focuses upon the phonological aspects of language acquisition in young L1 speakers. Pronunciation is often a bi-product in these studies. Also, there are no recent or relevant studies by Swedish linguistic researchers linked directly to the development of pronunciation skills in young learners of English. Ultimately, this key area of Second Language Acquisition needs to be addressed on the practical level if young learners are to develop into mature, confident and proficient speakers of English in the future (Lightbown & Spada 2006: 61-62, 103-104).  

In order avoid the problems of “fossilized accents”, it is necessary to introduce pronunciation into the language learning situation from the first week of language instruction for L2 learners, offering them support and help to avoid errors in their oral language acquisition. Baker points out that school curriculums and course planners do not include classroom tasks in pronunciation for beginners in English, but gradually introduce it at higher levels of language acquisition. More time is generally allocated to linguistic areas such as reading, writing, spelling and general language comprehension at all levels of instruction and learning. Pronunciation is often disregarded in the classroom at beginner level of Second Language Acquisition. This is also true of English Language teaching and learning at the beginner level in Sweden.  

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1 See Lily Wong-Fillmore (1979); Alexander Guiora et al. (1972); Horwitz and Cope (1986); MacIntyre (1995); Guy Spielmann and Mary Radnofsky (2001); Derwing & Munro (1995, 1997, 1999, 2003, 2005, and 2006); see also Derwing, Munro & Thomson (2007).  

2 Phonology is the study of a sound system of a language(s) in general. Phonetics is the science pertaining to speech processes including the production, perception and analysis of speech sounds.
Baker discusses practical teaching methods and learning exercises which offer adolescent (from the late teens) and adult learners the means to achieve better pronunciation skills and mastery of English as a second language. Baker’s teaching methods are aimed at improving pronunciation in adult learners. These methods could be easily modified and used with young learners of English. Noam Chomsky points out in the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) that mature language acquirers do have difficulties in learning a new language. It is important to point out that the degree of exposure to the L2 is just important as age. Correct pronunciation should be encouraged at the earliest stage of L2 instruction, even for pupils who have limited exposure to the new language (Lightbown & Spada 2006:69).

Young English Native-Speakers are not consciously aware of the rules surrounding phonology and phonetics of their L1. They learn to identify real words (dictionary/lexical words) and single them out from all the words that are possible to create, but do not actually exist, i.e. ‘fnul’. Second Language Acquirers must learn to recognize this through language instruction by mastering the rules which govern the phonology and phonetics of English. The relationship between the fields of phonetics and phonology is multifaceted and complicated. The phonetics of a language does not necessarily reflect the phonology of it. This leads to problems in recognizing and pronouncing words correctly.

The current study suggests that there are substantial benefits to be gained by the use of nonsense language as a teaching/learning tool for improved pronunciation in young learners; playing a significant and positive role in the development and improvement of English pronunciation in the earlier years of Second Language Acquisition. Nonsense language is both a fun and stimulating medium for young learners of English. In order to catch the attention of the children it is important that the learning/teaching materials offered them are enjoyable and visually appealing as well as pedagogical. The study introduces Edward Lear’s nonsense ABC (Appendix 1) as a source of structured and enjoyable work material in order to encourage and develop the awareness of correct pronunciation at the earliest stage of learning.

**Aim**

This Master thesis proposes that there are didactical and edifying advantages in the use of English nonsense language to improve English language pronunciation in third- and fourth-grade students in Sweden. The study focuses on the use of Edward Lear’s nonsense ABC to augment and reinforce pronunciation skills through the development of phonetical and
phonological awareness in young English Language Learners’ (ELL). The study compares traditional teaching methods to the use of nonsense language in authentic classroom settings, where the *nonsense ABC* is used as an inter-active and stimulating language tool for the teaching and learning of English language pronunciation.

1. **Theoretical background**

The theoretical background discusses relevant aspects of research directly and indirectly linked to the aim of the essay and the independent study in authentic classroom settings as described in section Materials and Method. The main body of the theoretical background is applied linguistic research. Section 1.1 discusses differences in the phonological and phonetical awareness in L1 English speakers and L2 learners. The Deficit Hypothesis and the Alphabet Principle are discussed in sections 1.2 and 1.3. Section 1.4 deals with reading and literacy skills. Finally, section 1.5 discusses nonsense language in linguistics, literature and philosophy. These two sections are directly connected to the discussion on Nonsense Word Fluency in children in section 1.6.

1.1 **Phonological and Phonetical awareness in L1 English speakers and L2 learners**

Goswami and Bryant’s empirical study sheds light on the role of “phonological awareness” in English language Learners (1990). Their study findings suggest that young language learners are sensitive to the sound variations in words. They noticed that very young children were first aware of Onset and Rhyme when learning to decode the sounds of a language. These findings are supported by studies done by David J. Chard and Shirley V. Dickson, for example, *Phonological Awareness: Instructional and Assessment Guidelines, Nonsense in the Twentieth Century*. Here, phonological awareness is defined as the comprehension and understanding of the ways in which oral language can be offered to young learners in order for them to develop language knowledge. They also assert that the division of language into smaller units of manipulated sound sends different messages of word awareness, which children spontaneously target in order to decode the sound structures of the language. Their description of sound manipulation includes deletions, adding and substitution of words and letters to create new ones (1999).

Michael Heyman points out in his article, *The Original Interactive Multimedia Game – Edward Lear’s Literary Nonsense*, that almost all children are “naturals” at decoding

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3 Phonological awareness is developing knowledge of a language and being able to recognize and identify the constructions of it.
neologisms\textsuperscript{4}. Deciphering nonsense language is an important part of language development. All children have their own unique way when trying to make sense of new words. Edward Lear connected and combined illustrations and texts creating what modern researchers consider the first interactive, multimedia entertainment for children. Nonsense touches and stresses upon the creative processes connected to language, learning and logic (2001: 81-82).

April McMahon, professor of English Language and linguistics at the University of Sheffield discusses human speech in anthropological terms. In her book, An Introduction to English Phonology (2002), she points out that the eighteenth century naturalist Carl Linnaeus’s called human beings, Homo sapiens, which points to human qualities such as rationality and intelligence. McMahon considers this inappropriate from the perspective of the linguist. She prefers to call human beings Homo loquens – ‘speaking man’- when discussing human attributes such as language and speech.\textsuperscript{5} By this she refers to the fact that humans are the only animal that uses speech to communicate, using a wide range of sounds which can be linked to each other in very elaborate patterns. The above mentioned study looks at two subcategories within the field of linguistics, namely phonetics and phonology. In order to understand how English accents and dialects combine sounds and patterns of language, it is important to study the aspects of these two areas of linguistics parallel to each other.

Humans learn to use sounds and combine them to create new sounds. When looking closely at the characteristics of the English sound system, i. e. that which is specifically English, we need to understand the phonology and phonetics of the English language. What do speakers and hearers need to know in order to master a language? What do young L1 speakers need to learn and how well can L2 acquirers learn the specific structures of a foreign language? (McMahon 2002:1-2). In a report published by the National Research Council in 1998, it was confirmed that the most important area of language acquisition is the early foundation of basic language learning skills. According to the report there are two basic language skills that language learners need to pin down, if they are to develop proficient speech patterns; first the learner needs to recognize letter-sound correlation and the “constructs” that allow them to connect the internal configuration of words - which is the individual letters and letter sequences; the second is learning the constructs to mix and use sounds (phonemes) in order to identify the correct pronunciation of a language (Hank Fien et al. 2008: 392).

\textsuperscript{4} Neologism - a newly coined word or phrase; or making new meaning or sense of a familiar words in a new context

Researchers in the field of phonetical and phonological studies have arrived at several interesting conclusions concerning the use of nonsense words in learning situations in order to create phonological awareness and improve the level of word understanding in young native-speakers. The L1 speaker uses nonsense words initially to decode the native language. The L1 mental lexicon processes various phoneme combinations, whilst exposure to the language through other more mature L1 speakers, allows them to recognize phonetically and later on textually, affixes and stems of words. In time they begin to dismiss pseudowords and create reference points for real words. Native-speakers are instinctively aware of and develop new dimensions to their learning abilities phonetically and semantically in the learning of the L1 vocabulary and pronunciation, allowing them to use the L1 on a complex level; learning to recognize and understand the structure, sounds and written forms of their language.\(^6\)

The learning strategies used by L1 speakers to learn to recognize phoneme patterns, phonetic and semantic awareness are not necessarily the same strategies used by an individual introduced to English as a second language. The L2 is often introduced mechanically or consciously in school/educational settings, through grammar and vocabulary, written texts, reading and at a later stage phonetics. Active listening and speaking of the new language encourages development and understanding of its structure. All areas of language structure must develop in order for the L2 acquirer to become proficient or native-like in the second language. L2 students do often rely on the L1 constructs and contents (phonetically and grammatically), searching for structural similarities between the L1 and L2 in order to decode the new language (Aitchison 2003: 137-138).

Depending on the nature and construction of the first language, L2 acquisition can be a challenging task for many English language learners. Similarities between L1 and L2 language constructions can afford the L2 learner several beneficial results. On the other hand similarities between the L1 and L2 can also create learning difficulties and obstacles in proficient language acquisition, especially in an area such as pronunciation (Lightbown & Spada 2006: 93-94).

Phoneme combinations vary depending on the structure of a language, for example, the Sino-tibetan language Chinese is structured around characters which represent images and not individual letters. Alphabetical languages have specific phoneme clusters and phonetic

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\(^6\) Pseudowords are words created in research situations for the purpose of practising pronunciation- they carry no lexical meaning.
sounds. Some of these phoneme clusters and phonetic sounds combinations are therefore unfamiliar to L2 learners, proving to be difficult to remember in order to effectively utilize them in L2 language speaking situations. This can be reflected in problems in pronunciation, choice of words and general lower levels of vocabulary in the second language and unwillingness to use it. Second language learners need methods of teaching and learning to promote effective mental and physical language development on several levels if they are to succeed in their L2 acquisition.

According to Goswami and Bryant there is some degree of spontaneous phonological awareness in all individuals early on in their L1 language development. Phonological awareness in children develops on three levels of letter-sound-word understanding: Syllables, Phonemes and Onset-Rhyme. The two researchers felt that there was need for an empirical study to establish the role of “phonological awareness” in English language learners (ELL) and their sensitivity to changes in the sounds in words (1990:1-2)

Furthermore, Chard and Dickson, define phonological awareness as the understanding of the ways in which oral language can be divided into smaller units. They can be manipulated to send different messages of word awareness. Manipulation can be deletions, adding and substitution of words and letters. Children can be introduced to simple rhyming songs or rhyme chants, learning to divide words into smaller units and implementing this knowledge in activities which use Onset and Rhyme. The children learn to appreciate sounds and are encouraged from as early as four years old to use them to promote improved speech. For an indepth discussion of Chard and Dickson’s test methods see section Materials and Method (1999:1).

Alexandra Gottardo studied the phonographical skills of sixty-five young Chinese speakers living in Canada. Cantonese Chinese was their L1 and English was their L2. The children were tested for rhyme detection in the L2 language. The researchers correlated this experiment with tasks that looked at phoneme detection and deletion. The study for rhyme detection is relevant to this study; the test administered was based on rhyming and the recognition of phoneme combinations in a sequence of rhyming words (Gottardo et al. 2001:533, 540).
In Gottardo’s study the children were asked to listen to three words with similar phoneme structures. They were encouraged to repeat and practice the task and were given extra training tasks if they experienced problems. They were given corrective feedback on the tasks. They were also given precise and clear instructions prior to the tasks. A similar test looking for phoneme detection was administered to the same children. They were asked to identify the word out of three words which had a different phoneme in initial position of the word. In the third test they were introduced to pseudowords or nonsense words. They repeated a nonsense word and were asked to remove a letter suggested by the tester and insert another letter and asked to pronounce the new nonsense word. The research results concluded that differences in orthographical language structures could lead to problems at a later stage of SLA. An early screening of children based on the structures of the L1 can in fact have beneficial backwash in the learning of the L2. Gottardo suggests age and language appropriate screening-tools to help develop phonological awareness. Furthermore good phonological awareness in the L1 ultimately benefits the L2 language in the learning of the L2 phonology regardless of the L1 orthography. Earlier studies in phoneme detection were carried out by Bradley and Bryant (1983) and Stanovich, Cunningham and Cramer (1984). They came to similar conclusions which supported Gottardo’s later findings from 2001.

Language ability is a unique human quality and the most important vehicle of communication used by all individuals in order to make sense of the world around them. Humans learn and develop language (both L1 and the L2) through experience and exposure in several areas of language acquisition; collecting, storing, evaluating and assessing the information in the mental lexicon, leading to cognitive and meta-cognitive development. Adult Second Language Acquirers need to understand the complexities of meaning in the languages they are exposed to and the world societies in which they are created, making sense meta-cognitively and semantically of them. Children on the other hand tend to use other simplified strategies when exposed to new languages.

Children first learn by listening to the rhythm of individual words in simple utterances. The rhythm of a language is part of its phonetical construction and young native-speakers quickly show the phonetical ability to create strings of sounds, and learn to identify the pronunciation of words; orally in pronunciation and audibly by listening to the phonetical structure of the language. Several longitudinal studies in this area of research (phonological and phonetical awareness in young L1 speakers) came to similar conclusions or support earlier findings by

John Archibald, linguistic researcher, from the Department of Linguistics at the University of Calgary asserts that the acquisition of a second language (SL) is a long and circuitous enterprise. Language is composed of several correlative sections, each is equally important in the L2 acquisition. One of these areas is the learning of phonology. He defines pronunciation a pedagogical notion. The main difference between them is, whilst teaching supervisors in classroom settings are looking at the production and the perception of the second language, linguists are concerned with the phonological abilities and competence in Second Language Acquirers (Archibald 2009: 237).

1.1.1 Syllables

Syllables are phonological constituents and the most obvious way for adult learners to learn to recognize words in a text. They do this by checking word meaning and pronunciation in a dictionary. Dictionaries illustrate both the grammatical form and the phonetical form of words. Yet, young learners seem to find this problematic and often lack knowledge on how to use a dictionary. Monosyllabic words, such as *duck, train, hat, box*, and so on, are the first words of English young L1 speakers and the first words to which ELL students come into contact. Syllables cannot be considered an efficient means of teaching or learning of very young L1 and L2 children. The syllables are not constituent or compatible to the sounds or word pronunciation (the phonetics of the words). Some words of the English language are incompatible in the sense that the written word does not reflect the pronunciation, i.e. ‘through’ /̂rʌθ/ or ‘see’ (to observe) alternatively ‘sea’ (large open body of water). /si:/.

Homonyms like the last two examples are pronounced in the same way (sound the same phonetically), but are spelt differently. Goswami and Bryant assert that young children need to have words broken down into smaller units than syllables in order to fully comprehend them phonetically and visually (1990:2).

1.1.2 Phonemes

The method of breaking down words into separate units of sound, i.e. *d-o-g*, offers an alternative way of learning and understanding words and the alphabet of which words are made up. In order to fully understand the function of phonemes in language acquisition, children need to know that phonemes are the smallest unit of sound. They must also be aware
that alphabetical letters (graphemes), the smallest unit of a word, represent phonemes in the written language. Goswami and Bryant point out that some researchers do not take into consideration the other types of phonological awareness, because they believe that phonemes play a vital role in the learning patterns of children. They put very little or no emphasis on the significance of Syllable understanding or Onset-Rhyme. The conclusion of their study is that very young children seem insensitive to the apparent existence of phonemes, especially if they do not learn an alphabetical script. Young L1 speakers, who have not yet learnt to write or read, are more sensitive to Onset-Rhyme, rather than single units of sound (1990:2).

1.1.3 Onset-Rhyme

Onset-Rhyme (or Intra-Syllabic Units within a syllable) can be considered intermediary to phonemes and syllables. It takes into consideration both these structures. This kind of phonological “awareness”, that is the division of sounds, is of interest for the current study of improved pronunciation and therefore worth describing in greater detail.

Words can be divided into larger units of sound. They “sound” larger than phonemes but smaller than syllables. Take for example the monosyllabic noun ‘boat’; boat is the syllable, it is made up of four phonemes b-α-v-t. When using Onset-Rhyme it is possible to divide syllables to create two clear sections to the word, the onset ‘b’ and the rhyme ‘oat’ - b|oat. The onset is the beginning or the opening unit and the rhyme the end unit of the word.

What is achieved by creating these divisions of words? The monosyllabic first words taught to and learned by young children can be broken down into clear consonant combinations and vowel/consonant combinations. It is possible to use the same rhyme and combine it with different onsets, thereby creating new words and sound combinations, such as, *boat, moat, coat, goat* and *float*. Rhymes and rhyming are an important part of a young child’s life and takes on a significant role in the learning processes of the both the L1 and L2. The nonsense ABC uses the notion of Onset-Rhyme in order to create sound-letter-word – image awareness in young language learners.

Pre-school children rhyme long before they can read or write. Songs and rhymes encourage natural phonological language awareness in young children. This method of word/sound awareness should be effectively utilized during the early school years. This could also be encouraged in young Swedish ELL learners in order to promote proficient SL pronunciation. Research suggests that by combining exposure to sound-letter and grapheme-phoneme
correspondence rules (the connection of individual letters or digraphs with single phonemes) it is possible to create words with individual letters and learn to recognize the sounds of the words. The current study enforces these two notions to establish if there are improvements in pronunciation through the introduction Onset-Rhyme through the active learning of the nonsense ABC (Goswami & Bryant 1990: 26).

Novice language learners find unfamiliar sounds and distinguishing sounds similar to each other difficult to hear. L2 students benefit from knowing how and where these sounds are produced. Language supervisors can demonstrate where in the mouth the individual sounds are produced. Diagrams may help learners to better understand the production of individual sounds of the target language. But as Ann Baker points out that this method is difficult to use with large groups of students and only certain parts of the vocal organs are visible. She believes that a better alternative is to demonstrate by using the sounds and actively including learners in the process of language acquisition by giving them appropriate phonetical target tasks. These tasks should reflect on the fact that learners of English experience phonetical sounding perplexing and inconsistent (1982:2).

The acquisition of proficient English pronunciation is a continuous learning process. By linking phonetical-based tasks to the other language tasks at the beginner level of Second Language Learning, young children become aware of pronunciation at a much earlier stage of SLA. Further studies and research in this area, which support Ann Baker’s teaching suggestions, are described in Cognitive Processing in Second language Acquisition (Pütz and Sicola: 2010: 335-350).

1.2 The Deficit Hypothesis

There are, however, researchers in the SLA field who debate if certain phonological phonetical constructs, such as pronunciation, not present in one language, can be acquired /learnt proficiently in another, especially in adult L2 learners. Researchers such as Hawkins and Chan (1997) and White (2003) do not take into consideration that these sounds are not part of the young learner’s L1; but they seem to be able master and use the phonetical and phonological constructs of the L2 and learn to pronounce the second language in a native-like manner. This area of study has been dealt with by Brown in two studies in 1997 and 2000. Phoneme consonant combinations such as the fricative ‘th’ /θ/ and / / and ‘sh’ /ʃ/ and / / are not found in the phonetical structure of Standard Swedish. For example the noun ‘thrush’ / r /- which will be used in the current study, contains two fricative consonant
combinations. The primary material for this study does not illustrate the phonetical sounds, /ð/ or /ʤ/, but it is important to introduce both fricative types in L2 learning/teaching at an appropriate point in time in second language instruction (Archibald 2009: 240).

In the discussion surrounding SL pronunciation, it is necessary to consider speech acquisition research carried out by the American scholar, James Flege. His research is mainly concerned with the phonetical aspects of L2 pronunciation in mature learners. Several of his empirical studies in this area try to answer one important question; “Why are some sounds harder to learn than others?” He tries to explain and answer this question through the comparison of similar phonetical sounds which occur in both the L1 and L2. Flege asserts that there are three possible correlations between the L1 and the L2: (1) The L2 and L1 are identical; (2) The L2 sounds similar to the L1 and (3) The L2 sound is new to the language learner. Piske, Mackay and Flege reported their findings on pronunciation and foreign accents in 2001, also Mackay, Flege and Imai (2006) and Hojen and Flege (2006). Flege asserts that longer periods of exposure to the L2 do improve pronunciation in ELL learners. Other findings show that adults who rely on the phonetics of their L1 make pronunciation errors and have stronger L2 accents (Archibald 2009: 239-245; Lightbown & Spada 2006:105-106).

1.3 The Alphabet Principle

The Alphabet Principle is one of the five basic steps in Beginning Reading, which involves the decoding of phonetic sounds and the letters they represent. It is essential to be able to decode in order to recognize the correct pronunciation of words. There are certain general criteria to take into consideration and instructions in order to learn to successfully decode words. These are according to the Center on Teaching and Learning in Oregon, USA:

- The reading of a text, from right to left, with simple more familiar words and the decoding of unfamiliar regular words.
- Generating sounds for all letters.
- The blending of sounds in recognizable words.

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7 James Flege specializes in Experimental Phonetics. He wrote the first thesis that focused on the phonetic scope of SLA in mature learners of English. He has written over thirty articles alone or with other linguists since 1977 until his retirement in 2006. He continues to contribute to research in L2 pronunciation and foreign accents of English. Flege’s articles and research can be accessed from his website http://jimflege.com/L2_research.html.

8 Beginning Reading is phonemic awareness, alphabetical principle, accuracy and fluency with texts, vocabulary and comprehension.

9 This statement only applies to those languages which are read and written from right to left and can be considered a groove generalization based on the fact that several languages read left to right (Hebrew) or, from top to bottom (Chinese); others have non-Latin alphabetic systems (Russian) or have consonant constructs making learning an alphabetic language more complicated (Turkish).
The instructions for decoding are,

- Letter-sound recognition - What is the sound of the letter (the grapheme) presented to the learner?
- Sound blending - i.e. /ccc aaa nnn/ producing the sounds of individual phonemes in order create a word ‘can’.
- Segmenting - What sounds can be heard in the word? Does the learner hear all or only just some of the sounds – i.e. /æp l/
- Manipulation – letter-sound correspondence in words. What word do you have by replacing the onset of a word i.e. the /n/ in nap to /l/?
- Reading pseudowords (nonsense words) – What is this word and how does it sound /mep/?
- Word identification – What is this word? /map/

(University of Oregon, Center on Teaching and Learning. CLT)

When using nonsense words the young L2 learner creates phonetical chains of sounds made-up of different phoneme combination. For example /t en/, /fent/, eventually they transfer the phonetical sounds of the nonsense words to real constructions of the second language /pent/. Nonsense words allow them to concentrate on the repetition of sounds and eventually they learn through experience to recognize words which carry dictionary meaning through the use of nonsense words phoneme combinations. Children learn to recognize the phonetical sound combinations rather than decoding the meaning of the nonsense words themselves.

1.4 Reading and literacy according to The Skill-building Hypothesis and The Comprehension Hypothesis

The Comprehension Hypothesis asserts that language learners master reading by the interpretation and decoding of written messages. This is done through learning to decipher and understand individual words and strings of words. This is true of real literature and partially in nonsense literature. The learning focus is centered on the use of engaging and interesting language tasks, (the ABC Nonsense poem could be considered to be both engaging and interesting). The texts should be readily understood by the language learners, that is say that the students are offered the correct type of task materials according to age, exposure and experience. The teacher’s role is that of “helper”. The teacher offers guidance and suggestions to the students in order for the texts to become clear. Supporters of the hypothesis maintain that the application and teaching of direct learning skills only becomes first helpful to the learner when the texts become comprehensible audibly(Archibald 2009: 237).
In contrast to the Comprehension Hypothesis, the Skill-building Hypothesis says that language skills and language proficiency are learnt in stages or on different levels. Researchers, who support the findings of so called “skill building” assert that literacy is learnt in a series of stages or a sequence of learning skills from the bottom-up, which lead to proficiency in a foreign language. The language learner first learns sound-spelling (rhyming is a form of sound-spelling which is common in nonsense poetry). They are encouraged to read out loud through explicit and careful instructions in order to improve their pronunciation skills. Proficient pronunciation can only be accomplished by regularly practicing oral language skills. Stephen Krashen discusses the both these arguments based on research results from both theses research areas, asserting that the teaching of phonics has certain boundaries and limitations because of the complexities of it.\textsuperscript{10} Therefore Krashen suggests that phonics should be used parallel to other areas of language acquisition if students are to make real improvements in their language abilities (Stephen Krashen 2002: 32; Archibald 2009: 237-8).

Paul Sze presented his study of phonics at the 4th CamTESOL Conference on English Language Teaching “Building Bridges to the World”, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, February 2008. Phonics is very commonly used in order to learn young SLA English in schools in Asia. They are introduced to sounds and letters and then learn to apply them to new or unfamiliar words. The purpose of the phonics is an end to a means according to Sze. This is a teaching method whereby the children’s goal is to learn and understand the phonology of the L2, with the aim of becoming proficient at a later stage in the language acquisition process. By introducing the sounds of English and their corresponding letters of the alphabet, it is hoped that children will learn to recognize the phonetical messages they are exposed to during the early elementary school years. Sze points out that there is little or no research on the impact of phonics on children’s L2 language development. In fact it is generally only used when educating and supervising adult ESL immigrant learners.

Schools in Hong Kong actively teach phonics has part of the primary curriculum. Teaching phonics has become popular, showing good results. Even secondary schools have started to introduce phonics as a teaching method for the lower level pupils to help them recognize the sounds of the English language. Sze, like Krashen, points out that there are limitations in the

\textsuperscript{10} Phonic is a method of teaching students to read through the association letters or groups of letters with particular sounds. \textit{Compact Oxford English Dictionary}, OECD (2008), page765.
use of phonics and the overemphasis of phonics can create negative backwash in the form of frustration and bewilderment in young students. There needs to be a balance in all language teaching/learning areas. He believes that in Hong Kong they may have in fact lost sight of the aim of phonics; to assist the progress of L2 language learning and deciphering sounds and letters in their reading constructs and language knowledge (2008:4).

1.5 Nonsense language in linguistics, literature and philosophy

Nonsense sets itself to discover and bring forward the incongruities of all things within and without us […]
Nonsense, in fact, in the use of the word, has shown itself to be a true work of the imagination, a child of genius, and its writing one of the Fine Arts.

(Edward Strachey: Sutton Court, September 1894. Taken from the introduction to Edward Lear’s Complete Nonsense)

This citation described how nonsense language impacts human beings inwardly. Nonsense language can be studied on different levels of understanding, linguistically, literary and philosophically. All language needs to be decoded especially when it presents puzzles to the learner. Nonsense Language texts are different from normal language texts in that nonsense language amplifies or embellishes the problems of language learning structure and understanding language. Normally the reader is able to make sense of a text and the words in the text, with nonsense language the reader is forced to try to make sense of the text through the words and come to the conclusion that sense does not and cannot exist within the linguistic oddities of the genre. Nonsense language becomes a point of reference which helps young L1 speakers and Second Language learners (SLA) to recognize and debate the structure of the English language phonetically and textually (Heyman 2001: 82).

1.5.1 The use of Nonsense Literature/Words as a medium of learning/ teaching in English SLA

A valid point to be raised is why some researchers prefer to use nonsense language/words to assess the phonetical and phonological abilities of younger language learners without creating negative backwash in second language students (L1’s and L2’s). As Michael Heyman points out, Edward Lear’s nonsense literature and poetry were written for children (over a century ago). Children experience the rhymes without taking into consideration that there are in fact non-words alongside real lexical words. They experience rhythm and phonetical consonant and vowel combinations in the form of repeated sound patterns. Children learn by recognizing
the pitch and stress of the words to which are introduced in the rhyme. Children have a different understanding or non-understanding of the nonsense texts than adults do. Mature readers notice the effects of nonsense on the texts because they have a more developed grammatical and mental lexical knowledge than the child. Whilst children listen to the nonsense words parallel to the real words, adults can become ensnared in the semantic web of the nonsense rhymes and this leads them to offer misinterpretations or other explanations relating to the contents of the texts. He concludes that children and adults read on differentiated levels according to how they perceive and experience the texts. Nonsensical rhymes offer a continuum of meaning, both creating and severing the sense-relationship ties they share with the words themselves, in order to create new meaning and sense between the nonsense words and the world they represent (Heyman 1999/2000: 192).

Professor Wim Tigges has extensively researched nonsense literature and defines nonsense language as transmitting both meaning (the real words in the text) and the void of meaning (the nonsensical words in the text). Nonsense is a collection of one or more authentic utterances, but subsequently kept in balance by the absence of meaning. According to Heyman there is balance in nonsense literature. There are two parallel languages in the same text. The reader is offered two languages simultaneously; real language in the form of sentence structure and meaningful words connected to images and nonsense words which are the undefined part in the text, that which is semantically unclear and without logic. The reader tries to fill in the gaps and make sense of nonsense. Nonsense words make imaginative connections and challenge the reader to create textual patterns, creating an invisible connection between the nonsense and the sense of the text (Children’s Literature and the Fin de Siècle 2003: 14; Heyman 1999/2000:190).

Heyman’s research shows that nonsense language does in fact impact young SL learners and therefore a valid reason to include and use simple nonsense poetry in second language instruction to improve linguistic development in areas such as pronunciation skills in younger learners. It is well suited to the task of learning and teaching language awareness, orally, audibly and textually (sounding/wording, reading and recognizing words). Nonsense language is therefore an alternative language tool to the traditional literature used to educate young language L1 learners and L2 speakers.

In a linguistical study of this type, the nonsense words play a major role. They are recurring phonetical phoneme structures in Onset and Rhyme. They create an awareness of
pronunciation, linking it to a visual vocabulary in the L2. This validates both the approach and choice of materials of the current study concerned with pronunciation skills of the English language. In fact, Frankie Leibe asserts that most children find word games an intriguing and challenging medium in order to unlock the secrets of language. They do this partially through nonsense language, jokes, riddles and puns, which capitalizes on the natural learning curiosity that is present in all young learners.

Leibe does in fact suggest an activity for improved pronunciation in L1 speakers aged between seven and nine. In this activity Leibe uses Edward Lear’s nonsense ABC. The idea is that the children repeat the sounds which are found in the words of the rhymes. He suggests that the children in the form of a follow-up create their own nonsense words and rhymes. Write them down or listen to them. The current study proposes a similar approach with a group of L2 learners of English with a follow-up test and questionnaire that evaluates both enjoyment and learning levels (1984:104).

1.5.2 The philosophical view on the linguistics and the function of nonsense

Jean-Jacques Lecercle, professor in English, puts forward some very interesting theories pertaining to nonsense language in his detailed study, The Philosophy of Nonsense. He states that nonsense is “a contrario reflexion on the traditions of hermeneutics” (5). The texts are contradictive and demand more than a straightforward reading and explanation. The language structure of a nonsensicality reading is creative and intuitive. In fact, Michel Heyman asserts that it is very difficult to define nonsense, but maintains that there is an ever present balance in the texts of Edward Lear (even Lewis Carroll and Dr Seuss); a balance between “sense” and “non-sense”. There is word harmony between real language and nonsense language, creating a linguistic balance within the texts themselves (Children’s Literature and Fin de Siècle 2003: 13). 11

Why are philosophers and linguistics intrigued by nonsense literature? Lecercle asserts that nonsense language makes sense on the philosophical level. He writes that the nonsense in a literary text is reflexive in that it refers back to the sense (real words) in the same text. He believes that this reflexive quality is embossed in the intuitions of the literary genre of nonsense language. It combines the study of the English language in literature, linguistics and philosophy. Lecercle explores the philosophical foundations and structure of nonsense

language and the philosophy which has grown out of it. Linguists frequently quote and use both Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll when exploring the properties and development of the English language.

Nonsense is structured around the notion of contradiction - that is over-structuring and de-structuring, subversion (destroying) and support. Language becomes a contradiction, nonsense versus sense. It becomes a paradox that tears the reader between two language poles. The contradictions of nonsense language can be described on two levels of understanding. Lecercle asserts that it is the language itself that speaks and not the reader, because the words come out incorrectly and one speaks language in the sense that one says what one means and mean what one says; therefore, one is in control of the words and the utterances one chooses to speak. Having said this it is vital to understand Lecercle’s view on the phonetics of nonsense language (Lecercle 1994: 3).

Lecercle points out that nonsense writers create words by repeating the same cluster of phonemes in Onset-Rhyme i.e. thiddy, kliddy, middy, fiddy. Edward Lear very cleverly emulates the rhyming nature of the little child’s language in his Nonsense ABC. He uses the word ‘dolly’ and then, by repeating (or re-using) the rhyme sound -‘oll’- he creates real and nonsense words (i.e. real words like Dolly, Molly, Polly and the nonsense word Nolly). This reflects the nature of a child’s early attempts to create and emulate language. Lecercle also observes that when babies learn language they use simple words made up of rhyming duplicated phoneme clusters; words such as ‘gigi’ for a horse, ‘dada’ for daddy and so on. These words are considered to be the language of a child separate from adult language. Although they are not strictly nonsense words, but rather the simple language of a child, they are compatable in the sense that the child, like the nonsense author, uses phoneme duplications to create simple words, which represent real objects in the English language i.e horse and father (Aitchison 2003: 200-203).

The nonsense language that Edward Lear creates in his literary works is not just a string of phonemes chosen at random in order to create humorous whimsical sounding words. The nonsense words of nonsense literature are in fact very cleverly formulated Onsets and Rhymes. English phoneme and phonetical structures allow nonsense language authors to exploit the phonotactical structures of the language – the rules which govern the possible phoneme combinations. There are unlimited possibilities which nonsense language authors can create by using the lawful combinations (real words and phoneme clusters). By the
displacement of the onset of the original word and replacing it with another phoneme(s) to create a new or nonsensical words (Lecercle 1994: 33).\textsuperscript{12}

Lecercle’s discussion on the creation and use of nonsense language offers relevance to the phonological structures in the ABC nonsense poem. Edward Lear uses repetition and duplication. He creates nonsense words which appeal to and reflect upon the early language of a child. Pragmatically (on a practical level) the L1 child is able to use and link nonsense words phonologically to learn to recognize lexical words (written and spoken). Nonsense language explores and exploits the structure English language, reflecting on the language of a young L1 speaker. If this assumption is correct then it must be possible for young L2 English learners to exploit and use nonsense language when learning to recognize letters and sounds in individual nonsense words (i.e. tig) and creating minimal pairs of real words (i.e. pig and fig). Through the use of Onset-Rhyme in order to create nonsense words and then applying it to natural or real language, L2 learners can actively discover phonetical sounds and the words they represent in language, thus expanding their word knowledge and training the pronunciation of them at the same time (1994:35).

1.6 Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF)

Hank Fien PhD and fellow researchers published their extensive results on reading proficiency predictions in the area of Nonsense Words Fluency (NWF) in younger English learners (EL) and English Speakers (ES) in almost the same age range – the later nursery year through to the second grade at several local schools in *The School Psychology Review* in 2008. This longitudinal study screened 2400 children, divided into five cohorts (groups), during a period of three years. Nonsense Word Fluency resources the student’s capabilities in deciphering elemental letter-sound correlations, rather than recalling whole words from the mental lexicon whilst being still fully aware of the basic letter sounds i.e. recognizing sound combinations within nonsense words and applying them to real lexical words.

NWF directly measures pseudoword reading tasks, measuring alphabetic understanding and phonological re-coding constructs with the goal to isolate how well the test individuals learn to apply phonics rules in order to decode language by recognizing concealed sound-letter correlations (phonemes) and being able to recode the alphabet phonologically.

\textsuperscript{12} Certain individuals prefer to call nonsense language for gibberish, blather, balderdash; Lecercle uses the French word for nonsense – charabia.
One very interesting and valid point made by linguistic researchers, which could have some relevance to the current study is the fact that there are no studies, which specifically look at and validate pseudoword reading in English Language Learners (ELL). Studies such as Luk Bialystock et al. (2005) and Bialystock & Kwan (2005) show in their research that EL learners with limited language proficiency are able to read and pronounce both real and pseudowords that contain familiar phonetical sounds without knowing the word meaning they are learning to decode the phonological constructions of the English Language. Some English Language learners already use an alphabetic writing system in their native language and have no speaking proficiency of the L2, and yet they are able to recognize phonetical consonant sounds which are very close to or similar to consonant sounds of the L1 language (Fien et al. 2008).

2. Materials, Method and Previous Research

This section of the essay opens with a brief description of previous research relevant to the present study and which specifically includes and studies the effect of Onset and Rhyme and the use of nonsense language in ELL pronunciation skills. The materials used in the current study will be discussed in detail, followed by information pertaining to the method of testing, the tasks involved and the testees who participated in the study.

2.1 Previous Studies of L1 linguistic development in young children

The results of three studies by Hahn (2004) and Derwing and colleagues (1998, 2003) showed that pronunciation instruction focused on stress and rhythm had positive influence on the pronunciation skills of the testees. Researchers are also beginning to realize that the teaching and learning of pronunciation in a decontextualized situation can give negative results. The need for a combination of exposure, experience and motivation is as equally important as specific pronunciation instructions. By motivating young ELL learners to use the nonsense ABC they can gain valuable insights in phonetical sound structures. They learn by using rhyme and repetition, making pronunciation easier to master (Lightbown & Spada 2006: 104-105).

There are longitudinal studies in the field of applied linguistics which specifically research the use of nonsense language and real language in Onset-Rhyme in order to measure and assess the phonological and phonetical awareness in young L1 speakers of English. These researchers do not specifically study pronunciation skills, although the children were asked
to sound the nonsense words or real words they had created. The ages of the children who took part in the study ranged from four to ten years old.

2.1.1 Treiman’s study of intra-syllabic units in Onset-Rhyme

Treiman (1983) asserted that the intra-syllabic units in Onset-Rhyme play a significant role in language learning. Her earliest experiments concluded that adults experienced word learning more easily when the syllables were divided onto intra-syllabic units. In 1985 she turned her attention to the language learning in young children. This longitudinal study involved the study of a group of eight year olds. The children were given specific tasks involving the onset or the rhyme. In the first task they were asked to change the first two phonemes in a given word, i.e. ‘fog’ became ‘lug’. In the second task they were asked to change the last phoneme of a word, i.e. ‘fit’ became ‘fig’. Her conclusion of this experiment was that the children performed better when they were offered words where the rhyme was preserved. She showed that children at the age eight were able to recognize Onset-Rhyme. Despite the fact they could not read very well they were aware of intra-syllabic structures and sounds.

Treiman also studied phonetical awareness in four year olds. They were offered groups of nonsense words such as ‘s a’, ‘sna’ and ‘san’ or ‘a’, ‘na’ and ‘an’. The children were asked to identify the phonetical sound ‘s’ or ‘n’. Treiman predicted that the children would have problems with one or more of the phoneme combinations. Her prediction proved to be correct. The children found it easier to distinguish the word ‘sna’. She argued that this was the earliest form of natural phonological awareness in L1 speakers. She added that very young children cannot detect phonemes except when they occur with the onset. Treiman’s findings in this study support the results of Goswami and Bryant (1990).

2.1.2 Chukovsky – language learning patterns and rhyme

One of the earliest studies in this area was carried out by Chukovsky (1963). Chukovsky collected data on the learning patterns of very young L1 speakers. He proved that children could in fact recognize rhyme in words long before they actually learn to read words. The collected information suggested that children were intrigued by rhyming and rhyming words at a very early stage of their language development. He created nonsense poems based on one word. The children found the nonsense poetry fascinating and tried to emulate it by creating their own rhymes. They invented words in order to maintain the rhyme. The children were
encouraged to spontaneously invent nonsense words in the form of rhymes, which became a natural part of their linguistic development. Two later studies verified Chukovsky’s findings; children can in fact detect rhyme long before they are able to read. These long term studies were carried out by Lenel & Cantor (1971) respectively Bradley and Bryant (1983). The first study looked at rhyme, whilst the second study looked at rhyme and alliteration (1990: 22-24).  

Edward Lear’s nonsense ABC uses both rhyme and alliteration and is therefore suitable for the current, cross-sectional study focused on pronunciation skills in young English language learners in Sweden.

### 2.2 Method of research in the current study

In order to study the positive and relative didactic advantages of the nonsense ABC as a learning/teaching tool to promote pronunciation skills in the L2 learning/teaching situation, it was necessary to introduce the nonsense ABC to young English language learners in authentic classroom settings in order to study the development of pronunciation at an early stage of the Second Language Acquisition. The participants of the study were informed that RP English (Received Pronunciation) would be used for the purposes of the study, based on the information that the researcher was a native speaker of British English. The researcher pointed out that there are various accents and dialects of English relative to the origins of the English spoken by various different users.

The method chosen for this study is similar to the approach to that of Frankie Leibe. In the book *Bright Ideas – Language development*, (discussed in sub-section1.5.1) nonsense language/words are used as a teaching/learning aid for young L1 speakers of English to encourage speech development. The same material (Edward Lear’s nonsense ABC) used with young L1 speakers is introduced to beginner English language learners.

Frankie Leibe, writes that a teacher’s main concern is to help young speakers of English (in the current study young learners of English) to develop and improve their language abilities, especially oral skills. They need to master or underpin the complicated constructions of the language. Moreover speech is the most important channel of communication for human beings. The test materials were chosen to be able to assess the children’s phonological and

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13 Alliteration is the occurrence of the same sound at the beginning of words which are close together, i.e. sing, sang, sung, song. The description is taken from COED. 2008
phonetical understanding of various phoneme combinations, such as shorter or longer vocal sounds and consonant clusters in order to reach the ultimate goal, that of improved or correct pronunciation. (1984: 4).

For the purpose of this study a test was administered, based on the original nonsense ABC (appendix 1 and 4). All the verses of the nonsense alphabet consist of seven lines and a corresponding image. The repetition of the rhyme in the verses is present in all the verses, for example:

**C c**

[Image of a cake]

C was once a little **Cake**

Caky

Baky

Maky

Caky

Taky Caky

Little Cake

The word to be learnt was first introduced by the letter it begins with ‘C’. This was the identification of the phonetical sound /k/ of the letter ‘C’ / for the simple monosyllabic noun ‘Cake’ /keık/. The letter ‘E’ after ‘K’ is silent in English, producing a long sound rather than short. Lear then offers his reader a visual image. In this example the reader is offered an illustration of a cup-cake or muffin. The rhyme begins with a simple short sentence, which introduces the reader to the subject of the verse. Children generally connect the visual image of the cake to the subject of the verse – a cake. The four nonsense words are created by removing the ‘C’ and the ‘E’ in the word cake and replacing them with other consonants sounds in the onset; ‘B’, ‘M’ and ‘T’ and ‘Y’ in the rhyme. The rhyme sound ‘aky’ [eıkı] remains long. These words are not real dictionary words. Although they are nonsense words i.e. ‘caky’, ‘baky’, ‘maky’, ‘taky’ they reflect dictionary words, such as (Cake, Bake, Make and Take, all of which can be and are associated with the making or eating of a cake). Younger L2 learners with limited vocabularies and language knowledge latch on to more familiar words she/he already may or may not recognize or partially recognize. They become aware of a phonetical combination [eıkı] based on three phonemes [aky] in the form of a rhyme, eventually being able to recognize or associate real words which are similar in their constructs.
The sound and spelling of the original word ‘Cake’ connects to other words enabling the young SLA to create simple sentences and being able to learn to read them, for example: ‘Bake a cake’, ‘Make a cake’ (process of creating a cake) or ‘Take a cake’ (to be offered or to eat a cake). Each sentence offers a new dimension to the domain of the cake. The repetition of the rhyme ‘ake’ helps to develop phonetical awareness in the young learner at an early stage of language acquisition.

2.2.1 Participants of the study and general information about the school

The school is a combined primary and comprehensive school in the South of Sweden. The school supervises students from the age of five to fifteen (0-9th grade). It admits students from the entire administrative district of Kristianstad (Kristianstads Län). Each class, on average, comprises of between twenty and twenty-five pupils. There are four traditional classes (0-4A) who receive specific support in both English and Swedish. The pedagogical and educational aspects of classes 3-9 Bf are based on art and form, which is integrated into all other subjects on the curriculum. The children attending these classes are required to do an entrance exam based on their abilities to sketch, paint and design. One specific class offers home language instruction for immigrant children, adopted children and children of mixed ethnic origins. Two examples of the home language supervision offered to the pupils at the school are Chinese (Mandarin) and Arabic.

The two classes who took part in the study were Class 3 bf and class 4a. Class 3 bf (bf = “bild och form”; art and form). This group consists of both girls and boys. The children have been introduced to English as foreign language in the form of songs, vocabulary and simple reading texts. They are encouraged but not forced to engage verbally in the L2. Class 4a is a traditional fourth-grade group of mixed ethnicity and gender. For the purpose of the study Class 3 bf is experimental Group A and class 4a is control Group B. Both groups have the same basic level of knowledge of English.

Group A is a group of children born in Sweden to mainly Swedish parents. Group B is multi-ethnic in sense that several of the children are born in Sweden to parents with immigrant background, adopted or have immigrated to Sweden with their parents. In Group A there are two pupils who can in fact speak more than two languages, but the group’s L1 is Swedish. In Group B, the control group, several of the children speak Arabic, Kurdish, Somali or Persian as their L1 and Swedish as their L2 or L3 language. This makes English the L3, L4 or even L5 for one of the male participants. The Swedish L1 speakers in Group A consider English to
be their L2. Based on these facts and taking into consideration ethnic language backgrounds, it is therefore incorrect to describe English as the Second language (SL). The children taking part in this study will be referred to as English language learners (ELL) rather than Second Language Learners (SLA).

2.3 The test method stages

The study was carried out in four practical stages. Each stage was a further development of the previous one. There was a period of fourteen day between meeting 1 and meeting 2 (due to the Easter Holiday). Seven days elapsed between meeting 2 and the final test, allowing the children in Group A to process and practice the test materials between meetings and for the final test.

2.3.1 Group A

Stage 1: The children were introduced to the test materials: Edward Lear’s nonsense ABC. The group was asked to identify the first eight target nouns of the compendium (written on the white board by) and offer the Swedish equivalents. The tester identified the nonsense words which were there to help the children to reproduce the phonetical sounds of the target nouns using. At the end of meeting 1 the children was asked to practice the correct pronunciation of the words, together or by themselves in preparation for meeting two.

Stage 2: The children did basically the same task with the remaining seven target nouns. They were encouraged to sound the words, latch onto the Onset-Rhyme and observe the similarity between the sounds of the nonsense words and the real words. The tester used communicative and structured teaching/learning methods with the participants. At the end of the second meeting the children were asked to practice all fifteen verses prior to meeting 3 - the final test (appendix 4 and 5).

Stage 3: The final test - Each pupil was asked to identify the target vocabulary/nouns by drawing a line to a black and white image. They were then asked to pronounce each word. The answers were scored for further analysis by the tester. The final test was given as an individual test. The pupils were not allowed to talk about the test with the other students in the group.

Stage 4: the children were asked to respond to a very simple follow-up questionnaire in order to evaluate the study materials and method as well as the educational and fun levels of the
task (appendix 6a and 6b). The questions were offered in Swedish making sure that the children would fully understand what was required of them by the tester.

2.3.2 Group B

Stage 1: The children were introduced to the study materials. They were asked to identify the nouns they recognized by offering the Swedish equivalent. This was noted by the tester. They learnt the vocabulary by repeating the words as a group and individually. The vocabulary sheets were collected in at the end of the first meeting. The children were not asked to practice with each other or alone before meeting 2.

Stage 2: The children were asked to do the same task at meeting two. At the end of meeting 2 the children were indirectly asked to take the vocabulary list with them and practice individually for the final test. These two stages of the task were instruction based. The children received some limited correctional feedback from the tester during stages 1 and 2.

Stages 3 and 4: The children completed the same test and a follow-up questionnaire in order to evaluate the testees’ attitudes toward, the materials and method, learning and language acquisition in general.

2.3.3 Assessment and final analysis

The results of the study are compiled into tables, which show the pupils’ linguistic development over twenty-eight days. The results of the test for pronunciation and noun recognition are based on the differentiating results between Groups A and B and gender.
2.4 Diagram A: Test stages of the current study

The following diagram shows the test stages to assess and test the pronunciation and word knowledge of the target vocabulary. * denotes “Bild och Form” (art and form)

Text used in the study:
Edward Lear’s Nonsense ABC

/                  \
Fifteen selected verses                   target vocabulary (fifteen nouns)

From the ABC rhyme only

containing the target vocabulary

↓

Meeting 1
Introduction to the verses in their original form with the illustrations. The verses contain the target vocabulary/nouns

↓

Meeting 2
Encouraged group A to sound and read the words. Practice together in pairs and individually.

Final analysis
A thorough assessment of the results of the experiment.

Final test
The pupils were asked to identify and match the target vocabulary to corresponding pictures, by drawing a line. They were then asked to pronounce the word. The children were scored and tested individually for correct pronunciation and word identification.

Group B
Class 4A

Group A
Class 3Bf*

Identical final for test for both Group A and B

Scoring and assessment
Results were reviewed in the form of tables.
2.5 The follow-up questionnaire – An evaluation of the children’s responses and attitudes toward the study materials, method of teaching/learning and language acquisition

The pupils in both groups were asked to fill in a simple closed ended questionnaire (appendix 6a and 6b) appropriate for primary school third and fourth-grade pupils. The children were able to express their own attitudes and feelings toward the test materials and test tasks. The goal of the questionnaire was to evaluate the children’s attitude toward learning English pronunciation and the final individual test. The participants were asked to relay their attitudes by choosing one of three facial expressions that best facilitated their own individual opinions. In the current study the children were asked to answer the questionnaires without presence of the tester. The teaching supervisors were instructed to collect the data and put it in two separate envelopes provided by the tester. The envelopes were sealed and collected by the tester.

The follow-up questionnaire used in this study is closed ended - based on the Likert scale, first introduced into research in the 1930’s. The purpose of the questionnaire is to find about the attitudes of the pupils taking part in the study. There are various different types of QUEST-QUAN questionnaires. The most frequently used are questionnaires which record attitude scales and personality inventories. There are numerous advantages in using this type of questionnaire, i.e. the researcher can mail or send questionnaires via e-mail to participants. It is important that there is a follow-up of the questionnaires, reminders and re-mailing to participants who do not respond to the questionnaire (Teddlie & Tashakkori 2009: 232-33).

A traditional 5-point-scale of scoring could be considered difficult for young language learners to complete. The participants of this study were therefore offered a simpler och less complicated questionnaire. The choice fell on a 3 point-scale level of agreement, using the image of a human face and a key word corresponding to the level of agreement or disagreement. The faces ranged from very happy to very sad, with one choice in between. The children’s responses to the questions offered important feedback relating to their levels of learning and if they thought that use of nonsense language was a fun method of learning English pronunciation.
3. Study Analysis

3.1 Meeting 1 with Group A

The duration of the each task was sixty minutes, divided into two thirty minute passes. The children received thirty minutes teacher-based instruction combined with a communicative approach which actively engaged the children to participate in the task. They received thirty minutes of practice in pairs. They were given constructive feedback on the correct pronunciation of the target vocabulary.

The children were asked not to open the compendium until the introduction to the task was finished. They were asked to identify eight of the fifteen target words by offering the Swedish equivalents. They were then introduced to the compendium of nonsense verses and instructed to listen very carefully to the first eight verses and then recite them as a group. The children immediately connected the images to the target nouns. They were asked to listen to the repetition of the rhyme in the nonsense verses. They were specifically told that these words would help them to identify the correct pronunciation of the target nouns. By repeating several different onsets to the rhyme they incorporated and practiced the correct pronunciation of the target vocabulary. Each child was encouraged to repeat the lines in the verses several times. The children eventually identified a recurring pattern in the verses. They continued to work in pairs, listening to each other and receiving communicative positive feedback on their attempts to pronounce the words correctly. The children were asked to continue to practice the verses before the next meeting. They were also told to recite the verses out loud, whilst listening to the phonetical sound structures of the words.

Several of phonetical sounds did in fact prove difficult for them to pronounce. These are typical English phoneme clusters such as ‘sh’ /ʃ/ and ‘oo’ /uː/. The introduction of the phonetical sound /ʃ/ in the nonsense word ‘chen’ proved to be the most difficult sound to both identify and pronounce. They were asked to practice on the sounds they felt were especially difficult to pronounce, more so than the other familiar sounds. Finally, the children were asked to observe the written form of the words and the letter combinations of which they were made-up by connecting the graphemes to the phonemes and the sounds phonetically. The children were asked to observe the words in Onset-Rhyme and to pronounce them. Finally they were introduced to the phonetical transcription of the words. The tester explained that this is the sound alphabet and could they see any differences between the letters of the written language and the language of sound. The children immediately identified the differences,
discovering that the phonetical spelling was in fact incompatible to the graphemes of the syllable. An example would be,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syllable/noun</th>
<th>image</th>
<th>phonetical spelling</th>
<th>onset-rhyme</th>
<th>phoneme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cake</td>
<td>🍰</td>
<td>/keɪk/</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>a-k-e</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Meeting 1 with Group B

Group B were introduced to the list of selected nouns, adapted from the nonsense ABC, which they would be using for the duration of the study. They were also given specific instructions pertaining to meetings, materials and the final test. It was necessary to repeat the instructions in both Swedish and English to avoid any misunderstandings between the testees and the tester.

The children were first asked to identify the target nouns in Swedish. They had difficulties in identifying ‘whale’, ‘thrush’ and ‘owl’. The children were then allowed to look at the vocabulary list with corresponding images. The children were offered the words individually on the whiteboard. They were offered the syllable (whole word) and asked to repeat it. They were then offered the same word divided into phonemes and asked to pronounce the words. The children were asked to listen and repeat all fifteen words of the target vocabulary. The structure-based teaching task lasted thirty minutes. Group B was then asked to repeat the words working in pairs for another period of thirty minutes, whilst the tester listened to the all the participants individually.

The phonetical combinations and sounds which caused problems for the children were noted by the tester who also listened for differences between their mother-tongue and the English Received Pronunciation to which they were introduced to in the task. They offered several variations of the words ‘doll’ /dɒl/ - i.e /d/; /l/; ‘owl’ /aʊl/ - i.e /a:/; /l/; ‘whale’ /weɪl/ - i.e /weɪl/; /leɪl/; and ‘goose’ /ɡuːs/ - i.e /ɡeɪs/; /s/. One interesting observation made by tester was that the children reverted to listening to clusters of phonemes rather than to individual phonemes. They eventually became aware that the phonetical structure was different to the alphabetical structure. The tester observed that several of the
children went spontaneously over to rhyming in the onset, creating new sounds in order to understand and deal with the unfamiliar pronunciation.

Conclusion of meeting 1 with Group A and B

The children in group A showed interest in the nonsense ABC and willingness to both listen and learn. They answered the questions offered them and asked questions when they did not fully understand the English instructions. The children and the teacher were curious and enthusiastic toward the task and the compendium of nonsense verses. Group B was asked to learn the target words by listening and repeating them together as a group and in pairs. They received limited feedback on their initial efforts of the task. Both class supervisors had prepared both classes mentally prior to the first meeting, which contributed to create an initial surge of interest in the materials used in the study.

3.3 Meeting 2 with Groups A and B

Before the second meeting with Groups A and B, some questions needed to be asked. Did the children show improvement in pronunciation of the target vocabulary? What kind of improvement did they make? What kind of attitude did Group A have toward the nonsense rhymes/pronunciation task, alternatively the attitude of Group B toward the pronunciation task offered them?

3.3.1 Meeting 2 with Group A

The children were asked to recall the target vocabulary in verses 1-8 in the compendium of rhymes. The children’s pronunciation had improved between meetings. Almost all the children continued to pronounced /b ɛə/ as /bı ər/. The word /dɒl/ which they initially pronounced as /d ʌl/ was eventually identified by all the children except for five in the group. Two of the children continued to pronounced /paı/ as /peı/. They were given individual feedback on the target sounds and the sounds they actually produced.

The seven remaining verses of the nonsense ABC were introduced to the children. The pronunciation of the word ‘owl’ /aυl/ proved difficult for all the children to anticipate when confronted with the written form of the word. The children tended to sound / ɔ:l/ The children even referred back to the Swedish alphabet and mixed-up the letter ‘A’ and the Swedish ‘R’ with each other. This indicates that the children experienced learning difficulties when the phonetical sounds of the words did not correlate to the written form. They fell back on their
L1 language knowledge in order to decode the pronunciation. Finally, the sounds /ʃ, and ð/ proved to be challenging phoneme combinations to learn. Several of the children changed / r/ in Shrimp to /fr/. The occurrence of both /r/ and /ʃ/ in the same word, -‘thrush’-, was given the children’s full attention. When practicing together they chose the most unfamiliar sounds and asked for feedback on their individual efforts to pronounce the words correctly.

The children actively enquired about the difference between graphemes and phonemes (letters of the written alphabet and the phonetical alphabet). This origin of the question can be traced back to the first line of the verses. They were asked to give the grapheme and sound it phonetically. They had through the reading of the rhymes understood that the written alphabet and the International phonetical alphabet (IPA) were in fact incompatible.

More importantly they could hear the repeated rhyme and emulated the target sound in the nonsense words. The children did in fact start to rhyme and test other sounds, i. e Maggie, taggie, daggie. This clearly showed that they were aware of Onset and Rhyme as well as being able to recognize the target words. Although they were less aware of phonemes at this stage of their learning acquisition the rhymes helped them to listen for phoneme changes in the verses.

Prior knowledge gained from meeting 1 helped the children to immediately realize what was expected of them at meeting 2. They actively participated, listened and repeated the rhymes. They received positive feedback on their efforts to help them improve their pronunciation. Some time was allocated to working in pairs. The children were asked to listen to each other. The tester asked if they thought it was difficult or if they were unsure and needed guidance. At the end of session Group A was asked to practice at least once every day for the final test. One observation did however divide and define the group. The girls seemed more willing to do the tasks well and were very positive and open to feedback on their efforts. The boys were interested in the actual reading of the verses as a group, but showed reluctance to practice. They were however open to feedback and positive encouragement. It is possible that the children reacted according to gender and maturity, when tackling the problem of learning to pronounce English correctly.

Finally in answer to the three questions put forward prior to Meeting 2. The children in Group A did show considerable improvement in their pronunciation of the target words in verses 1-8. They did use the rhyme to practice and learnt to recognize the sounds of the target words phonetically and connect the verse textually to the images. They also showed interest
in the system of Onset and Rhyme as a tool of learning and created their own words, both real and pseudo. The final test will give conclusive answers to support, alternatively not support these findings.

3.3.2 Meeting 2 with Group B

The second session with group B lasted for just over 45 minutes. The children were encouraged to take part in the exercise despite the fact that the large majority of the group felt that the task was monotonous and less appealing. The testees were first asked if they remembered any of the target words on the vocabulary list they had learnt at the first meeting. They remembered many of the words but were unsure of the pronunciation. Their reaction was logical, bearing in mind that they had not been offered the opportunity to practice the words, which limited the overall exposure to the words and corresponding images as well as practice the correct pronunciation.

The children repeated the same task from meeting 1. The first part of the task was to check for improved pronunciation. They were prompted to say the words out loud as a group. In order to assess any improvements in their pronunciation they were asked to repeat the words one by one in the second part of the task. They reacted both negatively and positively to the task. The girls were generally more positive toward the task. The boys admitted that they felt that situation was initially embarrassing, but eventually became more comfortable as time went on. In the third part of the task they were asked to work in pairs listening to each other, but without commenting on each others’ efforts. The tester then listened to every child individually, observing their efforts and suggesting which of the words they needed to specifically practice for the final test.

Their pronunciation of simple sounds had marginally improved, but some anomalies still remained in the pronunciation of the unfamiliar phonemes clusters and the sounds they represented in the written words. The children completed all the tasks they were required to do, but felt that the overall task was tedious and colourless, indicated by a lower level of concentration within the whole group, but more notably in the boys in Group B.

The words which posed several problems for the group were /b ɹ/ and /lavl/. All of the children pronounced /b ɹ/ as /bɹæ/ and /lavl/ as /ˈlɪ/. They still had problems combining /ɹ/ and /ʃ/. On a more individual level of improvement some of the children still had problems with /guːs/ and suggested the alternative /ɡːs/, /dɬ/ became /dɹ/, /fɹi/ tended to become long
The sound/phoneme combination /ʃ+r+p/ caused problems for some of the children, who pronounced it /ʃ+r+p/ or /ʃ+p/. Interestingly, two of the boys noticed that the two words ‘shrimp’ and ‘frimp’ rhymed and looked similar. They commented on this fact, which points to an unconscious understanding of Onset-Rhyme. All the children received some feedback on their individual efforts and ways in which they could improve pronunciation by sounding the phonemes i.e. /ʃ-r-i-m-p/ and comparing it to the written form ‘sh-r-i-m-p’.

Finally, the children were asked to prepare for the final test. They were asked to practice for the test, but not how much they should practice. They were also informed that they would be tested individually and would receive no help or guidance during and after the test. They reacted strongly to being tested individually. The tester explained that this was necessary in order to correctly assess their knowledge of pronunciation and chart their progress from the first session and the second session in order to compare task performance and pronunciation improvements with the results of the final test.

3.4 Results of the final image/word and pronunciation test

In the following section the results of the final test are compiled in five separate tables. Each table is discussed in a separate sub-section.

3.4.1 The construction and scoring of the final test for both Groups A and B

Group A and Group B did the same final test. It was divided into two distinct sections. Each test sheet indicated if it is a boy or girl testee and their age at the time of testing. The children were tested individually and without the influence or support of the group. They received no help or prompts from the tester. Section 1 tested both groups for image/word recognition. They were asked to draw neat lines between the target nouns and the corresponding images. Section 2 of the test observed the correct pronunciation alternatively the incorrect pronunciation of the target vocabulary. The data from the tests results was collected for closer analysis. The children were not allowed to communicate in any way during section 1 of the test and asked not to discuss the phonetical test in section 2 with their class peers. Each child was asked to fill in a questionnaire relating to the two meetings, study materials, method and the final test.
3.4.2 Test results for Groups A and B

The results of the final test (section 1 and 2) are analyzed and represented in five separate tables: Group A – image/word and pronunciation, Group B - image/word and pronunciation and results based on gender. The two test sections were allocated fifteen points each. A correct response gave one point and an incorrect answer no points. The children did both tests individually. They were asked to evaluate the experience and their attitudes toward the study by responding to the questionnaire. The test took one and half hours to complete for each of the groups. On the day of the final test four of the children were absent from school due to illness and could not take part on the final test. The results have been marginally affected, but not compromised by their absence. Twenty-eight (87, 5%) of the thirty-two children completed the final test.

The results of sections 1 and 2 of the final test for Group A and Group B can be studied in tables 3.4.2.1 to 3.4.2.4. Table 3.5 shows the results of the tests according to gender. The results of the test according to group and gender give differentiated results of the children’s learning and improvement in their English language acquisition. It was initially observed that the girls were able to concentrate for longer periods of time compared to their male counterparts. This study is not directly concerned with the differences in psychological maturity of girls and boys, but the results do clearly indicate that certain psychological factors, such as mental maturity do affect the results when analyzing test responses and the way in which they react to the classroom and test settings from the perspective of gender.

The result of each section shows the number of correct and incorrect responses offered by the testees. It is important to remember that the testees received no help during the test and did not discuss the test before or after they had completed both sections. They were not allowed to compare or divulge their responses to the questionnaire. The results of the follow-up questionnaire are discussed in more detail in section 4.3.
### 3.4.2.1 Test results for image / word

**Group A (15 testees)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target noun/word image: Result for Group A</th>
<th>Correct answer</th>
<th>Incorrect answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An apple-pie</td>
<td>15 100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A bear</td>
<td>15 100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A cake</td>
<td>15 100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A doll</td>
<td>15 100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A fish</td>
<td>15 100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A goose</td>
<td>15 100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A hen</td>
<td>15 100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A kite</td>
<td>15 100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A mouse</td>
<td>15 100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A needle</td>
<td>15 100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An owl</td>
<td>15 100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A shrimp</td>
<td>13 87%</td>
<td>2 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A thrush</td>
<td>13 87%</td>
<td>2 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A whale</td>
<td>15 100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.4.2.2 Test results for image / word

**Group B (13 testees)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target noun/word image: Result for Group B</th>
<th>Correct answer</th>
<th>Incorrect answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An apple-pie</td>
<td>13 100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A bear</td>
<td>13 100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A cake</td>
<td>13 100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A doll</td>
<td>13 100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A fish</td>
<td>13 100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A goose</td>
<td>13 100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A hen</td>
<td>13 100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A kite</td>
<td>13 100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A mouse</td>
<td>13 100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A needle</td>
<td>13 100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An owl</td>
<td>13 100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A shrimp</td>
<td>11 85%</td>
<td>2 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A thrush</td>
<td>10 77%</td>
<td>3 23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A whale</td>
<td>12 92%</td>
<td>1 7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3.4.2.3 Test results for pronunciation

**Group A (15 testees)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronunciation Group A</th>
<th>Correct answer</th>
<th>Incorrect answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An apple-pie</td>
<td>14 93%</td>
<td>1 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A bear</td>
<td>10 67%</td>
<td>5 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A cake</td>
<td>15 100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A doll</td>
<td>14 93%</td>
<td>1 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A fish</td>
<td>14 93%</td>
<td>1 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A goose</td>
<td>12 80%</td>
<td>3 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A hen</td>
<td>15 100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A kite</td>
<td>13 87%</td>
<td>2 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A mouse</td>
<td>15 100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A needle</td>
<td>11 73%</td>
<td>4 27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An owl</td>
<td>14 93%</td>
<td>1 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A shrimp</td>
<td>13 87%</td>
<td>2 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A thrush</td>
<td>11 73%</td>
<td>4 27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A whale</td>
<td>14 93%</td>
<td>1 7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.4.2.4 Test results for pronunciation

**Group B (13 testees)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronunciation Group B</th>
<th>Correct answer</th>
<th>Incorrect answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An apple-pie</td>
<td>12 92%</td>
<td>1 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A bear</td>
<td>2 15%</td>
<td>11 85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A cake</td>
<td>13 100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A doll</td>
<td>3 23%</td>
<td>10 77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A fish</td>
<td>6 46%</td>
<td>7 54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A goose</td>
<td>7 54%</td>
<td>6 46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A hen</td>
<td>11 85%</td>
<td>2 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A kite</td>
<td>9 69%</td>
<td>4 31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A mouse</td>
<td>9 69%</td>
<td>4 31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A needle</td>
<td>11 73%</td>
<td>4 27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An owl</td>
<td>6 46%</td>
<td>7 54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A shrimp</td>
<td>7 54%</td>
<td>6 46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A thrush</td>
<td>6 46%</td>
<td>7 54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A whale</td>
<td>9 69%</td>
<td>4 31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. 5 Test results according to gender (both Groups A and B)

The following test results show deviations in image/word and pronunciation between the male (15) and female (13) testees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word/image</th>
<th>Boys (15)</th>
<th>Girls (13)</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>Boys (15)</th>
<th>Girls (13)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C Inc %</td>
<td>C Inc %</td>
<td>C Inc %</td>
<td>C Inc %</td>
<td>C Inc %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An apple-pie</td>
<td>15 0 100%</td>
<td>13 0 100%</td>
<td>13 2 87% 13%</td>
<td>13 0 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A bear</td>
<td>15 0 &quot;</td>
<td>13 0 &quot;</td>
<td>3 12 87% 13%</td>
<td>6 7 46% 54%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A cake</td>
<td>15 0 &quot;</td>
<td>13 0 100%</td>
<td>15 0 100% 13%</td>
<td>13 0 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A doll</td>
<td>15 0 &quot;</td>
<td>13 0 &quot;</td>
<td>7 8 47% 53%</td>
<td>11 2 85% 15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A fish</td>
<td>15 0 &quot;</td>
<td>13 0 &quot;</td>
<td>9 6 60% 40%</td>
<td>12 1 92% 8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A goose</td>
<td>15 0 &quot;</td>
<td>13 0 &quot;</td>
<td>10 5 67% 33%</td>
<td>9 4 69% 31%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A hen</td>
<td>15 0 &quot;</td>
<td>13 0 &quot;</td>
<td>13 2 87% 13%</td>
<td>13 0 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A kite</td>
<td>15 0 &quot;</td>
<td>13 0 &quot;</td>
<td>13 2 87% 13%</td>
<td>13 0 &quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A mouse</td>
<td>15 0 &quot;</td>
<td>13 0 &quot;</td>
<td>12 3 80% 20%</td>
<td>13 0 &quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A rose</td>
<td>15 0 &quot;</td>
<td>13 0 &quot;</td>
<td>9 6 60% 40%</td>
<td>11 2 85% 15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>needle</td>
<td>15 0 &quot;</td>
<td>13 0 &quot;</td>
<td>11 4 73% 23%</td>
<td>10 3 77% 23%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Owl</td>
<td>15 0 &quot;</td>
<td>13 0 &quot;</td>
<td>10 5 77% 10%</td>
<td>3 77% 23%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Analysis and discussion of the collected data

In this section of the essay each table is discussed in separate sub-sections. The results of the tests and the children’s questionnaire are limited to this analysis and only apply to the testees who participated in this study.

4.1 Analysis and comparison of the test results for word and image in Groups A and B

The children in both groups correctly indentified almost all of the words in section 1 of the test. The two words which proved to be most difficult to identify were, as anticipated – ‘thrush’ and ‘shrimp’- The children confused the onset –‘shr’ and ‘thr’ - connecting the words to the wrong visual image. This confirms that almost all learners of English do in fact find it confusing when trying to correlate vocabulary knowledge and pronunciation. John Archibald’s findings confirm that certain phoneme clusters do in fact cause difficulties in English Language Acquisition (Archibald 2009: 237; Ann Baker 1982: 1-4).

Phonetic sounds that are absent in the L1 are more difficult to master in the L2, alternatively if they are present in the L1, but not represented in similar constructions i. e. Arabic uses the /ʃ/ sound, but not necessarily in combination with /r/ or / ʃ/. Group B had 96.7% correct on section 1 compared with experimental Group A’s 98%. This clearly shows that both study groups were successful on section 1 of the test, proving that both the methods chosen for this study were compatable and equal when analyzing links between words and images, having improved in all the testees.
4.1.1 Comparison of word recognition according to gender

The results for word and image according to gender deviate slightly from the results according to the performance of Groups A and B. The girls’ results were marginally better than the boys’ results. This can be linked back to my initial observation made during the two meetings; the girls were able to concentrate for longer periods of time than their male peers. The girls showed that they had listened and followed the instructions given to them during and after the two meetings and the final test, resulting in an improved result on the whole section (even the words they initially found difficult to recognize). The girls answered 98.2% correct on this section of the test compared to the boys’ 97.3%. Although the difference between these results is marginal, it suggests that mental maturity of girls and boys develop at different rates.

4.2 Analysis and comparison of the test results for pronunciation in Groups A and B

The results collected for the pronunciation test offers some very interesting data pertaining to the language development skills of the testees. Group A had similar results to Group B for some of the target vocabulary and higher scores in others. The differentiated results of certain words can be directly linked to L1 language background. Appendix 3b lists likely speech errors in speakers of Arabic and Swedish and does explain, to some degree, several of the incorrect responses offered by the children in both groups based on their L1. Several responses to the words given by the children in Groups A and group B in the test showed that the pronunciation skills of the children in Group A had improved over the duration of the study.

A closer analysis of the results for both groups showed that both groups gave various incorrect answers. It is therefore rather a question of what types of mistakes they made in the pronunciation of the vocabulary. Which of the target words caused problems for the young learners and for whom were the words a problem? A comparison of the children’s performance during the two meetings linked to the results of section 2 of the final test showed that the rhyme in the nonsense ABC had a positive effect on the children in Group A, whose pronunciation of the target words had improved.

During the meetings certain problems relating to the children’s pronunciation did arise. Initially, both groups had similar difficulties with the following words: ‘doll’, ‘owl’, ‘bear’, ‘thrush’, ‘kite’, ‘shrimp’ and ‘goose’ (see meetings 1 and 2 for both groups). Group A
practiced the Nonsense ABC between both meetings and were specifically asked to practice every day the week prior to the final test. Group B had the same type of incorrect pronunciation as group A. They were only instructed to learn the words on the list through teacher-based instruction. The words on the vocabulary list corresponded to a number of black and white images. They were not directly asked to practice the vocabulary between the two meetings and only indirectly told that it would be a good idea to practice prior to the test. Based on the difference in materials, instructions and methods used with each of the groups, the results did show some significant improvement in the pronunciation skills of Group A compared to Group B.

The test results, according the table 3.4.2.3 and 3.4.2.4, confirm the findings of the current study that the active use of the nonsense ABC contributed to improve the pronunciation skills of the young English Language Learners in Group A. They showed significant improvement in pronunciation on section 2 of the test.

Next is a comparison of the results of the test groups, highlighting some of the basic mistakes made by testees during the meetings and successfully corrected in the test alternatively the words they continued to mispronounce at the end of the four week study. The result for Group A in section 2 of the test showed 88% correct pronunciation. Group B had only 52.2% correct in this section of the test. The use of the Nonsense ABC seems to have had a positive effect on Group A. Although certain words still caused problems for the children, the large majority of the group had mastered the phonetic sounds of the target words. These findings are an isolated one and limited to the present study focusing on the pronunciation skills of thirty-two participants. Further investigation into the use of nonsense language to help develop pronunciation is necessary in order to shed further light on how beginner learners of English understand and use the phonetics and phonology of nonsense words to help them to develop their pronunciation skills.

Let us study some of the target words and the problems of pronunciation that were revealed in section 2 of the final test. The target word ‘bear’ was initially pronounced incorrectly by all the children in both groups. At the second meeting Group A had greatly improved and only a few of the children still tended to pronounce ‘bear’ as /bɪər/ instead of /bɛər/. The nonsense verse played on the word ‘bear’ – beary, Wary, hairy and cary (see appendix 1). The children in Group B had marginally improved to the second meeting. They were only given the noun
‘bear’ (along with and the other words) to learn through teacher led instruction. The problem of pronouncing / aɹ/ is common in English language learners whose L1 is Arabic. Swedish L1 speakers also make similar mistakes when pronouncing the word ‘bear’. The rhyme in (b | ear) was more noticeable (strong) in the pronunciation of the children with non-Swedish language origin.

The words ‘thrush’ and ‘shrimp’ were, as was mentioned earlier, difficult for the children to master. Correlating the words textually to the pronunciation was a quandary for the young testees. The Nonsense rhyming did however help more than half of Group A (shrimp 87% and thrush 73% correct) to identify the words correctly by listening to the phoneme repetition which occurred in the rhyme of the verses. They fared much better in the test situation than Group B (shrimp 54% and thrush 46% correct). The most common mistake in the pronouncing ‘shrimp’ was the exclusion of the /t/ after /ʃ/ alternatively it became almost inaudible. Depending on the L1 of the students they offered several variations of ‘thrush’ i. e /trʌʃ/ - /tɹʌʃ/ - /tlrʌʃ/. ‘Doll’ was also a problem for almost all the children in both groups. They initially changed the vocal phoneme /dɹl/ for the vocal sound /ʌl/ alternatively /ɔl/, fourteen of the children in Group A identified and pronounced ‘doll’ correctly when they completed the final test, compared to only three children in group B.

4.2.1 Analysis and comparison of the pronunciation test according to gender

The results of section 2 of the test according to gender showed that the female testees, once again, fared better than their male counterparts (the boys in Group A had better results than the boys in Group B in both sections 1 and 2 of the test). The girls scored higher on fourteen of the words of the target vocabulary. This confirms the initial observation that during the meetings the girls were able to concentrate for a longer periods of time than the boys. The lack of concentration impacted the boys’ results and performance in the test and can explain the difference in results (the girls had 83% correct pronunciation compared to the boys’ 73.7 %). According to the results the boys had a higher score on the word ‘thrush’ and can possibly be explained by the fact that several of the boys have Arabic as their L1.

4.3 Findings of the final test

According to the results of the final test Group A showed marked improvement in their language skills, pointing to the fact that the use of the nonsense ABC, as a learning tool in the early stages of English language acquisition, may well have helped them to improve their
pronunciation. Group B made progress in word / image association, but partially failed to improve their pronunciation skills when taught by the traditional method of teaching vocabulary in predominantly teacher led settings.

The results revealed that the children who used the compendium had developed a better awareness of pronunciation compared to the children in Group B at the end of the four week study. The observations made are supported by studies of Chukovsky (1963) and Treiman (1983). Chukovsky showed in his research that young learners could in fact recognize rhyme before they could read. He suggested that the natural curiosity of young children was one the main factors behind their interest in rhyming and rhyming words at a very early stage of their language development. Treiman’s tests using pseudowords proved valuable in helping to develop phonological awareness in four year olds, pinning down which phoneme combinations were easier to learn in the early stages of L1 language development. These earlier findings were modified in order to investigate pronunciation skills in early Second Language Acquisition.

**4.4 Results of the follow-up questionnaire offered to Groups A and B.**

The responses offered in the questionnaire reflected the attitudes of the young participants toward the materials they were asked to use and their experience of the teaching/learning methods used in the classroom. It is important to take into consideration the thoughts and reflections of the children when introduced to new or experimental methods of learning/teaching pronunciation of a foreign language. This data must be taken into consideration when evaluating their performance on the final test. The following table shows the results of the simple follow-up questionnaire (the children were given the questionnaire in Swedish – appendix 6b): The following table compares the individual answers offered by the testees in both groups.
4.4.1 Table and discussion based on the responses of the children to the simple follow-up questionnaire.

The five follow-up questions pertaining to the attitudes and perceptions of the children toward the method and materials used in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Did you like the words?</th>
<th>Happy face – I liked it!</th>
<th>Okay face – It was okay!</th>
<th>Unhappy face – I did not like it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group A</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group B</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Were the words fun to learn?</th>
<th>Happy face – I liked it!</th>
<th>Okay face – It was okay!</th>
<th>Unhappy face – I did not like it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group A</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group B</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Did you practice the sounds of the words? (one week prior to the test)</th>
<th>Happy face – I liked it!</th>
<th>Okay face – It was okay!</th>
<th>Unhappy face – I did not like it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group A</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group B</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Is it difficult to speak English?</th>
<th>Happy face – I liked it!</th>
<th>Okay face – It was okay!</th>
<th>Unhappy face – I did not like it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group A</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group B</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. Was the test difficult?</th>
<th>Happy face – I liked it!</th>
<th>Okay face – It was okay!</th>
<th>Unhappy face – I did not like it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group A</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group B</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the results of the questionnaire the two groups reacted differently to the materials they were asked to use for the study. Group A reacted positively toward the compendium of nonsense verses. Fourteen of the children in Group A responded with positive answers to questions 1 and 2. Group B’s reaction to the list of target nouns with corresponding black and white images was as expected, they did not consider them interesting or appealing. Only six of the thirteen children in Group B reacted positively to the vocabulary list. Children seem to prefer colourful or interesting images, rather than monotone lists of words with corresponding black and white illustrations. The result of question 3 supports the responses of the children to questions 1 and 2. Eleven of the children in Group A marked the smiling face and four marked the half-smiling face when asked if they had practised both pronunciation as well as image/word recognition prior to the final test. Only five of the children in Group B actively practiced the words on the vocabulary list one week prior the
Questions 4 and 5 were concerned with difficulties in speaking English and how they experienced the final test. Again, the children in Group A chose positively whilst the children in Group B found English difficult to learn which was reflected in their negative response to the final test. Only one person in Group A found it difficult to master English pronunciation. The results of the pronunciation test showed that all the children in Group A did well on the test. The testee (in Group A) who found English pronunciation a problem did actually improve her pronunciation after using the nonsense ABC. 75% of Group A found the test easy compared with only 50% of Group B.

The overall result of the questionnaire confirms the teachers’ evaluation of Groups A and B’s efforts on the tasks. The supervisor of Group A experienced improvement and enthusiasm in all the children and commented that she too found the nonsense ABC both intriguing and educational in an area such as learning/teaching pronunciation. She also noted that they appeared more confident when speaking English after the two meetings. The supervisor for Group B partially confirmed the findings of the study. She commented on the lack of concentration in the boys and the negative attitude toward the list of target nouns.

The test also confirmed the philosophical dimensions of nonsense language and the linguistics of it put forward by Jean-Jacques Lecercle (1994) and Professor Wim Tigges (2003). The language structure of a nonsensicality reading is more creative and intuitive. Linguists often turn to the works of Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll when exploring the properties and development of language and this supports the current study in that the nonsense compendium intrigued the children into wanting to learn pronunciation through the use of the nonsense ABC.

The results of the final test and the questionnaire showed that the use of the nonsense ABC had several positive effects on the young English Language Learners in Group A. The results of this study confirm that the introduction of nonsense language as a didactical tool for developing language skills in areas such as pronunciation benefitted the children in Group A. The design and lay-out of the task material (Edward Lear’s original texts and illustrations from the late 1800s) used by Group A, aided the children in their language learning. It is important to point out that this short term study involved the testing of thirty-two young learners of English; of which twenty-eight completed the study. In order to fully confirm the
findings of the current study it is necessary to do other long term studies which focus on pronunciation skills in young ELL learners, involving larger groups of young English language Learners with varying ethnic and language backgrounds.

5 Final Discussion

The study was executed over a period of four weeks and focused on the pronunciation skills of the English language. A traditionally based method of teaching was compared to an experimental approach. Native-like pronunciation is as important as proficiency in the written language and understanding the spoken language (vocabulary and the use of grammar). The training of pronunciation at the beginner level could help to avoid or counteract problems with ‘fossilized accents’ in mature speakers of English. Language fossilization can lead to a variety of language problems, such as choice and use of vocabulary, nuances of the L2, grammar, reading/writing and being understood by others. Problems with pronunciation make it difficult to be understood, making the interpretation of what is being conveyed unclear. Pronunciation is afforded little time on the beginner level, resulting in strong and sometimes unintelligible accents in mature Non-Native Speakers of English (NNS). The emphasis on other areas of progressive language acquisition seems to take priority over pronunciation. By reversing the learning process and introducing pronunciation at the beginner level, it would give learners important phonetical and phonological knowledge, making later stages of language acquisition easier.

This is also true of the learning/teaching situation in Swedish schools. Young learners are taught to concentrate on memorizing words in English and being able to offer the Swedish equivalents. They are shown how to use the target words in a given context offered in language textbooks and doing simple exercises in order to practice them. They learn to construct simple sentences and receive feedback through tests in order to learn to write, read and spell correctly. But what of pronunciation as part of the on-going learning process? By incorporating and allocating time for lessons in pronunciation at an early stage as an integrated part of the learning process the children are exposed to all dimensions of the new language and not just parts of the language. True native-like proficiency is the command of all the components of the second language.

In the present study word manipulation was introduced through the repetition of the rhymes and words of the nonsense ABC. The purpose of introducing simple rhyming verses or rhyming chants audibly and visually was to arouse the interest of the children in Group A.
They learnt to recognize the division of words into smaller units of sound in activities which use Onset and Rhyme. The early acquisition of phonological and phonetical awareness could contribute to help develop proficient pronunciation at the earliest stage of learning, whilst offering improved results at later stages of language acquisition.

The questionnaire offered some insights into the children’s perception of the materials they were asked to work with for the duration the study. Group A, appreciated the fun element of the Rhymes in the nonsense ABC compendium. In fact, the children in Group B unconsciously went over to rhyme in order to try and understand and learn less familiar phoneme combinations, spontaneously creating nonsense words. This confirms to a certain degree that young children are aware and are susceptible to rhymes and rhyming words rather than trying to decode phonemes and syllables. This observation connects back to Michael Heyman’s discussion in, *The Original Interactive Multimedia Game – Edward Lear’s Literary Nonsense*, that children use their natural ability to decode neologisms. Deciphering nonsense language is an important part of language learning and children seem to create their own unique solutions to the problem of decoding language. This is part of the natural learning process when trying to make sense of the L1, and certainly possible to encourage in Second Language Acquisition.

6 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to incorporate Onset and Rhyme in the form of selected nonsense verses (written and illustrated in the nonsense ABC by Edward Lear) in order to specifically target and develop pronunciation skills in young ELL learners in Sweden. The method chosen was to actively encourage correct pronunciation through the use of phonetic sounds combinations repeated in the nonsense verses. These sounds effectively repeated the target consonant and vowel phoneme clusters in Onset-Rhyme. Nonsense words or pseudowords (words created for the purpose of practicing pronunciation, but have no lexical meaning) effectively illustrate sounds that are present in dictionary words. By constructing consonant phoneme clusters around one sound, it is possible to create new words (real and nonsense).

Language learners can practice pronunciation, whilst the fun element of the task promotes learning in other areas of language acquisition at same time. They learn to recognize a particular sound of the English language whilst recognizing words with the help of images. Children can take an active role in the learning situation, becoming increasingly aware of English phonology and phonetics at the earliest stage of their foreign language acquisition.
The young English language learners selected for this study were chosen according to their age and limited exposure to the English language in school settings. The experimental group, Group A consisted of mainly Swedish speaking pupils with an average age of 10 years old. The whole group used Swedish as their L1 and English as their L2 language. The participants in control Group B were slightly older (10-11), but because of the group’s ethnic and language constellation they were found to be at the same basic language level as their counterparts in the experimental Group A.

The participants in the study were asked to identify which language was their L1 and which language they considered to be their L2, L3 and so on (one the male testees spoke four languages making English his L5). Most of the non-Swedish pupils had North African or Middle Eastern language backgrounds and had resided in Sweden for a relatively short duration of time. They had limited exposure to Swedish (mainly in school) and almost no exposure to English in the home environment. Therefore, it was important to pin point plausible reasons for incorrect pronunciation of the target vocabulary.

It was observed at the meetings with Group B that the children spontaneously reverted to the use of rhyme having discovered that the sounds of the words did not correlate with the written words. They created new words (which were in fact nonsense words) to help them understand and deal with the unfamiliar phonetical sounds and pronunciation of the target nouns they were asked to learn from the simple vocabulary list. Although they were not instructed in any way or asked to rhyme or use nonsense words to aid pronunciation, their natural curiosity of language led to spontaneous rhyming in order to understand the phonetical structures of the target vocabulary.

It was anticipated that some of the target vocabulary offered to both groups would cause problems for the testees. The pronunciation test confirmed that the Onset -‘shr’- was easily mistaken for the Onset -‘thr’- by both groups. Although the differences in the results were relatively small, they indicated that the use of Onset-Rhyme had certain positive effects on Group A. Within the groups it seems that the girls fared slightly better in their knowledge of the target vocabulary they were asked to learn.

Gender, although not the main focus of this study, is an important factor to take into consideration when introducing young children to both a new language and teaching/learning methods of the target language. The girls in this study were able to concentrate on the tasks longer than boys. The results of the final test confirmed the initial observation made at
meeting 1. However, the Boys in group A did fare better than their counterparts in Group B. This indicates that the nonsense ABC could have also contributed to improve concentration as well as pronunciation in Group A. Because of the limited nature of the current study, it is not possible to categorically confirm how much the maturity of the testees according to gender impacted the children’s results. Further studies are needed in this area in order to re-embellish the results of this study.

It can be concluded that by utilizing natural learning instincts in young ELL learners, through the introduction and active use of the nonsense ABC and Onset-Rhyme, it is possible for learners to acquire basic phonetical and phonological skills to help them master English pronunciation at the earliest stage of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), helping to prevent language fossilization at a later stage of SLA. Effective prevention is more advantageous than the panacea, confirming that it is better to build a railing at the top of the cliff (i.e. fun and inter-active learning/teaching strategies at the beginner level). The nonsense ABC represents several of these learning elements. The cliff is the development of pronunciation skills, whilst the hospital at the bottom of the cliff metaphorically treats language casualties, such as trying to rectify errors in pronunciation at a later stage of Second language Acquisition with limited or no success (i.e. the general fossilization of L2 skills on more than one level).

Although, this study was limited in the number of hours and the number of participants, the results confirmed that the children in Group A, directly exposed to the rhymes of the nonsense ABC, fared better in the pronunciation test than the children in control Group B. There is, however, a need for other longitudinal studies which specifically study the development of pronunciation skills in young ELL students. Continued studies in this area of applied linguistics are necessary in order to compare the results of this study with the results of other studies, which involve larger groups of children and the use of similar study methods and test materials.
References


<http://jimflege.com/L2_reseach.html> (07-07-2011)

<www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/207099/fin-de-siecle> (17-05-2011)

Appendix 1

Selected verses of Edward Lear’s nonsense ABC (with target nouns) – used by Group A
E was once a little Eel,
Fisly
Fishy
Rely
Twilly, Twissy
Little Eel!

F was once a little Fish,
Fisly
Wishy
Squishy
Fishy
In a Bushy
Little Fish!

G was once a little Goose,
Gloomy
Moony
Bonny
Guoney
Waddly-wonny
Little Goose!

H was once a little Hen,
Henny
Clumny
Toony
Henny
Eggy-ony
Little Hen!

K was once a little Kink,
Kyu
Wishy
Nifty
Kiny
Our of Sighty—
Little Kink!

L was once a little Lark,
Larky
Marky
Harky
Larky
In the Parky
Little Lark!

M was once a little Mouse,
Munsey
Bonny
Sunny
Munsey
In the Housey
Little Mouse!

N was once a little Needle,
Needly
Twendly
Tendly
Needly
Wiskly-woolly
Little Needle!
Oo

O was once a little Owl,
Oxen
Pawly
Howly
Oxen
Brown-eyed Owl!

Pp

P was once a little Pussy,
Pawly
Shaggy
Flumply
Pawly
Dumpy, Thumply
Little Pussy!

Ss

S was once a little Shrimp,
Shrimpy
Nimpy
Flumply
Shrimpy
Jumpy-jumpy
Little Shrimp!

Tt

T was once a little Thrush,
Thrithy
Hushy
Pawly
Thrithy
Flurry, Hushy
Little Thrush!

Ww

W was once a Whale,
Whaly
Shaly
Whaly
Tumbly-naky
Mighty Whale!

Xx

X was once a great King Xerxes,
Xerry
Flurry
Terry
Lumpy-umpy
Great King Xerxes!
Appendix 2

Material provided to control group B based on the nonsense ABC - from *Complete Nonsense* by Edward Lear: Wordsworth Classics, 1994. The images are in black and white on the vocabulary offered to the children in Group B.

An apple-pie
A bear
A cake
A doll
A fish
A hen
A mouse
An owl

A rose
A shrimp
A thrush
A whale
A goose
A kite
A needle
Appendix 3a
A phonological table of the nouns used for the tasks and test.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phonetical Sounds</th>
<th>Syllables</th>
<th>Onset-Rhyme</th>
<th>Phonemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>æpl-pai</td>
<td>apple-pie</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>ie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>bear</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>ear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keık</td>
<td>cake</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>ake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d Ɩ</td>
<td>doll</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>oll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fi</td>
<td>fish</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>ish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hen</td>
<td>hen</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>en</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maus</td>
<td>mouse</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>ouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aul</td>
<td>owl</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>wl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r ʌs</td>
<td>rose</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>ose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rimp</td>
<td>shrimp</td>
<td>sh</td>
<td>rimp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>thrush</td>
<td>th</td>
<td>rush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weıl</td>
<td>whale</td>
<td>wh</td>
<td>ale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gu:s</td>
<td>goose</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>oose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kant</td>
<td>kite</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>ite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ni:dl</td>
<td>needle</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>eedle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3b

Table of likely speech errors in speakers of Arabic and Swedish (Danish and Norwegian). Adapted from *Introducing English Pronunciation* by Ann Baker (pp.138 and 151).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic: <strong>Vowels</strong></th>
<th>Swedish: <strong>Vowels</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ı(ship)</td>
<td>Confused with e (pen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>æ(man)</td>
<td>Confused with (cup) or : (heart)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(camera) Pronounce as spelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ı (tail)</td>
<td>Confused with e (pen) or ai (fine)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ù (phone)</td>
<td>Confused with : (ball) or (girl)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>: (ball)</td>
<td>Too short or confused with ù (phone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u:</td>
<td>Confused with ù (book)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(bear)</td>
<td>Confused with ı: (sheep)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ı</td>
<td>Pronounced as spelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ai (fine) Final ı sound too long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ı (boy) Final ı sound too long</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic: <strong>Consonants</strong></th>
<th>Swedish: <strong>Consonants</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>Sounds close to b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>Strongly trilled, normally silent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w</td>
<td>Pronounced v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(thin)</td>
<td>The sound does exist in classical Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ð (feather)</td>
<td>The sound does exist in classical Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v</td>
<td>Pronounced as f or b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>Confused with k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(television)</td>
<td>Pronounced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>η (ring)</td>
<td>Pronounced ηg or ηk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t  (cherry)</td>
<td>May be pronounced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>Maybe pronounced t in final position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d  (jam)</td>
<td>Confused with j (yellow)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>z</td>
<td>May be pronounced s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Experiment Group A: Swedish (L1)

Control Group B: The children speak pre-dominantly Arabic (L1); others Swedish (L1)
Appendix 4

**Word and Image test**

Final test section 1 administered to both the experimental and the control group, Group A and Group B. (the images are printed in black and white)

Group B: Score………. / 15 (one point for correct answer)

Information about the testee:

Are you a girl or a boy?  
[ ] Girl  [ ] Boy

How old are you?  
[ ]

**Draw a neat line to the correct word**

- A doll  
- An owl
- A kite  
- A mouse
- A needle  
- A rose
- An apple-pie  
- A hen
- A bear  
- A thrush
- A cake  
- A whale
- A fish
- A goose  
- A shrimp
Appendix 5
Final test section 2 - **Pronunciation**, for Group A and B  (Results and Score Chart)

Boy ☐  Girl ☐  Age ☐

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>correct</th>
<th>incorrect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An apple-pie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A bear</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A cake</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A doll</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A fish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A hen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Mouse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An owl</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A rose</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A shrimp</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A thrush</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A whale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A goose</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A kite</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A needle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scores ....../15
Appendix 6a: English version of the questionnaire. An evaluation of the children’s attitudes toward the method and test materials used the study.

English version

Questionnaire to Group A och Group B

Did you like the words?

Were the words fun to learn?

Did you practice the sounds of the words?

Is it difficult to speak English?

Was the test difficult?

Thank you for helping me!
Appendix 6b: Swedish version of the questionnaire. En utvärdering av barnens attityd gällande arbets- och testmaterial.

Svensk version
Utvärderingsfrågor till Grupp A och Grupp B

Tyckte du om orden?

Var det roligt att lära dig orden?

Övade du på uttalet av orden?

Är det svårt att uttala engelska ord?

Tyckte du att testet var svårt?

Tack för hjälpen!