USING SHADOWING TECHNIQUE TO IMPROVE 7TH_ GRADE STUDENTS' ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION. A METHODOLOGY

USO DE LA TÉCNICA SHADOWING PARA MEJORAR LA PRONUNCIACIÓN EN INGLÉS DE LOS ESTUDIANTES DE 7º GRADO. UNA METODOLOGÍA

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Using Shadowing Technique to Improve 7th_ Grade Students' English Pronunciation. A Methodology

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ABSTRACT

Correct English pronunciation is essential when communicating for international academic exchange, business, education, etc. In foreign language teaching, one of the elements of the oral skill that should be taught in lessons is pronunciation. In Ecuador, though, there is always a call to improve the students' acquisition of their oral communicative competence, the students at different levels of education show deficiencies in pronunciation. Different reasons limit its development like lack of teachers' motivation, preparation, time to teach it, effective teaching materials, media, and, techniques to be employed. One technique that can be used by teachers to enhance pronunciation is the shadowing technique. In this article, the results of the research developed by the author are presented and explained. This study was carried out to corroborate the feasibility of the application of a methodology for the improvement of 7th- grade students' English pronunciation at Flavio Alfaro # 52 Junior High School in Flavio Alfaro Canton, through the triangulation of the quantitative and qualitative results of an experiment in a class of 25 students, and questionnaire. This methodology containing four stages took into account the student's previous knowledge and learning styles and its results showed that after the post-test, 72% of the students increased their grades. These results confirmed the effectiveness of the proposed methodology that uses the shadowing technique in the English lessons to favor the development of the 7th-grade English pronunciation.

Keywords: english foreign language teaching, oral communication, pronunciation

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Uso de la Técnica Shadowing para Mejorar la Pronunciación en Inglés de los Estudiantes de 7º Grado. Una Metodología

RESUMEN

La pronunciación correcta del inglés es esencial cuando se comunica para intercambios académicos internacionales, negocios, educación, etc. En la enseñanza de idiomas extranjeros, uno de los elementos de la habilidad oral que se debe enseñar en las lecciones es la pronunciación. En Ecuador, sin embargo, siempre hay un llamado a mejorar la adquisición de la competencia comunicativa oral por parte de los estudiantes, los estudiantes en los diferentes niveles educativos presentan deficiencias en la pronunciación. Diferentes razones limitan su desarrollo como la falta de motivación de los docentes, preparación, tiempo para enseñarlo, materiales didácticos efectivos, medios y técnicas a emplear. Una técnica que pueden utilizar los profesores para mejorar la pronunciación es la técnica de sombra. En este artículo se presentan y explican los resultados de la investigación desarrollada por el autor. Este estudio se realizó con el fin de corroborar la factibilidad de la aplicación de una metodología para el mejoramiento de la pronunciación del idioma inglés en los estudiantes de 7mo grado de la Secundaria Flavio Alfaro #52 del Cantón Flavio Alfaro, a través de la triangulación de los resultados cuantitativos y cualitativos de un experimento. en una clase de 25 alumnos, y cuestionario. Esta metodología de cuatro etapas tuvo en cuenta los conocimientos previos y los estilos de aprendizaje de los estudiantes y sus resultados mostraron que después de la prueba posterior, el 72% de los estudiantes aumentaron sus calificaciones. Estos resultados confirmaron la efectividad de la metodología propuesta que utiliza la técnica del shadowing en las lecciones de inglés para favorecer el desarrollo de la pronunciación del inglés de 7mo grado.

Palabras clave: enseñanza de inglés como lengua extranjera, comunicación oral, pronunciación

INTRODUCTION

English is a universal language spoken in many countries worldwide. People from different countries and languages use it to communicate with each other, learn about cultures, to be able to explore, discover and acquire new knowledge for their self-training, for attending international conferences, business, education, etc.

As Lobachova (2020) said the Council of Europe has developed currently a directive to establish the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, which aims to provide an assessment and a teaching method that applies to all European languages and changes in the education system should be derived from its introduction like self-development of the individual, self-education and self-realization, and lifelong learning, among others. Various countries all over the world are putting into practice these directives.

Teaching a foreign language involves the development of oral communication, listening, and reading comprehension, as well as writing skills. Within oral communication, the teaching of pronunciation is of great significance.

Pronunciation is an important component of successful oral communication (Jones, 2018). Similarly, correct pronunciation helps the learners understand what the speaker says easily (Ulfa & Fatimah, 2019).

According to Aprianoto & Haerazi (2019), pronunciation is a crucial aspect of speaking and it gives a significant effect on determining the utterance's meaning.

As Salim & Narasima (2020) consider the accuracy of pronouncing English words determines the appropriate meaning the interlocutor perceives it; that is why, pronunciation should be taught in effective ways which provide a good atmosphere in the classroom, for the students to learn English without tension.

Various studies have been made in different countries. Martinsen, et al (2017) found that students' skills in pronouncing words were low since there is a lack of getting exercise in pronunciation, and a lack of interest in learning because the teaching and learning process was monotonous and teachers think that students can reach correct pronunciation autodidactically.

On their side, Ulfa & Fatimah (2019) think that the first obstacle in learning correct pronunciation is that teacher finds that he/she does not have enough time in class to teach pronunciation and the material and media from the learning topic are boring and unrelated so the students' interest and attention to the lesson are lost.

One of the ways to improve students' pronunciation is by using the shadowing technique. According to Lambert (1988, p.266) as cited in Hamada (2016:36) states shadowing is "a paced, auditory tracking task which involves the immediate vocalization of auditory presented stimuli, i.e. word-for-word repetition in the same language, parrot-style".

Shadowing was introduced to foreign language teaching in the 1990s and since then it has been researched in EFL teaching contexts. Shadowing has been used as a listening task, and its effectiveness in listening comprehension has been acknowledged. However, its effect on pronunciation development remains unclear (Hamada, 2016).

In Ecuador, students have difficulties when pronouncing the English language at schools and limitations like the ones analyzed before, are also found here. A diagnosis was applied and it confirmed that there are difficulties in 7th- grade students' English pronunciation. The problem described above allowed the formulation of the scientific question: How to favor the development of the 7th -grade students' English pronunciation at Flavio Alfaro # 52 Junior High School in Flavio Alfaro Canton through the use of the shadowing technique?

Therefore, the objective was the following: To elaborate a methodology for improving the 7th- grade students' English pronunciation at Flavio Alfaro # 52 Junior High School in Flavio Alfaro Canton that introduces the shadowing technique and departs from the diagnosis of those students' previous knowledge and learning styles.

In this paper, the researcher presents the results of this research in which she applied the triangulation principle to qualitative and quantitative results of different methods and techniques and it was carried out to determine the effectiveness of the implementation of that methodology. The methodology is relevant since it introduces the shadowing technique to the teaching of pronunciation and takes into account the diagnosis of those students' previous knowledge and learning styles so that the diversity of students in the classroom is given special attention.

This article is organized as follows: Introduction where the components or variables are described, and the relationship between them is established, research or works related to the proposed topic are described, the problem, the objective, and a summary of the methodology are stated; in the Materials and Methods section the information and the treatment given to the data are detailed; in the Results section the data obtained are analyzed to finally establish the discussion and the conclusions of the topic.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The mixed research method was employed with a population of (192 students) 7th grade students from Flavio Alfaro # 52 Junior High School in Flavio Alfaro Canton, and a sample of 25 pupils for the experiment. In developing the research, this investigator employed different methods and techniques; below they are exposed and explained:

Assessment of the application of expert judgment method

The experience that is going to be presented here has its antecedents, as previously stated, in Ulfa and Fatimah, (2019) exercise, though, from it, only the procedures that are convenient for the context in Ecuador are taken.

In its initial conception, for the empirical evaluation of the methodology, the expert judgment method was applied, seeking consensus among experts on it, to ensure success in its introduction in the social practice in Ecuador. Here, the survey for the consultation of experts was sent to a total of 36 specialists, with experience in the field of teaching, related to the English language at junior and high schools, as well as universities, in several provinces in Ecuador with the inclusion of Cuban Specialists teaching at various institutions, in Ecuador, but only 27 were considered experts since their coefficient levels were greater than or equal to 0.80. Of the experts selected, 48% are Ph.D., Masters 38% and14% specialists with an average of 20 years of experience in teaching English.

Afterward, the statistical processing of the results from the consultation of the experts was carried out, calculating the observed frequency matrix, where the opinions of experts on the issue under their valuation were quantified. Then, it went on to determine the cumulative frequency matrix, and cumulative relative frequency matrix, which was the value array abscissa, to finally determine the cutoff

points that determine each of the categories in the given intervals: VR (Very Relevant), QR (Quite Relevant), R (Relevant), LR (Less Relevant) and NR (Not Relevant).

Table 1. Observed Frequency Matrix

STAGES	VR	QR	R	LR	NR	TOTAL
Diagnosis	15	9	2	1	0	27
Preparation	10	10	6	1	0	27
Implementation	18	8	1	0	0	27
Assessment	16	9	2	0	0	27

Table 2. Cumulative Frequency Matrix

Stages	VR	QR	R	LR	NR
Diagnosis	15	24	26	27	27
Preparation	10	20	26	27	27
Implementation	18	26	27	27	27
Assessment	16	25	27	27	27

Table 3. Cumulative Frequencies Matrix (ODDS)

Stages	VR	QR	R	LR	NR
Diagnosis	0.56	0.89	0.96	1.00	1.00
Preparation	0.37	0.74	0.96	1.00	1.00
Implementation	0.67	0.96	1.00	1.00	1.00
Assessment	0.59	0.93	1.00	1.00	1.00

Table 4. Matrix Value Abscissa

Stages	VR	QR	R	LR	SUM	Average	Scale
Diagnosis	0.14	1.22	1.79	3.00	6.15	1.537	0.160
Preparation	-0.33	0.65	1.79	3.00	5.10	1.275	0.421
Implementation	0.43	1.79	3.00	3.00	8.22	2.054	-0.358
Assessment	0.23	1.45	3.00	3.00	7.68	1.920	-0.224
Sum	0.47	5.10	9.57	12.00	27.14		
Limits	0.12	1.27	2.39	3.00	6.79	1.697	

As it can be observed the scale values of stages 1 and 2 are placed in the second interval (QR) and stages 3 and 4 in the first interval (VR), as it is shown in the graphic below:

		1,14		2,08		3,00	
VR		**QR**	**R**		**LR**		**NR**
3&4		**1&2**					
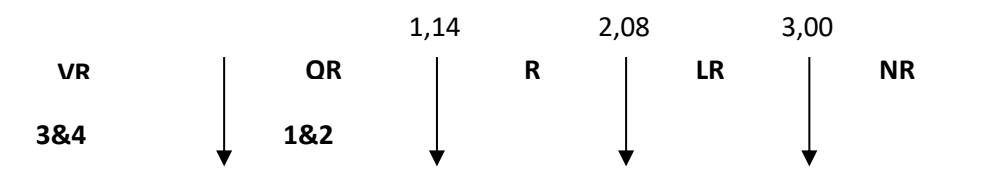
Group Discussion

A group discussion was carried out to determine the possibilities of implementing the methodology in the teaching and learning process of English 7th grade at Ecuadorian junior high schools with teachers of schools in Flavio Alfaro Canton. The teachers' main concerns were related to their preparation for applying the shadowing technique and the diagnosis of the student's learning styles, the required media for listening to the materials and for recording the students' repetition, as well as, the organization of the activities out and during the lessons.

Description of the pre-experiment and analysis of its results

In this section, the qualitative and quantitative results of the application of the methodology are presented.

Pre-experiment realization

The pre-experiment was developed at Flavio Alfaro # 52 Junior High School in Flavio Alfaro Canton to corroborate the effectiveness of the application of the methodology using the shadowing technique to improve the 7th- grade students' pronunciation of English, during the last academic year.

The pre-test is an initial reference point that enables the researcher to know the development of the learners' pronunciation in English before submitting it to treatment with the new methodology. This also showed how the oral communicative competence of the learners evolved to the final measurement or post-test, both in the same group.

Pre-experiment sample analysis

The pre-experiment was developed in 2022 at Flavio Alfaro # 52 Junior High School in Flavio Alfaro Canton. The group had been already formed naturally with 31 students; however, the total sample was 25 learners, since the first day of lessons 6 students were absent because of different reasons, so when

the final test was applied though all the students were present, those 6 students' evaluation was disregarded.

Application of the initial diagnosis

Before the implementation of the methodology, the researcher applied a questionnaire to students to know if they like to study English and some questions about very general personal information; they were asked to them in English first and, then, in Spanish, for them to answer in English or Spanish (at least to know if they understood), among other aspects.

Pre-test

The pre-test was applied on the first day of the lesson. An activity in which the students had to use the shadowing technique was employed, to determine their level of oral communicative competence emphasizing pronunciation. During a time out of the lesson, they have explained the use of that technique.

In assessing the performance of the 7th- grade students of English at Flavio Alfaro # 52 Junior High School in Flavio Alfaro Canton in the pre-test, it was noted that the current level of their communicative competence in English was very limited. They had difficulties not only in accuracy but also in fluency, intonation, and pronunciation of various sounds.

Application of the methodology

It was observed during the Implementation Stage how learners employed the shadowing technique progressively and that the pronunciation elements were improving step by step in the majority of the students. Their motivation for the activities was increasing and awareness of their difficulties was greater (metacognition was present).

Post-test

To determine the effectiveness of the methodology, a post-test or final measurement was applied, through activities of the same type as the ones applied during the period of application of the methodology, developed and assigned to the students according to the student's previous knowledge and learning styles whether visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, etc. The results and the changes noted are presented in the explanation below.

Assessment of the results

From the pre-experiments of the intact group at Flavio Alfaro # 52 Junior High School in Flavio Alfaro Canton, with a pre-test and a post-test, the level of change of each learner was analyzed, establishing a number (2) for those that increased their rating, a number (0) for those that decreased their qualification and (1) for those who maintained their rating.

Results of the pre-experiment

Table 5

Learner	Pretest	Postest
1	1	2
2	1	0
3	1	2
4	1	2
5	1	2
6	1	0
7	1	0
8	1	2
9	1	1
10	1	2
11	1	1
12	1	2
13	1	2
14	1	2
15	1	2
16	1	1
17	1	1
18	1	2
19	1	2
20	1	2
21	1	2
22	1	2
23	1	2
24	1	2
25	1	2

Concerning the pre-experiment at Flavio Alfaro Institution, in tabulating the amount for each number it took the following results:

Table 6

Quantity	Numbers
18	2
4	1
3	0

When analyzing the results of the introduction of the methodology in its different stages, in the teaching and learning process of English in 7th grade, it can be stated that it contributes to the improvement of the pronunciation of the students, since the students' previous knowledge and learning styles were taken into consideration.

Learners' questionnaire after the application of the methodology

For these researchers the opinions of the students are of great value; that is why a questionnaire was applied to 87% of the sample in the group (22 learners) with the general purpose of knowing their expectations at the end of the application of the methodology, as well as, their opinions on the degree of oral communicative particularly in pronunciation. Aspects like the following were asked also:

- Topics and types of materials used (whether videos or audios, dialogs or monologues).
- If they like to continue learning English in the same way (using those activities they said they preferred, being assisted by their classmates in groups or by the teacher).

The majority of the learners expressed their satisfaction with the new way of teaching. Furthermore, they stated that they were feeling that their pronunciation level was better

Summing up, it can be stated that, qualitatively and quantitatively, the changes appreciated by applying the methodology are evident in better pronunciation way.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The main result of the research presented here was the elaboration of a methodology to implement the shadowing technique to improve 7th -grade students' English pronunciation and consider the student's previous knowledge and learning styles.

A methodology as a practical contribution is a way to achieve a goal, a group of procedures or stages that order the activity leading to attain that goal.

The methodology to present here has the main objective to serve as a methodological guide for the application of the shadowing technique to improve the 7th -grade students' pronunciation of English at Flavio Alfaro # 52 Junior High School in Flavio Alfaro Canton.

This methodology guides the teacher in his/her teaching activity and shows that s/he can work in another way, the student is the center of the process while the teacher is a facilitator, a guide, a helper, and an evaluator. The methodology, directed to teachers for their educational assistance to the 7th grade English language students, should not be considered as something rigid and imposed, changes, and adaptations can be done according to the needs of the students.

Foundation of the methodology

The basis of this methodology is found in previous studies developed in many parts of the world, especially in Asia about the use of the shadowing technique for pronunciation and the procedures Ulfa and Fatimah, (2019) put into practice.

From the theoretical point of view, for this methodology considering the students' needs analysis is very important. Furthermore, the theory of learning styles and the classification of students following their styles closely related to their types of intelligence is crucial for this proposal. Attention to the diversity of students derived from the student's needs and learning styles is at the center of the methodology; so the humanistic paradigm support is part of its foundation.

In addition, the historic and cultural paradigm is also part of the basis of the methodology since "Vygotsky perceived the skills that a learner is close to mastering as being in the "Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)" which can be achieved with guidance and encouragement from a skilled partner" (Alexandrowicz, 2021, p. 110). In the proposal, the guidance and support of the skilled teacher and partner, in or out of the classroom is manifested too.

Stages of the methodology for the application of the shadowing technique to improve 7th - grade students' pronunciation of English

1-Diagnosis Stage

Out of the lesson time:

On one hand, the teacher has to determine the media at his/her disposal and the students' technological competencies, in case different media could be used.

The teaching media at their disposal could be of different types: projectors, speakers, TV sets, tape recorders, types of telephones the teacher and students have and their applications, and portable speakers, among others. In the case of using Smartphones, for example, if not all the students have them the teacher should organize the activities, in the classroom or out of it, to have them working in pairs or groups.

On the other hand, the teacher has to determine the students' previous knowledge regarding the English language they bring with them from the previous levels, and the type of teaching materials they prefer whether audio or videos or dialogs or monologs (this could be done, for example) through questions and answers in a group or individual interview).

About their learning styles, the teacher has to diagnose their learning styles to know the types of students s/he has in her/his classroom mainly if they are auditory learners or visual learners to select the material to work with: an audio or a video (test to determine learners' learning styles can be found in the internet; maybe adaptations to the context and the student's age should be done) for differentiated or personalized teaching.

This author agrees with Ulfa & Fatimah (2019) when they suggested that the teacher before implementing the shadowing technique should prepare the audio based on student's ability level. The teacher can get the audio on the internet or she can make the audio in audio maker software by herself and for the video, she can get them by downloading them on YouTube or by making the video-on-video maker. The video and audio the teacher prepares must be clear for the students because if it is not clear students will not catch what the speaker says and the use of the shadowing technique will fail. Audio and videos of different speeds should be selected but not too slow, different from the way we normally speak.

2- Preparation Stage

In this stage, the teacher explains the characteristics of the application of the shadowing technique, as well as its purpose.

The teacher, in time out of the lesson, has to introduce clearly and simply, the more difficult sounds they are going to find in the English words they are going to find and their corresponding graphemes, the intonation patterns, stress, rhythm, etc. (using words, phrases and short sentences from their previous studies of English at primary school, because they don't have it in Spanish. This activity should be brief and motivating for the learners.

3- Implementation Stage

In the case of the pre-experiment at Flavio Alfaro # 52 Junior High School in Flavio Alfaro Canton, the teacher used a projector, speakers, and sometimes a tape recorder and/or her phone to record students' repetition when using the shadowing technique.

Students listen and repeat at the same time or make pauses and repeat after them; this is the first time they are practicing this technique. They should repeat 2 or 3 times the same text, then use another one in the next lesson.

Recording your repetitions helps them learn from their mistakes and identify what is difficult for them. The teacher calls students to focus on the most challenging aspects of pronunciation, whether specific sounds, intonation, rhythm, or stress. This provides feedback to the students on how they are doing it.

This author is likewise in line with Ulfa & Fatimah (2019) when they considered that if students practice pronunciation at school, house, and at the workplace they students will be ready to feel more confident and, that is why, in this methodology activities to be developed at home when possible are also suggested, during 5 to 15 minutes, 5 times a week.

In this stage the teacher should orient for the students' private study some other shadowing activities, maybe to practice individually or in pairs and, if possible, to have them recorded; this can be checked during the next lesson time or in case it is possible to send their recordings to the teacher and to some other students to debate in the lesson time or out of it.

4- Assessment Stage

Assessment should be present all through the application of the methodology and all through each lesson, i.e., all through the process. What is more, assessment and evaluation should be seen as a process and not as a final result, a process of self-assessment, peer assessment, and group assessment should be considered.

CONCLUSIONS

To achieve good pronunciation, a student should learn and practice continuously with a good instructional method and good techniques. The shadowing technique has proven important effects in improving students' understanding of listening, speaking, and pronunciation. Hence, this technique should be applied during the whole process of learning English for the achievement of fluency in English.

With the employment of the methodology to favor the 7th– grade students at Flavio Alfaro # 52 Junior High School in Flavio Alfaro Canton, not only the students' pronunciation was improved but also their imitation ability, phonological coding and speech perception, their vocabulary, and comprehension of texts, their listening skills, memory abilities and above all their motivation towards the study of English. Students' individual prior knowledge, and individual preferred ways of learning were stimulated and their communicative competence progressed.

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