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FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS HUMANAS Y DE LA EDUCACIÓN

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THE STARFALL APP AND THE ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION

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TUTOR APPROVAL

CERTIFY:

Me, Calero Sánchez Ximena Alexandra, holder of the I.D. 180288406-2, as supervisor of research dissertation on the topic: “THE STARFALL APP AND THE ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION”, investigated by Miss Johanna Lizbeth Cando Sánchez, with I.D. 1804451175, confirm that this research report meets the technical, scientific and regulatory requirements, so the presentation of it is authorized to the corresponding organism in order to be submitted for evaluation by the qualifying Commission appointed by the Directors Board.



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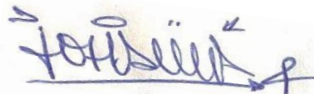
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I declare this undergraduate dissertation entitled: “THE STARFALL APP AND THE ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION”, is the result of the author's investigation and has reached the conclusion and recommendation described in the present study.

Comments expressed in this report are author's responsibility.

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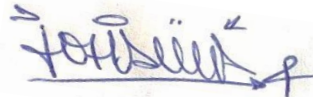


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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the stronger woman I have never met, my mother who always trusts me and taught me all I know. Also to the greatest love of my life and to the most sincere I Love You I am going to hear. Who in my last years of study was my travel companion and who motivated me to continue fighting and to never give up.

To both of them Maria and Amy.

Jo Hanna Liz.

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to research how the Starfall app develops in the English pronunciation since it is a new alternative to learn the language oriented to children in preschool, kindergarten, first, second and third grade. This program emphasizes exploration, play, and positive reinforcement, encouraging kids to feel safe and motivated to learn. For the research development, a quasi-experimental qualitative methodology was used with 10 fourth-year students from Basic Education School "Marcial Augusto Soria", whose ages fluctuated between 8 and 9 years OLD. They were evaluated before and after the five-week intervention. At the end of the research, the results of the pre and post-test were compared and it was possible to verify the effectiveness of the Starfall application in English pronunciation. Before the experimentation, most of the students were in level 1, that means, there was limited control of phonological characteristics and incomprehensible speech. However, at the end of the experimentation, the majority were placed at level 3 which was satisfactory, and at level 4, being very good because the speech was understandable, there was good intonation, use of accent and in general, good articulation of words.

Key words: mobile applications, teaching, pronunciation, Starfall.

CHAPTER I

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Investigative Background

The publication entitled “Can Apple’s iPhone Help to Improve English Pronunciation Autonomously? State of the App” executed by Fouz (2012), mentions that pronunciation is one of the most challenging aspects of language learning, because, it involves not only mental but also psychomotor and perceptual abilities, consequently, it should be controlled under substantial requirements.

This research is focused on the wide range of technological applications designed for pronunciation, like the following: English file, phonetic focus, sounds, pronunciation power, enunciation focus and clear speech. Where the first three have interactive sound tables to practice pronunciation, and the others, allow to discriminate the sound or verify the knowledge of each symbol. In all of them, a record is saved to observe the areas that need reinforcement, reinforcing the broad benefits of using these and other applications to hone pronunciation skills.

This research helps support the current one because it highlights the usefulness of mobile phones and their applications for language learning. As well as, recognizing the potential to practice and improve certain aspects of pronunciation in English, such as sound discrimination, learning phonemes, or the pronunciation of individual words.

In the investigative work written by Adey (2014), entitled “Teaching the pronunciation of the English language in students from fourth grade of primary school”, the author analyzed the difficulties of English language pronunciation in Spanish-speaking primary school students. The objectives about pronunciation level

should cover phonetic, rhythmic, stress and intonation aspects, that are where difficulties are most observed.

This research proposed pronunciation activity strategies such as: presentation and rhythmic repetition of phonetic symbols, graphemes and words, phonetic organization, recognition and reproduction of phonetic symbols, minimum pair work and games like tongue twisters are highlighted.

The contribution of this research is given by its contents regarding the phonetic difficulties in pronunciation and the way they should be driven in the primary classroom giving guidelines about objectives, methodology, educational resources and organization of spaces for this purpose; in order to expands the knowledge level regarding pronunciation pedagogical work.

In the document published by Imam publication, Hasbi & Aliv (2014) entitled “Developing mobile application of interactive English pronunciation training to improve EFL students’ pronunciation skill”, there is an explanation about the English configuration as a foreign language because the pronunciation has received less attention in teaching compared to grammar, vocabulary, and the four language skills, which creates a lot of difficulty for students who make pronunciation mistakes very frequently. In this research, the authors mentioned that the pronunciation errors that occur most frequently are confusions in vowels, consonants and diphthongs, based on them a mobile application was used in order to confirm its usefulness, allowing the pronunciation training. Hence, the methodology and technological resources of this platform made it possible to raise awareness of the mistakes made, practice and memorize them in a simple way.

These contents served as a reference because they detail the way mobile applications should be used and included in the English language teaching plans. According to this, the Starfall application could be used with the students under study.

To continue, in the scientific research developed by Calvo (2017), under the title: “Contributions of new technologies to the teaching of English pronunciation”, there is an analysis about the contribution of technology in pronunciation. The author mentioned that the teaching of languages such as English must be supported in information and communication technologies to take advantage of the large number of existing programs and other materials specifically designed to improve student pronunciation. In this document, the research evaluated several applications to improve pronunciation, doing a consensus because they achieve good results.

Students seem to enjoy these technological resources, and find them useful and interesting. In addition, the interactive resources allow to introduce variety and creativity in the classroom, promoting the students’ autonomy since they can use these tools when and where they like. However, it is necessary to be selective and test these resources to verify if they are suitable for the specific needs of the students. This information contributes significantly to the current research because it details several specific applications for pronunciation, highlighting their advantages and disadvantages. Nevertheless, it also argues that these resources should be used more frequently as supplements to traditional education, being ideal to combine them with workbooks and with the teaching guide to create true knowledge.

In the publication entitled: “Choosing technology tools to meet pronunciation teaching and learning goals” developed by Marla (2018), the author mentioned that although there is a wide range of technological resources that are effective for teaching-learning pronunciation, these must be reviewed to ensure that they meet the objectives.

The research concluded that technology is valuable in teaching and learning pronunciation because technological tools can make it easier for students to understand the mechanics of articulation, as well as helping to improve the ability to

identify sounds, words and phonetics. In this research, it is clear that there is no better application that manages to adjust to the needs of each teacher or student for pronunciation. Therefore, it is recommended that instead of looking for the perfect application, it is more productive to inquire about the most common and useful applications that fit the real pronunciation needs of the students. This idea makes clear the fact that it is not necessary to look for the most expensive or newest application, but rather the one that can be easily used by students and meets their expectations and those of teachers.

Another research that contributes to this study is the one titled “Online resources for learners and teachers of English language pronunciation” that was developed by Peterson (2018), where it is mentioned that the use of computers is almost ideal for learning pronunciation because they provide individualized instruction, frequent practice through auditory discrimination, focused repetition exercises and automatic visual support that shows students mistakes and successes in this field. This research describes several mobile applications that help English pronunciation and that offer various tools more or less useful for this purpose. In addition, it exposed that the variety of technological resources is a good thing because the learner can select the website, the application or another suitable tool that adjusts to his needs, objectives, level, learning style and particular situations. The publication highlights the importance of the instruction that teachers must provide to students in order to use any type of technological resource because they will be able to use the platform independently and thereby reinforce their knowledge.

In the scientific article developed by Aminullah (2019) with the title “*Applying ELSA speak software in the pronunciation class: student's perception*”, the writer declared that pronunciation is one of the crucial skills to understand a foreign language because its misuse can cause communication ineffective and be indicative of poor command of the language. This research emphasizes the value of applications and technology in general, to help students have a good pronunciation and clarifies that

due to the interactivity of these media, learners can improve their oral production skills and deliver speeches clear and fluid with constant practice. Because applications such as ELSA help students correctly pronounce vowels, consonants, practice accents and can repeat as many times as necessary. The information about this application contributes to the development of current research because it highlights the importance of applying technological systems in current education, especially to improve areas such as pronunciation that require a lot of practice to be perfected.

In the bibliographic review, there was no official research directly related to the Starfall app and the pronunciation development. Therefore, conducting this research, in addition to being original, it is a necessity because it will serve as a basis for teachers and students to have new technological resources to work on pronunciation. However, several opinions have been collected that verify the effectiveness of the Starfall app, for example: for the pedagogical researcher Vander (2019), Starfall is an interactive instrument with a good combination of video, audio, games and stories to keep children interested. It additionally has a clear presentation of content, at a good pace and present several activities that allow them to work in almost all fields of English learning.

Another significant opinion collected around the Starfall app is through the publication “Starfall ABC app: an interactive way to teach your children the alphabet” developed by Cline (2014). The author mentioned that using this app, children could know, read and hear the pronunciation of sounds in order to learn the alphabet through fun games. It could additionally be used successfully in children with learning difficulties like autism and other conditions.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

Independent Variable

Apps

Apps are programs aimed primarily at smartphones and tablets and characterized by being useful, dynamic, easy to install (a few clicks) and easy to use. Some of them depend on the Internet to function (for example, those associated with social networks, news, weather information, etc.).

Depending on their origin, apps can be downloaded from different places, although it is usually done in virtual stores (app stores), which are found on the Internet and in some mobiles, the user can access to them directly from the main menu. An important point of the apps and the access to get them is their price. There are several applications (most of them) that are free and others are paid. Logically, the free ones are the most demanded by users and the least sophisticated, in general. In addition to the division by cost, the stores offer others by theme, number of downloads, cost level, provider/operating system, etc. (Roca, 2020)

Educational Apps

According to Di Cristo & Bonilla (2016), educational apps are multimedia programs designed to be used through electronic devices and used as a mobile learning tool, which allows more personalized learning in any situation, taking advantage of different learning contexts found on our daily life. There are several benefits that mobile learning offers, many of which require rethinking methodologies and standards in education; mainly in the way teachers communicate with their students.

Some of them are the following:

- Educational apps allow communication in real time between students, teachers and managers.
- Educational apps simplify and make the distribution of content and materials more efficient.

- Certain Applications and services allow the user, not only to store information in the cloud, but also to share it with other people.
- Educational apps eliminate the geographic barrier in learning.
- Educational apps promote students to be more active during the learning process.

Therefore, mobile learning is aimed at taking advantage of new mobile technologies to facilitate, support and improve the teaching-learning process.

Starfall app

Starfall is a free and fun app for learning English language, aimed at children in preschool, kindergarten, first, second and third grade. This program emphasizes exploration, play, and positive reinforcement, encouraging children to feel safe and motivated to learn. Additionally, it constitutes an ideal children educational entertainment alternative for special education, home schooling, and English language development (Luna, 2019).

This software has been developed by the Starfall Education Foundation, for English teaching and particularly, the development of reading skills mainly, however, it is an interactive space with several activities and games for children to enjoy this process. Starfall also has a “*More*” section, where books are accompanied by an audio, so that, students can read the story while listening to the narration in English, helping them distinguish the accent and recognizing how each word is pronounced. In the same section, there are games and songs to improve reading, comprehension, and vocabulary, allowing to improve elementary phonetics and develop productive skills. (Muñoz, 2013); (Aula Planeta, 2013).

According to Starfall Education Foundation (2020), Starfall is a free public service for teaching English, and because of its benefits has expanded to include language arts and math for preschool, kindergarten, first grade, second grade, and third grade. The Starfall's emphasis on phonemic awareness, systematic sequential phonetics, and common words in conjunction with audiovisual interactivity has demonstrated its effectiveness in teaching the English language.

Starfall's activities are research-based and aligned to the Common Core Individual State Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics. Hence, the program emphasizes exploration, play, and positive reinforcement, encouraging children to feel safe and intrinsically motivated. Starfall is an educational alternative to other entertainment options for children and it is especially effective for special education, home schooling, and English language development. (ELD, ELL, ESL) (Starfall Education Foundation, 2020).

Dependent Variable

Language skills

It is the ability to use language appropriately in everyday social situations. To clarify, according to the role as sender or receiver and according to the transmission channel used: oral or written, the person will denote skills such as: listening comprehension (understood as the ability to interpret or understand what is heard), reading comprehension (ability to transform linguistic signs into images or mental ideas), and in linguistic awareness (referring to the proper use of language and its types of syntactic constructions. Additionally, language is a manifestation of thought, because allows people to receive, process and express the information, and then, socialize the learning. Therefore, the skills that communication entails are various. (Sánchez, 2018)

Phonology

Phonology is accepted as a branch of linguistics that has as object of study the phonic elements, considering their distinctive and functional value. Phonetics contemplates the analysis of the acoustic and physiological profile of sounds, and Phonology interpretes the way in which sounds arise at an abstract or mental level (Szczegieliak, 2015).

Phonology deals with the phonic systems of languages, as opposed to the physical articulation of language (Phonetics). Among the great variety of sounds that a speaker can make, it is possible to recognize those that represent the "same" sound, although the ways of pronouncing it are different from the acoustic point of view, listeners can distinguish the sounds that indicate a difference in meaning, at the same time (Szczegieliak, 2015).

Pronunciation

Pronunciation can be defined as the way a sound or sounds are produced and, unlike articulation, which refers to the actual production of speech sounds in the oral cavity, pronunciation emphasizes the way sounds are perceived by the listener. Therefore, it includes individual sounds or phonemes, the sounds in the spoken string, the force of pronunciation in words and sentences, rhythm and intonation (Texidor, Reyes, & Echevarría, 2016).

For Pérez (2014), pronunciation is a skill that manifests itself in the real process of communication and involves the development of skills in two fundamental aspects: hearing and phonological system production of the language. In this way, it is assumed that the skills corresponding to pronunciation are:

- The ability to distinguish and produce ordinary sounds and prosodic structures.
- The ability to perceive and concatenate unknown sequences of sounds.
- The ability, as a listener, to convert (that is, divide into distinctive and significant parts) a continuous stream of sound into a significant and structured chain of phonological elements.
- Comprehending or mastering the perception processes and sound production applicable to learning a new language.

Hence, pronunciation should not be considered as a simple articulation, or as a sound production of a language with a certain rhythm, accent and intonation, but as a complex process that allows the speaker to structure his speech, complete the meaning and intention and, on the other hand, the listener, the listening comprehension process (Pérez, 2014).

Pronunciation in the English language has an extraordinary importance, since, it is closely related to the meaning of words, which contain the information provided in oral discourse. This plays a relevant role in listening comprehension, oral expression and oral interaction, therefore, the relationship between pronunciation and communication in teaching English (Texidor, Reyes, & Echevarría, 2016).

According to the above, pronunciation is a skill of great importance in the communication process, and therefore, several authors have focused their attention on seeking the best strategies based on mobile technology for pedagogical work in this area.

1.3 Objectives

1.3.1 General Objective

- To investigate how the Starfall app is developed in the English pronunciation.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- To identify which teachers' resources are used to improve the English pronunciation.
- To establish the main students' difficulties regarding pronunciation.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the Starfall application in the English pronunciation.

CHAPTER II

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Recourses:

During the study development, several resources were used. They are listed below:

Human

- Researcher
- Tutor
- Students

Materials

- Sheets of paper
- Pens
- Photocopies
- Books

Technological

- Computer
- Internet
- Printer

Institutions

- Technical University of Ambato.
- Basic Education School “Marcial Augusto Soria”

Economic

The project development cost \$ 50 dollars approximately,

2.2. Methods

The research required a qualitative approach because it was necessary to use interpretive techniques in order to decode and describe the main problems around pronunciation in students from the fourth year of Basic Education School “Marcial Augusto Soria”

Research modality

Bibliographic-documentary

In the development of the research, the investigator used the bibliographic-documentary modality to collect, select and analyze information from books, magazines, reports, publications, web pages and among other sources to support the study variables such as Starfall mobile application and English pronunciation.

Field

This research took place essentially in the field, making direct contact with the reality of the study: with the fourth-year students from Basic Education School “Marcial Augusto Soria” in Patate. In the institution, the researcher collected data regarding the pronunciation development for adapting Starfall app in the English class.

Research level

Descriptive

The descriptive level allowed observing, characterizing and describing the reality of the study. In the first instance, highlighting the potentialities and difficulties that students have at the pronunciation level, and subsequently, analyzing the effectiveness of using the Starfall application in this area.

Quasi-experimental

The research was quasi-experimental since, a new pedagogical strategy (Starfall app) was applied to a group of fourth-year students from Basic Education School in Patate town, during six weeks, to check its effectiveness on pronunciation.

The experimentation process involved implementing 12 activities, two per week and 40 minutes length each. After the completion of each activity, there was a reinforcement regarding the pronunciation. The activities for week 1 and week 6 were the same because they served as pretest and posttest respectively. All of them, under evaluation criteria proposed in the Cambridge KEY standardized test for schools (Annex 1) allowed to compare the initial and final results to determine the level of progress achieved by students.

Population and sample

The research included the participation of the 10 fourth-year students from Basic Education School “Marcial Augusto Soria”, whose ages fluctuated between 8 and 9 years. This group was selected for convenience due to accessibility and predisposition to use Starfall app.

Considering that the population was reduced and accessible, a sample design was not necessary, and the entire population was occupied as a sample, which means that the research had 10 students.

Technique and instruments for data collection

The data collection technique used was:

Survey: it was developed through a questionnaire applied to the teachers of the educational unit to collect information regarding the use of didactic and technological resources in pronunciation, making possible to develop a Situational diagnostic.

Rubric: to evaluate the students' pronunciation, the Cambridge speaking parameters were used. In this instrument, the ability of pronunciation is contemplated and it is scored from 5 to 0 points; where 5 results in comprehensible intonation, appropriate intonation and accent and 0 the inability to pronounce properly. These criteria were applied by asking the students to pronounce some words. (ANNEX 1).

Intervention plan

The intervention had four phases:

Phase 1: Induction

- Prior to data collection, the researcher sent an official letter to the director of Basic Education School "Marcial Augusto Soria" in Patate town in order to get the approval to develop the investigation.
- Later, the schedules and activities were coordinated with the group assigned for the study, which had the approval from the parents and legal representatives.
- A zoom meeting was held to explain the operation of the application, advantages of using and the activities that were developed with the students.

Phase 2: Diagnosis

- In this phase, the survey was applied to an English teacher and 2 English interns, in order to obtain information about the resources used to work on the students' pronunciation.

- The application of Activity 1 performed as a pretest. Based on two small readings found in the Starfall app, (Zac and cat and Jake's tale) these readings contain words with the vowel a of short and long sound independently, so 5 words were chosen from each reading, 10 single words total. In the first place, the researcher read these two readings, emphasizing the words that the children had to read. After that, the activity consisted of asking the student one by one to read these words. In this case, there were cards with the words containing the / æ / and / eɪ / sound of the vowel a. This activity was evaluated in the range of 0 to 5 points as established in the Cambridge pronunciation section.
- During the pretest, it was identified that students at the time of reading did not know the correct intonation for each word. In addition, the students had confusion at the time of pronouncing different consonants, but the most noticeable were the consonant *c*, and *h* in these two cases students showed interference from L1.

Phase 3: Intervention

With the activities carried out during the six weeks, the researched children were able to identify different sounds characteristic of the English language such as plosive, nasal, fricative, and lateral sounds. Emphasis was placed on consonants because in the diagnostic phase it was noted that children had a wrong pronunciation and intonation. The app allowed children to notice that they pronounced and read in a very similar way to Spanish when in the English language it is different. In addition, the diagnostic phase helped ensure that the application is not only used to teach the vowels sound but also helped to teach the falling and rising intonation.

Week 1: During the first week of intervention, the students received an explanation about the Starfall application, how to use it and the type of activities that will be developed. This application by itself teaches the proper pronunciation of long and

short vowels. It has different activities to practice each of the vowels, and additionally, in each activity it teaches the pronunciation of the consonants that accompany each vowel.

The application has reading and listening activities making possible to work together with the students in order to improve their pronunciation. With the application of the pretest, it was observed that the students had a notable interference with the L1. This is because the students did not receive enough hours of English class during their first years of education.

The following activities were subsequently applied:

Week 2: In this week, the explanation consisted in that a vowel has 7 different sounds. The first sound for the vowel a is / æ / (in the middle) as in the cat, there was the clarification on how this sound is produced, teaching the correct position of the lips and tongue, therefore, the children become familiar with the form to produce that sound.

For a better practice of what was taught, it was developed an exercise of the application called **Make a word with an/at to match the picture**. This activity not only focused on teaching the vowel sounds, but also that in an indirect or unconscious way the students will hear and become familiar with the consonant sounds. Therefore, to complete the activity, the students had to press the image and they heard the name of the object. On their left, when they pressed any of the consonants, the sound it made was heard.



Figure 1 Week 2 activities.

As a second activity, the researcher proceeded to read words with this sound and the students repeated them twice. As reinforcement, an activity from the Starfall application: **C-A-T Word Machine** was used, where the students had to listen and repeat the words presented.



Figure 2 C-A-T Word Machine activity.

To conclude, a video called Let's Read! Three Letter Words with "a" | Phonics for Kids, was watched to allow the students make a small review of what they already learned.

Week 3: Before class began, the short story **Zac and the Hat** was used to practice reading with students. This tool is projected on the screen of their cell phones or tablets, sentence by sentence, and the students can click on the word they want to know its pronunciation and hear how to pronounce it, correctly.

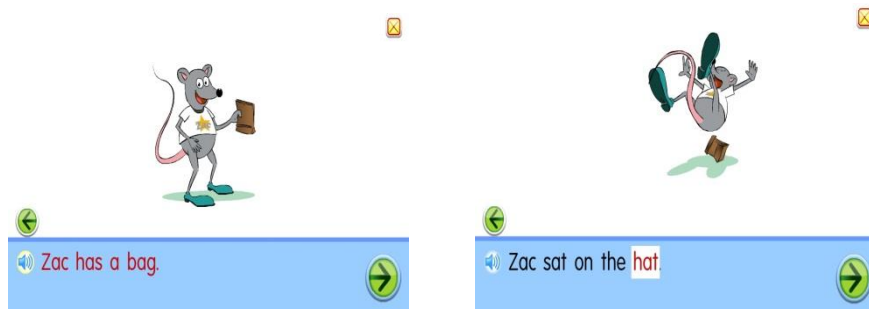


Figure 3 Week 3 activities.

Later, a game similar to **Bingo** was played with the difference that words were used from the reading and also from the previous activities. For this, the students had to make a chart with 9 boxes and write nine words that were learned during the 3 weeks.

As a second activity, the researcher used one of the sections of the Starfall application, where the children listened to a story (Zac the Rat) that served to reinforce the study of the short vowel. Therefore, the children had the opportunity to practice the / æ / sound.

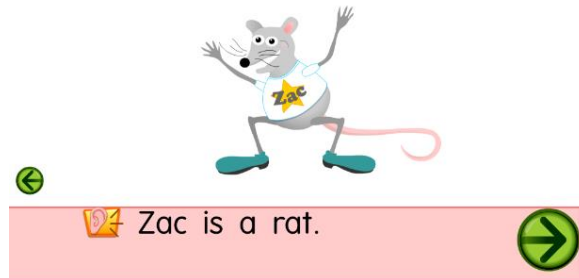


Figure 4 Zac the Rat story.

Week 4: This week began with the study of the sound / e / that belongs to the long vowel. To start with the short introduction, 3 words were mentioned with the sound of the long vowel (snake, tail, day). After, students were asked: which vowel sound did they hear? The students immediately recognized the sound of the vowel a.

In addition, there was an explanation to them about the / e - / sound which is the combination of the / e / and / or / i: / sound. As in the word cake. For a better understanding, the video Phonics - Long / ā / Sound was projected as an example where they were able to notice/know words that contained the aforementioned sounds.

As a second activity, the description of the / e / sound that can be found in the middle or at the end of a word was explained. For this reason, students learned words that had the / e / sound in the middle, such as: game / ge-m /; state / ste-t /; later / éle /; change / tʃeɪndʒ / etc.

This activity was complemented by the Starfall application called **Make a Word with silent –e** which allows the student to form words by adding letters. Therefore, children could practice this new sound in a fun way. Likewise, this activity not only

teaches the pronunciation of vowels, but also consonant sounds in order to improve pronunciation.



Figure 5 Week 4 activities.

Week 5: the class began with a warm-up, in this case, the video Long Vowel A Song to reinforce what was learned the previous week. As an independent activity, it was developed the activity called Draw long A sound words, where the students on a sheet of paper had to write at least 10 words that contain the sound / eɪ / and draw the 10 objects, to strengthen the sounds already learned.

As a second activity, Jake's story was used, which is a story from the Starfall app where students came across words with the / e / sound. Of course, this exercise was not the exception in teaching the pronunciation of consonants and vowels.



Figure 6 Week 5 activities.

As a next step, an activity that consisted of a brief review on the / e- sound took place. The **picture hunt** tool was used, where students had to press the image that the indication pointed to.

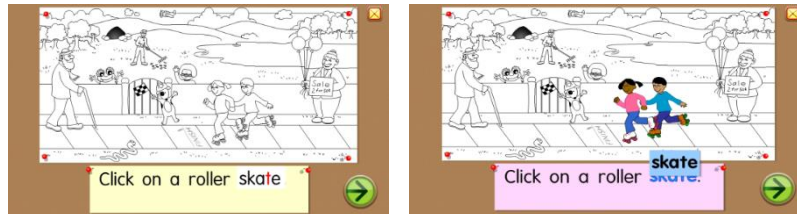


Figure 7 Picture hunt activity.

Phase 4: Ending

In the sixth week, two activities were developed, the first is a reinforcement of the sounds learned that the students had to paint in red the images that contained the short sound of the vowel and blue the images that had the long sound of the vowel. The second, where the pronunciation was worked with the same initial activity (Activity 1) to evaluate it under the same Cambridge criteria.

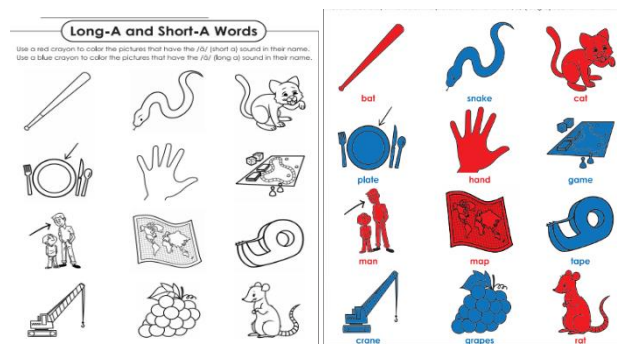


Figure 8 Sound recognition.

Information processing plan

The results of the pretest and posttest activities rated on 5 points, were analyzed by means of a comparative study, making tables and graphs. To determine the effectiveness of the proposed application, the chi-square statistical test was performed, which, through the level of significance, allowed to accept the alternative hypothesis, assuming the effectiveness of the Starfall app in pronunciation.

The information from surveys was reviewed and tabulated through Excel and presented in tables and graphs for analysis and interpretation.

CHAPTER III

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

3.1.1 Pretest results

The following are the results of the pre-test pronunciation application to the 10 students from the Basic Education School “Marcial Augusto Soria” according to the Cambridge scale range from 5 to 0.

Table 1

Pretest scores

Scores	Frequency	Percentage
5	0	0%
4	0	0%
3	0	0%
2	4	40%
1	6	60%
0	0	0%
TOTAL	10	100%

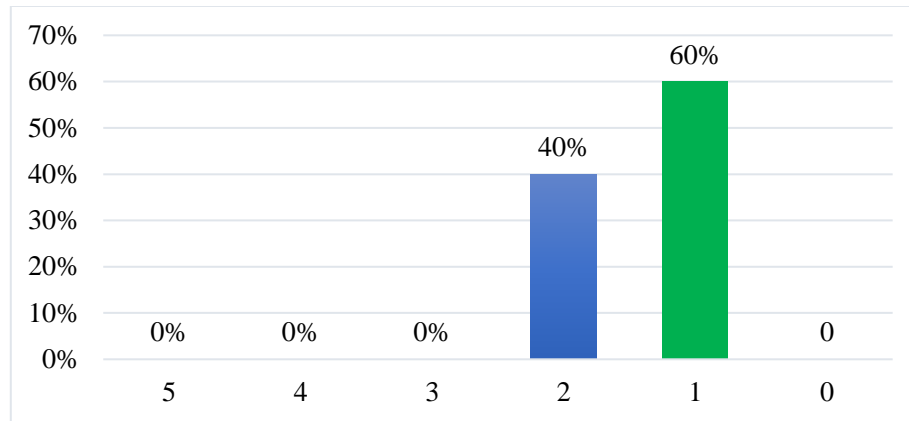


Figure 9 Pretest scores

Analysis and interpretation:

After the application of the pretest activity, the majority of the children from the fourth year of Basic Education School “Marcial Augusto Soria” had deficiencies in terms of pronunciation, since 60% of them were at level one because they got a point on the scale of 0 to 5, and 40% ranked at level two.

Before the experimentation, the students from Basic Education School “Marcial Augusto Soria” presented significant difficulties in pronunciation because their speech was not comprehensible, and there was limited control on their pronunciation. Therefore, it was necessary to work integrally on pronunciation by developing activities in the Starfall app.

3.1.2 Post-test results

Table 2

Post-test scores

Scores	Frequency	Percentage
5	0	0%
4	3	30%
3	4	40%

2	3	30%
1	0	0%
0	0	0%
TOTAL	10	100%

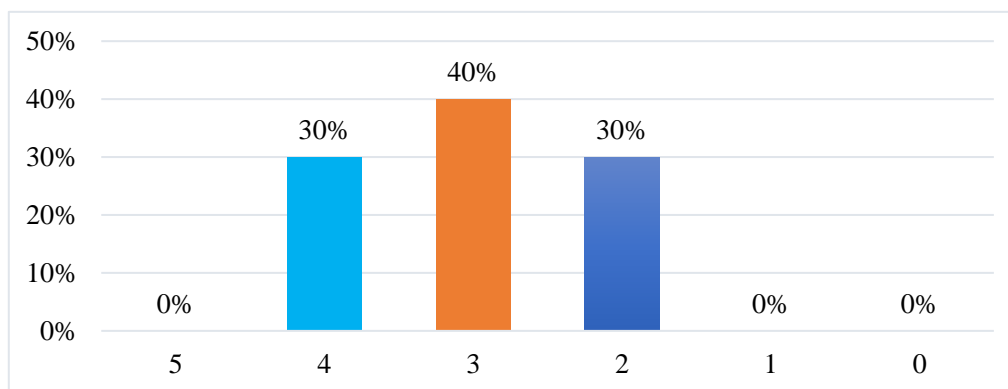


Figure 10 Post-test scores

Analysis and interpretation:

With the application of the activities proposed in the Starfall app, there was progress in the development of the students’ pronunciation, evidenced when applying the post-test activity. The 40% of the students reached level 3, considered satisfactory. It was really encouraging to find the 30% of students at level 4. However, the 30% were also observed at level two.

According to this percentages, students in the fourth year from Basic Education School “Marcial Augusto Soria” developed their pronunciation skills, appreciated throughout the activities, because their speech was mostly intelligible, precise and clear compared to the initial. In addition, the students were more confident, attentive

3.1.3 Comparative analysis

Table 3

Pretest and post-test

Scores	PRETEST	POST-TEST
5	0%	0%
4	0%	30%
3	0%	40%
2	40%	30%
1	60%	0%
0	0%	0%

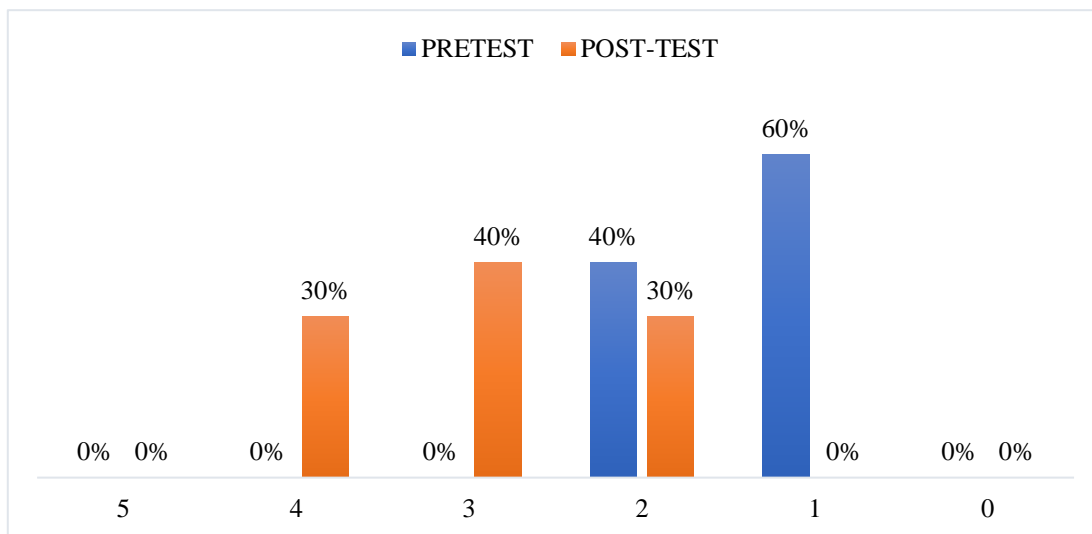


Figure 11 Pretest y post-test

Analysis and interpretation:

In order to fulfill the research objectives and attest to the effectiveness of using the Starfall app, it was necessary to compare the results obtained in the pretest and posttest. As it can be seen in figure 6, when starting the experimentation, the majority of students were in level 1 and the 40% in level two. However, in the post-test, no level one students were found, there was a reduction in the percentage of level two students from 40% to 30%. However, it was positive to find 40% of students in level

3 and 30% in level 4, showing the students’ progress because they went from an imprecise, unintelligible speech with phonological errors to a more appropriate one, using intonation and clearer pronunciation.

3.2 Survey results

How important is it for you to use educational resources in teaching English pronunciation?

Table 4

Importance of using resources to teach pronunciation.

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
Very important	3	100%
Important	0	0%
Moderately important	0	0%
Little important	0	0%
Not important	0	0%
TOTAL	3	100%

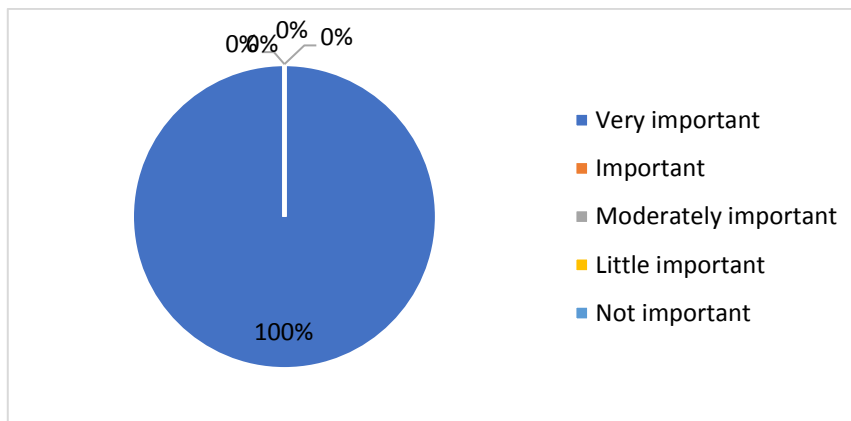


Figure 12 Importance of working on pronunciation

Analysis and interpretation:

The 100% of the English teachers at Basic Education School “Marcial Augusto Soria” in Patate assumed that it is very important to use educational resources in teaching English pronunciation. The teaching resources have a dual purpose: on the

one hand, they improve learning because facilitate the acquisition and assimilation of content and, on the other hand, create conditions for teachers and students to interact within an appropriate climate for the creation of meaningful learning.

Why do you use didactic resources in teaching pronunciation?

Table 5

Objective of using teaching resources.

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
To facilitate teaching	2	67%
To solve existing problems	0	0%
To reinforce pronunciation	1	33%
To encourage students to learn more	0	0%
Others (specify)	0	0%
TOTAL	3	100%

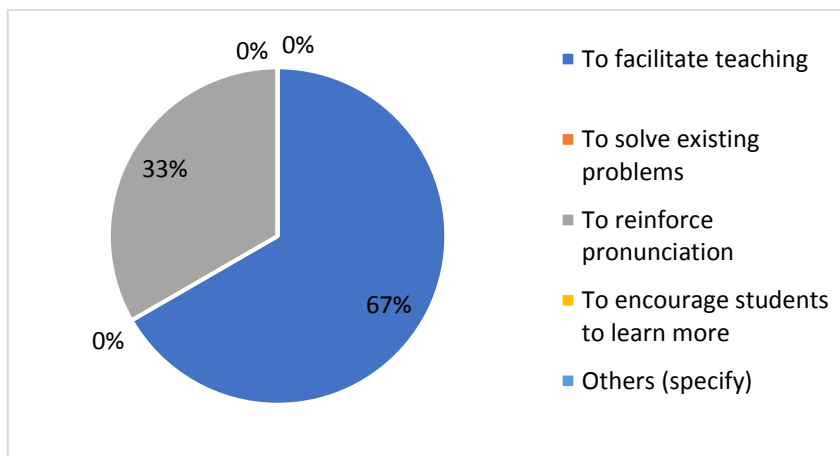


Figure 13 Objective of using teaching resources.

Analysis and interpretation:

The 67% of the teachers stated that they use didactic resources to facilitate pronunciation teaching, while 33% assume that they used them only as a reinforcement.

Hence, they can instruct the student on how to pronounce the different words, in addition to reinforcing existing knowledge or correcting mistakes for better performance.

What resources do you use to work on pronunciation with your students?

Table 6

Type of resources used for pronunciation.

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
Books	0	0%
Workbooks	0	0%
Apps	2	25%
Platforms	2	25%
Podcast	3	37%
Debates	0	0%
Round tables	0	0%
Workshops	1	13%
Exhibitions	0	0%
Others	0	0%

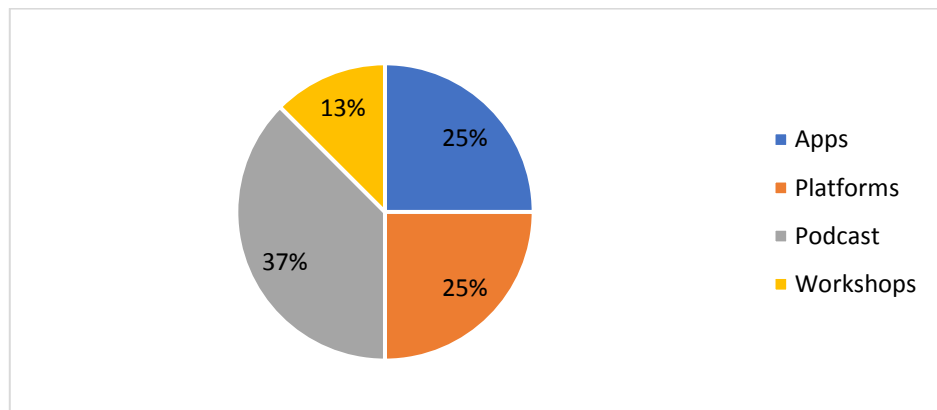


Figure 14 Type of resources used for pronunciation.

Analysis and interpretation:

When inquiring about the types of resources used to work pronunciation with students, it was found that 37% used podcasts, 25% opted for technological resources

such as digital platforms or applications and 13% utilized workshop. According to the scores, the teachers developed their teaching work with several and innovative means. Both, books and workbooks were not used to improve pronunciation because this skill is requires greater interaction.

What is the criteria you use to select the resources for teaching pronunciation?

Table 7

Criteria for selecting pronunciation resources.

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
Accessibility	1	33%
Easy to use	0	0%
Activities that the resource offers	2	67%
Results	0	0%
Others (specify)	0	0%
TOTAL	3	100%

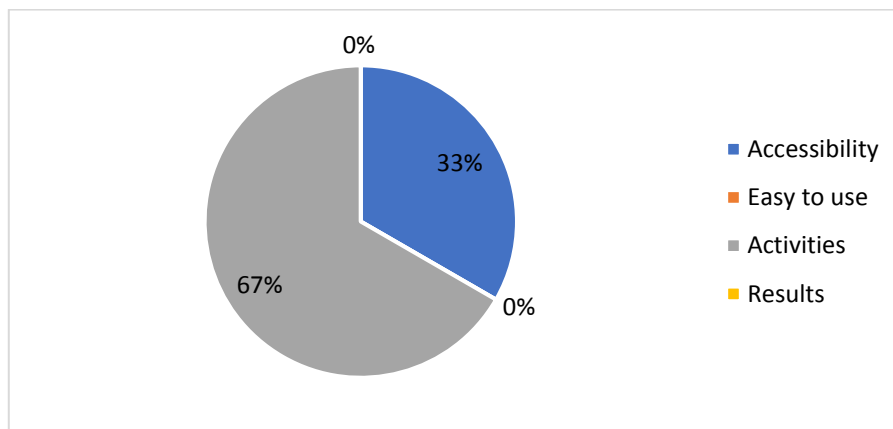


Figure 15 Criteria for selecting pronunciation resources.

Analysis and interpretation:

The criteria for selecting resources to teach pronunciation were mainly the activities that can be developed with them (67%), while the 33% affirmed that the most important criterion is accessibility. Agreeing to the above, the didactic resources used for teaching pronunciation were selected due to the activities that can be developed

with it, because, in this way, students have the opportunity to evolve several tasks according to their taste and their needs and capabilities.

How often do you use technological resources to work on pronunciation with your students?

Table 8

Frequency of using technological resources.

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
Generally	0	0%
Frequently	0	0%
Occasionally	3	100%
Rarely	0	0%
Never	0	0%
TOTAL	3	100%

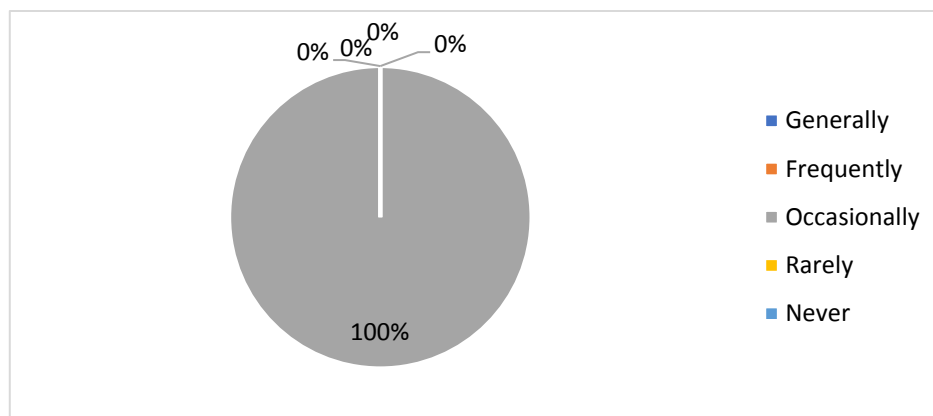


Figure 16 Frequency of using technological resources.

Analysis and interpretation:

The surveyed teachers wholly affirmed that they occasionally used technological resources for the pronunciation development since within the Educational Unit there

is not always access to ICT, due to the large number of students. However, in class planning, these activities are scheduled once every 15 days because their importance and impact on the development of English skills is recognized, especially at the pronunciation level.

3.3 Hypothesis verification

Alternative hypothesis: Starfall app favors the children pronunciation development from the Basic Education School “Marcial Augusto Soria”.

Null hypothesis: Starfall app does not favor the children pronunciation development from the Basic Education School “Marcial Augusto Soria”.

Once the information was tabulated, the hypothesis was calculated using the T-Student statistical test through the IBM SPSS program. This test allowed to determine if there is a significant difference in the group before and after the application of the tool.

Table 9.

Paired Samples Test

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Pre-test group & post-test group	10	,791	,006

As can be seen in the previous table, the value is equal to 0.006, less than the level of statistical significance $\alpha = 0.05$, that means there is a significant difference in the samples. Accordingly, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted: Starfall app favors the children pronunciation development from the Basic Education School “Marcial Augusto Soria”.

3.4 Discussion of results

After the development of the current investigation, it was verified that the pronunciation ability is very important in the English language because it goes beyond a correct articulation of words, since it constitutes the fundamental basis of communication. Pérez (2014), stated that pronunciation is a skill that manifests itself in the real process of communication and is a complex process that allows the speaker to structure the speech, complete its meaning and intention, and the listener, the process of listening comprehension.

Taking this argument into account, the present investigation was evolved to verify that Starfall app does favor the pronunciation development. Through activities, explanations of articulation -phonology and teaching support, it was possible to improve intelligibility, tone and rhythm of student's discourse. This digital application allows working on phonemic awareness, systematic sequential phonetics in conjunction with audiovisual interactivity.

This result is supported by the research of Hasbi & Aliv (2014), who concluded that the errors in pronunciation that students have can be adequately worked with mobile applications. This kind of applications allow to train pronunciation through repetition, to create awareness about the mistakes made, practice and memorize them in a simple way.

For Calvo (2017), teaching languages such as English must necessarily be based on information and communication technologies because current teaching demands the use of its richness and variety in pronunciation instruction. Furthermore, these means have achieved good results in multiple studies because the students seem to enjoy the technological resources. Consequently, they allow to introduce variety and creativity in the classroom, promoting the autonomy of the students, since they can use these tools whenever and wherever they like.

According to Marla (2018), technological resources are effective for teaching-learning pronunciation, facilitating students to understand the mechanics of articulation and improving their ability to identify sounds, words and phonetics in general. However, it recognizes that technological resources must be reviewed before application and frequently monitored by the teacher to ensure that they meet the proposed objectives. Appreciation that is also supported by Peterson (2018) who alluded that although digital resources are ideal for learning pronunciation because they provide individualized instruction, frequent practice through auditory discrimination, focused repetition exercises and automatic visual support, these should be under supervision of a teacher to guide the process and reinforce knowledge.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusions

After the investigation development, the following conclusions have been reached:

- It was possible to identify that the resources that teachers use to improve the students' English pronunciation are podcasts, digital platforms and mobile applications. Resources that, although not provided by the central government or parents, are used by the teachers by themselves, who, aware that the pronunciation requires practice, have made it possible to use them in order to go beyond traditional education based on the guide book and workbook.
- It was possible to establish that the main difficulties that students have referring to pronunciation are: confusion in the pronunciation of phonemes (vowels and consonants) due to ignorance, accent and imprecise intonation, unintelligible speech due to poor articulation of words, in addition to insecurities and fears of poor oral production.
- After comparing the pretest and the posttest results, it was possible to verify the effectiveness of the Starfall application in English pronunciation. Before the experimentation, most of the students were located at level 1, that means, there was a limited control of phonological characteristics and an incomprehensible speech. However, at the end of the experimentation, the majority were located at level 3 which is satisfactory and at level 4 that is very good because the speech was understandable, there was good intonation, use of accent and in general, good articulation of words.

- The Starfall mobile application allows the progress of English pronunciation because it is an interactive space where a large number of productive and receptive activities can be developed, such as listening, reading, writing and speaking. In addition, this program emphasizes exploration, trial-error, memory, attention, play and positive reinforcement, encouraging children to feel safe and intrinsically motivated to learning.

4.2 Recommendations

- Although the use of mobile applications has proven to be effective, it is necessary to look for those that allow greater contact with native speakers, because, in this way, the pronunciation will be perfected through practice and active listening.
- It is necessary for teachers and institutional administrative staff to manage technological resources for learning English, because, like this, students will be able to learn and develop their receptive and productive skills more easily by being able to make use of multimedia, interactive and high-impact resources.
- It is necessary for English teachers to be continuously trained in innovative teaching resources, especially to work on pronunciation, which is a precise productive skill that requires more interaction and practice to be perfected.
- For the use of Starfall app or any other mobile application, it is necessary to instruct students on how to use it, benefits and activities that can be developed. They must be previously selected by the teacher and guided during the process because digital applications serve as support or reinforcement, but do not replace teaching.

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ANNEX

ANNEX 1:

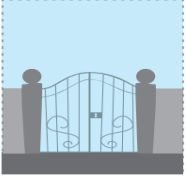
Evaluation criteria for pretest and posttest

A2	Grammar and vocabulary	Pronunciation	Interactive communication
5	Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms. Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary when talking about everyday situations.	Is intelligible. Intonation is generally appropriate. Sentence and word stress is generally accurately placed. Individual sounds are generally articulated clearly.	Maintains simple exchanges. Requires very little prompting and support.
4	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.</i>		
3	Shows sufficient control of simple grammatical forms. Uses appropriate vocabulary to talk about everyday situations.	Is mostly intelligible, despite limited control of phonological features.	Maintains simple exchanges, despite some difficulty. Requires prompting and support.
2	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.</i>		
1	Shows only limited control of a few grammatical forms. Uses a vocabulary of isolated words and phrases.	Has very limited control of phonological features and is often unintelligible.	Has considerable difficulty maintaining simple exchanges. Requires additional prompting and support.
0	<i>Performance below Band 1.</i>		

Source: Cambridge (speaking section of KEY for school assessment)

ANNEX 2:

**PRETEST-POSTTEST
ACTIVITIES 1 AND 12**

SCORE 0-5	CHARTS	
	<p>Short a</p>  <p>Rabbit</p>	<p>Long a</p>  <p>Gate</p>
	 <p>Ax</p>	 <p>Ape</p>
	 <p>Sad</p>	 <p>Cage</p>
	 <p>Bass</p>	 <p>Vase</p>
	 <p>Nap</p>	 <p>Skate</p>
AVERAGE:		

Done by: Cando, J (2020)

ANNEX 3:

**UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA DE AMBATO
FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS HUMANAS Y DE LA EDUCACIÓN
CARRERA DE IDIOMAS**



**TITULO DEL PROYECTO: THE STARFALL APP AND THE ENGLISH
PRONUNCIATION**

Content Validity Instrument

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UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA DE AMBATO
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CARRERA DE IDIOMAS

Dear Mg. or PhD:

I am writing to you to request your valuable collaboration in the revision of the information collection instrument that is attached, in order to determine its validity, to be applied in the Final Degree Project entitled “THE STARFALL APP AND THE ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION”; fundamental requirement to qualify for the Bachelor`s Degree in Educational Sciences Mention: English.

Your participation is fundamental, since it will consist of analyzing and evaluating the relevance of each item of the instrument, this will be done in order to judge the aspects and their concordance with the objectives, variables, dimensions and indicators of the research project, as well as the collection of information. Any suggestion or modification that you consider necessary will be very useful for the validity of the instrument.

Thank you in advance for your help.



Johanna Cando Sánchez
I.D. 180445117-5

UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA DE AMBATO
FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS HUMANAS Y DE LA EDUCACIÓN
CARRERA DE IDIOMAS

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE EXPERTS

- ✓ Determine if each of the items of the instrument establishes a relationship with the research variable.

- ✓ An evaluation table is presented, in which you can give your opinion about each of the items that make up the instrument.

- ✓ There is a general evaluation of the instrument, where you can point out all those aspects that you consider important to improve the content.

- ✓ Make all relevant observation based on the objectives to be achieved.

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Institution: Universidad Tècnica de Ambato
Year: 2017

GENERAL INFORMATION OF THE RESEARCH WORK

THEME: “THE STARFALL APP AND THE ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION”

THE PROBLEM: LOW DEVELOPMENT OF PRONUNCIATION SKILL.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

- To investigate how the Starfall app develops in the English pronunciation.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- To identify what kind of resources teachers use in order to improve the English pronunciation.
- To establish the main difficulties students have regarding pronunciation.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the Starfall application in the English pronunciation through the comparison of results before and after its use.

VARIABLES

Independent: Starfall app

Dependent: Pronunciation

POPULATION AND SAMPLE:

The research included the participation of the 10 fourth-year students from Basic Education School “Marcial Augusto Soria”, whose ages fluctuated between 8 and 9 years. This group was selected for convenience due to accessibility and predisposition to use Starfall app.

Considering that the population was reduced and accessible, a sample design was not necessary and the entire population was occupied as a sample, which means that the research had 10 students.

TECHNIQUES TO COLLECT DATA:

Survey: it was developed through a questionnaire applied to the teachers of the educational unit to collect information regarding the use of didactic and technological resources in pronunciation, making possible to develop a Situational diagnostic.

Key: The Cambridge Key standardized test for school was used as the basis for the pronunciation score because in the speaking section there are several evaluation criteria, ranging from 0 to 5 points.

MATRIZ DE OPERACIONALIZACIÓN DEL INSTRUMENTO.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE: Starfall app

Conceptualization	Dimensions	Indicators	Questions	Technique	Instrument
Starfall, a digital application used for teaching English to children.	Importance of resources.	Very important Important Moderately important Little important Not important	How important is it for you to use educational resources in teaching English pronunciation?	Survey	Questionnaire
	Resource Goals	To facilitate teaching. To solve existing problems. To reinforce pronunciation. To encourage students to learn more.	Why do you use didactic resources in teaching pronunciation?		
	Types of resources	Books Workbooks Apps Platforms Podcast Debate	What resources do you use to work on pronunciation with your students?		

	<p>Resource selection criteria</p> <p>Use of technological resources</p>	<p>Round tables Workshops Exhibitions</p> <p>Accessibility Easy to use Activities that the resource offers Results</p> <p>Generally Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never</p>	<p>What criteria do you use to select the resources for teaching pronunciation?</p> <p>How often do you use technological resources to work on pronunciation with your students?</p>		
--	--	--	--	--	--

DEPENDENT VARIABLE: Pronunciation

Conceptualization	Dimensions	Indicators	Questions	Technique	Instrument
Pronunciation can be defined as the way a sound or sounds are produced and, unlike articulation, which refers to the actual production of speech sounds in the oral cavity, pronunciation emphasizes the way sounds are perceived by the listener.	Intelligibility	5	Is intelligible.	KEY	Evaluation rubric
	Intonation		Intonation is generally appropriate.		
	Precision		Sentence and words stress is generally accurately placed.		
	Articulation	4	Individual sound are generally articulated clearly,		
	Phonological characteristics	3	Performance shares features of bands 3 and 5.		
		2	Is mostly intelligible, despite limited control of phonological features.		
	1	Performance shares features of bands 1 and 3.			
	0	Has very limited control of phonological features and is often unintelligible.			
			Performance below band 1.		



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA DE AMBATO
FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS HUMANAS Y DE LA EDUCACIÓN
CARRERA DE IDIOMAS



SURVEY

Addressed to: English teachers working with children.

Topic: “THE STARFALL APP AND THE ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION”

Objective: To identify the educational resources that every teacher uses while teaching pronunciation.

Instructions: Please, mark with an (X) according to your opinion.

How important is it for you to use educational resources in teaching English pronunciation?

Very important	
Important	
Moderately important	
Little important	
Not important	

Why do you use didactic resources in teaching pronunciation?

To facilitate teaching	
To solve existing problems	
To reinforce pronunciation	
To encourage students to learn more	
Others (specify):.....	

What resources do you use to work on pronunciation with your students?

Books	
Workbooks	

Apps	
Platforms	
Podcast	
Debates	
Round tables	
Workshops	
Exhibitions	
Others (specify):.....	

What is the criteria do you use to select the resources for teaching pronunciation?

Accessibility	
Easy to use	
Activities that the resource offers	
Results	
Others (specify):.....	

How often do you use technological resources to work on pronunciation with your students?

Generally	
Frequently	
Occasionally	
Rarely	
Never	

Thank you in advance for your cooperation!

UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA DE AMBATO
FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS HUMANAS Y DE LA EDUCACIÓN
CARRERA DE IDIOMAS

INSTRUMENT VALIDATION

Topic: “THE STARFALL APP AND THE ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION”

Objective: To identify the educational resources that every teacher uses while teaching pronunciation.

Instructions: Select the option you consider relevant to each item.

R: Relevant

NR: Not Relevant

EXPERT’S NAME:

Mg. Cristina Jordán Buenaño.

Mg. Sarah Jacqueline Iza Pazmiño.

ITEM	Objective		Variable		Dimension		Indicator		Drafting		OBSERVATION
	R	NR	R	NR	R	NR	R	NR	R	NR	
1	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		
2	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		
3	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		
4	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		
5	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		

Source: Piedra (2019).

Final Resolution:

Approved	✓	Disapproved	
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Source: Piedra (2019)

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CARRERA DE IDIOMAS

EXPERT JUDGMENT EVIDENCE

I, Lic. Cristina Jordàn Buenaño, with I.D. No. 1804010500, certify that I conducted the expert judgment on this instrument designed by Johanna Lizbeth Cando Sànchez, with I.D. No. 180445117-5 for the Final Degree Project entitled “THE STARFALL APP AND THE ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION” since it is a fundamental requirement to qualify for the Bachelor’s Degree in Educational Sciences; Mention: English, at Universidad Técnica de Ambato.

Ecuador, July 27th, 2020.

Sincerely,



Lic. Cristina Jordàn Buenaño, Mg.

I.D. 1804010500

UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA DE AMBATO
FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS HUMANAS Y DE LA EDUCACIÓN
CARRERA DE IDIOMAS

EXPERT JUDGMENT EVIDENCE

I, **Mg. Sarah Jacqueline Iza Pazmiño**, with I.D. No. 0501741060, certify that I conducted the expert judgment on this instrument designed by Johanna Lizbeth Cando Sánchez, with I.D. No. 180445117-5 for the Final Degree Project entitled “THE STARFALL APP AND THE ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION” since it is a fundamental requirement to qualify for the Bachelor’s Degree in Educational Sciences; Mention: English, at Universidad Técnica de Ambato.

Ecuador, July 27th, 2020.

Sincerely,

SARAH JACQUELINE
IZA PAZMINO

Digitally signed by SARAH
JACQUELINE IZA PAZMINO
Date: 2020.07.27 20:13:50
-05'00'

Mg. Sarah Jacqueline Iza Pazmiño.

I.D. 0501741060