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Shadowing: A Technique to Enhance Fifth Grade EFL Learners
Pronunciation of Consonant Clusters /sk/ /sp/ /st/ in Initial Position

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

L2: Second Language

L1: First Language

CEFR: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

ABSTRACT

The following research explores the effect of the shadowing technique on Chilean 5th-grade EFL learners for pronunciation enhancement of consonant clusters /st/, /sp/, and /sk/ in initial position to describe the performance and perception of students before and after the intervention period. This research takes a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental design. The data was collected through a pre and post-test, and a self-perception questionnaire applied to 24 5th graders at a school in Coronel, Chile. The findings revealed a significant improvement in the pronunciation of consonant clusters in the initial position, while keeping students engaged and motivated, according to the questionnaire used in this study. More research is needed to corroborate the findings in this study.

Key words: Shadowing, consonant clusters, EFL pronunciation, EFL teaching.

RESUMEN

La siguiente investigación explora el efecto de la técnica de shadowing en estudiantes chilenos de 5° grado de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) para mejorar la pronunciación de los grupos de consonantes /st/, /sp/ y /sk/ en posición inicial, con el fin de describir el desempeño y la percepción de los estudiantes antes y después del período de intervención. Esta investigación adopta un enfoque cuantitativo con un diseño preexperimental. Los datos se recopilaron mediante un pretest y un posttest, y un cuestionario de autopercepción aplicado a 24 estudiantes de un colegio en Coronel, Chile. Los hallazgos revelaron una mejora significativa en la pronunciación de los grupos de consonantes en posición inicial, manteniendo a los estudiantes motivados y cómodos de acuerdo con el cuestionario aplicado. Se necesita más investigación para corroborar los hallazgos de este estudio.

Palabras clave: Shadowing, grupos de consonantes, pronunciación de EFL, enseñanza de EFL.

INTRODUCTION

Living in a globalized world, communication has faced the need for a universal language and a unique means of communication. The English language has spread around the entire globe and the variations a person might find in countries that have English as their first language. For example, the United States of America, The United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and many others. Due to social and historical transformation throughout the years, English has become the language of worldwide interaction. In other words, English is being increasingly used as a medium of communication between speakers for whom it is not their first language (Kelly, 2000).

In this context, pronunciation is of paramount importance, and the concept of *intelligibility* is key for effective communication. “*Intelligibility* refers to the listeners’ ability to understand the speaker’s message” (Munro & Derwing, 1995).

Students not being acquainted or aware of the specifics of and differences between English and Spanish pronunciation will struggle with both comprehension and delivery of a message. For this purpose, speaking skills and pronunciation must be taught in our Spanish-speaking schools, considering English differs from Spanish in many aspects; to illustrate:

different roots, wording, spelling and most important for this research, different pronunciation e.g the phonetic system. Regarding this matter, the focal point of this research is consonant clusters, specifically /sp/, /st/, and /sk/ in initial position due to their problematic pronunciation to Spanish speakers. These clusters do not exist in Spanish in initial position; therefore, it is a challenge that Spanish-speaking EFL learners must overcome in their learning process.

In Chile, English is taught as a foreign language but even though the national curriculum is aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the language is compulsory in schools only from fifth grade onwards. This might cause irregularities in students' proficiency at the level. As an illustration, in 2011 approximately one-third of 5th and 6th grade teachers reported that the level (of MINEDUC English textbooks) was too challenging for students, and in 2017 teachers noted that the content was too complex for some students, as this was their first experience learning English (Scarlot, 2025). Besides, speaking is generally neglected by Chilean English teachers as it is known to be a grammar-centered classroom. Teachers usually focus on grammar, vocabulary, and receptive skills; therefore, few speaking opportunities happen in these classrooms. Moreover, speaking is a

challenging and stressful skill for most students; they are not eager to participate in it due to several factors such as fear of committing mistakes, anxiety, and nervousness, as Sharma (2024) claims in his research about Challenges and Opportunities in Teaching Speaking Skills. These factors plus Chile's mandatory status of English in schools and the lack of practice make proficiency low in terms of oral production. Moreover, according to a Quality Agency Education report (2018), Chilean students are not meeting the national curriculum's expectations. There are various ways of teaching pronunciation, but the context is crucial for one method to obtain positive results. For this reason, this research aims to explore a new method to address this need by the use of the shadowing technique. This technique has been approached in the EFL field of investigation in other countries having positive results; however, there is no evidence of its implementation and effect in the Chilean context.

This research work is divided into the following chapters:

1. **Theoretical framework:** This chapter explores key concepts and theories related to pronunciation teaching, reviewing relevant literature on methodologies, instructional approaches, and the challenges faced in teaching pronunciation in EFL contexts.
2. **Research design:** This chapter provides a detailed description of the research methodology, including the instruments used to collect data and the participants involved in the study.
3. **Findings:** In this chapter, the results of data analyses are presented, including a breakdown of the participants' responses and highlighting key patterns related to their perceived knowledge and pedagogical criteria for teaching pronunciation.
4. **Discussion:** This chapter interprets the findings in the context of existing literature, drawing comparisons with previous studies, and examining the implications of the results for EFL teaching practices.
5. **Conclusion:** The final chapter summarizes the key contributions of the study, reflecting on its relevance to current EFL teaching practices, the limitations of the study, and further research in this area.

CHAPTER I: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Speaking skills

Speaking is one of the four skills that learners of a language ought to develop once they start the journey of learning an L2. This skill is defined as “the ability to articulate thoughts coherently, express ideas fluently, and communicate effectively in spoken language” (Sharma, 2024, p.74). It tends to be the most challenging skill for learners as it can be affected by numerous factors.

According to Sharma (2024), these include learner anxiety, large class sizes, and limited practice opportunities; however, some of these difficulties may be addressed by the use of technological devices, authentic material, and a focus on communication. Sharma (2024) states that opportunities for improvement include integrating technology, implementing authentic communication tasks, and encouraging peer interaction. These concepts are of paramount importance in a Chilean EFL classroom, since once learners leave the classroom, it is not likely that they will interact with the language in their daily lives.

On top of that, Chilean EFL classrooms are not the most successful. According to a report from *Agencia de Calidad de Educación* (2018), an overwhelming 68% of high schoolers are on a beginner (A1) level of English,

which means that the vast majority have not met the National Curriculum expectations while the other 32% of students managed to reach a basic and intermediate level (A2 and B1 correspondingly), making a clear necessity of improving for the forthcoming years. This performance might be caused because of teacher-centered classrooms, as Gomez Burgos et al. (2020) mention that the vast majority of English teaching programmes have mainly followed a traditional approach to language teaching, focusing on structural or grammatical curricula that concentrate on teacher-centred methodologies. (Gómez Burgos, E., and Walker, W., 2020). As a result of the above-mentioned and as noted in an article by Perez (2024) it agrees with what academic Malba Barahona explains, students lack English proficiency, and deficient pronunciation is one contributor as this is a multifactorial issue.

1.2 What is pronunciation?

The concept of pronunciation may have been difficult to define for many authors in the field; however, it is important to bear in mind the similarities that these definitions have.

There are different types of formal definitions given to the term “*pronunciation*”. According to Kelly (2000), pronunciation is the study of

two fields, namely phonetics and phonology. The author also mentions the different features which constitute pronunciation as a concept that acknowledges many subdivisions. These are two main features: the phonemes, which refer to the sounds appended to a language, and the suprasegmental features related to intonation and word stress; and how meaning is influenced by the variation and modification of this feature.

By taking concepts such as phonetics and phonology into consideration, it is possible to dive into a more detailed understanding of what pronunciation is.

On the one hand, phonetics is understood as the study of sound that we use when we speak (Roach 2009). On the other hand, phonology is described as the study of phonemes function in language, and the relationship among the different phonemes (Roach 2009). Although these two definitions may sound similar, the main difference lies in the field each concept focuses on.

Phonetics is aimed at studying how the sound is produced and how the articulatory system works; whereas, phonology focuses on the meaning of phonemes, how they sound, and the rules and patterns these phonemes follow for the purpose of having an accurate pronunciation. Another definition given to the term suggests that pronunciation is related to the production of sounds

in order to make meaning through the use of our articulatory system (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010).

By and large, pronunciation is defined in various ways. Nevertheless, the similarities between these definitions lie in one common matter, which is the production of sounds. A possible formal definition that can be elicited out of all the previous formalizations might be: pronunciation is how speakers produce sounds through the use of the articulatory system in order to consolidate the act of communication and generate meaning, which can vary regarding features such as intonation and word stress. The production of these sounds will vary depending on the language that is being spoken. In this case, the research scope will take into consideration both Spanish and English phonetics.

1.2.1 What is good pronunciation for EFL students?

It is relevant to define what is considered good pronunciation for EFL students; and most importantly, the learner's sound production, which is the main focus of this research.

Good pronunciation can be seen from different perspectives. For example, the production of individual sounds, intonation, intelligibility, or connected speech. For Jenkins (2000), intelligibility should play the main role and goal

over native-like pronunciation. As the author argues, the objective of intelligibility is to be understood and fulfill the communication process between two or more speakers, whether they are native or non-native users of the English language.

Other characteristics are the segmental and suprasegmental features. As Sharma (2021) clarifies the segmental features embrace consonant, and vowel sounds or phonemes, whereas stress, pitch, intonation, length and juncture are included in suprasegmental features. These set the fundamental basis of how good pronunciation should be achieved; in other words, they provide a formal definition and a structured theoretical framework for a better understanding of English sounds; the large number of possible combinations, and the intonation patterns and how meaning varies depend on the use given by the speaker.

In addition to the afore-mentioned concepts, connected speech also becomes relevant at the moment of assessing good pronunciation; according to Roach (2009), “a significant difference in natural connected speech is the way that sound belonging to one word can cause changes in sounds belonging to neighbouring words” (p. 123). To put it differently, the final sound in a word can modify the way the initial sound of the next word is pronounced and vice

versa. Roach calls this instance “Assimilation”, and this phenomenon will be relevant while assessing students' pronunciation in part two of the pre- and post-test (see chapter 2).

1.3 Consonant Clusters

Consonant cluster pronunciation is the focal point of study for this research, due to the inexistence of some of these clusters in the initial position in the L1 (Spanish).

When we have two or more consonants together, we call them consonant clusters; however, if the syllable begins with one consonant, that initial consonant may be any consonant phoneme except /ŋ/; though /ʒ/ is rare (Roach, 2009, p. 68). There is a wide array of options and combinations for consonant clusters, yet the scope for this study will derive a special and unique focus on consonant clusters beginning with pre initial “/s/” phoneme, followed by the initial phonemes /p/, /t/, and /k/. Thus, the three consonant clusters to be considered relevant for this research are /sp/, /st/ and /sk/, respectively.

1.4 Differences between English and Spanish

While they share many similar words, Spanish and English have little in common. Spanish inherited its vocabulary directly from Latin as it evolved from the language of the Roman Empire. In contrast, English is a Germanic language; its core grammar is more closely related to languages like German and Dutch.

It is due to these differences, among other factors, that English has significantly more complex consonant clusters than Spanish. According to Roach (2009), the length of English language consonant clusters varies on their position; for the initial position, which is before the nucleus, the longest possible consonant cluster has three sounds, where all of them must begin with /s/ or /ʃ/, followed by /p/, /t/ or /k/, and ending with /l/, /r/, or /w/.

On the other hand, the Royal Spanish Academy (2025) suggests that for the Spanish language, consonant clusters are more limited as they only have two consonant sounds. With the first sound being /b/, /p/, /g/, /k/, /d/, /t/ or /f/, followed by the consonant sounds /r/ or /l/, any other consonant cluster is unnatural for Spanish language and if they are present in the language, it is mostly due to a word borrowed from a foreign language.

It is due to these limitations that Spanish EFL learners struggle with pronouncing long English consonant clusters, which appear to be too overwhelming and difficult at first sight, as they are not used to them or do not have enough practice.

Even though the consonant clusters /sp/, /sk/, and /st/, are present in both, English and Spanish languages, there is a difference among them. In the English language, these consonant clusters may happen in the initial position whereas in Spanish, they only happen after a vowel.

The difference in the consonant cluster's placement in both languages make Spanish EFL students struggle with their pronunciation, as they are unfamiliar with producing said sounds without a vowel preceding them. This problem causes Spanish speakers to unconsciously add a vowel sound before the consonant cluster while they are speaking in English. This phenomenon is called epenthesis, a term coined by the French phonetician Antoni Dufriche-Desgenettes in 1656, and it is a strategy used to cope with pronunciation unfamiliarity.

According to Al-Abdullah and Almutairi (2024), vowel epenthesis is one of the most common phonological strategies followed by EFL learners. That is to say, EFL learners make use of this repairing strategy to smooth the

pronunciation of unfamiliar consonant clusters. In fact, empirical studies (e.g., Al-Yami & Al-Athwary, 2021; Bouchhioua, 2019; Broselow & Kang, 2013; Castillo, 2022; Chan, 2023; Choi, 2016; Edwards, 2015; Lam & Thi, 2022; Nguyen, 2020; Zhang, 2009) have shown that EFL learners attempt to simplify their pronunciation of complex English words that constitute consonant clusters through vowel epenthesis (Al-Abdullah & Almutairi, 2024). However, this strategy implies that Spanish EFL learners' pronunciation of the consonant clusters /sp/, /sk/, and /st/ sounds unnatural; thus, it can affect the intelligibility of their speech.

1.5 What is Shadowing?

The concept “shadowing” was first introduced by Lambert (1992), providing a basic definition, which is “a paced, auditory tracking task which involves the immediate vocalization of auditorily presented stimuli” (p. 266). It was originally presented as a training method for beginner interpreters. In addition, Takeuchi et al. (2020) define shadowing as “a listening act or task in which the learner tracks the heard speech and repeats it as exactly as possible while listening attentively to the incoming contextual information” (p. 1254). Moreover, Barkov (2022) states that, generally speaking, this

technique consists of “repeating an aural stimulus as precisely as possible without a delay” (p. 290). This view is consistent with Hamada’s definition of the technique, who confirms that shadowing learners track and repeat it verbally “as exact manner as possible” (Hamada, 2017, as cited in Kadota, 2019).

Its name may be related to the metaphor of a shadow that follows you, copying your every move immediately (Hamada, 2018). Hence, the students (“shadowers”) will act as the shadow of what they hear (Hamada, 2018).

Considering these definitions, we could say that shadowing has unique characteristics that differ from other techniques or methods, such as repetition. According to Hamada (2018), both practices have some nuances regarding the way they work. In the case of shadowing, students must repeat the track simultaneously as they listen to it. Conversely, repetition does not require immediate repetition (p. 19).

In essence, we could say that shadowing involves a listening task where the learners repeat what they hear immediately, with minimum delay, which demands processing at the moment of speech.

According to Hamada (2018), one of the cognitive abilities that students use during the process of shadowing is to catch incoming sounds, not necessarily

focusing on the meaning of the words. The author also states that this technique can be used both for speaking and listening skills; however, it is advised that teachers should focus on developing just one skill at a time (p. 20). Additionally, he comments that reading a transcript of the audio while using the shadowing technique changes the cognitive process, splitting their attention to other aspects of the language such as letters and meaning.

Nonetheless, some researchers have put emphasis on the benefit of using transcripts during shadowing. Guerrero and Commander (2013) argue that shadow reading facilitates the transition from external actions to internal cognitive processes, providing repeated opportunities for learners to internalize language segments through verbalization (as cited in Win, 2020). Consequently, according to this study, students may experience enhanced retention and understanding of the phonological features when shadowing with written support.

In the case of shadowing for pronunciation, Hamada (2018) states that since the process of the shadowing technique is to copy a model as accurately as possible, the technique results in a useful method for enhancing pronunciation. The author mentions that students listen to features of “incoming sounds, phonemes, stress, intonation, and accents” (p. 22).

Additionally, Hamada (2014) explored the effectiveness of “pre-shadowing” and “post-shadowing” in the classroom. These concepts could expand our study. According to Hamada (2014, citing Kadota, 2012), pre-shadowing relates to the Bottom-up cognitive process. In other words, pre-shadowing is the process where students do shadowing before listening to the content, as if they listened to the grammar or vocabulary content for the first time. Conversely, post-shadowing relates to the Top-down cognitive process. To put it differently, post-shadowing is the process where students do shadowing after listening to the content, learning the grammar or vocabulary content beforehand. Advantages and disadvantages of both processes are discussed in Hamada (2014). For example, the author states that during pre-shadowing, students can focus on sounds with intent, since that is the only information they perceive, instead of knowing the semantic content of the words being studied (Hamada, 2014, citing Kadota, 2007). Nonetheless, when students shadow the unknown content, it could mean a higher cognitive load for them. Additionally, it may increase anxiety when learning words they do not really know. On the contrary, Hamada (2014) comments that doing the post-shadowing process could possibly hinder students’ ability to grasp the sounds by splitting their cognitive resources between the phonology and content they

have just learned (p. 5). However, learning the content beforehand could reduce anxiety among students. Moreover, from a pedagogical point of view, pre-shadowing aligns with one of the teaching principles, specifically the Presentation, Practice, and Production (PPP) in the context of teaching English as a foreign language (Hamada, 2014).

1.5.1 Studies on shadowing

Currently, there are no studies within our country that have addressed the shadowing technique as a method to enhance pronunciation. There has been a systematic review of literature regarding shadowing; nevertheless, it has been addressed in other areas and disciplines, not foreign language learning. Notwithstanding, there have been studies around the globe. For example, a recent study conducted by Abdurazzaqova (2025) explored the effectiveness of the shadowing technique on enhancing B1-level language learners' communication challenges. The main findings indicated an improvement of fluency, with increased confidence and reduced hesitation in speech. Additionally, Suyadi (2024) studied the efficacy of this technique compared to traditional teaching methods, where the author found that there was a significant improvement in pronunciation accuracy and fluency. Besides that, a growing increase in engagement among students was noted, highlighting

its effectiveness as a pedagogical tool. In addition, a more recent study conducted by Zafarova (2025) revealed a significant improvement not only in rhythm, stress and intonation accuracy, but also in the segmental accuracy (vowel and consonant sounds), after shadowing intervention in the classroom. Moreover, survey data revealed that 83% of participants found shadowing enjoyable and motivating. Many of them reported feeling more confident in speaking and better able to understand fast native speech (p. 243).

1.6 Pronunciation teaching methods for children

Young learners are typically defined as primary school children up to around 12 years old who are learning a second, additional, or foreign language (Rixon, 2004). In Chile, students have mandatory English lessons from 5th grade onwards. This means that there are some children who have not been exposed to English classes before. Young learners are still developing their language, cognitive, and social skills, and their learning experiences and motivations are different from those of adults and teenagers. (Nikolov, 1999; Moon, 2005; Pinter, 2011; Sevik, 2012). Under these definitions, the following section will display different common methods and strategies to teach pronunciation to young EFL learners.

It is Kelly (2004) who points out that teachers often prepare lessons based on grammar and vocabulary, but rarely on pronunciation. Additionally, when there are phonemes that do not exist in the learners' native language, the level of difficulty is greater, as is the case with native Spanish speakers who learn English.

One of the most commonly used pronunciation teaching methods is drills; that is to say, "repetitive and controlled activities where students practice particular sounds, words, or phrases to improve students' speech abilities, as Silva et al. (2024) explain. For this method, there is a wide variety of drills. It is Larsen-Freeman (2000) who divides them into 7 types, which are: (1) backward build-up drill, (2) repetition drill, (3) chain drill, (4) single-slot substitution drill, (5) multiple-slot substitution drill, (6) transformational drill, and (7) question and answer drill.

According to Silva and Carrión (2024), other methods are Phonological Awareness Activities, which help young learners develop an awareness of the sounds within words and their structure through rhymes and Teacher Modelling, in which the teacher acts as the model for appropriate production, so that students can imitate and reproduce the utterance reinforced. Games

are also used as an indirect way to teach pronunciation due to their appealing and engaging nature.

Other authors, such as Houdek (2020), mention that storytelling, games, chants, and songs are also effective methods to teach pronunciation to young learners since they generate greater engagement among students. Besides, other tools like the use of minimal pairs, visual aids for improvement of the teacher's description of how sounds are produced and reading aloud are also mentioned by Dwiningrum (2016).

Houdek (2020) states that when working with a young learner, the approach to teaching how to pronounce any utterance is different than when educating a teenager or an adult. This is because both learners are in different stages of cognitive development; therefore, the approach must be different to meet young learners' needs.

As Kelly (1976) explains, there are two methods for teaching pronunciation. The first one being the intuitive-imitative approach that uses listening to the target language and repeating it. Whereas the second is the analytic-linguistic approach that uses findings and developments that linguists have made, such as the invention of the International Phonetic Alphabet, to teach pronunciation. As young learners are yet to be fully cognitively developed,

teachers ought to address pronunciation teaching from the intuitive-imitative approach. Considering these criteria, the Shadowing technique belongs to this approach to teaching pronunciation.

In all the methods mentioned, the role of the teacher changes from one activity to another. These strategies to teach pronunciation can also be classified by the role the teacher takes. On the one hand, activities such as listening and repeating, storytelling, or drills offer teacher-oriented tasks in which there is more teacher talking time, and students have little freedom within the activity; therefore, they receive a passive role. On the other hand, in activities such as role plays or games, which are more communicative, students get an active role, whereas the teacher's main role is that of a facilitator and a guide, following constructivist models (Tam, 2000, as cited in Bada & Olusegun, 2015). In these activities, the goal of the teacher is to create the space in which the communication process happens between learners (Breen & Candlin, cited in Richards & Lockhart, 1996, p. 103), so that they can practice different speaking features, such as pronunciation, stress, and intonation, among others, for later feedback from the teacher.

It is pivotal to teach pronunciation from an early age as it is easier for students to grasp it as Lenneberg (1967) claims in their critical period hypothesis of

language acquisition. The teaching methods must be varied and there should be a balance between activities and the students' role, so that they can integrate appropriately what is being taught. As Raju & Joshith (2018) suggest, the teacher should consider all kinds of students, such as introverted and extroverted students when selecting activities. Throughout this investigation, it is intended to explore a new method that might be effective for both teachers and students.

CHAPTER II: RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1 Type of study

This research takes a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental design. The reason for this decision is that the experiment will be carried out in an intact class; therefore, the subjects of the study cannot be randomly chosen. As a result, there is not a control group in the current investigation, e.g. single-group research. The study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the Shadowing technique to improve students' pronunciation of specific consonant clusters and describe the students' perceptions of the technique.

In alignment with the selected design, the following statistical hypotheses were formulated to test the effectiveness of the shadowing technique.

Null hypothesis (H_0): There will not be a statistically significant difference in students' pronunciation of consonant clusters /sp/, /st/, and /sk/ in initial position after the shadowing intervention.

Alternative hypothesis (K_a): There will be a statistically significant improvement in students' pronunciation of consonant clusters /sp/, /st/, and /sk/ in initial position after the shadowing intervention.

2.2 Research questions

How effective is the shadowing technique to improve EFL learners' pronunciation of consonant clusters in the initial position?

2.3 Objectives

2.3.1 General objective

To explore the effect of implementing the shadowing technique to improve fifth-year students' pronunciation of consonant clusters /sk/, /st/ and /sp/ in initial position in order to test its efficacy by describing students' performance and perceptions pre and post intervention.

2.3.2 Specific objectives

1. To assess students' pre- and post-test performance regarding the pronunciation of consonant clusters /sk/, /st/ and /sp/ in initial position through reading a set of words isolated and a short sentence on a reading chart.
2. To compare and contrast the results of pre- and post-tests to test the efficacy of the implementation of the shadowing technique.
3. To describe the students' perception of the shadowing technique practice and effect by analyzing their answers on a survey.

2.4 Participants

The participants for this study were 24 beginner students from 5th grade from a public primary school located in the city of Coronel, Chile. The students, aged between 10 and 12 years old, were selected from one intact class. They participated in this study during their regular English lessons. All participants shared Spanish as their mother tongue, and most of them had previous experiences with English as a foreign language through the school's curriculum.

To select the participants, a non-probability sampling technique was employed. Using a convenience method to gather a sample of 24 students from a population of 35 students, which results in an error margin of 8.40% after calculations.

The group was chosen based on the accessibility and willingness of the school to collaborate with this study. It is worth mentioning that prior to the implementation of this study, informed consents were obtained from the students' parents and tutors. Additionally, the complete group participated in all stages of this study.

2.5 Instrument

Pre & Post-Test: a pre- and post-test has been designed to collect relevant data from students; assessing the production of isolated consonant clusters in initial position and then, in connected speech. Both the pre- and post-test were exactly the same, and no changes were made, so it is consistent, valid, reliable, and lays out whether there is a real improvement in the pronunciation of consonant clusters. According to Fraenkel et al. (2012), reliability refers to the consistency of the scores obtained; how consistent they are for each individual from one administration of an instrument to another and from one set of items to another. In other words, reliability strongly depends on the pre- and post-test being the same for the results to be stable and comparable. In addition, it will support the research's main objective, i.e. the efficacy of shadowing technique implementation within the EFL classroom for improvement of consonant clusters in initial position pronunciation.

The pre- and post-test consists of two parts, the pronunciation of words, containing the consonant clusters /sp/, /st/, /sk/, in isolation; and a short reading passage to assess the production of these clusters in connected speech respectively.

In part one, students will be provided with three isolated words per consonant clusters, e.g. if the cluster being assessed is /sp/, the learners read words such as splash, spider crab and species; and the same for /st/ and /sk/. Furthermore, it has been decided to include three words per each consonant cluster because of several advantages it might have, such as, reducing error margin due to isolated mistakes, increasing instrument reliability and giving students better practice of production of the sounds being evaluated. We might also expect the material read by non-natives to contain fewer errors and to be perceived less foreign-accented than spontaneously spoken material, given that speakers have more opportunity to monitor their pronunciation while reading than while focusing intently on the content of unrehearsed material (Munro & Derwing, 1994, p. 255). Therefore, the use of three or more samples per unit is justified in order to reduce casual mispronunciations that the students may produce while reading.

Reliability and validity are also crucial when it comes to applying any type of instrument to collect data for research purposes. Using multiple items helps to average out errors and specificities that are inherent in single items, thus leading to increased reliability and construct validity (DeVellis, 2003).

In other words, the use of multiple items within the pre- and post-test will decrease the impact of abnormal responses from students.

Finally, there is a second part in which learners must read a short sentence that includes the three different types of consonant clusters that this study aims to assess. However, unlike the first part in which students read isolated words, now the focus is mainly on connected speech and the production of utterances with preceding sounds. The implications of this are that students have to be made aware of the phenomena occurring in connected speech so that they can understand it better, consequently improving their listening skills and confidence to boost (Jednaszewski, 2022). In addition, confidence plays a pivotal role when it comes to speaking any second language or even the mother tongue itself, and it can trigger mistakes due to nervousness, insecurity, or fear of failure. Krashen (1981) pointed out that there are mainly three factors that affect the learner to acquire the second language acquisition, such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. Additionally, learners' perception of their own improvement can be influenced by the amount of structured practice they receive. Tlazalo and Basurto (2014) found that young EFL students often linked their lack of confidence in pronunciation to a reduced number of opportunities for guided practice. Conversely, students

also attributed constant instructional activities to increased confidence and enhanced self-perceived improvement. Students' affective filter must be low so that it does not interfere with their performance and the study results.

Questionnaire: A set of questions will be given to students divided into three categories; 1) questions related to the activities performed during the interventions, 2) self-perception of pronunciation skills, and 3) the emotional states students had at the end of the intervention and the data collected by means of the post-test respectively. All of this with the objective not only to be conscious about learners' opinions, thoughts and feelings, but also to help provide researchers with useful and valuable feedback about the intervention in general, discovering points of improvement to take into consideration for future lesson planning which might consider including the shadowing technique as a tool to rehearse pronunciation on EFL learners.

2.6 Research Variables:

For the purpose of this study, shadowing will be defined as a pronunciation practice technique in which students listen to a model, which for this intervention was the teacher, and repeat the utterance immediately, with minimal delay, focusing on accurately reproducing segmental features of the

speech. This study adapts key elements described in Lambert (1992), Takeuchi et al. (2020), Barkov (2022), and Hamada (2017, 2018).

In this study, the pronunciation of consonant clusters will be defined as the ability of students to produce the initial clusters /sp/, /st/, and /sk/ accurately, avoiding epenthetic vowels (such as /e/) before the cluster, which is a common transfer from Spanish as the L1. Hence, good pronunciation will be considered when students produce the consonant sequence without this vowel insertion and in a way that is intelligible, based on the criteria of intelligibility proposed by Jenkins (2000).

In regard to students' perceived engagement, it will be defined as the learners' experience of interest, motivation, and participation during the shadowing activities. Accordingly, this will be assessed through a post-intervention questionnaire designed to gather information on how students felt while participating in the tasks, whether they found the activity enjoyable or challenging.

Table 1
Variables Operationalization

Definition	Dimensions	Subdimensions	Indicators
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is a listening task where the learners repeat what they hear immediately, with minimum delay, which demands processing at the moment of speech. 2. Two or more consonant sounds together before the nucleus of the first syllable. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Shadowing intervention: activities in the classroom using shadowing technique 2. Pronunciation accuracy of consonant clusters in initial position. 3. Context in which they are pronounced. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Data collection stage through immediate vocalization of auditorily presented stimuli. 2. Pronunciation of consonant cluster /sp/, /st/ and /sk/. 3. Overall pronunciation of modeled words 4. Pronunciation of words in isolation and connected speech. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pre- and post-test. 2. Reading chart. 3. Reading chart + Rubric. 4. Correct pronunciation of the group /sp/, /st/, and /sk/. + rubric. 5. Correct pronunciation of words in isolation and connected speech + rubric.

2.7 Procedure

2.7.1 Creation and validation of the instruments

Pre- and post-tests: The tests were created having in mind the content from the unit that students are currently on, which is “ocean life”. This means that all the words and sentences from the tests are related to ocean life.

Additionally, the tests are not labeled as such but as an activity to avoid the stress and anxiety that a test might cause in some students.

Checklist: For the checklist, two criteria were created, correctly or incorrectly produced, altogether with an explanation of what will be considered as correctly produced and what will be incorrectly produced, the checklist was created having in mind two possible contexts for the pronunciation, as isolated words or as part of a full sentence. Therefore, the instrument has a different category for each different context.

As for the validation of these instruments, they were sent to professors from the university to get their validation and insights on the instruments. After receiving a response, the instruments were changed according to the professors’ directions.

2.7.2 Data gathering process

1. Informed consent

This instrument will be sent to students' representatives; they will have up to two weeks to return the signed consent through their pupil accepting the investigation. If the student does not return with the signed consent, they will not be considered for the investigation.

2. Pre-and post-tests

As the test will be recorded, an analysis of the recording will be conducted. Using a checklist as a basis, each item of the test will be analyzed and scored based on the checklist results and researchers' perception.

3. Intervention:

The intervention will have a total of four sessions, which are required to cover the pedagogical unit considered for the research. Each of these sessions will have one shadowing activity per class integrated into the lessons. The activities will vary according to the lesson plans created for each class, which are going to be designed based on the students' book activities as that is the teacher's methodology, i.e. following the national curriculum and what

students are used to working with. Some activities from the students' book will be modified to include words with the initial consonant clusters /sp/, /st/, or /sk/, so students get familiarized with them.

4. Questionnaire:

After all the intervention is done and the tests are applied, a questionnaire will be given to the students about their perception of the technique. The questionnaire responses will be synthesized on the thesis; the most repeated responses will be highlighted, and the positive and negative feedback will be considered for possible future investigations.

2.7.3 Data analysis

The data collected through the implementation of the instruments will be analyzed by means of a checklist to determine whether the participant production of the three consonant clusters were accurately pronounced or there was any inconvenient, interference from the L1 or mistake during the vocalization of the task.

Based on the guidelines present in the checklist, it will be considered correctly pronounced if the student does not add any extra sound and imitates the sound of the consonant clusters it was listened to in English, e.g.:

/'stju:dnt/. However, if the student produces non-existent sounds in English due to L1 interference or any other possible factor, e.g., /'estju:dent/, it will be marked as incorrect.

In addition, each criterion will count one point if correct, and zero points if incorrect; therefore, making it plausible to convert the data collected into quantitative evidence, for subsequently, comparing and contrasting the results obtained by the pre- and post-test implementation. In other words, it will provide useful information to evaluate the effect of the shadowing technique within the EFL classroom to enhance students' pronunciation.

Finally, regarding the questionnaire to describe students' perceived engagement in the activities performed, applying the shadowing technique during the interventions. The questions were categorized into three main topics; these are: questions related to the activities, self-perception of their own pronunciation before and after the interventions, and the emotional consideration along the process and development of activities.

The pronunciation enhancement of consonant clusters in initial position revealed by the study contributes to previous evidence by Abdurazzaqova (2025). The author exposed and improved fluency, reducing hesitation, and boosting confidence in students; even though both studies do not share the

same scope, the two research belong and are strongly appended to the phonological competence. According to Canale and Swain (1980), they proposed four main competences within communicative competence; these are 1) Grammatical competence, 2) Sociolinguistic competence, 3) Discourse competence, and 4) Strategic competence; pronunciation and fluency fall into the category of grammatical competence or also known as linguistic competence. In other words, both findings can be compared and supported by each other under the same category.

To determine the effectiveness of the shadowing technique intervention on students' pronunciation scores, a paired sample t-test will be utilized. This test allows for the comparison of mean scores collected from the same group of participants at two different time points. The paired samples t-test will specifically assess whether the mean difference between the two measurements is statistically different from zero.

The Paired Samples t-test will be used to test the following hypotheses at a significant level of $p < 0.05$:

Null hypothesis (H_0): There will not be a statistically significant difference in students' pronunciation of consonant clusters /sp/, /st/, and /sk/ in initial position after the shadowing intervention.

Alternative hypothesis (H_a): There will be a statistically significant improvement in students' pronunciation of consonant clusters /sp/, /st/, and /sk/ in initial position after the shadowing intervention.

The test generates a t -statistic and an associated p -value. If the calculated p -value is less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), the Null Hypothesis (H_0) will be rejected, and the Alternative Hypothesis (H_a) will be supported, indicating that the shadowing technique had a statistically significant positive effect on pronunciation improvement. Conversely, if $p \geq 0.05$, the Null Hypothesis will be retained, suggesting no significant effect.

CHAPTER III: FINDINGS

3.1 Results found regarding specific objective 1

The first specific objective was:

To assess students' pre- and post-test performance regarding the pronunciation of consonant clusters /sk/, /st/ and /sp/ in initial position through reading a set of isolated words and a short sentence on a reading chart.

Both the pre and post-test were scored using 3 points for isolated words, and 3 points for the connected speech item, making a total of 6 points possible for the test.

With 24 participants in each stage, the pre-test reached a total of 56 points, resulting in a mean score of 2.33. Contrastingly, the post-test reached 91 points, with a mean score of 3.79. Considering variability, the standard deviation (SD) of the pre-test was 2.31, while the post-test showed a lower SD of 2.02, meaning the data was clustered tightly to the mean in the post-test.

3.2 Results found regarding specific objective 2

The specific objective 2 was:

To compare and contrast the results of pre- and post-tests to test the efficacy of the implementation of the shadowing technique.

Table 2

Pre and Post Test Scores

Time measured	<i>N</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Pre-test	24	56	2.33	2.31
Post-test		91	3.79	2.02

Note. *P* = total points obtained; *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation.

In order to achieve this goal, the results of pre- and post-tests, a paired sample t-test was conducted. This type of t-test is used for measurements of subjects before and after a treatment or intervention, which is our case.

As previously mentioned, the means for the pre-test and the post-test were 2.33 points and 3.79 points respectively, which corresponds to an increase in the mean score of 1.66 points, representing an increase of 62.66% in the results. Furthermore, the standard deviation for the post test (*SD*=2.021) was slightly lower than the standard deviation for the pre-test (*SD*=2.315), suggesting that test results were less varied after the intervention.

The inferential analysis revealed a statistically significant effect of the intervention, with the resulting *t*-statistic of $t(23) = 4.58$ and an associated *p*-

value of $p < .001$. Given the high level of significance, the null hypothesis, that there is no difference between the pre- and post-test scores, is rejected.

3.3 Results found regarding specific objective 3

The specific objective 3 was:

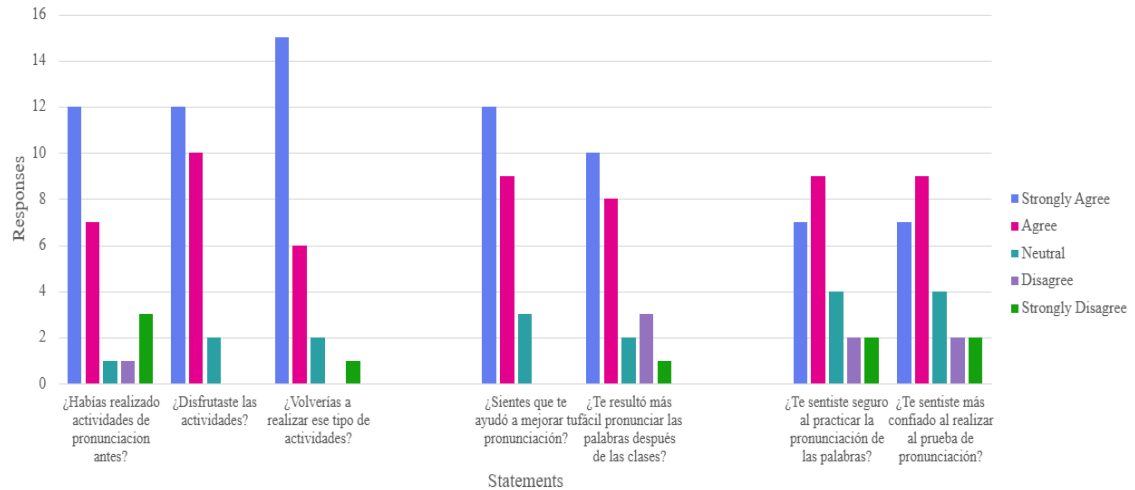
To describe the students' perception of the shadowing technique practice and effect by analyzing their answers on a survey.

After the intervention, a survey was applied to the students to grasp their perception of the technique. On this survey, students expressed their level of agreement, through a Likert scale, regarding three aspects of the intervention, which are 1) self-perceived engagement, 2) self-perceived pronunciation improvement, and 3) self-perceived confidence. In total, 24 questionnaires were collected.

The results were the following:

Figure 1

Self-Perception Questionnaire Results After the Intervention



When it comes to the self-perceived engagement, students seem to like this type of activity as most of the responses, that is, 22 responses with agree or higher, liked the activity and almost the same amount (15 strongly agree and 6 agree) claimed that they would like to repeat that type of activity. Furthermore, it is also worth mentioning that there was a high number of students (19 responses with “agree” or higher) who had pronunciation activities on previous occasions.

Regarding self-perceived pronunciation improvement, students appear to agree on their pronunciation enhancement after the intervention. This is based on their survey’s positive responses as 21 of them answered agree or

higher. Additionally, 18 of them perceived that the words were easier to pronounce after the intervention.

In terms of self-perceived confidence in their learning, students' responses were more varied, but still mostly positive. Firstly, 16 students reported feeling more secure at the moment of pronouncing words after the intervention. Secondly, the same number of students report feeling to feel more confident at the moment of taking the post-test.

CHAPTER IV: GENERAL DISCUSSION

The main focus of this research aimed to explore the implementation of the shadowing technique and its influence on consonant clusters /sp/, /st/, and /sk/ in initial position for pronunciation improvement by means of applying a pre and post-test, comparing the results obtained through assessing students' pronunciation, and addressing the self-perception of students regarding their overall experience and performance throughout the intervention. This way, we aimed at exploring both the efficacy of the methodology, and how appealing it is for the students, both essential considerations for successful teaching. The findings report that the shadowing technique in the EFL classroom had a significantly positive impact on the pronunciation accuracy of consonant clusters; after the execution of three interventions in which shadowing took a fraction of the lesson (15 minutes approximately). This debunks the idea that, in order to teach pronunciation effectively, much time and practice is required. A key element might be just creating awareness; making students monitor their production of sounds more carefully.

Undoubtedly, the results from the post-test, when contrasted with the findings from the pre-test, were noticeably positive. There might be plenty of factors that could influence the performance of students; for example, previous experiences with pronunciation activities, their overall level of proficiency in

the L2, how engaging the unit and the topic was for students, driving them to pay more attention and participate during the lessons, the relationship built throughout the time with the teacher that can boost confidence and create a safe environment for learners to practice, or even how much input they receive; in other words, how exposed they really are to the English language, and the frequency and duration of that period of exposure.

However, the key element, as it was mentioned previously, was the creation of awareness, or also known as “metacognition” of their progress at the moment of being assessed; suggesting that most students were completely aware of what they were pronouncing and how they were producing the target sounds. Therefore, by being conscious about what they articulated during the pre and mostly the post-test, they were able to monitor themselves and correct any mispronunciation that they might have presented.

Beyond the results suggested by figures, it is also crucial to mention the results obtained by the self-perception questionnaire applied after the post-test to the learners. The main objective was to describe the students’ perception of shadowing technique practice and effect by analyzing their answers on a survey. The questions were divided into three main categories: 1) self-perceived engagement, 2) self-perceived pronunciation, and 3) self-

perceived confidence; revealing that most of the students featured a positive attitude towards the overall design of the intervention. Suggesting that the constructive behavior of students might be explained due to their previous experiences with pronunciation activities, as they were familiarized with dynamics like chants, or repeat after they hear a prompt; therefore, easing the process of shadowing implementation within the classroom and supporting the pronunciation enhancement of students, which is evidenced in the substantial boost in the production accuracy of consonant clusters in initial position from this study.

The pronunciation enhancement of consonant clusters in initial position revealed by the research supports previous evidence presented by Abdurazzaqova (2025). The author observed an improvement in fluency through the use of shadowing techniques, suggesting that shadowing might be a viable option when it comes to enhancing the proficiency of a second language acquisition. In addition, the findings presented by this study are entirely consistent with the results from Zafarova (2025), as the author mentions how shadowing was an effective technique for not only pronunciation improvement regarding vowel and consonant sounds, but also for intonation, rhythm, and stress. Besides that, the survey applied in the

research revealed that students enjoyed working with shadowing, boosting their confidence at the moment of speaking in the L2.

Finally, this study becomes helpful for English as a second language tutors who target an improvement in the pronunciation not only in consonant clusters in initial position, but of English pronunciation and fluency as a whole. It might also provide evidence and support for future studies and experimental research in the field. It is highly recommended to devote a section of the class for pronunciation practice where students have the possibility to repeat and imitate a heard stimulus in order to enhance sound production, which many times is not considered or excluded from the lesson planning.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the impact of the shadowing technique on the pronunciation of consonant clusters in English among Chilean EFL learners. Throughout this research, the purpose was to determine whether consistent shadowing practice could make improvements in learners' accuracy when producing specific consonant clusters that are often problematic for Spanish speakers. The findings obtained from the analysis of data will contribute to a better understanding of the role of pronunciation-based techniques in language acquisition within the Chilean EFL context.

The observations obtained from the pre- and post-test suggest that students showed a significant improvement in their pronunciation accuracy of clusters in the initial position after the intervention, as shown by the increase in mean scores. This suggests that the shadowing technique may have a positive effect on learners' ability to produce these consonant clusters accurately, but more evidence is needed. What is more, the perception of students towards the intervention, which was interpreted through the analysis of the questionnaire, showed high levels of engagement, a sense of improvement in their own pronunciation, and an increase of confidence when speaking.

Ultimately, the findings of this research provide a better understanding of the role of pronunciation techniques within the Chilean EFL context. The results shown in this study support the potential benefit of shadowing as a useful tool to enhance learners' pronunciation accuracy of clusters in initial position, and to other aspects of pronunciation.

5.2 Pedagogical implications for pronunciation teaching and learning

The findings of this research suggest that incorporating shadowing in pronunciation lessons can provide learners with greater exposure to a clear pronunciation model. Additionally, it can help them develop better control over consonant clusters in initial position that are not present in Spanish. Moreover, since this technique encourages active listening and immediate imitation, it can foster phonological awareness and articulatory precision.

Furthermore, it may improve students' confidence at the time of speech and make classes more engaging for students.

For teachers, the shadowing technique could function as a practical complement to traditional pronunciation classes. It can be easily adapted to different levels of proficiency. More specifically, in the Chilean EFL context, where pronunciation is often given less attention than other areas, shadowing

may provide an engaging strategy to help students improve their pronunciation.

5.3 Limitations

One of the main constraints of this study was the limited time available to carry out the intervention, which lasted around three weeks. As a result, the long-term effects of the shadowing technique remain uncertain.

Another limitation was the inconsistent number of participants between the pre- and post-test because students were absent on the latter day. This affected the overall sample size that was already limited. More specifically, only 24 students participated out of a target population of 39.

5.4 Further research

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, some ideas for future research are suggested.

Firstly, it would be valuable to investigate the long-term effect of the shadowing technique in order to determine if the improvements in learners' pronunciation are maintained over time.

Secondly, it would be advisable to apply the intervention in grades with older students for further research, or learners with different proficiency levels, to

determine whether factors like age or levels of proficiency affect the effectiveness of the shadowing technique.

Thirdly, the impact of shadowing using authentic material must be explored. Authentic material such as movies and TV shows, songs, interviews, materials in which native English speakers use the language and can be used as language models. In this way, the differences and similarities in results can be analyzed to show greater knowledge of the technique.

Finally, future studies may expand the scope of shadowing by focusing on or including additional consonant clusters, even beyond the initial position. For example, considering consonant clusters in middle or final positions, or including more of clusters that are difficult for Spanish speakers (such as /sm/ or /sl/) would allow researchers to evaluate the potential of this technique for broader application in pronunciation teaching. Similarly, further research may address other speaking features such as fluency, connected speech, intonation, or other phonemes rather than consonant clusters.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1

Consent form

Consentimiento Informado

Estimado apoderado(a).

Somos los estudiantes tesistas Manuel Lamilla, Byron Ulloa, Bastián Sepúlveda y Benjamín Albornoz de la Universidad de Concepción y deseamos solicitar su autorización para que su pupilo participe de una intervención en el aula, como parte de una investigación que estamos realizando que tiene por finalidad observar el efecto del uso de la técnica *shadowing* para mejorar la pronunciación en los estudiantes.

Le pedimos firmar el siguiente consentimiento que acredita que el alumno(a) accede a participar de esta experiencia voluntariamente.

La colaboración del estudiante consistirá en lo siguiente: participar en la lectura de palabras individuales y un breve texto, el cual será registrado por medio de grabación de audio.

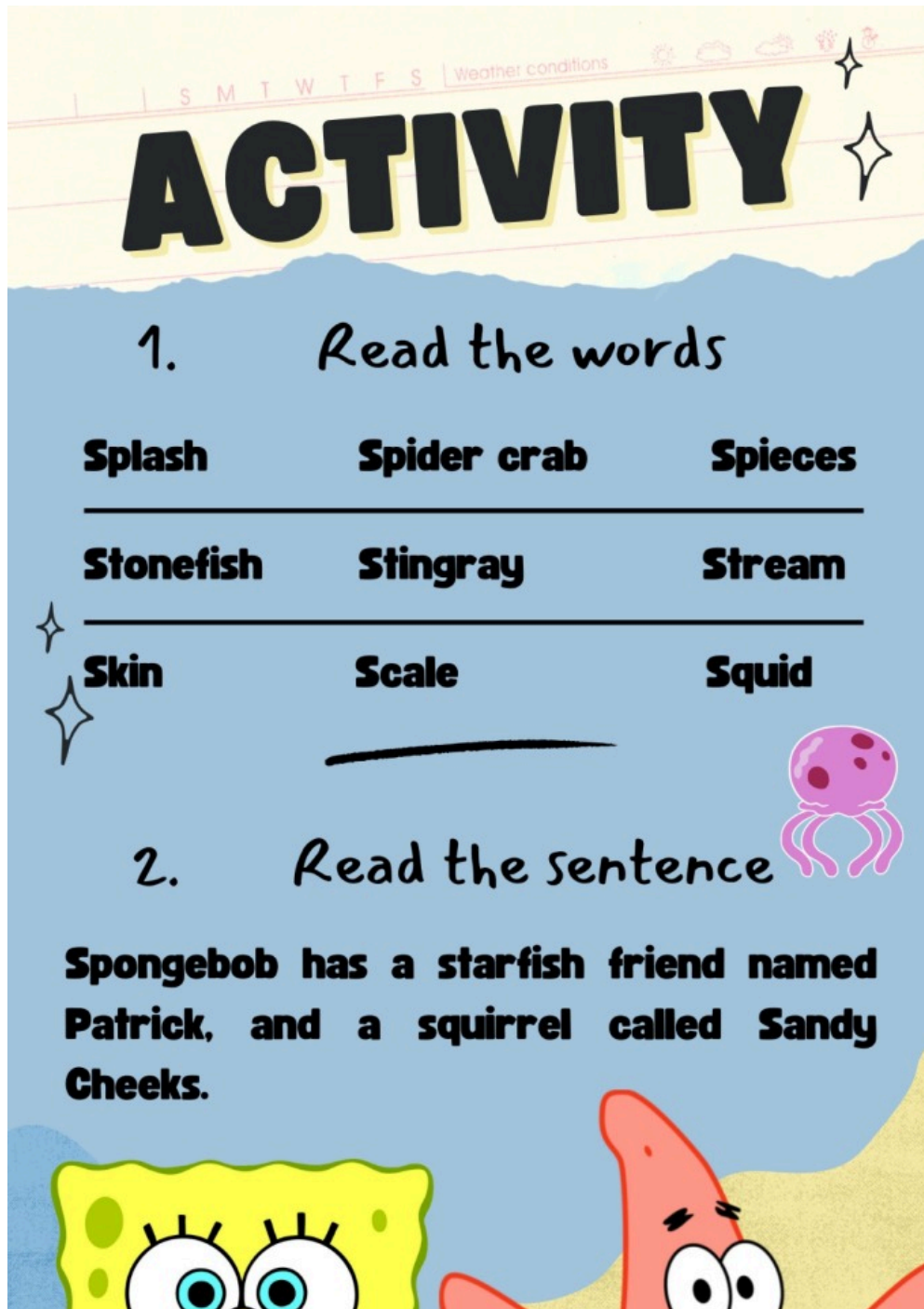
Además:

1. Su participación no representará costo alguno para el establecimiento educacional, ni para docentes, ni apoderados.
2. La colaboración del estudiante será totalmente voluntaria.
3. Este estudio no presenta riesgos identificables para su integridad física o psicológica.
4. La participación del estudiante no es anónima, pero los datos serán manejados bajo absoluta confidencialidad y los nombres de los participantes no aparecerán en ninguna parte del estudio o publicación de sus resultados. Estos datos estarán guardados en archivo electrónico, codificado con clave de acceso y los documentos en papel serán custodiados por el Investigador Responsable.

Firma apoderado

Appendix 2

Pre & Post Test



The activity sheet is designed to look like a piece of lined paper with a torn bottom edge. At the top, there is a header with the days of the week 'S M T W T F S' and the text 'Weather conditions' followed by small icons of a sun, clouds, and rain. The word 'ACTIVITY' is written in large, bold, black letters with a yellow drop shadow. Below this, the first instruction is '1. Read the words'. A table of words is presented with three columns and three rows, separated by horizontal lines. The words are: Splash, Spider crab, Spieces, Stonefish, Stingray, Stream, Skin, Scale, and Squid. There are decorative starburst icons on the left side of the table. Below the table, the second instruction is '2. Read the sentence', accompanied by a small pink squid illustration. The sentence reads: 'Spongebob has a starfish friend named Patrick, and a squirrel called Sandy Cheeks.' At the bottom of the page, there are illustrations of Spongebob and Patrick's faces.

ACTIVITY

1. Read the words

Splash	Spider crab	Spieces
Stonefish	Stingray	Stream
Skin	Scale	Squid

2. Read the sentence

Spongebob has a starfish friend named Patrick, and a squirrel called Sandy Cheeks.

Appendix 3

Test Rubric

Activity Checklist

Name:	Date:
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Criteria	Correct ✓	Incorrect ✗	Words Pronunciation ✓ ✗
	Pronunciation of /sp/ cluster		
Pronunciation of /st/ cluster			
Pronunciation of /sk/ cluster			
Pronunciation of the consonant clusters in connected speech			
Overall Score			

Guidelines:

1. Correct: the student does not add any extra sound and imitates the sound of the consonant clusters it was listened to in English, e.g.: /'stju:dnt/.
2. Incorrect: the student produces non-existent sounds in English due to L1 interference or any other possible factor, e.g., /estjudent/.

Connected Speech:

1. Correct: the student's pronunciation of words beginning with consonant clusters follows an accurate connected speech pattern, e.g., a squirrel /ə'skwɜ:rəl/.
2. Incorrect: inaccurate pattern of connected speech due to the interference of the L1, e.g.: /ʌ'e'skwɜ:rəl/.

Words Pronunciation:

1. Correct: the overall pronunciation of the word being assessed is accurate and does not present difficulties to be understood.
2. Incorrect: The overall pronunciation of the word is poorly produced, and it presents difficulties to be understood.