



**UNIVERSIDAD ESTATAL PENÍNSULA
DE SANTA ELENA
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INSTITUTO DE POSTGRADO**

TÍTULO DEL TRABAJO

SHADOWING TECHNIQUE TO IMPROVE ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION IN A2-
LEVEL YOUNG LEARNERS

AUTORA

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Silvia Verónica Cumbal Toapanta

DEDICATORIA

I dedicate this work, first and foremost, to myself for believing in my abilities, for not giving up in the face of challenges, and for proving that perseverance and effort make it possible to achieve one's goals.

I especially dedicate this achievement to my daughter, Aylín Rodríguez, for her patience, understanding, and unconditional support throughout every moment that required her help. May this work serve as an example for her of perseverance, self-improvement, and the belief that there are no limits when dreams are pursued with love and determination.

Silvia Verónica Cumbal Toapanta

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Resumen

El presente trabajo analiza la efectividad de la técnica shadowing para mejorar la pronunciación del idioma inglés en estudiantes jóvenes de nivel A2 dentro del contexto de la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) en Ecuador. El objetivo principal es analizar los fundamentos teóricos y pedagógicos del método shadowing y presentar una propuesta didáctica estructurada que contribuya al desarrollo de la pronunciación, la fluidez oral y la comprensión auditiva en aprendices jóvenes.

La investigación se desarrolla mediante un enfoque documental y bibliográfico, basado en la revisión crítica de literatura científica publicada entre los años 2020 y 2025, así como en el análisis de documentos curriculares nacionales y estudios internacionales relacionados con la enseñanza de la pronunciación y el aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras. Los resultados evidencian que la pronunciación continúa siendo una de las áreas menos atendidas en el contexto educativo ecuatoriano debido a limitaciones metodológicas, falta de formación docente y escasos recursos tecnológicos.

Como respuesta a esta problemática, se presenta una propuesta pedagógica basada en un programa estructurado de shadowing, diseñado para integrarse de manera flexible en clases regulares de inglés mediante actividades progresivas de escucha, imitación, práctica guiada y retroalimentación formativa. Se concluye que esta técnica constituye una alternativa viable, contextualizada y de bajo costo para fortalecer la inteligibilidad, los elementos segmentales y suprasegmentales del habla, así como la confianza comunicativa de los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: 3 palabras

1. **Shadowing:** técnica de aprendizaje en la que el estudiante escucha y repite un modelo oral casi simultáneamente para mejorar pronunciación y fluidez.
2. **Pronunciación:** producción adecuada de sonidos, ritmo y entonación que permite la comprensión efectiva del discurso oral.

3. **Aprendices jóvenes:** estudiantes en etapa escolar que desarrollan habilidades lingüísticas dentro del contexto educativo formal.

Abstract

This study analyzes the effectiveness of the shadowing technique to improve English pronunciation in A2-level young learners within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education in Ecuador. The main objective is to examine the theoretical and pedagogical foundations of shadowing and to present a structured instructional proposal aimed at enhancing pronunciation, oral fluency, and listening comprehension skills.

The research follows a documentary and bibliographical approach based on the critical review of academic literature published between 2020 and 2025, as well as national curriculum documents and international studies related to pronunciation instruction and foreign language learning. Findings indicate that pronunciation remains one of the most neglected components of English language teaching in Ecuador due to methodological limitations, insufficient teacher training, and restricted technological resources.

As a response to this issue, the study proposes a structured shadowing-based pedagogical program designed to be flexibly integrated into regular English lessons through progressive listening, imitation, guided practice, and formative feedback activities. The study concludes that shadowing represents a feasible, context-sensitive, and low-cost strategy to improve intelligibility, segmental and suprasegmental features of speech, and learners' communicative confidence.

Key words: 3 words

Shadowing:

A language learning technique in which learners listen to an oral model and repeat it almost simultaneously in order to improve pronunciation, rhythm, and speaking fluency.

Pronunciation:

The accurate production of speech sounds, rhythm, and intonation that enables effective understanding in oral communication.

Young learners:

Students in the school-age stage who develop language skills within a formal educational context.

Shadowing Technique to Improve English Pronunciation in A2-Level Young Learners

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the global need for young people in the world to be proficient in English has drastically increased, particularly in nations where English is utilized as an additional language. Globally, the phenomenon of globalization will continue to change the way we communicate, receive an education, and find employment; consequently, all countries have recognized that young people today must be able to communicate orally in English as this has become a requirement for success and achievement. As a result of this requirement, one of the most significant components of oral communication is accurate and comprehensible pronunciation, as this skill will directly impact the ease of understanding, the ability to interact with others through spoken language, and the level of confidence learners have when using their language. Additionally, although the need for improved communication skills is becoming increasingly apparent in the educational environment, effective instruction in pronunciation remains one of the most underrepresented elements in many English language curriculum.

This issue is most pronounced in developing nations, where limited access to learning resources, lack of teacher training, and limited access to technology make the development of effective instructional methods focused on teaching pronunciation very difficult for teachers. In many instances, teachers are more concerned with the accuracy of their students' grammar and their ability to understand what they are reading than they are with developing their students' oral communication abilities; this is primarily due to the constraints imposed by established curriculums, large class sizes, and standardized assessments that do not focus on or reward the development of spoken language skills. As a result, the vast majority of learners receive very little, if any, instruction on how to produce English speech sounds, how prosodic features create meaning, or how to enhance their overall fluency in spoken English.

Ecuador illustrates this problem. While the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education has recognized that English is an essential skill for its citizens and is promoting the teaching and learning of English in the second language context, the lack of teacher training and the lack

of resources for the teaching and learning of pronunciation are very real problems in the country.

These challenges are evident in the daily classroom practices of a practitioner. As an English teacher in Ecuador, I have extensive experience teaching English language learners between the ages of 11 and 14, and I have found that they often struggle to develop sufficient pronunciation skills, especially at the A2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Learners at this level often display very little awareness of segmental features (e.g., vowel quality, consonants, consonant clusters) and suprasegmental features (e.g., stress patterns, rhythm, intonation patterns) in English pronunciation. The extent of these difficulties is compounded by learners' limited exposure to natural spoken English, by the relatively small amount of classroom time dedicated to oral practice, and by the lack of opportunities to provide individualized corrective feedback to students. As a result, many students develop slowly in oral fluency and are unable to communicate at a level of clarity necessary for comprehension.

To address the challenges faced by these learners, recent research in applied linguistics is examining pedagogical approaches that promote active listening and oral imitation. One technique currently being researched for learner use is shadowing. Shadowing can be defined as a process wherein learners listen to a recording of a spoken model and then reproduce it either simultaneously or with very little delay after having heard it. Shadowing encourages learners to focus on pronunciation, rhythm, intonation, and speech flow as they engage in both the perceptual and productive processes of language learning.

DEVELOPMENT

State of art

The A2 Level with a Focus on Speaking and Listening Skills

When it comes to speaking or listening at the A2 (Basic User) level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), students will likely be in the A2 level range as defined by CEFR. At this point, students are able to use very basic vocabulary

and communicate simple ideas about familiar and day-to-day things that happen in their lives. A2 represents an important turning point for students who are learning how to verbally communicate messages using connected sentences (wrapped in more than one sentence) in a more natural manner.

Listening skills for students at the A2 level include the ability to understand common expressions, simple short sentences, and messages within a context of importance to the listener (e.g. personal, school, routine, needs) when the speaker is making the delivery slow and clear. Although the majority of the listening comprehension skill will be more stable when listening to the spoken messages, students may continue to experience challenges if they do not fully understand all of the components of how English is spoken (e.g., connected speech, weak forms of speech, vowel reductions, and intonation patterns) Council of Europe (2020).

The speaking skills for A2 level students are designed to have them be able to participate in short conversations with friends, social or business associates, and exchange simple information. It will also be necessary for younger school students to have a better understanding of how to appropriately speak to a variety of audiences and communicate effectively in a natural and conversational manner.

The Conceptual Foundation of Pronunciation Instruction

Pronunciation includes both segmental features (individual sounds) and suprasegmental features (stress, rhythm, intonation). Contemporary pronunciation research highlights intelligibility rather than native-like pronunciation. This means that learners' ability to be understood in their interactions is more important than how closely their pronunciation resembles native English speakers (Saito, 2021). However, learners still need systematic instruction of pronunciation and to practice their oral production regularly, both of which A2-level learners do not receive consistently in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings.

Arumi and Esteve-Gibert (2020) noted that between 2013 and 2018, there have been numerous advances regarding our understanding of how learners acquire phonological

features. At the same time, they have also consistently demonstrated a gap between the findings of research and what is implemented in the classroom. Many EFL teachers report that they do not have sufficient training or resources to effectively teach pronunciation, and this gap between theory and practice has a direct impact on young EFL learners who could potentially benefit from structured pronunciation activities as early as possible.

A2-Level Young Learners Struggling with Pronunciation

Research has revealed that lower-proficiency EFL learners will have difficulties with:

- Phonological discrimination
- Rhythm that is stress-timed
- Intonation contours
- Consonant clusters

Within Latin American countries, including Ecuador, young English learners are significantly affected by:

- Limited exposure to authentic spoken English
- Teacher-centered methodologies
- Curricular constraints
- Inadequate mechanisms for giving oral feedback

These findings are consistent with global research showing that pronunciation still remains one of the most neglected areas of English Language Teaching (ELT), especially in contexts where the average class size is large and there is not enough time dedicated to teaching pronunciation.

Shadowing as Learning Technique

Initially Shadowing was developed in the field of training to be a professional interpreter, over time it has evolved into a technique that can be used in conjunction with learning and developing your target language. The cognitive aspect of shadowing makes it a great tool to improve the bottom-up to top-down forms of processing language by allowing the learner the ability to process the spoken language at that moment in time. The Psycholinguistic Perspective indicates that shadowing creates a twofold advantage of stimulating the auditory and motor processes used for articulation, improving the learner's pronunciation.

Currently, there is empirically based evidence to support the effectiveness of shadowing:

- Al-Saidat, (2020) demonstrated that EFL students who used shadowing to practice their pronunciation improved significantly compared to EFL students that used traditional methods of drilling.
- Marzban, & Hadipour (2020) demonstrated the potential for increasing complexity, accuracy, and fluency in speaking when shadowing is utilized, indicating that shadowing has a positive effect on increasing overall oral performance.
- Hamada (2021) confirmed the findings from Al-Saidat and reported increased gains in pronunciation and listening comprehension through shadowing.
- Bower & Kawaguchi (2021) found that when synchronous shadowing was combined with interactive practice that overall fluency improved in EFL learners.
- Lin & Chen (2022) provided insight into the advantages of mobile-assisted shadowing and indicated that utilizing shadowing on mobile devices improves pronunciation accuracy and motivation.
- Shirakawa (2024) ascertained that AI-assisted shadowing changes the way rhythm and intonation are produced in L2 learners, indicating that the development of new technology can provide a future venue for developing shadowing.

- Rostami & Yaghoubi (2023) concluded that substantial increases in listening comprehension were achieved through the use of shadowing; demonstrating that sites for shadowing must be found.

Literature Gaps and Uncertainty Between Theory and Practice

While growing evidence supports the theories of Shadowing and Reading, the literature still reveals a number of gaps.

Limited research on Latin American environments where culture, language and Education differ than Asia and Europe limited number of studies on young learners as most of the research has been conducted with University or adult participants. There are very few studies additionally on the integration of shadowing into national curricula and in Ecuador, where pronunciation has remained marginalized. Lack of integration of shadowing into Ecuador's national curriculum hinders its potential. discrepancy between theoretical recommendations and classroom reality; in Ecuador, teachers have limited access to training, few technological resources, and limited exposure to oral models.

These gaps indicate the need for contextually relevant, cost-effective and sustainable pedagogical options to improve pronunciation in ecuadorian classrooms. Thus, shadowing is a viable candidate for classroom use in Ecuador.

National reports and Studies in Ecuador

Current government documents and public evaluations program of Ecuador are both indicative of the government policy's attention to English languages and continuing difference between spoken/phonological competence at the level of schools within the country.

The Ministry of Education has updated its National Foreign Language Curriculum and produced English Language Teaching Modules for the 2024-2025 school year, indicating that there is an institutional commitment to enhance English language teaching at the level of Public Education Institutions across Ecuador.

The Curriculum Materials produced by the Ministry of Education has highlighted the need for improvement with regard to developing Communicative Competence and to meet Curriculum Standards related specifically to the area of speaking. However, this has not translated into consistent delivery of activities focused on pronunciation by school type and geographic region.

The assessments and monitoring systems in Ecuador are conducted at a national level and nationally validate the learning outcomes of Ecuadorian students. The National Institute for Educational Evaluation (INEVAL) has recently completed its evaluation of "Ser Estudiante" that was given to nationally representative samples across Ecuador in 2023-2024; it reported results in the domains of knowledge and competencies of tens of thousands of students. In addition, the public documentation released by INEVAL identifies specific areas of weakness associated with students' ability to communicate which are supported by external indicators of low levels of English language proficiencies. Nonetheless, assessments conducted at such a large scale are primarily focused on standardized cognitive measures and do not typically provide a tool for accurately assessing students' pronunciation of a word or suprasegmental characteristics; thus, there is little availability of data that can be used to identify performance on speaking or pronunciation competencies on a national level.

The Ecuadorian Government and again affiliated authorities are implementing national programmes and developing standards, to develop teacher support and proficiency. The intention is to increase the teacher's capabilities in the language of instruction and how to apply this to their classroom practice, therefore improving the successful implementation of pronunciation and enunciation instruction by means of an adequate amount of teaching experience and the provision of methodological training, which are both important mediators between teacher proficiency and success in the structure of pronunciation instruction within Ecuador's education system. It should be noted, therefore, that the reports from the Ecuadorian Government regarding the effectiveness of these efforts both indicate that the applicants for these programs are regularly at about an upper intermediate (B2) level or above, leaving no significant gap in available methodologies or structural support for primary and secondary teaching staff, who will be working with students at an A2 level.

Comparative and nationally available comparative information is provided from both public and private educational institutions and through various sources (including internationally recognised research and data from universities in Ecuador) and continues to show a wide disparity between private and public educational institutions in terms of the amount of time and resources available to private educational institutions. Private educational institutions, particularly those that provide an explicit English language training program as part of their overall curriculum, typically report a significantly greater amount of exposure to spoken English (due to the number of students enrolled in their programs, the number of teachers available to deliver these programs, and the time available to facilitate speaking activities) and a significantly higher frequency of practice of oral production of the English language through the use of technological resources.

As a result of continued systemic and institutional differences between public and private educational institutions, the problems that exist with respect to poor pronunciation and the extent to which pronunciation needs to be addressed in the educational system of a country, are able to be resolved through the establishment of various and affordable, contextualised low-cost structured interventions.

Although there is increasing evidence of the need for this type of study, gaps in the current literature include:

1. There are limited studies on the impact of this approach in Latin American countries because many of these countries have different cultural, linguistic and educational factors than Asian countries and Europe;
2. There is an absence of research conducted with young learners because the majority of the studies that have been conducted have focused on either university students or adult learners;
3. There is a lack of emphasis on integrating the use of this method into national curriculums, such as in Ecuador, where pronunciation has historically been considered to be of marginal importance and was therefore not taken into consideration when developing instruction;

4. In addition to the above limitations, the lack of training experienced by teachers, limited access to technology, and limited exposure to oral models creates a disconnect between theory and actual classroom practice.

Thus, there exists a need for context-appropriate and cost-effective pedagogical solutions that could make this content area (shadowing) a viable option for use in the Ecuadorian classroom.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

The proposed intervention consists in the design and implementation of a structured pronunciation program through shadowing that is aimed at enhancing pronunciation skills as well as speaking and listening skills in A2-level young EFL learners in Ecuador. This is because it is considered to be an inexpensive yet pedagogically sound approach to English that can easily fit into English lessons without necessarily requiring much in terms of technology. It is through incorporating activities that involve shadowing that this intervention is seeking to enhance pronunciation skills.

Pedagogy

The intervention is based on a number of underlying pedagogical beliefs, which are supported by recent literature on teaching pronunciation and second language acquisition:

- Intelligibility-oriented instruction

The aim of the program is to promote the intelligibility and comprehensibility of the learners' pronunciation rather than native-like pronunciation. This is in line with the current pronunciation studies that focus on communicative ability rather than accent reduction.

Gradual progression and managing cognitive load:

The learning process of Shadowing tasks are organized in a continuum from controlled to more natural forms of spoken production. Initially, the audio is accompanied by written scripts. Such an arrangement is a low Cognitive Load approach that focuses attention on the phonological aspect. As the learner becomes more familiar with the stimulus material, the textual support is gradually removed.

- Repetition and automaticity:

The repeated presentation of the same auditory materials will help the students learn the phonological patterns, improve articulatory skills, and develop automaticity in their speech. This is especially relevant for A2 students, as they need constant practice in order to reinforce their basic pronunciation features.

- Multimodal input:

The combination of auditory, visual, and text input caters to different learning styles, which helps increase phonological awareness. Visual features, including stressing, intonation markers, and chunking, are particularly helpful in teaching young learners.

- Scaffolding and Formative Feedback: Scaffolding facilitated by the teacher plays an integral part in the program. The instructors model explicitly, point to the troublesome sounds and/or patterns, and give the students corrective feedback on aspects of pronunciation such as vowel length, consonant clusters, syllable stress, rhythm, and intonation. The feedback given to the students is formative and facilitative to help the students gain confidence and continue to contribute to the class orally.

Implementation Model

The program utilizes a cyclical and flexible implementation model, which is able to adapt to different classroom settings and time constraints.

Preparation Phase

In this stage, teachers select short audio content with a length ranging from 30 to 60 seconds, and it can include dialogues, micro-stories, interviews, and monologues that are related to the learners' interest and topics. Before engaging in observation, teachers pre-teach vocabulary and draw learners' attention to relevant phonological information, including tricky vowel sounds, stress, and intonation patterns. The preparation stage ensures that learners understand and are less anxious during oral practice.

Shadowing Cycle

The cycle of shadowing is the essence of the intervention and involves a number of steps, including:

Listen-only phase:

The learners listen to the audio without responding orally, focusing on meaning, features of pronunciation, and suprasegments (for example, rhythm and intonation). The tutor can guide the learners to note the position of the stresses and rising or falling intonations.

Mimicry phase:

The students echo short pieces or isolated sentences based on a model. This controlled echoing allows the learner to concentrate on articulation while building confidence before real-time shadowing. • Synchronized shadowing: The learners try to imitate the audio as closely as possible in real time. During this stage, the accent is more on fluency and speech rhythm than achieving absolute accuracy.

Recorded Shadowing

The students record their performance in the shadowing task using available devices. They then go on to compare their recordings with the reference model, thus fostering self-awareness and self-monitoring of their pronunciation.

Feedback and Reflection Phase

At this stage, according to the process of shadowing, the teacher provides specific and personalized feedback that focuses on persistent pronunciation problems rather than addressing each and every error in isolation. The learners can be encouraged to look back at their learning process through self-evaluation, which involves pinpointing the need for improvement and setting up short-term goals for pronunciation. Peer feedback can also be brought into play in a controlled and facilitative manner. 4. Integration with Technology

Technology is Technology is a facilitatory but non-essential component in the program. If technology is an option, mobile applications or artificial intelligence tools may be leveraged to enhance the practice of shadowing outside the classroom with the aid of technology. In a resource-deprived learning institution, MP3 players or audio recordings by the teacher can provide equitable access to the program.

Expected Outcomes:

The structured program based on shadowing is expected to generate the following pedagogically significant results:

- Improved segmental accuracy, especially in terms of vowel quality and consonant articulation.
- Enhanced suprasegmental features, such as rhythm, stressing, and pitch contours.
- Improved understanding of listening and enhanced speaking ability when communicating.
- High levels of learner motivation, confidence, and willingness to communicate in English.
- Building self-monitoring abilities and the habit of autonomous pronunciation practice. In conclusion, the proposed solution offers a viable and contextually informed reaction to the challenge of pronunciation for A2-level young learners in the context of Ecuador. Through the incorporation of the technique of shadowing into the classroom, the program harmonizes theoretical guidelines with practicality, and as such, it makes a contribution towards more successful instruction for oral skills in the area of EFL.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

1. Pronunciation is an integral yet unexplored area in English language teaching for A2-level young learners in Ecuador.
2. Research carried out during the period 2020 and 2025 finds strong support for the shadowing method as an effective approach to improve English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pronunciation, fluency, and listening comprehension.
3. Shadowing is modeled after the principles of auditory processing as outlined in the field of psycholinguistics and is very effective for those who have had limited exposure to natural speech in English.
4. Despite its promise, shadowing is not utilized sufficiently in Ecuador for a lack of training, technological infrastructure, and curriculum emphasis.
5. A structured shadowing program provides a viable, low-cost, and evidence-supported means by which pronunciation abilities can be enhanced in an Ecuadorian classroom setting.

Recommendations

- For Teachers: Shadow speaking activities should be incorporated in speaking classes on a regular basis, commencing with short texts at an appropriate level and including explicit feedback.

- For schools: Ensure at least basic technology assistance to enable audio learning.

- For policymakers: Change the curriculum guidelines to include pronunciation as a focus from early levels of proficiency. - For Researchers:

Conduct research studies on shadowing in the Latin American context and in the context of young learners. - For Students: Engage in autonomous shadowing practice using mobile applications or freely accessible online materials.

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