

Universidad Hispanoamericana

Faculty of Education

THESIS SUBMITTED TO OBTAIN THE LICENTIATE DEGREE IN ENGLISH TEACHING

**THE APPLICATION OF THE SHADOWING TECHNIQUE THROUGH  
THE AUDIO-LINGUAL APPROACH USING AI TEXT-TO-SPEECH  
PLATFORM TO IMPROVE PRONUNCIATION OF CONTENT AND  
FUNCTION WORDS IN STUDENTS AGED 17 TO 20 AT CENTRO  
PANAMERICANO DE IDIOMAS IN THE III QUARTER 2024**

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December 2024

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He revisado y he hecho las observaciones relativas al contenido analizado, particularmente lo relativo a la coherencia entre el marco teórico y análisis de datos, la consistencia de los datos recopilados y la coherencia entre éstos y las conclusiones; asimismo, la aplicabilidad y originalidad de las recomendaciones, en términos de aporte de la investigación. He verificado que se han hecho las modificaciones correspondientes a las observaciones indicadas.

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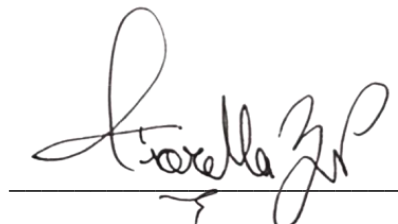
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First of all, I wish to dedicate this thesis to the ones who taught me the importance of pursuing a professional career and the beauty of working as a teacher: my parents, Jorge Zúñiga and Floribeth Vega. Completing my studies would not have been possible without the love and hard work they have dedicated to me. Mom and Dad, I am deeply grateful. You have both been such an inspiration to me, and I love you more than words can express.

I would also like to dedicate my work to my friends (the mafious) and family, who have shown their encouragement, admiration and joy for my growth as an English teacher.

To my boyfriend, Chris, who has been my greatest support and motivation during my college studies and throughout this process. I love you with all my heart.

Finally, to my dear chihuahuas: my angel Scott, my boy Puppy, and my little girl Chloe, who were beside me during every virtual class, project presentation, tutoring session, and my oral defense. In moments of concern, stress, and nervousness, they made sure to offer their warmth company even if it was full of constant barks.

This is for all of you, with love and tears,

Fio

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first like to acknowledge myself for my effort, dedication and performance throughout this process. I'm a very dedicated person who always strives to give the best of herself. Thanks to this, I have been able to conduct valuable research of my own authorship. Looking back, I would never have imagined that I could achieve it.

I want to express my gratitude to my professors:

- Yorlery González, who instructed me in the research methods and directed research courses. Through her guidance, I not only learned the importance of research but also how to conduct it correctly.
- Ronald Lobo, who has offered his support, advice and instruction throughout my studies and during this process.
- Adriana Apuy, who was not only my tutor guiding me to perfect my thesis, but also my teacher in various courses. From her, I learned many valuable and fascinating things that I have been able to apply in my profession.

These professors are among the best at Universidad Hispanoamericana, and I feel so lucky to have learned from them.

I also extend my thanks to Centro Panamericano de Idiomas for allowing me to conduct the research at their institution. This was made possible through the support of the coordinator Edson Calderon, the coordinator assistant Justin Méndez, the teachers Valeria Brenes and Henry Vargas, and of course the participant groups B1, A1-2, and B2 whose cooperation was invaluable to carrying out the investigation.

## ABSTRACT

The present investigation aims to analyze the impact of applying a language learning technique called Shadowing through Play HT an AI text-to-speech platform, to improve pronunciation of content and function words in students at Centro Panamericano de Idiomas. The research was conducted with thirteen students from three groups (A1-2, A2+, and B2).

An observation, interviews, and a survey were carried out to gather the data required for the research, including the pronunciation skills the students presented before the application of Shadowing, the teachers' experience and perspective towards the technique and students' performance, and students' opinions regarding the Play HT platform and Shadowing technique in improving pronunciation.

The findings revealed that students did not accurately intonate content and function words before the intervention process. However, according to the teachers, after the Shadowing session, students demonstrated a significant improvement in the intonation of content and function words.

The investigation concluded that the Shadowing Technique through Play HT can have a significant impact in improving student's pronunciation skills and that it can be an effective method for teaching English as a second language.

## RESUMEN

La presente investigación tiene como objetivo analizar el impacto de la aplicación de una técnica de aprendizaje de idiomas denominada Shadowing a través de Play HT una plataforma de texto a voz con inteligencia artificial, para mejorar la pronunciación de palabras de contenido y función en estudiantes del Centro Panamericano de Idiomas. La investigación se realizó con trece estudiantes de tres grupos (A1-2, A2+ y B2).

Se llevó a cabo una observación, entrevistas y una encuesta para recopilar los datos necesarios para la investigación, incluyendo las habilidades de pronunciación que los estudiantes presentaban antes de la aplicación del Shadowing, la experiencia y perspectiva de los profesores hacia la técnica y el rendimiento de los estudiantes, y las opiniones de los estudiantes con respecto a la plataforma Play HT y la técnica del Shadowing en la mejora de la pronunciación.

Los resultados revelaron que los alumnos no entonaban con precisión palabras de contenido y de función antes del proceso de intervención. Sin embargo, según los profesores, después de la sesión de Shadowing, los alumnos demostraron una mejora significativa en la entonación de palabras de contenido y de función.

La investigación llegó a la conclusión de que la técnica de Shadowing a través de Play HT puede tener un impacto significativo en la mejora de las habilidades de pronunciación de los estudiantes y que puede ser un método eficaz para la enseñanza del inglés como segunda lengua.

## **CHAPTER I: RESEARCH PROBLEM**

## **1.1 THE APPLICATION OF THE SHADOWING TECHNIQUE THROUGH THE AUDIO-LINGUAL APPROACH USING AI TEXT-TO-SPEECH PLATFORM TO IMPROVE PRONUNCIATION OF CONTENT AND FUNCTION WORDS IN STUDENTS AGED 17 TO 20 AT CENTRO PANAMERICANO DE IDIOMAS IN THE III QUARTER 2024**

For most students developing speaking skills effectively represents a challenge since it involves a variety of numerous skills such as: connotation, denotation, grammar, phonetics, vocabulary, etc. For that reason, speaking skills is so much more than producing the language knowledge orally because it requires a lot of practice and dedication in order to communicate successfully. Jaya et. al. (2022) highlighted some of the issues English Second Language (ESL) students struggle with when trying to speak:

The factors causing the speaking problems are lack of general knowledge, lack of speaking practice, fear of mistake, lack of words usage and grammar practice, low motivation, low participation, reading laziness, shyness, less dictionary usage, nervousness, fear of criticism, and unfamiliar words pronunciation. (Jaya et al., 2022, p. 1)

The reason behind these factors hindering the student's oral performance is usually due to the constant application of traditional teaching methods which are defined as Teacher-Centered Methodologies where the professor is the only source of information with little or non-existent student's participation. When it comes to the English language, these methods are only focused on receptive skills like listening and reading causing a level of difficulty whenever the students have to produce the language orally because of the lack of practice. Nistor. (2023) supports this information in:

Students' ability to speak successfully in real-life settings may be hampered by a curriculum that only emphasizes grammar and rote memorization. Because speaking and listening skills may not have been prioritized in traditional teaching techniques, students may find it difficult to apply what they have learned in interpersonal interactions. Repetitive exercises and teacher-centered education can make students bored and disengaged, which lowers their drive to learn. (Nistor, 2023. Para. 6)

In consequence of the little practice students can have with traditional teaching methods is that features of the speaking performance such as pronunciation are rarely taken into consideration when studying the language, the lesson may just cover vocabulary and structure to make correct sentences but no training of English phonetics, phonology, and prosody.

This is a problem because proper pronunciation is paramount for effective communication not just for language competence appearance. Incorrect pronunciation can cause misunderstandings, hindering the exchange of information and ideas. Some errors, though they may seem minor, can disrupt conversations and lead to communication breakdowns.

Therefore, is necessary to focus the English instruction with updated methodologies that allows the application of production skills enabling ESL students to express in a comprehensible and confident way where pronunciation is not a barrier for communication. As a result, the teaching of prosody through innovative techniques like Shadowing that focuses on listening and imitate what someone else's said turns out to be a good alternative since according to "All About Prosody" (2022) "Students need to develop strong prosodic skills because this is what helps them convey a meaning when they speak. In addition, good prosody can make their speech more intelligible to others." (para. 2).

Thus, when students struggle with pronunciation skills due to lack of English exposure and traditional language teaching methods, the Shadowing Technique along with prosody instruction can be an effective solution for all English as a Second Language (ESL) learners that are looking to enhance their pronunciation.

### **1.1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM**

There is an investigation performed by Anggraini in 2022 where the use of the app ELSA Speak was used. The research addresses the persistent challenges faced in teaching pronunciation within Indonesian classrooms. Despite the importance of pronunciation in second language acquisition, both teachers and students encounter numerous difficulties that hinder effective learning.

Anggraini identifies several key issues: a general lack of interest in pronunciation among students, insufficient practical pronunciation skills among teachers, and limited classroom time for practicing pronunciation. In Indonesia, where English is not the primary language, teachers often struggle with pronunciation themselves due to their uncommon use of English outside the classroom.

This leads to a situation where students receive inadequate pronunciation modeling and have limited opportunities to practice and improve. To cope with these challenges, Anggraini presents the ELSA Speak application, a technological tool designed to improve pronunciation skills. The study is conducted with 30 students at the Basic class level in the Easy English Course (EEC) in Indonesia.

The research employs a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, which incorporates qualitative and quantitative methods to comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness of the application. This mixed-methods approach includes cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection, ensuring a comprehensive analysis of the intervention.

Initially, the researcher plans lessons incorporating the ELSA Speak application, designing teaching methods to integrate the use of the application. During the action phase, the app is used in the classroom and student engagement and progress is closely observed. Observational data, questionnaires, pre- and post-tests are used to collect data on learners'

pronunciation skills and their perception of the app. The study also includes interviews with a subgroup of students to delve deeper into their experiences with ELSA Speak.

Throughout the study, Anggraini conducts three learning cycles, each consisting of three meetings. In the first cycle, students' average pronunciation test scores increased from 60 to 70, demonstrating an initial improvement in their skills. The second cycle saw further progress, with average scores rising to 75. By the third cycle, the students' scores reached an average of 80, indicating significant and consistent improvement across all cycles. The findings from interviews and questionnaires reveal that students perceive the ELSA Speak Application positively. They appreciate the app's ability to provide immediate corrections and feedback, which helps them refine their pronunciation in real-time.

Based on these results, Anggraini concludes that the ELSA Speak application is a valuable tool for improving students' pronunciation skills. The application not only enhances students' abilities but also fosters greater motivation and independence in learning. The study suggests that integrating such technological tools into language teaching can significantly benefit students by providing practical, real-time feedback and engaging learning experiences.

The thesis recommends that teachers incorporate the ELSA Speak application into their pronunciation lessons to leverage its benefits. It also suggests that schools provide training for teachers on using such technology effectively. Additionally, future research should explore the long-term impacts of using pronunciation apps and their potential integration with other language skills and educational technologies.

In 2023, Rodríguez Viteri from Universidad Tecnica de Ambato conducted research called: "The Shadowing Technique in the improvement of the oral production skills in adults". The research delves into enhancing English speaking skills using an innovative method known as the Shadowing Technique. This study addresses a critical issue: many students struggle to speak English fluently due to poor teaching methods, limited practice, and insufficient focus on practical speaking skills. This problem is particularly evident in the population studied, where students often fail to express themselves effectively in daily situations.

The main objective of this research was to analyze the impact of the Shadowing Technique on adult students' oral production skills. The study focuses on students from the CTT program at the Andes Language Center, which aims to enhance foreign language learning across various fields of study.

The specific objectives were:

- To identify the benefits of the Shadowing technique in learning English as a Second Language.
- To determine the initial level of students' oral production skills.
- To design and implement Shadowing activities to enhance students' speaking abilities.
- To evaluate the effects of the Shadowing technique on these skills.

To measure the effectiveness of the Shadowing Technique, she used the Cambridge Key English Test (KET). This test assesses students' abilities to understand and use simple phrases, answer basic questions, and communicate effectively in basic scenarios. The pretest focuses on the topic of eating, while the posttest covers vacations. Each test consists of two parts: a brief personal interview and a paired discussion on the given topic.

The evaluation criteria include three subskills:

- 1 Grammar and Vocabulary: Assessed on a scale from 0 to 5, where a score of 5 indicates good control of simple grammatical forms and adequate vocabulary use.
- 2 Pronunciation: A score of 5 implies clear and intelligible speech.
- 3 Interactive Communication: A score of 5 denotes effective participation in simple exchanges with minimal prompting.

The study involves two groups: an experimental group of 28 students who use Shadowing technique and a control group of 31 students who do not. The results were re analyzed by comparing pretest and posttest scores to determine the technique's impact.

The experimental group's pretest average score was 6.7, with a maximum of 9.67 and a minimum of 0.00. Posttest scores showed improvement, with an average of 7.7, a high of 10.00, and a low of 5. The standard deviation, indicating score variability, decreased from 1.71 in the pretest to 1.34 in the posttest, suggesting more consistent performance after the intervention.

In contrast, the control group showed minimal improvement, with pretest and posttest averages of 7.07 and 7.19, respectively. The standard deviation remained nearly unchanged, highlighting no significant progress without the Shadowing technique.

The experimental group showed a notable improvement in pronunciation, with scores increasing from 1.50 in the pretest to 2.25 in the posttest. Grammar and vocabulary scores remained stable at 2.00, while interactive communication slightly increased from 1.86 to 1.93.

Throughout the 12 Shadowing activities, students' performance consistently improved, with average scores rising from 4.76 in the first activity to 7.95 in the final one. This trend demonstrates the technique's effectiveness in enhancing speaking skills over time.

The study concluded that the Shadowing Technique significantly improves speaking skills, especially pronunciation, by providing practice that helps students articulate sounds naturally. The technique also enhances vocabulary, listening skills, and intonation. The positive changes in the experimental group, compared to the control group, highlight Shadowing's effectiveness in improving oral production. The research recommended that teachers incorporate the Shadowing technique into language teaching to address students' specific needs and improve their communication skills. They should provide relevant materials and adjust the technique to students' levels to ensure effective learning. The study also suggests further research on the long-term effects of Shadowing and its combination with other teaching methods to enhance language skills.

Ali K. Altamimi performed research among Arabic EFL School-Age Students Using Minimal Pairs to enhance pronunciation in 2015. Altamimi addresses a significant issue faced by learners of English as a foreign language. The problem revolves around the necessity of good

phonological awareness for achieving fluent communication in English. Many learners, especially Arabic speakers, struggle with pronouncing certain English sounds that do not exist in their native language. This challenge is rooted in the influence of the learners' first language on their ability to hear and produce sounds in the second language.

To face this problem, He focused on Saudi students, specifically 13 native Arabic speakers enrolled in the 2nd intermediate grade. The main objective of the study was to explore effective teaching strategies that could enhance the students' ability to pronounce difficult English consonant phonemes accurately. Altamimi proposed using minimal pairs—a method that involves pairs of words that differ by only one sound—to improve the students' pronunciation skills.

A quantitative approach was employed to collect data, using both a pre-test and a post-test to assess the students' pronunciation before and after the instructional intervention. During the study, which spanned four weeks, the researcher used an oral assessment checklist to monitor the participants' progress. The pre-test results revealed that the students had significant difficulties with the following English consonant phonemes: /p/ (76.9%), /tʃ/ (23.07%), /ŋ/ (92.30%), /v/ (46.15%), and /ʒ/ (84.51%).

Throughout the intervention, minimal pairs were integrated into classroom activities to help the students differentiate and practice the problematic sounds. By the end of the four-week period, the post-test results showed remarkable improvements in the students' pronunciation. Specifically, the difficulty levels for the phonemes decreased as follows: /p/ dropped to 7.69%, /tʃ/ to 0%, /ŋ/ to 23.07%, /v/ to 15.38%, and /ʒ/ to 30.76%. The most significant improvements were observed in the pronunciation of /p/ and /ŋ/, with a reduction in difficulty by 69.23%.

These findings indicate that minimal pairs can be an effective strategy for improving English pronunciation among Arabic EFL learners. The study highlighted the potential of this approach to address the phonological challenges faced by these students.

Based on the results, Altamimi made several recommendations. First, future studies should include statistical analyses to determine the significance of the observed differences between pre-test and post-test results. Second, conducting similar studies with larger populations would help validate the effectiveness of minimal pairs. Finally, further research is needed to expand the evidence base on the efficacy of minimal pairs in improving pronunciation among Arab speakers and other second language learners.

### **1.1.2 JUSTIFICATION**

English Language courses are programs created with the intention to instruct learners into all the aspects that are involved in a language such as: vocabulary, grammatical structures, pronunciation, cultural knowledge, etc. In these courses, students get to develop listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills to be fully competent in the language. Therefore, enrolling in an English course can have many benefits to non-native speakers since the mastery of this language provides different opportunities for working, communication, and social relationships.

These tools include a mastery of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. With an estimated 1.5 billion people speaking English around the world, it's no wonder that ESL programs have become increasingly important in today's globalized society. Furthermore, a strong command of the English language can open up a wide range of educational and employment opportunities for those who possess it. (Kenny, 2024, para. 4)

Although English courses can benefit students to master listening, reading and writing skills, the reality is that the outcomes of the speaking performance can be reduced or delayed due to factors such as the frequency of the classes, time management, amount of practice, and sometimes the mandatory use of resources like books.

This is because course books often focus on grammar and vocabulary where reading and listening exercises are highlighted but the speaking practice is a little reduced. O'Hare (n.d.)

emphasized: “Just as reading a book about swimming won’t make you a great swimmer, simply studying vocabulary or grammar isn’t enough.”

This highlights the importance of practicing speaking skills that will allow students to be competent and confident in the language. In addition, mastering speaking skills is essential to work on other areas such as pronunciation, intonation, fluency, rhythm, and some others which tend to be an obstacle for ESL students. Nuñez (2023) explains some of the different pronunciation struggles students face, “Learning which words to emphasize and where your voice rises and falls in a phrase or sentence can be a challenge to students, especially if the intonation in their mother tongue differs a lot.” (para. 7)

Difficulties in pronunciation of general words, incorrect stress patterns and lack of proper intonation are some of the aspects that have been observed in the students at Centro Panamericano de Idiomas where they are taking English classes. These students, whenever they read out loud, don’t have an accurate pronunciation and intonation of the words as they would read them as they are written. Similarly, when having to express something in detail such as answering open questions, the same issue takes place.

For this reason, the following research aims to combine the Shadowing Technique and the Audio-lingual Approach as a promising solution to pronunciation problems of English prosody. The Shadowing Technique involves having learners imitate speech immediately after hearing it, which helps them practice natural English rhythm and intonation. The Audio-lingual Approach, on the other hand, focuses on repetition and drills to reinforce correct pronunciation patterns.

Studies and research have shown that these methods can significantly improve learners' pronunciation. Therefore, it is hoped that the introduction of these techniques in the classroom will provide students with a structured and effective means of practicing and improving their pronunciation.

### 1.1.3 PROBLEMATIZATION

Students from Centro Panamericano de Idiomas in San Joaquin de Heredia, started a new English module called “A2 +” on August 2024, which has the intention to help students practice their oral skills applying the topics learned in the previous book “A2” so when they move on to the next level “B1”, they feel more orally prepared to study new topics and involve in advanced exercises. The A2 + module is coming to an end on September 30, 2024 meaning that they are about to continue with the next level starting on October 2, 2024 and is expected to finish on February, 2025 however, what has been observed in the past and current month suggests the need to overcome a pronunciation problem of the oral competence.

Open-ended questions are defined as questions that cannot be answered with a yes or no so, if someone is to answer an open question, it should be expected to provide a long, organized, and thoughtful response. Kawasaki, J. (2020) mentions: “Errors in spoken or written skills include vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammatical errors, as well as errors in producing intelligible language that can be understood globally.” Every time the students are asked an open question which requires them to express themselves in depth it tends to be a lack of fluency, past tense verbs ending in -ed are frequently mispronounced, along with other words.

Therefore, answering open questions can be challenging for them as many languages proficiency factors often come into play. Moreover, when they read out loud, they would read the words as they are written with no stress, intonation or correct pronunciation. This situation results in affecting their performance when they are presenting a role play or participating in a discussion where it gets complicated to understand what they are trying to say as sometimes the words they want to say are pronounce as other words for example saying “desert” when they mean “dessert”.

Similarly, speaking mistakes (n.d.) highlights a common mistake when students speak: A student may say something that is perfectly correct, grammatically speaking, but what happens if they put the stress on the wrong word? It may lead to confusion or misunderstanding. Consider

the difference between, “He didn’t pay for one **lesson**” vs “He didn’t pay for **one** lesson”. (para. 11)

Consequently, word stress becomes part of the mispronunciation mistakes as a key aspect to ensure clear communication when speaking in English so our speech express feeling, color, and engagement.

This suggest that the students are not familiar with spoken English which makes them “guess” the pronunciation of words since they are not used to listen to it and also, they have not been introduced to basic phonetic topics as in minimal pairs (vowel and consonant sounds), past verbs ending in -ed (/t/ /ch/ and /d/) pronunciation, intonation, rhythm, word stress and some others. By taking these aspects into consideration it can be said that the students could benefit from methodologies that work and improve pronunciation.

## **1.2 Problem Formulation**

Pronunciation is a crucial aspect of language acquisition, often challenging for students learning English as a second language. Despite efforts to enhance pronunciation through traditional methods, students at Centro Panamericano de Idiomas aged 17 to 20 continue to struggle with distinguishing and correctly pronouncing content and function words. This issue impacts their overall oral communication and comprehension skills.

The Shadowing Technique, integrated with the audio-lingual approach, has shown promise in improving language learners' pronunciation through repetitive listening and oral practice. However, its effectiveness when combined with artificial intelligence (AI) text-to-speech platforms remains underexplored. AI-driven platforms offer authentic, consistent pronunciation models and immediate feedback, potentially enhancing learning outcomes.

Thus, this research aims to investigate how the application of the Shadowing technique through the audio-lingual approach using AI text-to-speech platforms can improve the

pronunciation of content and function words among students aged 17 to 20 at Centro Panamericano de Idiomas during the III quarter of 2024. The study seeks to address pronunciation challenges by determining whether AI-enhanced Shadowing practice leads to measurable improvements in learners' spoken English

### **1.2.1 RESEARCH QUESTION**

What is the impact of using the AI Text-to-Speech platform in conjunction with the Audio-lingual Method and Shadowing Technique to improve pronunciation of content and function words in students aged 17 to 20 at Centro Panamericano de Idiomas, in the III quarter 2024?

## **1.3 OBJECTIVES**

### **1.3.1 General**

To determine the impact of applying the Audio-lingual Method through The Shadowing Technique to improve pronunciation of content and function words in students from 17 to 20 years old from Centro Panamericano de Idiomas, in the III quarter 2024.

### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives**

1. To establish the distinctive pronunciation characteristics of content and function words in students from 17 to 20 years old from Centro Panamericano de Idiomas, in the III quarter 2024.

2. To validate the use of the Shadowing Technique using an AI Text-to-Speech platform to work on the correct pronunciation of content and function words in students from 17 to 20 years old from Centro Panamericano de Idiomas, in the III quarter 2024.
3. To analyze the benefits of using Play HT AI Text-to-Speech platform to work on the correct pronunciation of content and function words in students from 17 to 20 years old from Centro Panamericano de Idiomas, in the III quarter 2024.

## **1.4 HYPOTHESIS**

Students from Centro Panamericano de Idiomas will have a correct pronunciation of content and function words, after implementing the Shadowing Technique along with the use of AI Text-to-Speech platform.

## **1.5 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS**

### **1.5.1 Scope**

This investigation aims to work with students from Centro Panamericano de Idiomas who are enrolled in beginner (A1-2 and A2+) and upper intermediate (B2) courses. These small groups consist of students interested in learning the English language through an oral approach. While the majority of these students take these courses to complement for their high school studies and to enhance their learning process, others seek to acquire the language for professional and personal growth.

Not only students who learn English as a Second Language and students from Centro Panamericano de Idiomas in the II quarter of 2024, but also future generations that struggle with pronunciation of English prosody will benefit from this research since the investigation test an innovative method to see if it can strengthen the pronunciation skills so the students who are

looking for different learning techniques to improve their performance can have another alternative to implement in their study process.

### **1.5.2 Limitations**

The development of this research faces several limitations that could affect its implementation and outcomes:

- **Student Motivation:** Learners' motivation to improve their pronunciation may vary, influencing their level of commitment to consistently practicing the Shadowing technique. Differences in personal goals, learning preferences, and external factors could impact their progress.
- **Native Language Interference:** The phonological patterns of students' native language may interfere with acquiring accurate English pronunciation, particularly with content and function words. This linguistic transfer could make learning specific pronunciation features more challenging for some students.
- **Limited Class Time:** The course schedule allows for only two weekly sessions of two hours each, which may not provide enough time for intensive practice, personalized feedback, and reinforcement of pronunciation skills.
- **Technological Resources:** The research relies on a stable internet connection for accessing the Play HT platform. Any technical issues, such as internet disruptions or platform malfunctions, could hinder the learning process and limit the effectiveness of the proposed technique.
- **Instructor Training:** The success of this method also depends on the instructor's familiarity with teaching methodologies that involve digital platforms. Limited

experience with AI-powered text-to-speech tools or the audio-lingual approach could impact on the quality of instruction and implementation.

## **CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

## **2.1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE INSTITUTION**

### **2.1.1 Theoretical and Conceptual context**

The present investigation is developed at Centro Panamericano de Idiomas (CPI). It is a private Language School founded in 1991 by Romy Morales and her family in San Joaquin de Flores in Heredia. It started as a Spanish Immersion School to non-native speakers. According to CPI (2011)

Holding close to the established vision to create the best language program in Latin America, CPI Director Romy Morales decided that her then 25 years of experience as a Spanish professor both for the Peace Corps and in schools specialized in teaching Spanish as a second language provided her with the expertise and insight to serve those foreigners wishing to embark upon an adventure, experience another culture, and learn a second language. (CPI, 2011, para .1)

Years later, they started to offer the English program as a complement to the Spanish program.

CPI's Mission is to equip with highly trained staff to meet learning needs of students by offering personalized attention and a multi-language immersion experience. Their vision is to get a recognition as the best educational institution for language learning in a globalized world by adapting their teaching methods to new technologies and to any innovations that may arise in the field of education.

## **2.2 ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODS**

### **2.2.1 Audio-lingual Method**

#### **2.2.1.1 Definition**

There are many methodologies that can be used in the classroom while teaching a second language, including those which aim to provide students with an engaging, exciting, and

dynamic learning experience. Some of these techniques might emphasize the use of technology, instructional materials, or the development of productive skills like speaking and writing as well as receptive skills like reading and listening. Receptive skills (n.d.) explains the difference between them, “reading and listening involve receiving information and so they are called the receptive skills. Speaking and writing are known as the productive skills because they involve producing words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs.” (para. 1.)

Throughout the years the methods used in language teaching have advanced to adapt to the evolving requirements and viewpoints of both learners and educators. Starting from the Grammar Translation Approach to Communicative and Technology-based methods, each technique has introduced distinct strategies and insights into successful language learning. Among these approaches the Audio-lingual Method (ALM) emerges as a strategy that emphasizes oral proficiency through repetitive exercises and organized training sessions. Arroway (2016) defined ALM “The audio-lingual method (ALM) is a behaviorist theory method of teaching foreign languages that focuses on repetition and grammar over vocabulary. It also teaches the language in the foreign language rather than the students’ native one.” (para. 1)

The Audio-lingual Method, also known as the ARMY Method because of its application in the training of personnel to learn languages effectively during World War II, arose from the need to acquire languages quickly and efficiently. Kravchenko (2023) explained:

The start of World War II made it more crucial than ever for Americans to learn the languages of both their enemies and friends. Consequently, fragments of the Direct Method were taken to create and reinforce this new approach, the “Army Method,” which eventually became known as the Audiolingual Method in the 1950s. (Kravchenko. 2023. Para. 5)

This method was based on behaviorist principles that view language learning as a habit-forming process. Therefore, by emphasizing listening and speaking skills, the ALM sought to promote these habits through repetition and positive reinforcement.

### **2.2.1.2 The Implementation of ALM in the Class**

In a typical classroom setting the main goal is to teach students how to speak correctly meaning that the activities will focus on correct pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, and the reinforcement of language patterns.

When implementing ALM in the class, the teacher plays a significant role where they model a correct sentence and then the students have to repeat it as it was said. The process continues until students are able to reproduce the sentences spontaneously. Turan (2023) added that for teachers, “Pronunciation like that of native speaker is important in presenting the model. Through repetition of phrases and sentences, a dialogue is learned by the first whole class, then smaller groups and finally individual learners.” (Para. 12)

This suggests that the application of the Audio-lingual Method can go through different stages of practice until the students get to improve on their own.

All activities should focus on the following principles according to Kravchenko (2023) teachers should introduce language in contexts that learners can relate to and find engaging. Sometimes it might mean staging real-life situations that students can explore in the classroom; for example, students can try out dialogues and role-plays.

One of the scenarios through which a student may get an opportunity to play a certain role is when he or she is at a restaurant placing an order. After listening to the audio of a customer and a waiter, they then get a chance to participate in the same conversation that they pick up and add, therefore, acquiring bonuses for real-time application.

The second principle is that when a student keeps mispronouncing a word or makes mistakes in their sentences while practicing, the teacher should pause the activity to fix the error and have the student say it correctly. This instant feedback is important for reinforcing language habits. Jain (2023) mentioned, “Errors are immediately corrected by the teacher, and students are

expected to repeat the corrected form or sentence. The focus is on accuracy and the elimination of errors through immediate feedback and repetition.” (para. 7) Being attentive in this way is key, to stopping students from forming language mistakes that might be hard to correct on a phenomenon known as fossilization.

The third principle implies that repetition exercises play a role, in ALM by strengthening language structures and vocabulary with practice. This method helps students in absorbing language patterns and using them naturally. For instance, in an exercise learners may rehearse verb forms, like "I am running " "You are running " "He is running" until they can effortlessly and correctly generate these forms without hesitation which develop fluency and natural language use in the long run.

In the Audio-lingual Method, grammar isn't explicitly taught. Instead, students learn usage through repeated practice allowing them to pick up rules naturally much like how they learn their mother tongue. Butt (n.d.) said “although correct grammar is expected in usage, no explicit grammatical instruction is given. It is taught inductively.” (para. 7)

Therefore, the focus here is to use language in practice as the method that will help students to learn the right way of language use instead of the one that uses grammar rules for theoretical explanations. This useful way of teaching makes the learners the masters of the language for real-life experiences.

Another principle is that students’ native language usage in the classroom must be minimized in order to focus primarily on the target language. This means that activities such as explanations, instructions, and corrections should be given in the target language to encourage learners to think and speak in a language that they are learning. Sami (n.d) explained the ALM objective:

Teachers want their students to be able to use the target language communicatively. In order to do this, they believe students need to overlearn the target language, to learn to use automatically without stopping to think. Their

students achieve this by forming new habits in the target language and overcoming the old habits of their native language. (Sami. n.d. para. 2)

Consequently, by prioritizing the use of the target language in the class students are less likely to revert to their native language when participating in activities. Teachers can make use of visual aids or hand gestures to convey meaning which helps students deduce the meaning of words.

### **2.2.1.3 Advantages and Disadvantages**

Like any other language teaching method, ALM can offer several benefits but also face some complications depending on the nature of the method.

One of the main advantages is the emphasis on listening and speaking which helps students to practice and improve features of comprehension, pronunciation, and confidence in the language they are learning. Along with this is the use of the target language, this strategy is beneficial to ESL students because it is part of the features of immersion.

According to Brennan (2024):

Immersion is a useful learning strategy for language students. By constantly exposing yourself to English, you start to organically think, speak, read, and write in English, and are more likely to remember new vocabulary and grammar because you learned it in a practical, meaningful way. (Brennan, 2024, Para. 5)

By focusing the learning on the use of the target language, students get to feel more at ease with English since they are practicing with authentic language exposure so their pronunciation and comprehension skills can be enhanced in the process. Another benefit is the possibility to implement ALM with either individual students or large groups which makes this

approach flexible to work with. and the use of drills and choral repetition creates efficient classroom management and engagement.

Also, teachers offer immediate feedback after each activity to suggest areas of improvement allowing students to understand their pronunciation mistakes and how to correct them, as stated by Benton (2023) “The teacher must also have a good understanding of linguistics and phonetics, and he or she must be able to spot and correct minor mispronunciations.” This emphasized teachers as another benefit since they are required to have a good training of pronunciation branches in order to provide a meaningful and accurate correction to each student.

As mentioned above, the Audio-Lingual Method can have disadvantages as well. One of the most evident drawbacks is the lack of exposure to reading and writing skills. If teachers want to implement this method in an institution where the emphasis is on the English Macro Skills (speaking, reading, listening and writing), there will be no balance which will affect the student’s performance in different tests or tasks.

In addition, while students are required to reproduce the language repeatedly, this exercise does not make learners develop meaningful communication. Audiolingualism (2023) said: “The approach favors drilling, memorization and repetition over building general spontaneous communication skills and language usage.” So, unfortunately students will face difficulties when having conversations in real-life scenarios where their memory cannot help.

Also, Kravchenko (2023) highlighted the lack of explicit presentation to grammar as a disadvantage. As it was mentioned previously this is one of the principles of ALM because the main goal for the students is to acquire the structures naturally as kids when learning their mother tongue. However, she said that sometimes exposure to grammar rules is necessary as a reminder for people to make corrections and speak correctly.

## **2.3 THE ROLE OF PRONUNCIATION COMPETENCE IN ORAL COMMUNICATION**

### **2.3.1 Importance**

Communication can be defined as the exchange of information between two or more people, it can happen face-to-face or virtually, allowing individuals to share their ideas, news and opinions either orally or in writing. When it comes to oral communication in the English language, pronunciation plays a fundamental role.

Is not about the amount of vocabulary someone has or the correct structure they follow, but about the way they express their ideas. Rudden (n.d.) supported this by stating: “without correct pronunciation, the vocabulary that you know will be less effective when communicating. It is always better to know fewer words and pronounce them well than to know a lot of words and pronounce them badly.” (para. 13)

Thus, mastering a good and correct pronunciation in English is essential for ESL students in educational, professional, and social settings. Lieber (2024) reflected on the reasons why pronunciation is fundamental in communication she states that pronunciation helps learners improve their comprehension of the spoken language, avoiding misunderstandings. In English, one word can have different meanings that often depend on the context or the distinctive pronunciation to be understood, the same happens with words that sound similar. For example, if someone were to say, “I just saw a bear” but pronounce “bear” as “bird”, “beer”, or “beard” the message can change completely, affecting the final idea of the information shared.

In addition, students gain confidence when having a good pronunciation. According to Lieber (2024), the better you can articulate your thoughts, the better the student will feel when speaking in front of others, as it reduces the uncertainty experienced when not knowing how to pronounce the words. Along with this, learners can successfully engage in meaningful conversations which can enrich the language learning process.

Moreover, having correct pronunciation provides different professional opportunities such as job presentations, negotiations or even job interviews. Sanchana (2023) mentioned, “In the professional world, clear pronunciation is highly valued. It can impact job interviews, presentations, and overall career advancement.” (para. 5). This suggests that by prioritizing good pronunciation, people in the working field can obtain better opportunities since they can highlight their communication skills to interact with clients, colleagues, and stakeholders.

### **2.3.2 Components of Pronunciation**

English pronunciation is divided into five different areas: the pronunciation of individual sounds which involves the correct articulation of vowels and consonants; word stress, that emphasizes the correct syllable in a word; sentence stress, similar to word stress but highlighting specific words to convey the main meaning; rhythm deals with the pattern of sounds and silences in speech, determined by the timing of stressed and unstressed syllables; and intonation, which focuses on the pitch variations in speech to convey meaning, emotion, and intent.

#### **2.3.2.1 Sentence Stress**

Spoken English tends to put more emphasis on some words in a sentence than others. This allows people to highlight important information to be clear and understood when having conversations, giving speeches, and reading information out loud. This feature is called sentence stress and is necessary to ensure an accurate expression of ideas. Roshay (2023) emphasized the importance of sentence stress:

When you learn a new language, you use the stress and music from your native language without meaning to but when you do this, your English might sound off-beat. By improving your sentence stress in English, you’ll be improving your speaking and listening skills, as well. (Roshay, 2023, para. 1)

So, just like music has a beat, sentence stress creates a rhythm in spoken language to make it sound natural or add nuances in meaning of words.

### **2.3.2.2 Content and Function Words**

For sentence stress to work, students must follow some principles to understand which words receive more emphasis and which do not. Jones (n.d.) explained an interesting fact regarding sentence stress identification: “You can often tell which words should be stressed based on the parts of speech and where the words fall in a sentence.” (para. 7)

English words can be divided into two categories: content and function words. Knowing parts of speech is important because they are the foundations of these categories. If a student doesn’t master parts of speech, it can be complicated to learn and understand the principles of sentence stress.

Content words carry the main meaning of a sentence which means that they are highlighted to show the important information. Trusler (2015) listed the content words that should be emphasized:

1. Nouns (people, places, things)
2. Verbs (actions, states)
3. Adjectives (words that modify nouns)
4. Adverbs (words that modify verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, or entire sentences)
5. Negative words (not, never, neither, etc.)
6. Modals (should, could, might, etc., but not will or can)
7. Yes, no, and auxiliary verbs in short answers (e.g., Yes, she does.)
8. Quantifiers (some, many, no, all, one, two, three, etc.)
9. Wh-Question words (what, where, when, why, how, etc.—note that what is often unstressed when speaking quickly because it’s so common)

On the contrary, function words provide mere grammatical structure, so they are not stressed in sentences because they do not carry the main meaning. According to Trusler (2015) the following words are not highlighted:

1. Articles (a, an, the)
2. Prepositions (to, in, at, on, for, from, etc.)
3. Conjunctions (and, or, so, but, etc.)
4. Personal pronouns (I, you, he, she, etc.)
5. Possessive adjectives (my, your, his, her, etc.)
6. Be verb (am, is, are, was, were, etc.)
7. Auxiliary verbs (be, have, do in two-part verbs or questions)
8. The modals will and be going to (because they're common, and the future tense is often clear from context)
9. The modal can (because it's so common)

## **2.4 CHALLENGES IN PRONUNCIATION FACED BY STUDENTS**

Pronunciation refers to the way of producing sounds in speech, involving the correct placement of intonation, stress, rhythm, and articulation. As previously mentioned, pronunciation is a key part of effective communication because it involves the mastery of not only phonetics to understand English sounds and phonology to recognize how sounds work within a language, but also English prosody, which adds meaning, emotion, and emphasis to speech.

Taking all these factors into consideration may suggest a level of difficulty for students when speaking in English. Fuca (2022) argued that in class, "Pronunciation can be tricky to teach your ESL students, as well as it is challenging for them to practice: they simply don't dare to speak in front of others." (para. 1)

However, understanding these concepts are not the only barrier students face when learning pronunciation. In fact, some of the factors affecting student's pronunciation are related to each learner's social context and individual characteristics such as: their mother tongue, their age, attitude towards the language, and the amount of exposure. Pronunciation Problems (2021) describe the situations students experience regarding these factors.

Languages are unique, each with distinctive features such as the alphabet, grammar rules, sounds, vocabulary, and accents that can make either easy or difficult for a foreign student to learn because of the similarities or differences to their mother tongue. According to Pesce (n.d.) "A student's native language determines, for the most part, the degree of difficulty and the types of difficulties students will have." (para. 1) ESL students whose mother tongue is Spanish often struggle with English sounds because they do not exist in their language.

This makes it harder for them to recognize and assimilate these new sounds to reproduce them with accurate pronunciation. This is because students tend to speak English in the same way they have been speaking Spanish ever since they were little. When learning a second language, it is expected that one adapts and changes old habits to acquire the new language appropriately (Dionne, 2022).

Student's ages are another aspect that affects students' pronunciation since the younger you are the easier learning pronunciation will be, however, is not a similar case for adults because the way they learn is different (Ikhsan, 2017) This suggests that people should start learning proper pronunciation at early ages to avoid any struggles in their oral performance once they get older.

Learners' personality and attitude are considered significant factors that affect pronunciation in adult students. A student's attitude is related to the learning environment; someone with a negative attitude who is unwilling to participate, receive feedback, and make corrections, will create a poor learning atmosphere where pronunciation training is almost impossible.

According to 7 Factors (2014), English language immersion will dictate how quickly good pronunciation is learned. This means that students who could live or study in an English-speaking country or environment, can aspire to a clean and proper pronunciation. The constant exposure to the language helps ESL students get used to it and, therefore, produce good and accurate pronunciation.

## **2.5 LANGUAGE LEARNING TECHNIQUES**

When learning a language, one can choose from many different methodologies, techniques, and resources to make the learning experience more engaging, realistic, personalized, or focused on a specific skill. Some methodologies are more updated than others, making them attractive to learners looking for new tips, tools, and exercises to incorporate into their learning process.

### **2.5.1 Shadowing Technique**

#### **2.5.1.1 Background**

Shadowing is a language learning technique that enhances listening and speaking skills through repetition. The main objective is to listen to an audio of a native speaker, such as conversation, speech, interview, or casual speech like in a video blog or podcast and then copy the exact words, intonation, stress, accent, and pronunciation just like a shadow in real time, with as little delay as possible.

Hurley (2024) explained that the idea of Shadowing is to force the student to listen actively, focusing on the sounds of the target language so they can then reproduce the speech like a native speaker. In the long run, this will help them grasp key expressions, grammar rules and sentence structures.

The American Professor, linguist, and polyglot Alexander Arguelles is considered the pioneer of Shadowing. Back in 2008, he started posting a series of videos discussing the technique, the step-by-step process, and providing an example of how to shadow a foreign language. His first video illustrated the practice of Shadowing with Chinese.

For the Shadowing practice to be effective, Arguelles (2009) highlighted three things to consider. The first piece of advice is to maintain a good posture. According to Nugent (2020) a good posture can increase the oxygen intake which is beneficial for the brain and therefore the learning process. The second aspect is to articulate fully and loudly because this will help with muscle memory, the brain will learn how to control the muscles and produce better and accurate pronunciation in the future.

The last and key advice for Shadowing to be put in place effectively is to walk outdoors swiftly rather than slowly since it is more practical than just sitting at one's desk. Nagel (2011) argued, "walking while shadowing language is directly challenging your brain to comprehend new linguistic input and to automate this process." (para. 13) So, even if performing two activities simultaneously can be difficult at first, the constant practice will make the experience feel more natural and efficient.

### **2.5.1.2 Application of Shadowing**

The application of Shadowing is done by following a series of steps provided by Alexander Arguelles. However, it is important to consider some materials as well as settings that will be key to make the process easier and more complete. Access to calm environments, such as a nearby park, a town square, or a hallway, is essential. Ramsay (2020) suggested that:

While it's best to focus on this activity, you can also do this while you're doing other things. For example, you can do it in the car on your commute to work, while you're out jogging, or even while you're having a bath. (Ramsay, 2020, para. 21)

Also, having an audio player, headphones, and a variety of audio recordings is necessary.

The first step is to choose short audio recordings, with a maximum of five minutes, that are high quality. These materials should be slightly above the current level but not too difficult. In addition, the content should be authentic spoken language, preferably by a native speaker speaking alone. Some examples are TED talks, product review videos, news reports, or podcasts. Ideally, each recording should have an audio transcript to help progress with the practice.

The second step is to start listening to the recording without reading the transcript. This step aims to help the student get familiar with the content, the speaker's accent, pace, rhythm, and intonation. Understanding what is being said is important; however, there is no need to fully comprehend every word because the idea is to get used to the sounds that will be copied.

The third step is to shadow the content and Alexander Arguelles (2009) called this "blind Shadowing". In this part, the student will listen and repeat with a slight delay of around 5 seconds over the audio while copying every detail of the speaker's speech. The student should try to speak along with the voice, doing it after will not be considered Shadowing.

Depending on the length of the passage being heard, the student should repeat it a decent number of times like ten or fifteen. Though, in Arguelles video he suggested that the Shadowing should be done as many times as possible until reaching a point of plateau meaning a situation where the person does not notice any change. If this happens, the student can move on with step number four.

Since the previous step may make the student feel bored, the next step is to listen while reading the passage. How to use Shadowing (n.d.) "when you get bored, frustrated, or aren't making noticeable progress with each repetition, it's time to look at the text." (para. 17)

This will allow the listener to understand better what is being said by making connections with the meaning of the content and the target language. It also provides an opportunity for the student to make corrections if needed.

### **2.5.1.3 AI as a Tool to Use with the Shadowing Technique**

As mentioned above, the application of Shadowing primarily requires technological devices. Fortunately, students today can take advantage of the great variety of platforms, apps, and additional features that modern technology offers. Shemesh (2022) talked about Shadowing and the different apps, platforms, and YouTube channels a student could use to do it. She listed “Cake learning app”, “DingulTube”, “Voicetube”, “Repete Plus” as applications that can be used on the phone or computer to access to audios and clips with transcripts. Also, she highlighted “TED talks” and “Youghlish” as platforms that provide clips and videos to practice and “Movie clips” and “English speeches with subtitles” as YouTube channels that offer interesting and entertaining materials to use along the Shadowing sessions.

AI is defined as a highly advanced technology where computers and machines perform tasks simulating human intelligence. In the education field, these tasks can be beneficial for both teachers and students. According to Hamid (2024), AI provides personalized learning by creating materials that align to learners’ needs, interests, and levels. It improves accessibility, especially for students with learning difficulties or differences. It automates tasks, saving teachers a lot of time when grading or lesson planning. It aids writing by correcting grammar, punctuation, format, and it offers a 24/7 support. Knight (2024) expressed:

The rise of AI isn’t solely due to recent advancements like the release of OpenAI’s ChatGPT. In fact, AI had, in recent years, already emerged as a significant trend in education, disrupting traditional teaching and learning methods. It has given rise to more interactive, personalized, and efficient learning experiences. (Knight. 2024. Para. 4)

This suggests that existent methods or practices can be improved by incorporating AI platforms and apps, making the learning experience more meaningful, practical, and up-to-date.

However, this raises the question of whether it is possible, or how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be used to achieve a similar utility to the described applications for Shadowing.

Zucchet (2023) argued that technology has been part of language learning for some years now, allowing students to learn, study, and practice anywhere and anytime they want, thanks to the online learning platforms, multimedia resources, and interactive apps. Nowadays, with the rise of Artificial Intelligence, all of the existent devices and platforms are being enhanced.

One way to shadow with AI is by using AI text-to-speech (TTS) platforms that can generate realistic voices. In these apps, any text can be converted to speech, providing personalized and varied audio recordings for Shadowing. By using TTS people can listen to books, journals, articles, online newspapers, and more without the need to read them. Brooker (2023) explained about how these technologies work:

When a text input is provided, the AI system breaks down the text into its linguistic components — we're talking words, punctuation, and sentence structure. Once the bare bones are down, it determines the more human aspects of each word to generate speech, including its pronunciation, stress, and intonation patterns that can help mimic a natural sounding voice. (Brooker. 2024. Para. 3)

She later mentioned that even the best AI voice generators could still improve, as they may sound a little robotic. Though, it does not affect the speech's clarity, prosody, or multilingual capabilities. So, it can be said that using audio recordings generated by AI text-to-speech platforms, is a good alternative for learners looking for additional materials about specific topics, paragraphs of different lengths, and having both female and male voices that can simulate several accents.

#### **2.5.1.4 Advantages and Disadvantages of Shadowing**

The main advantage of Shadowing is the improvement of pronunciation. Through the practice of listening and repetition, focusing on correct articulation and appropriate posture,

students can develop the features of fluency like intonation, rhythm, and prosody in English. Lewis (2020) argued, “Shadowing is really great for helping you practice developing muscle memory for your mouth so you can better pronounce English words.”

Lewis (2020) also mentioned that English prosody and intonation are rarely taught in classrooms, not only because they are somewhat complicated to teach but also because of the focus on teaching other aspects like vocabulary and grammar. However, Shadowing makes the learning and practice of these features easier and simple just by mimicking pitches. Manseur (2015) lists additional benefits of Shadowing in her research that explores the role of this technique in EFL learner’s speaking skill:

Manseur (2015) explained that Shadowing can also have a significant impact in reading and listening skills. According to her, students can improve their reading comprehension if they engage in a Shadowing practice prior to reading, which helps learners know how to read aloud properly. In addition, since Shadowing involves extensive listening to audio recordings, students practice active listening by concentrating on what they hear. This enables them to reproduce the speech more accurately.

Moreover, Shadowing boosts the working memory because the activity of listening, and repetition stimulates the areas that are in charge of producing sounds and restating the information.

Shadowing and reading aloud both involve multiple complex cognitive processes, and both are considered effective methods for second-language learning. The working memory system, particularly the phonological loop, has been suggested to be involved in Shadowing and reading aloud. (Takeuchi et al., 2020)

Another fascinating benefit of Shadowing is its flexibility, making it suitable for learners of all levels, including beginner, intermediate, and advanced students. Audio recordings can be personalized, allowing the learner to choose the level of difficulty regarding vocabulary, pace,

accent, structure, and duration. Thus, the access to appropriate materials will never be a problem, regardless of their English proficiency level.

On the other hand, Northbrook (2021) claimed that there are limitations to what Shadowing can improve. He said that if students struggle with other aspects like grammar rules, sentence structures, or writing skills, Shadowing will be of no help. Sometimes people may use strategies for the wrong objectives. This implies that even if Shadowing can be used by learners of different levels, students must have some foundation to start with for this technique to be effective in improving those foundations.

## **2.6 PLAY HT PLATFORM**

Play HT started as a simple Chrome extension design to read medium articles aloud in 2016. Later on, the creators thought about how beneficial it would be for others to listen to articles rather than read them. So, 2017 is when they envisioned expanding the target of PlayHT for not only individuals but also businesses to create realistic audio content. This led to the development of AI text-to-speech voice generator, a tool with over 1000 voices across 142+ languages and accents ensuring that all texts are transformed into natural-sounding voices.

The functionality and performance of PlayHT are optimal for various fields. It can be applied to education and e-Learning, entertainment to customer service, and accessibility services. It can convert text to audio, making text user-friendly for individuals who have reading challenges like dyslexia, or visual impairments such as blindness or limited vision. According to the information displayed on their web page, users can choose from a wide variety of voices:

- Conversational Voices for entertainment videos, podcasts, and audiobooks.
- Narrative Voices for audiobooks, explainer videos, and documentaries.
- Explainer Voices for educational and informational content.
- Children Voices for audiobooks and e-learning.
- Local Accents for localized entertainment and advertisements.

- Emotional Voices for gaming and creative projects.
- Character Voices for gaming and advertisements.
- Training Voices for training videos and e-learning.

Using PlayHT for creating audio recordings is simple. The first thing is to create an account to access to what they called “TTS Studio”. The next step is to choose a text to copy and paste or upload the text directly into the text box. Once passed, the following is to select a voice that will read aloud the text. Then, in case the audio needs some adjustments, there is a customized section to adjust the tone, speed, and style to get the best result possible. Finally, the audio can be successfully downloaded.

## **2.7 ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

English Language Learners (ELL) refers to students whose mother language is not English, meaning they need appropriate instruction and support to learn English effectively. These students may come from different backgrounds and have varying needs and abilities that can either facilitate the learning process or make it more difficult.

### **2.7.1 Linguistic Background of ELL in Costa Rica**

In 2021, the Consejo Superior de Educación approved “Plan de acción 2021-2040”. This policy aims to improve Costa Ricans’ skills, help them find jobs, and boost the economy especially in border and coastal regions, through public-private partnerships that encourage civilians to learn a second language. What they hope is that by 2040, students will be able to communicate well in various real-life situations and have the knowledge and skills to interact in the world confidently. Matamoros (2023) stated:

In the meantime, the country's education system has an action plan in place that estimates that by 2040 all students in public schools will be able to speak,

understand and write a second language, either English, French, Portuguese, Mandarin, Italian or German. (Matamoros, 2023, para. 5)

This promising proposal arises from the problematic of high school students whose English proficiency level proves to be lower than expected. In Ministerio de Educación Pública (MEP) all English programs work with Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR) this framework provides a classification in three bands, A, B, and C that are subdivided into two levels which assigns a student's mastery of English language.

Depending on the institution, the amount of exposure to English will differ. According to MEP students from technical or experimental high schools should have an exit profile of B2, while students from general high schools should have a B1. Kumar (2024) explained that proficiency in English is now a fundamental requirement in the working field. She argued that the required level of linguistic competence will vary depending on the working sectors; however, most of them demand a minimum level of B1 or B2.

This suggests that once students graduate, they should be able to have job opportunities since their proficiency level is the one, they are looking for. However, surprising findings were discovered by Universidad de Costa Rica (UCR) after applying a total of 5 625 English tests to eleventh and twelve grade students. Montero (2023) reported from the UCR test results that more than 70% of students placed at A1 (beginner) and A2 (basic) levels in listening comprehension, while only 16.8% reached B1 (pre-intermediate) level, which is still below the minimum target. Results in reading comprehension were equally low, with almost 80% of students at A1 and A2 levels and only 11.5% at B1. Once again, the minimum target was not met.

However, the best results were obtained in speaking, where 40.5% of the students reached A2 and 23.4% B1. But 19.4% remained at A1, and only 8.3% managed to reach B2 (intermediate). Alarmingly, 6.4% were at the pre-A1 level, despite being in the final years of secondary school in institutions where they were supposed to receive additional language support. Although these results show some improvement in speaking compared to listening and reading, they do not reach the minimum target.

Montero noted that the highest performance in speaking was among students in experimental bilingual schools, with 31.2% reaching B1, followed closely by students in schools with bilingual groups, with 29%. In contrast, vocational technical schools had the lowest performance, with almost a quarter (24.8%) of their students at A1.

These alarming results proved that English in public institutions is not being developed appropriately. Rojas (2023) expressed:

There have always been obstacles in the education of English in public educational centers in Costa Rica, among which we can mention the lack of teachers trained in this language, deficiencies in the methodology, and lack of successful plans that give good results. (Rojas, 2023, para. 1)

The factors mentioned by Rojas suggest the need for changes in educational institutions to ensure students excellent academic training that prepares them for the future. This will reduce the number of students who need to enroll in English courses after graduating from high school due to lack of exposure, ineffective methodologies, and inaccurate study programs that just undermined their linguistic competence.

## **2.8 ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSES**

English Courses are structured programs divided into levels of difficulty (Beginner, intermediate, advanced), formats such as in-person, online, or self-paced, and focus areas depending on what the student is looking for (grammar, listening, conversation). These courses are designed to teach the English language and improve learners' proficiency through innovative lessons, creative and entertaining activities, and practical evaluations.

As previously stated, these courses emerge as a need of Costa Rican students to either learn English from scratch or enhance their proficiency level to access more and better job

opportunities. Hernández (n.d.) discussed the reasons why English courses are available to students:

Latin America has made efforts to improve the teaching of English, including them in school and college education, however, educational programs are not producing students with the necessary levels of proficiency. For this reason, private language academies have emerged to solve this problem, offering virtual courses in English and other languages such as Portuguese, which has become very popular in Costa Rica, followed by French, Russian, Mandarin, Italian and German. (Hernández, n.d. para. 2)

Thanks to language academies, students can opt for specialized and accessible language training that they did not get when studying in the public system. As Hernández states, as Costa Rica continues to join the global economy, the demand for proficient English speakers and multilingual professionals will only grow, emphasizing the importance of these educational programs.

### **2.8.1 Benefits of English Courses**

Learning English as a second language through academic courses provides learners with numerous benefits that should be taken into consideration, especially when the need for learning English aligns with individual goals for travelling, career advancement, social relationships, and more.

The primary benefit is the structure of the programs because it allows the student to have a guide that will follow a logical order regarding topics, activities, and assessments. This also helps the learner to know, understand, and measure their progress which can be a little overwhelming when studying independently.

Top benefits (n.d.) listed some additional benefits these courses offer:

Enrolling an English course means you get access to experienced teachers with the best knowledge to create fascinating lessons that will adjust to all learners' needs, interests, and goals. A teacher will provide personalized feedback throughout the learning process, which will be very helpful for students to identify their areas of improvement and make corrections.

However, this would not be possible when studying alone. Studying independently can be inconsistent, as one can sometimes feel motivated and other times not. For this reason, this is seen as another benefit of English courses. A structure course with a consistent schedule ensures regular practice, meaning students will never feel stuck or rusty with their performance since their exposure to English will be continuous.

Additionally, English courses offer a wide variety of learning resources. They explained that there may be a lot of materials available for ELLs without the need to enroll in a course. However, some of these materials require a paid subscription or are not very effective. Thus, language academies are excellent at providing students with appropriate materials such as textbooks, quizzes, presentations, and even academic platforms aligned with the course's curriculum, where learners can practice and download all the necessary resources.

The most valuable benefit of these courses, is the boost of confidence which contributes to personal growth. Raheja (2023) emphasized, "As you become more proficient in English, your confidence in expressing ideas and opinions increases, making you more self-assured in various situations." (para. 8)

Language centers create a fascinating atmosphere where students experience different challenges and achievements. They have a safe space to make mistakes without any judgment, improve their skills, challenge their knowledge, interact with others, gain motivation, have fun, and learn about culture of English-speaking countries.

## **2.9 CENTRO PANAMERICANO DE IDIOMAS**

### **2.9.1 Background**

CPI has three schools located in different parts of Costa Rica. Students can study in the serene town of San Joaquin de Flores, explore the breathtaking Monteverde Cloud Forest, and enjoy the beautiful beaches at Flamingo beach on the Pacific Coast. Students are encouraged to split their time between these campuses to fully appreciate Costa Rica's rich cultural and ecological diversity.

### **2.9.2 Academic Proposal**

In this language school, students interested in learning English, can choose from different programs and modalities depending on their needs and profiles. If the student is looking for individual and personalized lessons, there are private classes divided into three different programs. "Curso Tucán" offers one hour class per week for four weeks. This program is great for those with limited time to study.

"Curso Delfín" is an hour and a half of class per week for four weeks. This one is better for students interested in focusing on specialized topics and vocabulary. "Curso Jaguar" is the best option for the students who have more time to study and want to practice regularly. It consists of two hours of class per week for four weeks. Each program can be taken in virtual or in-person modality however, the schedule for each program is established depending on teacher availability and type of course to be taken. For structure courses with an extended period, CPI offers programs for kids, teens, and adults. CPI's kids' program is divided into "CPI Little Kids", "CPI Kids", and "CPI Teen".

"CPI little kids" is an early stimulation in language learning program that aims to promote the acquisition of foreign languages in children between two and three and a half years of age, it focuses on a meaningful language teaching and learning process, which stimulates their

listening and oral production skills while integrating early stimulation techniques designed for the intellectual, emotional, cognitive, and motor development of children.

“CPI kids” is designed for children of four to eight years and eleven months old to effectively introduce them to English. It covers fundamental content such as phoneme recognition, listening comprehension, pronunciation, and basic language skills, along with reading and writing, to enhance their future performance in formal education.

“CPI teens” targets students aged nine to fifteen, aiming to help them reach pre-intermediate proficiency in the target language while maximizing their learning potential at this stage of life.

For older students, CPI presents “CPI Joven” is a program specialized in intensive English and Portuguese language learning. It is aimed at youth and young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 and represents an excellent alternative for those who wish to learn one or both languages in a short period of time in order to enter the job market, before or during their university studies. The program comprises a total of five study blocks, respectively, distributed over a period of two years and ten months in presential modality and three years and six months in virtual modality. Their study blocks are divided in the following way:

Block I: Basic level. It starts with “Intro Pre-A1” that takes two months in virtual modality and two months and fifteen days to be completed. It continues with “A1.1” that takes four months in face-to-face classes and five months in on-line classes to be finished. Finally, there is “A1.2” that has the same duration as the previous module.

Block II: Pre-Intermediate level. It begins with “A2” lasting four months if taking presential and five months taken virtually. It follows “A2 +” that last two months in face-to-face modality and two months and fifteen days in virtual classes.

Block III: Intermediate level. It starts with “B1” and then “B1 +”, both modules are completed in the same amount of time as “A2”.

Block IV: Superior Intermediate level. Students start with “B2” lasting four months but five if taken virtually and then they continue with “B2 +” that lasts two months but two and fifteen days more if enrolled on-line.

Block V: Advanced level. This is the last level students achieved “C1” and it has the same duration as “B2” however, the duration still varies if the course is enrolled in face-to-face or virtual modality.

It is important to emphasized that modules “A2 +” and “B1 +” have a conversational approach designed to help learners review and practice all those topics they study in “A2” and “B1”. This approach ensures they feel more orally prepared to continue with the rest of the courses and study advanced topics. For this reason, these modules do not involve the use of course books, in contrast to the other modules. The idea is for students to engage in activities that allow them to apply and reproduce what they have learned. Furthermore, a particular aspect of these CPI courses is that they are composed of small groups with a maximum of thirteen students. This let teachers provide a more personalized learning experience.

## **CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **3.1 TYPE OF RESEARCH**

#### **3.1.1 Purpose (Theoretical or applied)**

A theoretical investigation consists of theories, concepts, and ideas to support or extend the knowledge on an existent topic. Urmita (n.d.) stated, “in theoretical research, you can’t look at the research object directly. With the help of research literature, your research aims to define and sketch out the chosen topic’s conceptual models, explanations, and structures.” For that reason, this investigation is not theoretical because this project does not aim to develop theories in language learning and is not primarily focused on understanding linguistic theories but rather on finding a solution to a practical problem observed.

An applied investigation focuses on solving specific and practical problems with the use of the scientific method where techniques, resources, and experiments are applied to evaluate these solutions. Dudovskiy (n.d.) explained, “applied research aims at finding a solution for an immediate problem facing a society, or an industrial/business organization” that is why the present investigation is applied since it addresses a specific practical issue regarding pronunciation in students of 17 to 20 years old. It involves the application of techniques like Shadowing and tools such as “Play HT” to conduct practice sessions and evaluate the outcomes with the goal of improving student’s pronunciation.

#### **3.1.2 Temporal dimension (transversal or longitudinal)**

Longitudinal study is an observational type of study where data collection takes a long period of time to be completed. According to Velázquez (n.d.) this type of study can take years or even decades depending on the type of information desired to be obtained. This means that the present research is not longitudinal because the technique and the practice sessions are not meant to continue for too long. However, the investigation can be considered transversal also known as cross-sectional because it is a type of study that analyzes data from a population at a specific point in time. Similarly explained by Thomas (2023) “A cross-sectional study is a type of

research design in which you collect data from many different individuals at a single point in time.” (para. 1)

As this project is planned to be implemented over three or four months to evaluate the immediate effects of the Shadowing technique on students’ pronunciation, it is a transversal study.

### **3.1.3 Framework (mega-macro-micro)**

Loría (2020) explained the focus for mega, macro, and micro frameworks in research:

In a Mega framework the research is conducted on large groups of a population and is even identified as a social-level measurement. In this investigation, the mega corresponds to the language learning academies in Costa Rica.

A macro study is conducted on large but specific groups of the population. This means that in the present project, the macro corresponds to Centro Panamericano de Idiomas in San Joaquin de Flores.

Finally, if the size of the universe (population of elements under study) of the phenomenon is small, the framework is considered micro. Loría emphasized that the main goal of a micro study, is to “measure the internal product of organizations.” (2020) For that reason, the micro in this investigation corresponds to three adult groups of students aged 17 to 20 from Centro Panamericano de Idiomas.

### **3.1.4 Nature (Qualitative – Quantitative)**

The present investigation follows a qualitative and quantitative nature. Quantitative research refers to the use of numbers and statistics to analyze data. According to Streefkerk (2019) the most common instruments for quantitative data include experiments, observations

recorded as numbers, and surveys with closed-ended questions. This research is considered quantitative because observations as well as surveys with liker scales are going to be applied. These instruments generate numerical scores, allowing statistical analysis to determine a degree of improvement.

Moreover, this research has a qualitative nature which involves in-depth insights to understand population opinions and experiences. Sirsilla (2023) argued that qualitative research allows collecting data based on observations, open-ended surveys, and interview sessions. This investigation is also qualitative because it is intended to do interviews before and after the intervention to know and understand teachers experiences regarding the method.

### **3.1.5 Character (Exploratory, Descriptive, Correlational, Explanatory)**

This research is an exploratory study because according to (George, 2021) “exploratory research is a methodology approach that investigates research questions that have not previously been studied in depth”. (para. 1) . So, even though the Shadowing technique has been studied before to analyze the improvement of pronunciation skills, it has not been investigated if the technique can enhance the pronunciation of content and function words through an AI text to speech platform which is something that has been analyzed in this research.

Also, the research implements an observation and survey which aim to collect data that describe participants oral performance and perspectives regarding the method for that reason the investigation is descriptive, Bhat (n.d.) agrees with this claim in “Descriptive research is a research method describing the characteristics of the population or phenomenon studied. This descriptive methodology focuses more on the “what” of the research subject than the “why” of the research subject.” (para. 3) Additionally, it is a correlational study since the relationship between two different variables is being examined. Similarly, explained by Cherry (2023) “A correlational study is a type of research design that looks at the relationships between two or more variables.” (para. 1)

## **3.2 HYPOTHESIS**

The hypothesis of the following investigation is: Students from Centro Panamericano de Idiomas will have correct pronunciation of content and function words, after implementing the Shadowing technique along with the use of AI Text-to-Speech platform.

The independent Variable will be the application of AI Text-to-Speech platform.

The dependent Variable will be the correct pronunciation of content and function words.

## **3.3 SUBJECTS**

As a subject of study this research is to be conducted with three groups (A1.2, A2+, B2) of students aged seventeen and twenty years old who study at CPI – Centro Panamericano de Idiomas located in San Joaquin de Flores in Heredia province. Flores was chosen as the eighth canton of Heredia province by Law No. 52 on August 12, 1915. It is the smallest canton in Costa Rica, covering an area of 6.96 km<sup>2</sup>, and comprises three districts: San Joaquin, Llorente, and Barrantes. The official elementary school in San Joaquin is the United States of America School and The Liceo Regional de Flores and the Técnico Profesional de Flores are the two public high schools located in San Joaquin.

Some of these students are currently in high school while others are either working or studying at college. They have been learning English at CPI for a year and a half where they have met different teachers with varied methodologies for teaching. As soon as they started the conversational module “A2 +” it was observed that they struggle with pronunciation skills highlighting the features of English Prosody. As part of this modules, students are required to present three projects that encompasses the four linguistic skills however the main focus of the projects should be in speaking skills. This involves activities such as role plays, round tables, interviews, dialogues, podcasts, debates, among others. So, when they are participating of these

activities, there is a tendency of mispronouncing words that often results in not understanding what they mean.

### **3.3.1 Sampling– (probabilistic or non-probabilistic)**

The site for the investigation is the Centro Panamericano de Idiomas (CPI) located in San Joaquín de Flores, Heredia Province, Costa Rica. It reaches a wide range of students with programs designed for children, adolescents and adults, each with specialized curricula to meet different learning objectives. CPI emphasizes small classes, with a maximum of 13 students per group, ensuring personalized attention and a conducive learning environment. The institution typically has about thirty teachers and around two hundred students.

The study will involve 20 students aged between 16 and 25, comprising both males and females. All participants are currently at the A2 level of English proficiency. These students were selected based on their current enrollment in the A2 level classes that I teach. This selection is practical because it allows me to easily administer the instruments and monitor progress within groups I already manage.

Classes at CPI are scheduled according to students' availability, accommodating working adults and students with evening and weekend options, such as Monday and Wednesday from 7:00 to 9:00 PM, Tuesday and Thursday from 6:30 to 8:30 PM, and Saturday from 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM. Due to these varied schedules, it is not possible to choose a lot of groups because of the reduce number of schedules in which adult students tend to enroll.

The particular students selected for this study are those at the A2 level, as this is the stage where they commonly encounter pronunciation challenges. The selection was made based on my direct involvement with these groups, ensuring ease of implementation and close monitoring of the intervention. Students will be approached and recruited through a formal letter requesting their participation. Consent forms will be provided and required from all participants or their guardians, ensuring ethical standards and informed consent.

The study will take place in CPI's classrooms, equipped with whiteboards and monitors functioning as computers with internet access. Printed audio transcripts will also be utilized.

### 3.4 SOURCES OF INFORMATION

#### 3.4.1 Firsthand sources

**Table 1**

*Firsthand sources used in the research process*

<b>Authors</b>	<b>University or Organization</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Year</b>
Altamimi, A	State University of New York	Saudi Arabia	2015
Anggraini	Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika	Indonesia	2022
Jaya, H. P., Petrus, I., & Pitaloka, N. L.	Universitas Sriwijaya	Indonesia	2022
Ikhsan, M	Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat	Indonesia	2017
Manseur, R	University of Biskra	Argelia	2015

*Source:* Developed by Fiorella Zúñiga Vega (2024)

#### 3.4.2 Secondhand sources

**Table 2**

*Secondhand sources used in the research process*

<b>Autor</b>	<b>Journal article or blog</b>	<b>Year</b>
Matamoros, R	¿Estudiantes bilingües? Esto no pasará sino hasta el 20240, según el MEP.	2023

Kumar, S	Inglés para trabajar: ¿qué nivel piden en las empresas?	2024
Montero, F	Mayoría de estudiantes de último año de colegio presentan un dominio de principiante en inglés.	2023
Brooker, G	How does text-to-speech AI work?	2023
Nistor, C	Language Learning: Advantages and Disadvantages of the Traditional Methodology	2023
Lieber, K	The Importance of Pronunciation in English Language Learning	2024
Kawasaki, J	Pedagogy (TESOL/TEFL Strategies & Methodology) The Dos & Don'ts of Error Correction When Teaching English	2020
Trusler, T	Sentence Stress	2015

*Source: Developed by Fiorella Zúñiga Vega (2024)*

### 3.5 TECHNIQUES AND INSTRUMENTS

For the present investigation the researcher uses three different instruments to collect data. There is a check list to observe students' performance, an interview to analyze professors experience and opinions about the technique a survey to know about participant's perceptions at

the end of the process. It is important to mention that before applying for any instrument, the students will be formally asked through a letter for their consent to participate in the research.

The first instrument is related to the first specific objective that aims to identify the type of pronunciation of content and function words students present before and after the application of the technique. For the observation to take place, the teachers in charge of the participant groups will be suggested to implement one of the following activities:

- Dialogue: Students work in pairs or small groups to practice pre-written dialogues, focusing on fluency and the correct pronunciation of content (e.g., nouns, verbs) and function words (e.g., articles, prepositions, conjunctions).
- Short presentation: Students give a short presentation on a topic of personal interest (e.g., their hobby, favorite place, or future goals).

These activities will help the researcher to recognize if students have an appropriate pronunciation of content and function words. A rubric will be designed to categorize the pronunciation features and difficulties observed in both types of words.

This instrument was chosen to see if The Shadowing Technique with AI Text-to-Speech (TTS) technology can help students improve their pronunciation of content and function words. The idea is to know how are students are doing before starting with the intervention. This will provide a better picture of their current pronunciation skills so the results can be analyzed later.

For the second specific objective, which is to implement the Shadowing technique through the use of Play HT platform for pronunciation training, the researcher will conduct an interview to the teachers who agreed on applying the technique for one lesson. The interview will take place before and after the application to know about teacher's previous knowledge and experience regarding technological platforms and then, their perspectives of the platform after implementing The Shadowing Technique.

For the fourth objective, which aims to analyze the benefits of the technique by learning about students' perceptions regarding the platform, a survey was created. The survey will be developed through a Likert scale that contains five different choices allowing participants to select the one that best fits their perspectives. The reason for developing this instrument is that the researcher considers students' opinions valuable for reporting the final results. Better conclusions and recommendations can be made if the population's reactions towards the process are known.

### 3.6 VARIABLES CHART

**General Objective:** To determine the impact of applying the audio-lingual method through the Shadowing technique to improve pronunciation of content and function words in students from 17 to 20 years old from Centro Panamericano de Idiomas, in the III quarter 2024.

Specific Objectives	Variable	Conceptual Definition	Instrumental Definition	Operational Definition
To establish the distinctive pronunciation characteristics of content and function words the students at Centro Panamericano de idiomas have.	The distinctive pronunciation characteristics of content and function words the students have.	The way in which students pronounce content and function words when speaking.	Instrument: observation For the observation to take place, the teachers in charge of the participating groups will be suggested to implement the following activity: Popcorn Reading Activity: In this activity, students read aloud from a prepared text. After reading a passage, each	The variable is valid through this instrument if 70% of students demonstrate accurate pronunciation (as defined by the rubric) for at least 70% of the content and function words. This establishes a baseline for pronunciation characteristics.

			<p>student "passes the turn" to another student by calling out their name, ensuring all students have a chance to read aloud spontaneously.</p> <p>A checklist will be used to note key aspects of students' pronunciation, fluency, and rhythm. Anecdotal notes for further details on individual student performance may be taken.</p>	
<p>To validate the use of the Shadowing Technique using an AI Text-to-Speech platform to work on the correct pronunciation of content and function words in students from 17 to 20 years old from Centro Panamericano de Idiomas, in the III quarter 2024.</p>	<p>The use of the Shadowing technique using an AI Text-to-Speech platform to work on the correct pronunciation of content and function words.</p>	<p>The application of the Shadowing technique through the use of AI TTS platform to work on the correct pronunciation of content and function words.</p>	<p>Instrument: interview Before and after the implementation of the AI Text-to-Speech platform in their classrooms, teachers will provide critical feedback on the practical application of the technique. This interview will explore their observations regarding students' pronunciation, the usability of the platform, and any</p>	<p>The variable is valid if at least 70% of teachers interviewed report positive outcomes after the implementation of the AI Text-to-Speech platform in their classrooms. Positive outcomes include observing noticeable improvement in student's pronunciation of content and function words, finding Play HT easy to use, and facing minimal challenges in</p>

			challenges encountered. Their insights will help validate whether the technique is feasible and beneficial for improving pronunciation.	applying the Shadowing Technique.
To analyze the benefits of using Play HT AI Text-to-Speech platform to work on the correct pronunciation of content and function words in students from 17 to 20 years old from Centro Panamericano de Idiomas, in the III quarter 2024.	The paybacks the platform can have according to student's point of view.	The students' point of view of the technique during and at the end of the process.	Instrument: Survey Students will complete a survey after one session using the AI Play HT platform. It will gather students' opinions on the platform's usefulness and ease of use.  The survey will consist of both Likert-scale questions to quantify their experience.	The variable is valid if <b>80% of</b> students (at least 80 out of 100) report that the platform was useful and easy to use, selecting a positive rating (4 or 5) on the Likert scale for 70% of the survey questions.

## **CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS**

## 4.1 OBSERVATION

The first instrument applied in the investigation was a class observation. In this part, the teachers in charge of the chosen groups were asked to implement a “Popcorn-reading” activity. The activity consisted of students taking turns to read aloud from a text titled “The Importance of Exercise for Health”. After reading the passage, each student passed the turn to another student by calling out their name, ensuring all students have a chance to read aloud spontaneously. Students were told to read at a comfortable pace. During this activity, the researcher was taking advantage of observing certain behaviors that are explored below.

### 4.1.1 Group B2

Aspect	Observed Behaviors	Yes	No
<b>Pronunciation of Content Words</b>	Consistently pronounces content words clearly and with correct stress.		<b>X</b>
	Occasionally mispronounces or mis-stresses content words but remains mostly accurate.		<b>X</b>
	Frequently mispronounces content words or places stress incorrectly.	<b>X</b>	

In the first aspect, regarding the pronunciation of content words, it was observed that the students did not place the correct stress on these words. Although very few words were mispronounced, their intonation during the reading aloud activity was mostly flat. For example, in the sentence, “*Regular physical activity can reduce the risk of many serious diseases, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and certain cancers,*” words such as risk, reduce, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, certain cancers should have been emphasized but were not. There were no pauses or pitch variations, which made the text sound monotonous and unengaging, despite containing valuable information about the importance of exercise for health.

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Observed Behaviors</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Pronunciation of Function Words</b>	Function words are reduced appropriately with clear pronunciation when needed; smooth flow of speech.	<b>X</b>	
	Occasionally omits or overemphasizes function words, slightly disrupting speech flow.		<b>X</b>
	Rarely reduces function words or overemphasizes them, which affects speech flow.		<b>X</b>

In the second aspect regarding the pronunciation of function words it was observed that the students neither omitted nor overemphasized function words. The speech flow was always the same with no pitch variations.

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Observed Behaviors</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Fluency and Speech Rhythm</b>	Speech is fluid with natural rhythm, effectively balancing content and function words.		<b>X</b>
	Speech generally flows well, with minor hesitations or rhythm inconsistencies.	<b>X</b>	
	Speech is frequently hesitant or choppy, with noticeable rhythm issues.		<b>X</b>

In the third aspect of fluency and speech rhythm it was observed that even if there were minor rhythm inconsistencies, the students did not have a choppy speech. The students took turns to read the different paragraphs presented in the reading so even if they were reading at a different time, they tried to maintain a fluent speech.

### 4.1.2 Group A2+

Aspect	Observed Behaviors	Yes	No
<b>Pronunciation of Content Words</b>	Consistently pronounces content words clearly and with correct stress.		<b>X</b>
	Occasionally mispronounces or mis-stresses content words but remains mostly accurate.		<b>X</b>
	Frequently mispronounces content words or places stress incorrectly.	<b>X</b>	

During the Popcorn-reading activity, the A2+ students encountered the sentence, “Endorphins are chemicals in the brain that improve mood and reduce stress.” As beginners, they struggle with both pronunciation and word stress, particularly with content words.

For example, when reading “endorphins”, the word was pronounced as “EN-dor-fins” instead of the correct intonation “en-DOR-phins.” Similarly, “chemicals” was pronounced as “che-mi-CALS” rather than “CHEM-i-cals.”

Aspect	Observed Behaviors	Yes	No
<b>Pronunciation of Function Words</b>	Function words are reduced appropriately with clear pronunciation when needed; smooth flow of speech.		<b>X</b>
	Occasionally omits or overemphasizes function words, slightly disrupting speech flow.	<b>X</b>	
	Rarely reduces function words or overemphasizes them, which affects speech flow.		<b>X</b>

Function words were occasionally over emphasized during the reading activity. For example, in the previously mentioned sentence *“Endorphins are chemicals in the brain that improve mood and reduce stress.”* The students placed more stress on the prepositions, articles, and conjunctions such as “in”, “the”, “that”, and “and.” Also in the sentence, *“Even a simple daily walk in the fresh air can lift a person’s mood and provide a sense of relaxation.”* They emphasized the words “a”, “in”, “the”, “and”, “of”.

Aspect	Observed Behaviors	Yes	No
<b>Fluency and Speech Rhythm</b>	Speech is fluid with natural rhythm, effectively balancing content and function words.		<b>X</b>
	Speech generally flows well, with minor hesitations or rhythm inconsistencies.		<b>X</b>
	Speech is frequently hesitant or choppy, with noticeable rhythm issues.	<b>X</b>	

In regards to the fluency and pronunciation, the A2+ group had a very choppy speech and a slow pace. Their delivery lacked natural flow, as they frequently paused to read and articulate each word. In short sentences like *“Exercise helps to control weight by burning calories and improving the body’s metabolism.”* Their delivery sounded like, *“Exercise... helps... to... control... weight... by burning... calories... and ... improving... the... body’s... metabolism.”*

### 4.1.3 Group A1-2

Aspect	Observed Behaviors	Yes	No
<b>Pronunciation of Content Words</b>	Consistently pronounces content words clearly and with correct stress.		<b>X</b>
	Occasionally mispronounces or mis-stresses content words but remains mostly accurate.		<b>X</b>
	Frequently mispronounces content words or places stress incorrectly.	<b>X</b>	

Content words were frequently mis-stressed and mispronounced in the A1-2 group. For example, in sentences like “*but they may not realize how truly important it is for overall well-being.*” Their intonation was flat with little emphasis on words like “realize” “truly” “important” and, “well-being”. Also, the word “realize” was pronounced as “release.”

Aspect	Observed Behaviors	Yes	No
<b>Pronunciation of Function Words</b>	Function words are reduced appropriately with clear pronunciation when needed; smooth flow of speech.		<b>X</b>
	Occasionally omits or overemphasizes function words, slightly disrupting speech flow.	<b>X</b>	
	Rarely reduces function words or overemphasizes them, which affects speech flow.		<b>X</b>

The A1-2 students occasionally overemphasized some function words during the activity. In the sentence, “*Exercise helps to control weight by burning calories and improving the body’s metabolism.*” The students placed more stress on the words, “to”, “by”, and “and”.

Aspect	Observed Behaviors	Yes	No
<b>Fluency and Speech Rhythm</b>	Speech is fluid with natural rhythm, effectively balancing content and function words.		<b>X</b>
	Speech generally flows well, with minor hesitations or rhythm inconsistencies.		<b>X</b>
	Speech is frequently hesitant or choppy, with noticeable rhythm issues.	<b>X</b>	

In terms of the fluency and speech rhythm it was observed that students' speech was not smooth. They struggled to maintain a consistent rhythm, as their delivery tended to sound segment and they also spoke at a slow pace.

## 4.2 INTERVIEW

	Group B2 Teacher	Group A2+ Teacher	Group A1-2 Teacher
1. How many years have you been teaching?	The teacher in charge of the B2 group answered that she had been teaching for almost a year and a half. The teacher did not extend over her answer.	The teacher in charge of the A2+ group shared that he has been teaching around nine to ten years.	The teacher in charge of the A1.2 group shared that he had been teaching for three years.
2. Have you worked in both public and private institutions?	She had only worked at private institutions. She did not extend over her answer.	He has worked in both public and private.	He had only worked in private institutions but he has also completed internships at public institutions.
3. Have you taught in formal settings (such as schools or high schools) and informal settings (like	She explained that she had been working on informal settings including "New School Institute" and "CPI."	The teacher explained that he had work in both settings, he worked at Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje but most part of his career has	He had worked in both settings, private high schools and language institutions.

language institutes)?		been in private institutions including schools and language institutions.	
4. Which teaching methods or techniques do you typically use?	The teacher explained that she prioritizes the use of the Action-Oriented Approach as she was taught at its impact and the practicality during her university studies that focused on MEP'S perspective of learning languages.	The teacher highlighted the use of role-play activities with different background scenarios to immerse students in contextualized language practice. Additionally, he integrates interactive games like Kahoot, Quizzis, Wordwall to make learning engaging in a way that feels innovative and different from traditional methods, fostering active participation.	The teacher expressed that he tends to focus on the immersion method because it encourages students to speak in English.
5. Have you had any experience using technology-based tools or platforms to enhance pronunciation or language learning?	She said that she does use technology for language learning, mentioning tools such as Wordwall and Padlet. She mentioned that she had found a website called "Survey Nuts" which she has been using in her classes for her students to create surveys.	He stated that while he integrates technology for general language skills, he has no prior experience using technological platforms specifically to enhance pronunciation.	In terms of apps, he admitted to not having any experience. However, he relies on platforms such as YouTube or Spotify, to incorporate videos into his classes or use songs for listening exercises.
6. What challenges or benefits do you see in the current study program you use?	Regarding the study program she uses, she explained that having to use a book during the lessons is a somewhat complicated, as it does not provide an "answer key" to	The teacher sees the implementation of diverse activities as a benefit because they help break the routine and make language learning more engaging for students. However,	The teacher explained that a significant challenge of the program is that it requires to use a book during the lessons, the majority of exercises are repetitive which

	<p>check and solve the exercises. She highlighted that even if you are teacher with a good level of English, there is always the possibility of making mistakes. In addition, she noted that several exercises are sort of ineffective, according to her. However, she considers the advanced vocabulary included in the reading passages a benefit, as it allows her to implement reading-aloud activities through which students can practice and improve their pronunciation. She also finds the listening exercises particularly engaging.</p>	<p>he also identifies a challenge in his teaching approach; the lack of focused pronunciation practice.</p>	<p>forces him to look for additional activities to make the class more interactive. However, he acknowledged that one benefit of using the book is that it serves as a guide for determining which topics should be taught. He also mentioned that some suggested activities at the end of each book unit are effective.</p>
<p>7. Would you be willing to try the AI Play HT platform in one of your lessons?</p>	<p>The teacher answered that she would not only be willing to try the PlayHT platform but also plans to continue using it as she recognizes the potential impact the tool could have.</p>	<p>The teacher expressed that implementing the Play HT platform could be a good idea as he noticed the interesting feature of using the platform to show the pronunciation of difficult words like “schedule” that it was a word students struggle with during the practice.</p>	<p>According to the teacher, he would “completely” try the platform because he noticed a significant improvement by the end of the practice compared to the beginning.</p>
<p>8. Did you face any challenges</p>	<p>She did not face any challenge while</p>	<p>He emphasized not facing any challenge</p>	<p>The teacher mentioned that, given</p>

(technical or pedagogical) while using the AI Text-to-Speech platform?	using the Text to Speech platform.	while using the platform.	the students' lower English proficiency, the generated audios were a slightly too fast for the them to follow.
9. Were there any difficulties for the students in following the Shadowing Technique with the platform?	She expressed that the platform itself did not represent a difficulty for the students in following the practice; rather, the challenge lay in their lack of familiarity with the Shadowing technique.	The teacher shared that the audios were "very fast" for the students to follow so even if they tried to match the pace it was difficult for them to mimic the AI voice.	The teacher stated that students struggle to follow the path of the practice.
10. Do you think Shadowing Technique could be effective by improving the students' pronunciation of content and function words? Why yes or no?	The teacher explained that she believes the Shadowing technique, combined with the Play HT platform, could be effective in improving the pronunciation of content and function words. She highlighted the platform's feature of providing natural-sounding voices with good intonation, placing the correct stress on content and function words.	The teacher stated that if the Shadowing technique includes the content they really like, it could be effective in improving student's pronunciation of content and function words.	According to the teacher, content and function words pronunciation could be improved with the Shadowing Technique due to its method, which allows students to listen correct pronunciation and so they can correct any mistakes they make.
11. Are there any other tools or techniques you would recommend for enhancing pronunciation?	She said that she would recommend "core reading" and implementing individual practice to see who is making progress.	The teacher admitted that he did not have any specific tool or technique in mind to recommend.	The teacher shared what he considers a "personal technique" that he likes to recommend to his students: watching the show Friends. He explained that, as the show features six

			characters with distinct personalities, students can focus on each character's speech to observe how they speak in a more native-like manner, thereby improving pronunciation.
12. How did students respond to using the AI platform for pronunciation practice? (e.g., motivated, neutral, disengaged)	The teacher expressed that student's respond was neutral, likely due to the researcher's presence during the practice, which caused them to feel shy and confused.	In the teacher's opinions they seemed neutral at the beginning and during the pronunciation practice.	The teacher observed that the student's reactions to the practice went through different stages. At first, they appeared nervous and uncomfortable, but as the practice progressed, they seemed motivated to continue. By the end, they looked pleased and somewhat proud of the progress they had made in successfully following the practice.
13. How was your overall teaching experience using the AI Text-to-Speech platform with your student's learning experience?	She said that it was a positive experience, thanks to the organization of the Shadowing practice, which included a step-by-step guide. Additionally, she noted the valuable effort students made during the practice to mimic the intonation of the AI voices. In her words, "they were kind of lost but they tried and I liked it because I saw	He expressed that he enjoyed the experience as the platform was "user-friendly"	He summarized his overall experience using Play HT as good and that he would like to use it again.

	effort which is something that as a teacher you really are looking for.”		
14. Did you find it easy to integrate the Shadowing Technique in your teaching style with the AI text to speech into your regular lessons?	The teacher emphasized that it was “pretty easy” like any other tool.	The teacher stated that it was very easy to integrate the Shadowing Technique through the Play HT platform.	For the teacher, incorporating the Shadowing Technique into his regular lessons was not difficult. He described his teaching style as “flexible,” which allows him to adapt easily to any new technique or tool introduced in the classroom.
15. Based on your experience, what changes or improvements would you suggest for future implementation of this method?	The teacher recommended incorporating a “warm up” activity to help develop the method. She suggested introducing the concept of intonation first, so students become aware of the key elements they need to listen to and then mimic. Furthermore, she emphasized that explaining the Shadowing technique afterward would enhance students’ understanding and maximize the benefits of the practice.	For future implementation the teacher suggested focusing the technique on topics and vocabulary that students enjoy and are familiar with, to enhance their engagement in the process.	The teacher suggested it would be beneficial to introduce the Shadowing technique as an individual practice students could complete as homework before coming to class. This approach would help students become familiar with the practice and feel more comfortable during the Shadowing sessions.
16. Would you recommend continuing the use of AI Text-to-Speech platforms	She responded that she would definitely recommend it. She mentioned that the Play HT guide	The teacher stated that he would recommend the platform because of the variety of	The teacher shared that he would recommend using AI text-to-speech platforms to enhance

<p>for teaching pronunciation? Why or why not?</p>	<p>provided to her key in helping her understand how to use the tool and explore its interesting features, such as the variety of voice options and the differences between them. Thanks to this guide, she now feels confident about implementing the platform in her classes.</p>	<p>features it offers. He said “The different accents of AI voices expose students to the various pronunciations used by native speakers. It’s like having different teachers in one class, introducing them to diverse intonations.”</p>	<p>students’ pronunciation. However, he highlighted that implementing the platform weekly would not be ideal, as it could become repetitive. Instead, he said suggested using it twice a month, ensuring it incorporates different vocabulary each time.</p>
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The three interviews conducted indicate that the teachers have different years of experience, but all have worked exclusively in private institutions throughout their careers. Is necessary to note that, while they have implemented technological tools into class for language learning, they have not tried any tool for teaching pronunciation. This emphasizes the lack of pronunciation instruction for A1-2, A2+, and B2 students, which could explain their struggles with proper intonation and pronunciation overall.

In addition, the teacher’s responses revealed that their experience and perspective on the Shadowing Technique through Play HT were highly positive. They expressed interest in using the platform again as well as recommending it to others. All of them appeared engaged and motivated when implementing the platform. Therefore, it can be said that based on the interviews, the teachers view Play HT as a good alternative for teaching pronunciation, helping students improve their performance in oral activities.

Moreover, the teachers highlighted that incorporating Play HT into their classes provided a fresh and dynamic approach to pronunciation practice. They noticed that students were more willing to participate in oral activities due to the interactive and accessible nature of the platform. This increased engagement suggests that digital tools like Play HT can bridge the gap in pronunciation instruction by offering consistent practice opportunities. As a result, teachers believe that integrating such platforms into their regular teaching routines could enhance

students' speaking skills, fostering greater confidence and fluency in real-life communication scenarios.

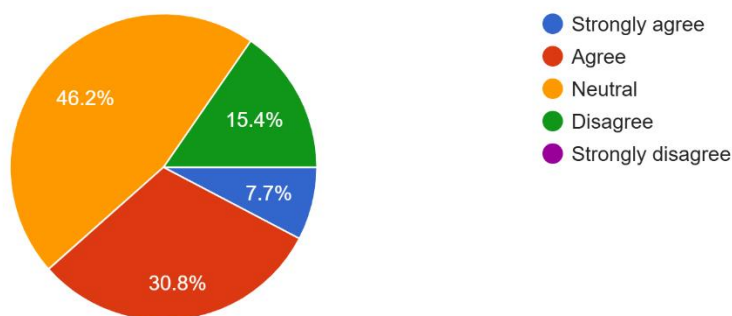
### 4.3 SURVEY

#### Graph 1

Play HT ease of use

1. The AI Text-to-Speech platform Play HT was easy to use.

13 respuestas



*Source: Developed by Fiorella Zúñiga Vega (2024)*

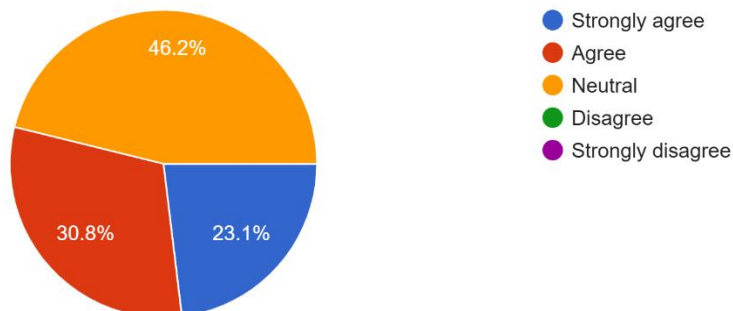
The graph above represents responses from 13 participants of the A1.2, A2+, and B2 groups about the usability of the Play HT platform. The responses are divided into five categories: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. According to the graph, only one participant (7.7%) strongly agreed that Play HT was easy to use, indicating a limited strong enthusiasm for the platform's usability. A significant portion of students (46.2%) agreed that the platform was easy to use, showing general satisfaction. About one-third (30.8%) had a neutral position, suggesting no strong opinion about the platform's ease of use. Two students (15.4%) found the platform challenging to use, highlighting potential areas for improvement in user-friendliness. None of the participants strongly disagreed.

## Graph 2

### Students Feedback on the Clarity of Examples Provided by the Play HT AI Platform

2. The AI platform Play HT gave clear examples that I could follow easily.

13 respuestas



*Source: Developed by Fiorella Zúñiga Vega (2024)*

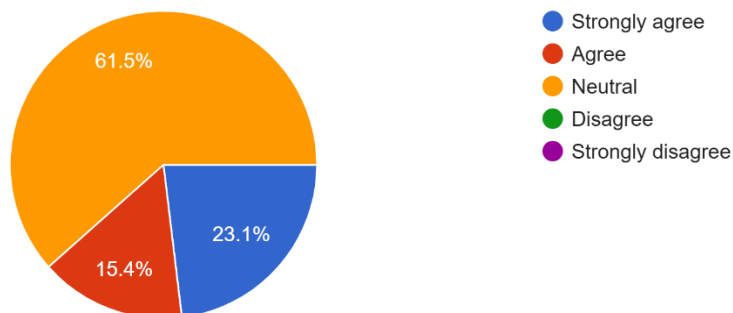
The data displayed shows that 53,9% of the students (combining the ones who strongly agree and agree) found the examples provided by the Play HT platform to be clear and easy to follow. However, the 46,2% neutral responses indicate the examples may not have stood out for some participants.

## Graph 3

### Students Willingness to Recommend Play HT for Future Pronunciation Exercises

3. I would recommend the AI Text-to-Speech platform Play HT for future pronunciation exercises.

13 respuestas



*Source: Developed by Fiorella Zúñiga Vega (2024)*

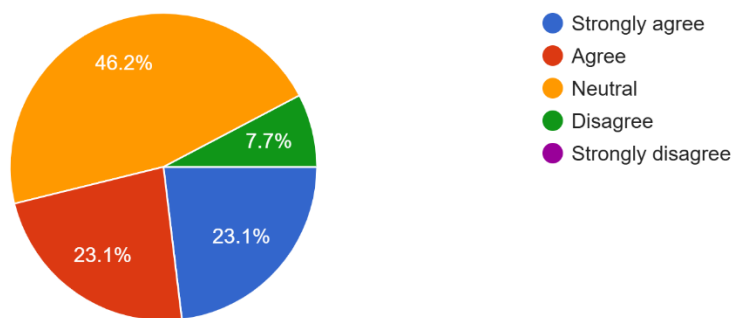
The data indicates that while 38,5 of respondents (strongly agree and agree combined) would recommend the Play HT platform for future pronunciation exercises, a significant majority (61.5%) expressed neutrality.

#### Graph 4

##### Perceptions of the Shadowing Technique's Impact on Pronouncing Content Words

4. I think that by using the Shadowing Technique constantly I could improve my pronunciation of content words (e.g., nouns, verbs).

13 respuestas



*Source: Developed by Fiorella Zúñiga Vega (2024)*

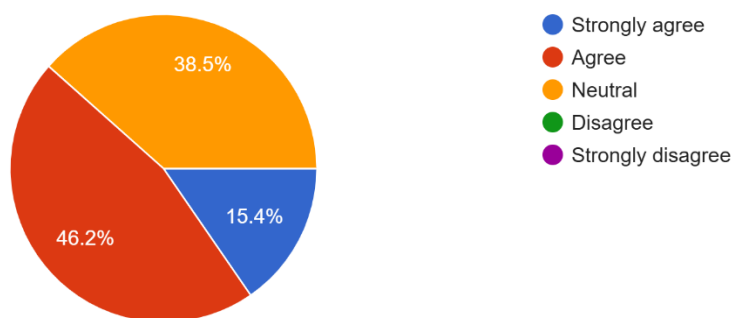
In the graph above while 46.2% of respondents expressed neutrality, suggesting some uncertainty about the effectiveness of the Shadowing Technique. 46.2% of the students (combining strongly agree and agree) believed that it could help improve their pronunciation of Content words. The 7.7% who disagreed with the statement represents a minority.

**Graph 5**

## Perceptions of the Shadowing Technique's Impact on Pronouncing Function Words

5. I think that by using the Shadowing Technique constantly I could improve my pronunciation of function words (e.g., articles, prepositions).

13 respuestas



Source: Developed by Fiorella Zúñiga Vega (2024)

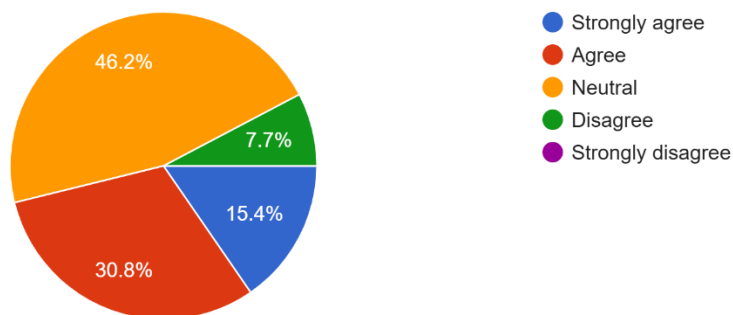
A combined 61.6% of respondents (strongly agree and agree) expressed confidence in the Shadowing Technique improving their pronunciation of Function words. However, 38.5% remained neutral. No participants neither disagree nor strongly disagree with the statement.

**Graph 6**

## Perceptions of AI Play HT Platform's Role in Building Speaking Confidence

6. I think that by using AI Play HT platform constantly I could feel more confident in my speaking abilities.

13 respuestas



Source: Developed by Fiorella Zúñiga Vega (2024)

In the graph above, 46.2% of participants remained neutral but, a total of 46.2% (combining strongly agree and agree) believe that using the AI Play HT platform could help improve their speaking confidence. Only 7.7% of the participants disagreed with the statement and no participants strongly disagreed.

## **CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## 5.1 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter aims to present the final conclusions that were drawn according to the theory discussed and the research objectives. It also seeks to answer the research question posed in first chapter to determine whether the main goal of the investigation was achieved.

Based on the specific objectives that guided the course of this investigation, important conclusions can be drawn. The first specific objective, which was “To establish the distinctive pronunciation characteristics of content and function words in students from 17 to 20 years old from Centro Panamericano de Idiomas, in the III quarter 2024,” was addressed using the first instrument (class observation). Three observations were conducted with a total of thirteenth students: three students from B2, four students from A2+, and six students from A1.2.

It is necessary to mention that some students from the already mentioned groups were absent the day the instruments were applied. This affected the analysis to some extent, as it was not possible to observe all the students as initially planned. However, despite the incomplete groups, the planned activities were successfully carried out. All groups participated in a Popcorn-reading aloud activity, where they took turns reading at a comfortable pace from a text titled “The Importance of Exercise for Health.”

This text included a variety of both content and function words, allowing students to practice differentiating stress patterns. To analyze their performance more effectively, a checklist was used as evaluation. This checklist helped observe whether students placed the necessary stress on content words and avoided stressing function words.

The findings revealed that in all three groups, the content words were not emphasized correctly, resulting in a flat intonation with no pitch variation. This suggests that students require further practice and instruction to enhance their intonation accuracy when reading aloud. However, the results differed for function words. The B2 group demonstrated excellent and accurate intonation, with function words never being overemphasized. In contrast, the A1-2 and A2+ group struggled with proper intonation of function words, occasionally overemphasizing

them. This indicates that overemphasis on function words is a common challenge for learners at lower proficiency levels.

In addition, the B2 group demonstrated generally fluent speech with minor hesitations. In comparison, the A1-2 and A2+ showed choppy speech, resulting in noticeable rhythm issues. Therefore, it can be said that the observation successfully helped identify the pronunciation characteristics of content and function words within the groups.

The second objective was: “To validate the use of the Shadowing Technique using an AI Text-to-Speech platform to work on the correct pronunciation of content and function words in students from 17 to 20 years old from Centro Panamericano de Idiomas, in the III quarter 2024.” The application of the Shadowing technique using Play HT to work on the correct pronunciation was validated through teacher interviews. Before the interviews, the teachers responsible for the groups were provided with a “Shadowing through Play HT guide” to familiarize them with the platform, the steps for conducting the Shadowing practice, and the required materials. This guide ensured the teachers understood the activity’s objective and could implement the platform effectively with their students. The Shadowing practice lasted approximately thirty minutes, after which the interviews began.

The interview questions addressed various aspects, such as the teacher’s general experience, impact of pronunciation, usability, perception of students’ engagement, and suggestions for improvement. Their teaching experience ranged from 1.5 to 10 years which did not interfere in their confidence or adaptability in adopting new methods. Also, their experience in diverse teaching settings provided them with varied perspectives on implementing innovative techniques like Shadowing.

In regards of the teaching methods, all teachers emphasized interactive and practical approaches: Teacher of B2 group used the Action-Oriented Approach by her academic background; teacher of A2+ group focused on role-play and gamification; and teacher of A1-2 group highlighted immersion techniques aiming at fostering conversational fluency. This diversity underscored the teacher’s flexibility in integrating Shadowing into their existing

methodologies. However, prior experience with pronunciation-focused tools was generally limited.

In terms of program and platform adoption, all three teachers expressed willingness to implement Play HT, appreciating its potential for improving pronunciation. Teachers of A2+ and A1-2 noted that while the platform effectively addressed challenging words, the audio speed occasionally posed issues for their groups. Nonetheless, they recognized the opportunity for measurable improvements.

All teachers expressed confidence in the effectiveness of Shadowing for improving pronunciation, specifically in the intonation of content and function words. Teacher of B2 group complimented the natural-sounding AI voices and their accurate stress patterns. Teacher of A2+ highlighted its potential if the content matched the learners' interests. Teacher of A1-2 group put particular emphasis on measurable improvement during practice, but he pointed out the importance of matching the practice to learners' proficiency levels.

In conclusion, the interviews validated the Shadowing technique using Play HT as an effective tool for enhancing pronunciation of content and function words.

The third objective, "To analyze the benefits of using Play HT AI Text-to-Speech platform to work on the correct pronunciation of content and function words in students from 17 to 20 years old from Centro Panamericano de Idiomas, in the III quarter 2024." Was addressed through survey. The survey included seven close-ended questions designed to gather students' honest opinions on the Shadowing technique potential to improve pronunciation and the use of Play HT platform. As previously mentioned, the number of participants answering the survey was a total of thirteen students as some students were absent the day the instruments were applied. Initially, the population number included eighteen students and while the reduced number did not affect the process, it limited the data available for analysis.

The thirteen students across A1-2, A2+, and B2 groups completed the survey through a Google Forms link. Most participants found the platform user-friendly. However, some noted

lack of standout features suggesting a need for better navigation or clearer instructions. Feedback on the clarity of the example sentences was neutral, indicating they may not have been engaging or they were contextually relevant. This aligns with teacher 2's suggestion to include examples tailored to students' interests.

It is worth noting that the teachers were the only ones introduced to the platform's full features. This may be the reason why a significant portion of the participants remained neutral regarding whether they would recommend the platform. As students only observed their teacher using the platform, its perceived value might not have been fully communicated.

Student perception of the Shadowing technique's effectiveness in improving pronunciation of content and function words were divided between positive and neutral. This balance suggests that while the technique benefits some students, others may need additional guidance or practice to recognize its advantages.

Finally, the students did not strongly believe that using the platform could improve their speaking confidence. This means that Play HT may not effectively demonstrate its potential to boost confidence.

The research question posed was: What is the impact of using the AI Text-to-Speech platform in conjunction with the Audio-lingual Method and Shadowing Technique to improve pronunciation of content and function words in students aged 17 to 20 at Centro Panamericano de Idiomas, in the III quarter 2024?

Based on the discussed theory and data gathered from students and teachers at Centro Panamericano de Idiomas, combining the AI Text-to-Speech platform (Play HT), the Audio-lingual Method, and the Shadowing Technique can have a significant positive impact on improving the pronunciation of content and function words. The natural-sounding AI voices provided by Play HT proved to be a reliable model for students to shadow, making it a useful tool to do Shadowing practice without requiring content from real speakers.

According to teachers, despite the limited practice time and students' unfamiliarity with the method, noticeable changes were observed in students' speech, improvements in pace, word-stress, and pronunciation. Moreover, the repetitive and focused practice encouraged by the Audio-Lingual Method reinforced the effectiveness of the Shadowing activities.

This suggests that Shadowing through Play HT can complement teaching methods and facilitate the learning process. Although, this approach has areas for improvement, such as tailoring practices to different proficiency levels, providing more instruction, and aligning content with learners' interests, the overall results indicate the valuable impact that Shadowing, AI Text-to-Speech platforms, and the Audio-lingual Method can have on students' pronunciation skills.

This research concludes that the studied theory and the results obtained provide valuable insights for the teaching of English as a second language. The Shadowing Technique, developed by Alexander Arguelles, emerges as an effective alternative for instructing pronunciation skills in the class. Furthermore, AI platforms like Play HT prove to be useful tools that can complement language learning techniques.

Mastering pronunciation skills may be a challenging task for many English Language learners. However, discovering and utilizing different techniques, apps, platforms, or AI tools such as those proposed in this investigation, can support both teachers striving to help students improve their speaking skills and students seeking to enhance and perfect their language learning process.

## **5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the following section, important recommendations for future investigation are listed below based of the result analysis and conclusions of the research.

- a) Before implementing the Shadowing practice, teachers were provided with a step-by-step guide to conduct the activity. However, some teachers did not have the time to review the

document which required the researcher to explain the process again before starting the activity. For this reason, it is recommended to conduct a Shadowing workshop for teachers either virtually or in person, to ensure they fully understand the activity and how to implement it in advance.

- b) Play HT is a platform that requires internet connection to generate audio files. Therefore, when planning to use the platform, it is recommended to generate the audio files in advance, download them, and save them in a file for offline use. This precaution was implemented during the research; however, it was fortunately not necessary, as the platform worked perfectly.
- c) Considering one of the teachers' suggestions, it could be beneficial to provide students with prior instruction on the vocabulary, grammar or pronunciation features they need to focus on during the Shadowing session. This preparation would help them be more aware of the details they need to pay attention to while imitating. This recommendation arises because students were not previously taught about intonation or the distinction between content and function words which made it challenging for them to identify and follow stress pattern.
- d) Another essential recommendation is to conduct the Shadowing technique using content that students enjoy and are familiar with. This approach can make the practice more engaging and easier for them. Teachers could ask students about the favorite movies, songs, or tv shows and use this information to create personalized texts as input for the Play HT platform.
- e) This research was developed in a language institute that prioritizes smaller groups, considering them beneficial for the learning process. As a result, larger groups were not available to participate in the investigation. Therefore, for future research involving the Shadowing technique, it could be better to include larger groups with at least eight to ten students to enable a more comprehensive analysis.

- f) Since the research was conducted at a language institution with a schedule of four hours per week, it could be valuable to implement it in a different setting such as a public or private high school where a broader schedule might allow for more extensive Shadowing sessions.
  
- g) Before the Shadowing sessions, the students participated in reading-aloud exercises where they took turns reading. During this activity, it was observed that the B2 group demonstrated a generally accurate pronunciation with minimal errors. On the other hand, both the A1.2 and A2+ groups struggled significantly with the pronunciation of many words and intonation. Consequently, when the Shadowing session began, the B2 group was able to follow the practice effectively, while the beginner-level groups needed more time to grasp the dynamics of the activity. Therefore, the Shadowing Technique appears to be more effective with advanced proficiency levels, which could be an interesting focus for future research.

**CHAPTER VI:**  
**PROPOSAL**

## **6.1 NAME OF THE PROPOSAL**

The name of the proposal for this investigation is “Enhancing English Intonation of Content and Function Words by Implementing Personalized Lessons that integrate the Shadowing Technique through Play HT” This project addresses the challenges observed during the research such as student’s difficulties in stressing content words correctly and the need for better engagement through relevant content.

## **6.2 DESCRIPTION**

The proposal aims to implement personalized shadowing sessions using Play HT to enhance student’s pronunciation of Content and Function words. The sessions are meant to be tailored to student’s proficiency levels and interests, ensuring their engagement and the method’s effectiveness. The Shadowing Sessions should be developed in ten lessons and should last one hour each. The proposal also seeks to provide the necessary training to implement the Shadowing sessions effectively.

## **6.3 PLACE TO BE DEVELOPED**

This research is suggested to be developed at Centro Panamericano de Idiomas (CPI) located in San Joaquín de Flores with students who are learning English at intermediate levels such as B1 or B2. This institution provides the necessary tools including internet connection and computer devices to access Play HT platform which facilitated the application of this proposal.

## **6.4 ORGANIZATION**

CPI is a language institution founded in 1991. It offers various modalities for students of different ages who seek to learn English for academic, professional, and

personal purposes. The researcher interested in carrying out this proposal is welcome to implement it once the academic coordination department has been consulted.

## **6.5 INVOLVED POPULATION**

The suggested population encompasses students from Centro Panamericano Idiomas who are enrolled in intermediate-level courses.

## **6.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE PROPOSAL**

### **6.6.1 General Objective**

To improve English Language learners' pronunciation of Content and Function words by implementing personalized lessons with the Shadowing Technique using Play HT.

### **6.6.2 Specific Objectives**

1. To design lesson plans that integrate personalized content based on students' proficiency levels and interests.
2. To train teachers in using the Shadowing Technique with Play HT to enhance classroom engagement and pronunciation outcomes.
3. To analyze the impact of personalized lessons on students' ability to differentiate and stress content and function words correctly.

## 6.7 CHRONOGRAM OF ACTIVITIES

<b>Lesson</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Objective</b>
1	Teacher Training: Overview of the Shadowing Technique and Play HT. Hands-on practice using the platform.	Ensure teachers understand the methodology and can effectively guide students.
2	Pre-Implementation Setup: Teachers finalize sentence sets and audio settings in Play HT. Discuss session flow and goals.	Prepare teachers to create tailored lessons and audios for shadowing sessions.
3	Pre-Test Pronunciation Activity (Students): Students participate on the popcorn-reading activity with a text that talks about a topic of students' interest.	Identify students' pronunciation challenges with content and function words.
4	Shadowing Practice 1: Introduce shadowing with Play HT. Students practice basic sentences with the generated audios.	Build familiarity with shadowing and improve pronunciation of simple sentences.
5	Shadowing Practice 2: Focus on intonation and sentence stress with other set of sentences. Reinforce learning through repetition.	Enhance intonation and stress recognition using Play HT-generated sentences.

6	Shadowing Practice 3: Practice with longer sentences	Improve fluency and the ability to replicate natural speech patterns.
7	Mid-Implementation Review: Group discussion on challenges and successes. Teachers provide feedback.	Address student and teacher concerns to refine following sessions.
8	Shadowing Practice 4: Shadowing practice with personalized short paragraphs.	Apply shadowing skills in contextually relevant, practical situations.
9	Post-Test Pronunciation Activity (Students): Apply post-test (previous popcorn-reading text) to assess improvements.	Evaluate progress and compare with the pre-test results to measure the effectiveness of shadowing.
10	Final Feedback and Reflection: Discuss progress and share results with students and teachers.	Reflect on learning outcomes and gather insights for future improvement.

*Source:* Developed by Fiorella Zúñiga Vega (2024)

## 6.8 BUDGET FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION

This proposal does not require any budget but it does require time and willingness to create all the resources needed such as texts, sentence sets, and any other guidance material for teachers to be able to apply the research effectively.

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