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**EFFECT OF LUDIC ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE THE PRONUNCIATION OF
FRONT VOWELS OF THE 7-6 STUDENTS AT LICEO LEÓN CORTÉS CASTRO**

Thesis Submitted to Obtain the Bachelor in English with Concentration in Teaching

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Abstract

Pronunciation is an essential subskill when learning to speak a language. As Spanish native speakers have always struggle with the way some words and expressions in English are pronounced, teachers have had to find ways to help students to improve their English pronunciation. The researcher of this study has perceived that most of the seventh-grade students tend to mispronounce frequently the front vowel sounds. Therefore, this research project intends to show what the effect of ludic activities is to enhance the pronunciation of front vowels of the 7-6 students at Liceo León Cortés Castro. The results of this research project were achieved through different instruments. First, an observation class that helped to identify the students' behavior and their performance in the teacher's class. Second, a questionnaire that allowed to discover which games students like and get to know their thoughts on English pronunciation. Third, a pre-test that enabled the researcher to identify the weaknesses students have when pronouncing the front vowel sounds. Fourth, application of ludic activities was implemented to enhance the pronunciation of the front vowels. Fifth, a post-test was applied to evaluate the usage of ludic activities to enhance the pronunciation of the front vowels. After carrying out the analysis of the data, it was concluded that the application of ludic activities such as board games and group tasks let students learn and improve the front vowel sounds. Finally, researcher proved that most of the students achieved to pronounce one or two front vowel sounds correctly.

Resumen

La pronunciación es una habilidad secundaria esencial al aprender a hablar un idioma. Ya que los hablantes nativos de español siempre han tenido problemas con la forma en que se pronuncian algunas palabras y expresiones en inglés, los profesores han buscado diferentes maneras de ayudar a los estudiantes a mejorar su pronunciación. El investigador ha percibido que la mayoría de estudiantes de séptimo año tienden a pronunciar mal de manera frecuente los sonidos de vocales frontales. Por lo tanto, este estudio pretende mostrar cuál es el efecto de actividades lúdicas para mejorar la pronunciación de las vocales frontales de los estudiantes de la 7-6 en el Liceo León Cortés Castro. Los resultados de este proyecto de investigación se lograron a través de diferentes instrumentos. Primero, una observación de clase que ayudó a identificar el comportamiento de los estudiantes y su desempeño en la clase del profesor. Segundo, un cuestionario que permitió descubrir cuales juegos les gustan a los estudiantes y conocer sus opiniones sobre la pronunciación del inglés. Tercero, una prueba preliminar que permitió al investigador identificar las debilidades que tienen los estudiantes al pronunciar las vocales frontales. Cuarto, se implementó la aplicación de actividades lúdicas para mejorar la pronunciación de las vocales frontales. Quinto, se aplicó una prueba posterior para evaluar el uso de las actividades lúdicas para mejorar la pronunciación de las vocales frontales. Después de llevar a cabo análisis de los datos se concluyó que la aplicación de actividades lúdicas como juegos de mesa y trabajos grupales permitió a los estudiantes aprender y mejorar los sonidos vocálicos frontales. Finalmente, el investigador comprobó que la mayoría de los estudiantes lograron pronunciar uno o dos sonidos vocálicos frontales correctamente.

Chapter I

Introductory Framework

The first chapter of this research corresponds to the introductory framework in which the topic of the research, the background of the study, its purpose, significance, and delimitation will be explained briefly. Additionally, it is worth to say that this first chapter will provide a guide throughout the research and will lead the reader to understand the topic better.

1.1 Background of the Study

The research paper is about the effect of ludic activities to enhance the proper pronunciation of the front vowels /i/, /ɪ/, /ɛ/, and /æ/. Students are commonly having problems when pronouncing these sounds; this is why the researcher has chosen this topic in order to find a solution and apply modern and ludic techniques to improve the pronunciation of the students.

The topic of this research has been chosen based on the particular interest that the researcher has in regards to pronunciation and phonetics since he started his English major. Additionally, the researcher thinks pronunciation is an important aspect when learning a language because the correct articulation and production of sounds will help the speaker to communicate successfully when expressing a message.

Mispronunciation sometimes leads to a barrier that interferes when a nonnative person is speaking and the other person understands something completely different that is not included in the intended message at first. This is very likely to happen with Spanish speakers

who sometimes struggle with the pronunciation of the English language. Specially most of the Costa Rican students tend to have a strong accent when they start learning English, consequently, teachers need to reinforce and provide enough practice in order to achieve the correct pronunciation and articulation in their students. Pitifully, most of the English teachers of Spanish speaking countries are more grammar and writing oriented, so they neglect the listening and speaking skills.

It is worth to mention that the Ministry of Public Education in Costa Rica also offers an English syllabus that tends to focus more on grammar and reading than on pronunciation and speaking. As a result, students do not have an wider knowledge of how a word has to be pronounced, since teachers prefer to teach grammar or make sure the students understand the readings in class. Therefore, the researcher wants to include and cover activities that allow students to recognize and produce the front vowel sounds that belong to English.

The researcher has chosen the Liceo León Cortés Castro to carry out his research project. Liceo León Cortés Castro is a public high school founded in 1943. This institution is located three hundred and fifty meters northwest from the Court of Justice in Grecia's canton, Alajuela. The student population consists of 1100 students. Besides, the institution has 90 teachers and 20 members of the administrative staff. This high school has open enrollment to students who live close to Downtown Grecia and surrounding areas such as San Roque, Los Angeles, Sarchí, Peralta, La Arena, among others. Most of the students come from families with low economical incomes and serious violent issues. Since the researcher has observed that students often struggle with these sounds, he has decided to look for different ludic exercises to motivate students and encourage them to pronounce the sounds in a fearless and funny way.

Another aspect to mention is that the researcher knows that every student has a particular way to learn and acquire new knowledge. This is why language-learning strategies are important. In fact, each student has different ways to assimilate and understand the topics that are taught by the teacher. Consequently, the way that is easier for a student to learn, may not be the same for another student. Therefore, teachers have to find out and employ different approaches to teach pronunciation in order to help students through different language learning strategies to absorb and recognize the correct pronunciation of the front vowel sounds.

1.2 Research Question

According to Maxwell (2013), a research question consists of what the researcher wants to demonstrate by doing the study, and it is the heart of the research design. Straus and Corbin (2002), also point out that a research question helps to reduce the problem until it can be solved.

Spanish speakers have always dealt with pronunciation problems, especially on the EFL classes where students try to use English to communicate. These difficulties may be related to the phonemic varieties that exist in both, Spanish and English, but specifically in English where some vowel sounds are hard to pronounce by Spanish speakers. It can be a challenge for some people to pronounce vowel sounds because their articulation and pronunciation will depend on the part of the mouth in which the sound will be produced and to the interference of their native language.

The use of ludic activities will help students to assimilate the pronunciation of the front vowel sounds by encouraging students to practice their pronunciation and language

skills directly and without prior preparation. These exercises will lead the researcher to evaluate the students' current knowledge on pronunciation and see what effect these ludic activities can provoke in order to improve the pronunciation of the front vowels of the seventh graders at Liceo León Cortés Castro.

Since Liceo León Cortés Castro is a public school, the level of English is not as high as the research expected. This is probably due to the unawareness that some teachers have in regards to the need that students have of being exposed to a proper pronunciation. As a result, teachers do not take into consideration the frequent issues students face when learning English. Therefore, the research question for this research project will be: What is the effect of ludic activities to enhance the pronunciation of front vowels of the 7-6 students at Liceo León Cortés Castro?

1.3 Purpose and Significance of the Study

According to Marshall & Rossman (2014), the researcher has to describe what his intentions are when conducting the research and tell the reader what he wants to accomplish. On the other hand, significance refers to how a research can contribute to increase the existing literature, determine who is going to benefit, and how they will benefit from the study (University of Southern California, n.d.)

The goal of this study is to carry out a research that allows teachers to discover what the effect of using ludic activities to enhance the pronunciation of their students when pronouncing the front vowel sounds /ɪ, i, æ, ε/ is. Students on seventh grade are very likely

to mispronounce these sounds, this is why the teacher has chosen this topic in order to help his pupils to distinguish and articulate these sounds correctly.

The mispronunciation of the front vowels is a current problem that many public schools in Costa Rica are facing every day, including the Liceo León Cortés Castro which is the chosen school for this research. Furthermore, the methods for teaching pronunciation can vary from one school to another, or in some cases, instructors do not apply any method for teaching pronunciation at all. For this reason, the research wants to determine which the appropriate techniques to teach pronunciation are and at the same time, develop ludic activities that may help students to retain and acquire the pronunciation of the front vowels through games and entertaining activities. In addition, pronunciation has always been a difficult task for Spanish speakers; therefore, the researcher intends to help students to communicate in an effective way and remove those barriers that interfere with the correct pronunciation.

This research will benefit both, students and teachers, since they work together. Teachers need new ideas and methods to help their students to improve pronunciation and students need to acquire different ways to develop the correct pronunciation of the front vowel sounds. The results of this study intend to work as a guide for teachers to select the appropriate methods and techniques to achieve the pronunciation objectives and it will help learners to assimilate and understand pronunciation in a funny and entertaining way.

1.4 Objectives of the Investigation

According to Barrantes (2002), objectives are benchmarks that lead the investigation and they intend to achieve the investigator's efforts. Consequently, the objectives of this research are

1.4.1 General Objective

To analyze the effect of the usage of ludic activities to enhance the pronunciation of front vowels of the 7-6 students at Liceo León Cortés Castro

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

- To identify the weaknesses of students when pronouncing the front vowel sounds
- To apply some ludic activities to enhance the pronunciation of front vowel sounds
- To evaluate the usage of ludic activities to enhance the pronunciation of front vowel sounds

1.5 Limitations of the Study

It is very common for a researcher to deal with some obstacles and contingencies that may appear during the investigation. A very clear obstacle the researcher might encounter is that students will be on their last trimester of 2017 and at this point of the year, students are mostly tired and exhausted. It will be a challenge for the teacher to find a way to motivate and encourage the students to participate and enrich the class environment.

Another obstacle is time because the researcher has to develop the class taking into account the amount of lessons the other teachers are willing to offer. Sometimes researchers

only have two lessons at least to carry out their classes and implement their instruments. Additionally, it is important to mention that public high schools are very likely to have vacation breaks and extracurricular activities such as school assemblies, art festivals, music festivals, and so forth. Therefore, these extracurricular activities and vacation breaks might interfere with the research and its expected results. In addition, it is important to note that public education in Costa Rica is affected sometimes by unexpected strikes and work stoppages that delay or interrupt the research during its process.

Another impediment could be the absenteeism of students because it is quite significant for the teacher to implement the instruments, procedures and strategies with the required amount of students that the research demands. Furthermore, the research will be conducted on the last trimester of the 2017 school year and this can be an inconvenience for the reason that, at this point of the year, students are being done with their final exams and extra class works. Because of this, the teacher has to hurry up and find a way to implement the instruments and achieve the objectives.

Moreover, the Ministry of Public Education does not provide an appropriate syllabus for teaching English and the country is currently having a high demand of learning English. Consequently, this need is not being fulfilled because the education programs do not offer accurate English syllabi for the students to develop and acquire the language correctly.

Finally, the researcher strongly recommends looking for an institution in advance and make sure the administration of the high school allows the implementation of the instruments. Based on the experience the researcher had, at the last minute, he had to look for another institution because the first institution he chose rejected the application of the

instruments to conduct this research project. Therefore, he had to look for another school where he finally applied the instruments and finished his investigation.

Chapter II

Theoretical Framework

According to Schanzer (n.d.), the purpose of the theoretical framework is to provide the investigation with a coordinated and coherent system of concepts and propositions that help to address the topic of the research. Therefore, this chapter will develop all the theories and concepts that will lead the reader to understand the topic better. The theoretical framework will mention the antecedents and review of the literature corresponding to this investigation.

2.1 Antecedents

Antecedents in a research correspond to a review of previous works that were carried out in higher education institutions about the subject of study (Contreras, 2011). In addition, Contreras (2011) also points out that the antecedents are primary sources because they provide information for the study such as sample, population, emerging categories, results, validations, among others.

The first antecedent correspond to a study made by María Paula Fallas during the first quarter of 2017, and it showed how anxiety affects the pronunciation of the English vowels / æ, α, ɔ, ʌ /. This study was conducted on English as a Foreign Language of adult students from 7th grade at the Liceo Nocturno de Desamparados in the province of San José. The researcher applied five instruments. First, she applied a questionnaire in order to measure the anxiety levels in the classroom and it showed that the majority of students sometimes forget how to say things they already know in an English as a foreign language class. Second, she evaluated her students through a pronunciation test where they had to read aloud without

previous preparation. The results showed that most of the students hesitated and mispronounced when reading- speaking. Third, she applied the ABC Method that consists on letting the students identify their irrational thoughts when they deliver a speech. The results showed that 50% of the students are more likely to feel scared when delivering a speech. Fourth, she used the Skills Training Technique, which aims to develop speaking skills through speeches in order to overcome anxiety. Students were given some steps to create a speech, they followed the steps and at the end, they were able to deliver their speech successfully. Finally, Fallas carried out a Post-test Speech, which consisted on applying all the techniques given by the researcher as a way to overcome anxiety. The results showed that the majority of students met the expectations of the researcher.

Another study that was taken into account was a study made in 2015 by Beatriz Ledezma Sandoval which showed the improvement of the pronunciation of the -s inflectional ending through auditory and kinesthetic in-class activities in a group of adult English students of a conversational course program in the School of Modern Languages at the University of Costa Rica. Sandoval applied a total amount of five instruments. The first instrument was a diagnostic test to assess students' pronunciation of -s inflectional endings in regular plural nouns, possessive nouns, and the third-person singular form of regular present tense verbs.

The results showed that 55% of the students had an average pronunciation while 45% had a poor pronunciation. For the second instrument, the researcher observed the students through an auditory and kinesthetic activity called "Listen, Write, and Speak." In this activity, students had to apply the rules to pronounce the -s inflectional by listening, saying, and writing a tongue twister. The purpose of this activity is to see if students are

able to correct themselves or not. The results showed that students in general usually correct themselves most of the times. The third instrument was an auditory activity where students had to create a tongue twister. The teacher repeated the tongue twister twice and then asked the students to repeat it several times simultaneously. This was also an activity to see if students were able to correct themselves when knowing the rules.

Thus, the results about the frequency that students correct themselves showed that usually and many times students correct themselves. The fourth instrument was a kinesthetic activity called “You won’t believe it.” It consisted on working in trios or foursomes and create a three-minute role-play using words related to crime and criminals. In this activity, the researcher also evaluated the pronunciation of the –s inflectional. The activity generated good results because the participants were “almost always” able to apply the rules of pronunciation and it was a grouping technique, so students could prepare better and receive feedback from their classmates. The final instrument was a kinesthetic instrument as well and it is called “Welcome to Controversy.” The task consisted on a spontaneous activity where students had to perform a specific situation related to a controversial topic. The students were divided in pairs and they had to present a roleplay where one of them was in favor of the controversial topic, and the other was against it. According to the researcher, the results were gratifying because it showed that students were able to demonstrate their knowledge on pronunciation and express themselves freely towards a topic.

Finally, a study made in 2011 by María Susana Herrera León showed that ludic activities are a strategy to teach English. The research was carried out at Juan Luis García School with first grade students. The researcher applied three instruments: an observation, a survey, and interviews. The observation consisted on finding out about the attitude of the

students towards the ludic activities. The researcher wanted to make sure students attitudes were negative or positive in order to know if the theory of ludic activities was successful on the acquisition of languages. The observation showed that 79% of the students were unmotivated. The interview consisted on asking questions orally to the students in order to know the students' opinions toward the use of ludic activities in the English class. The results showed that 100% of the students said they like when the English teacher uses games in class. The survey was made to the English teacher of first grade of Juan Luis García School in order to know about the activities or games the teacher uses in their classes and their opinion towards ludic activities. The results showed that ludic games are a great tool to teach contents in the English class.

2.2 Review of the Literature

In the words of Fink (2010), “A research literature review is a systematic, explicit, reproducible method for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing the existing body of completed and recorded work produced by researchers, scholars, and practitioners.” (p.3) Therefore, the review of the literature contains all the theory and concepts that other investigators have compiled related to the subject of the study.

2.2.1 Ludic Learning

According to Martin (2015), the traditional way of thinking has always been that students attend school and participate the whole day in the “sit and get” way of learning. Nevertheless, this way of learning is changing as teachers realize how students learn nowadays. Therefore, teachers are finding very helpful the use of games as a way to aid their students and let them retain information. A few examples of games are interactive computer

games, board games, get-up-out-of-your-seat games, and teacher led-games with or without a computer. As mentioned by Martin (2015) there are four reasons why teachers may want to consider the use of game in their classes:

- 1- Students operate in the digital world and their generation is looking for immediate feedback. Some tools such as the internet, text messages, Skype, and video games provide instant answers. Therefore, students are accustomed to get immediate answers or feedback when they operate these tools.
- 2- Games are fun, so when students enjoy themselves they will feel engaged to the activity. Everyone can play games; no matter what their ages are, and they will never get bored.
- 3- Games supply exposure to new information by using entertaining procedures and helping to establish social interaction with classmates and friendly competition. Additionally, some computer games contribute with necessary practice through repetition and immediate results of tests and quizzes. Students can access these games on their phones or tablets, so this will let students to obtain instant feedback as much as they want.
- 4- Games can be an integral part of teachers' curriculum since they will increase the level of interest on students. Therefore, teachers have to look for more methods or techniques in order to catch their students' attention.

2.2.1.1 Using Games in Teaching

In line with Döog (2012), when playing games participants feel forced to speak and communicate with each other. This helps students to communicate during games and encourage them to talk and express themselves without being afraid. Therefore, games help to improve students' fluency, which is a valuable communication skill. Döog (2012), also

adds that teachers are in charge of creating a positive learning environment and promoting the interest of the foreign language and its culture in order to achieve a successful language learning process. Döog (2012), also recommends that games are great tools for students when acquiring a foreign language as they provide enjoyable and exiting activities.

2.2.1.1.1 Games Categories

According to Döog (2012), games can be divided into different categories depending on their model. Some of these categories are:

- Games for dividing larger groups into smaller groups: These games consist of making an activity first with the group as whole and then divide it into smaller groups.
- Introduction games: These games were designed to work as an icebreaker activity where students introduce themselves and memorize classmates' names.
- Group games: This category consists on making activities with the whole class. Participants have to accomplish tasks by emphasizing teamwork.
- Physical games: In these kind of games participants have to walk, move and perform different actions with their hands, legs, head, and so forth.
- Scavenger hunt games: These activities make use of clues in the target language in which students have to listen, read, and test their understanding. Some examples of these games can be puzzles, crossword puzzles, word or questions' searcher and many other possibilities where teachers can use their creativity.

2.2.2 How to Teach Pronunciation

Pronunciation has an important role in communication because when a person speaks a language, all the sounds produced by the sender will help the receiver to understand the message better and interpret successfully what the other person is trying to express. Thus, teachers have to provide their students with some strategies and techniques to develop the correct articulation and pronunciation of the sounds in the English class.

According to Celce-Murcia et al (2010), there are two general approaches for the teaching of pronunciation:

- Intuitive imitative approach: it depends on the student's skills to listen and imitate the rhythm and sounds of the target language without the interference of any specific information. Additionally, this approach assumes that students will be exposed to good models where they can listen to phonograph records, tape recorders, language labs, videocassettes, compact discs (CDs) and digital video discs (DVDs).
- Analytic-linguistic approach: it is based on the use of information and tools such as the phonetic alphabet (IPA), articulatory descriptions, diagram of the vocal tract, contrastive information, and other resources that strengthen listening, imitation, and production. This approach was created in order to inform the learners and concentrate on the sounds and rhythm of the target language. This approach does not replace the imitative approach since it was made to work as a complement.

2.2.2.1 Problems in Pronunciation Teaching

As mentioned by Kelly (2007), pronunciation teaching has two key problems: it might be neglected or it appears when students ask questions about the pronunciation of certain words that the teacher had not planned strategically. Kelly (2007) also states that teachers neglect pronunciation not because they are not interested in the topic, but because they feel doubtful to teach it. Most of teachers admit that they do not have enough knowledge of the subject; consequently, they want to improve the practical skills they need in order to teach pronunciation. Even though teachers are very interested in pronunciation, they keep focusing on grammar and vocabulary rather than pronunciation (Kelly, 2007). Students, on the other hand, show enthusiastic interest on learning pronunciation because they say it will help them to communicate better. In the words of Kelly (2007), “Teachers of pronunciation need a good grounding theoretical knowledge and practical classroom skills access to good ideas for classroom activities” (p.13).

According to Kelly (2007), there are three kind of lessons in which teachers can emphasize pronunciation. Integrated lessons: In these lessons, pronunciation is an essential part of the language analysis and the planning process, as well as the presentation of language and practice. Remedial lessons: In these lessons, a difficulty in pronunciation arises and the teacher explains in order to provide the successful achievement of the class. Moreover, the purpose of practice lessons is to cover a particular feature of pronunciation and practice it in an isolated way.

2.2.3 Teaching Pronunciation Procedures

2.2.3.1 Pronunciation Learning Strategies

In agreement with Seidlhofer (2000), there are some strategies than can help students to foster their autonomy and enable them to develop strategies that allow them to continue learning pronunciation. Some of these techniques are awareness raising questionnaires, learner diaries, recordings of learner's production, dealing with incomprehensible tasks, and employing metalinguistic strategies, such as asking for repetition, paraphrasing, and monitoring feedback.

2.2.3.1.1 Global Holistic Activities

According to Seidlhofer (2000), there are activities that are focused on training a specific communicative goal, for example, mini-plays where students make use of their voice quality and intonation in order to interpret. There are also whole-brain activities that help to activate the right brain hemisphere and regularly involve music, poetry, guided fantasies, and relaxation techniques that include yoga breathing and kinesthetic activities.

2.2.3.1.2 Cognitive Analysis

As stated by Seidlhofer (2000), there is a wide range of methodological options for those learners who want an obvious explanation and analysis when learning pronunciation. Some of these methodological options are:

- Discussion of stereotypic ideas about “correct” and “sloppy” speech in order to introduce assimilation and elision as features of connected speech.

- Explanations of how to articulate particular sounds by using diagrams, videos, and conscious exploration of the students where they have to articulate L1 or L2 sounds by themselves.
- Teaching phonemic script to the students in order to enable them to conceptualize the sound system of the target language, use pronunciation dictionaries, record pronunciation themselves, and allow comparison with their native language.

2.2.3.1.3 Teaching Pronunciation through songs

In agreement with Stanculea (2015), in order to communicate and understand English better, students can make use of music that will help them to become familiar with the different English accents. In addition, music helps teachers to teach certain features of the spoken language such as contractions, elisions, and other aspects of connected speech. When students learn to recognize these features, they are able to understand the language they hear. Therefore, this will allow them to acquire these aspects naturally and include them into their way of speaking. Another reason for using music in the classroom is that it helps to reduce stress and anxiety. Since some students often say that they do not feel confident in their ability to pronounce words in English, music will help them to facilitate learning and low their stress and anxiety (Stanculea, 2015).

2.2.3.1.1.1 Activities Using music

As mentioned by Stanculea, (2015), teachers can use songs in order to focus on different aspects of pronunciation such as sounds and features of connected speech. The activities will be explained as follows:

- Activities focused on sounds: songs are authentic and they are easy to access spoken English. Songs also offer repetition of similar sounds by listening to their rhymes and lyrics.
- Activities focused on words: teachers can use songs in order to help students to associate the number of syllables and know where the stress faces.
- Activities focused on connected speech features: songs can be used to teach assimilation, elision, weak forms, and contractions.

2.2.4 Teaching Pronunciation Through Games

In line with Hancock (1996), pronunciation tends to be frequently taught by getting students to listen and repeat. Although this way of teaching pronunciation is very helpful, sometimes it does not help students to understand what they are doing. On the other hand, the use of games help students to challenge themselves and understand better the production of sounds.

Hancock (1996) provides some games teachers can use to develop and enhance their students' pronunciations:

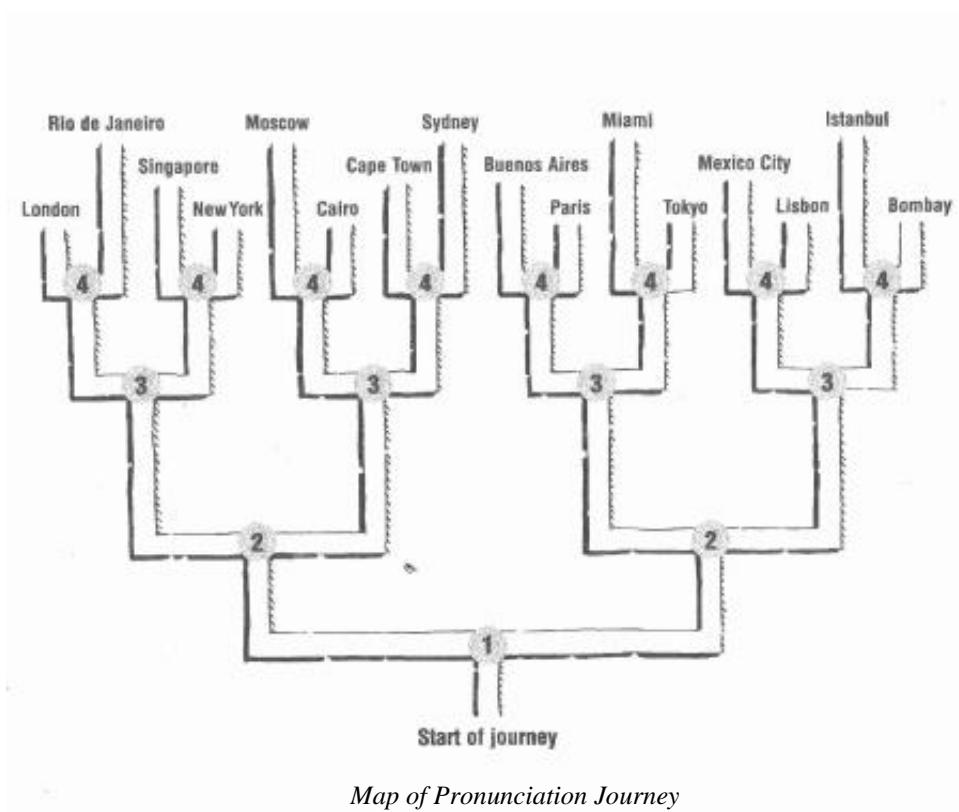
1. Pronunciation journey: This game is used to practice minimal pairs. It consists of a listen and respond game for the whole class and is targeted to elementary level students. To start the game the teacher makes copies of a map for each student. Then, he chooses four minimal pairs from his course and writes the pairs of words on the board. The teacher writes the minimal pairs in two vertical columns on the board. He labels the lists left and right as shown below:

Left	Right
sheep	ship
eat	it
seat	sit
heel	hill

The researcher reads out the words from the board and asks students to say which list they belong to. The researcher distributes the maps to every student. He points out that at each of the numbered intersections, there is a choice of turning left or right.

The researcher tells the students he will read four words from the board, one for each intersection. For each word, students must turn left or right according to whether the word is from the left or the right-hand list on the board. When the researcher has said the four words, students should then arrive at one of the destinations on the top of the map. For example:

sheep – eat – sit – hill —————> Singapore. The researcher goes over the route along with the students to check the correct route. The researcher repeats the activity several times using four pair of words or using other minimal pairs. Finally, the researcher gets students to play in pairs or small groups. Students take turns to read out words and trace the route on the map.



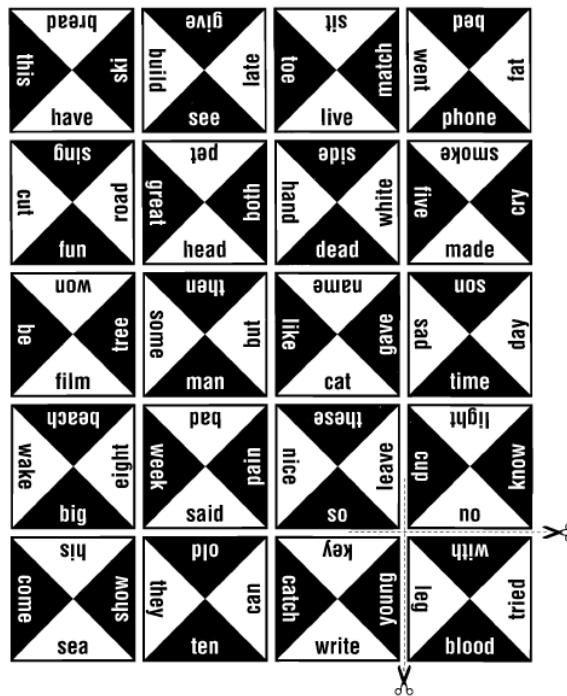
Map of Pronunciation Journey

Source: Hancock, 1996, p.36.

2. Four-sided dominoes: This game was designed for matching vowel sounds. It consists of a matching card game for three players and is aimed for pre-intermediate level students. To prepare the game, the teacher copies and cuts out a set of cards for each group of three students. To present the game, the teacher writes eight words containing the eight one-syllable vowel sounds and asks students to suggest other words containing the same vowel sounds. To conduct the game, the teacher divides the class into groups of three and gives each group a set of cards. Next, teacher gives instructions and explains the rules. Throughout the game the teacher has to monitor and move around to assist students if there is any doubt. The teacher also has to check that the words match with the domino card. Additionally, the teacher gives a copy of the key for students to see which card matches correctly.

Key

- 1 /ɪ/ big, build, film, give, his, live, sing, sit, this, with
- 2 /e/ bed, bread, dead, head, leg, pet, said, ten, then, went
- 3 /aɪ/ cry, five, like, light, nice, side, time, tried, white, write
- 4 /ʌ/ blood, but, come, cup, cut, fun, some, son, won, young
- 5 /eɪ/ day, eight, gave, great, late, made, name, pain, they, wake
- 6 /i:/ be, beach, key, leave, sea, see, ski, these, tree, week
- 7 /əʊ/ both, know, no, old, phone, road, show, smoke, so, toe
- 8 /æ/ bad, can, cat, catch, fat, hand, have, man, match, sad



Four-sided dominoes cards

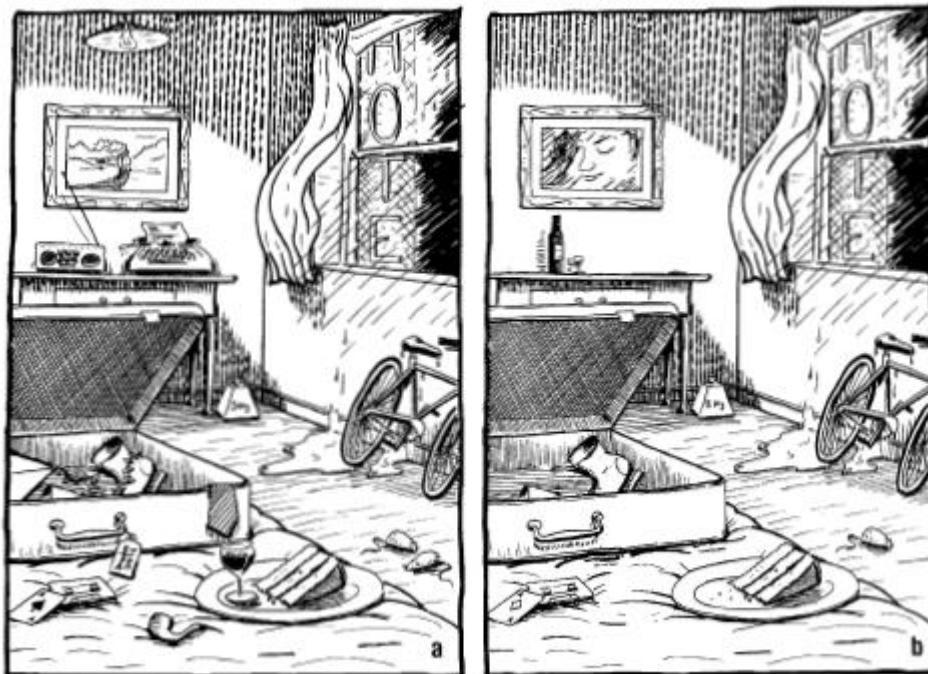
Source: Hancock, 1996, p.38.

3- Sound pictures: This game was created to raise awareness of sounds. It consists of a find-the-difference puzzle game for working in pairs. It was designed for pre-intermediate level students. To prepare this game, the teacher has to copy a picture pair for each pair of students and a video beam to project the pictures later. To carry out this game, the teacher divides the class into pairs. Then, he gives picture 1 to student A and picture 2 to student B. Students have to describe the pictures

judiciously to each other and find differences between both. It is recommended that students do not look at each others' pictures. Next, teacher splits the board in two columns, one for each of the two sounds in the picture pair. At the top of the columns the teacher writes the phonetic symbol for the sound and provides an example of a word containing that sound.

Consequently, the teacher asks the students to indicate which differences they have found. For each difference students might find, there should be one key word containing one of the two sounds. Teacher repeats the word and asks students to choose the column in which the word should be in. Finally, the teacher lets students look at the pictures one more time and asks them to find any other examples of words containing one of the two sounds.

Pair 1 /eɪ/ ace, label, radio, railway, suitcase, table, train, weight
(cake, ice skates, plate, rain, tape)
/aɪ/ kite, light, mice, pipe, type-writer, wine
(bike, ice skates, night, sign, sky)



Sound Pictures

Source: Hancock, 1996, p.40.

Additionally, Case (2008) offers more games focused on pronunciation.

4- Minimal pairs stations: This game is also used to practice minimal pairs. The game consists of a race where the teacher reads a word from a minimal pair. The teacher reads out the word and students race to touch one of the things representing that sound. For example, a table represents /i/ and a chair represents /i/. According to the sound they hear, they will race towards the object. The one who guesses the sound correctly will get a prize.

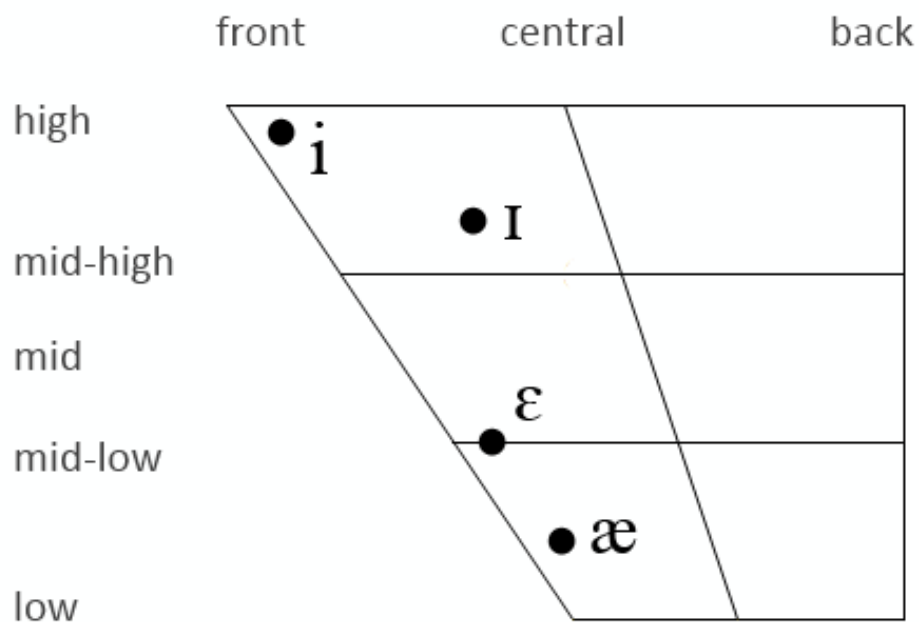
5- Tell me when I'm odd: This game consists of guessing which word does not correspond to the same sound. Students listen to a whole string of words containing

the same sound and once they hear a different sound they have to race and indicate the word that is different.

6- Silently mouthing: This game consists of identifying the word or sentence that the teacher or a student is mouthing silently. This is good for the awareness of mouth position for the English sounds. Students guess the sounds by reading lips and paying attention to the silent articulation.

2.2.4 Realization of the Front Vowels

According to Olive et al (1993), there are four vowels called front vowels in the English language. These vowels are: /i/ , /ɪ/, /ε/, and /æ/. The front vowel sounds differ from each other according to the height of the tongue including the exact degree of frontness. In order to articulate these sounds, the tongue has to be positioned towards the front of the mouth. In the words of Olive et al (1993), “It gradually lowers, moves toward the middle of the oral space and the jaw opens” (p.101)



*Figure 1. Illustrates a diagram of the front vowels.
Source: Graham, 2015.*

Long iota /i/

According to Baker and Goldstein (2008), the vowel /i/ is made with the tongue in its highest and farthest forward position. It is a sound that students may find familiar because most of languages have that sound in common. In order to articulate this sound, students have to open their mouth slightly. Then, spread their lips into a smile. Finally, push their tongue forward into their mouth. The /i/ sound is a long sound and students have to move their tongue up a little when they say it (Baker and Goldstein, 2007)

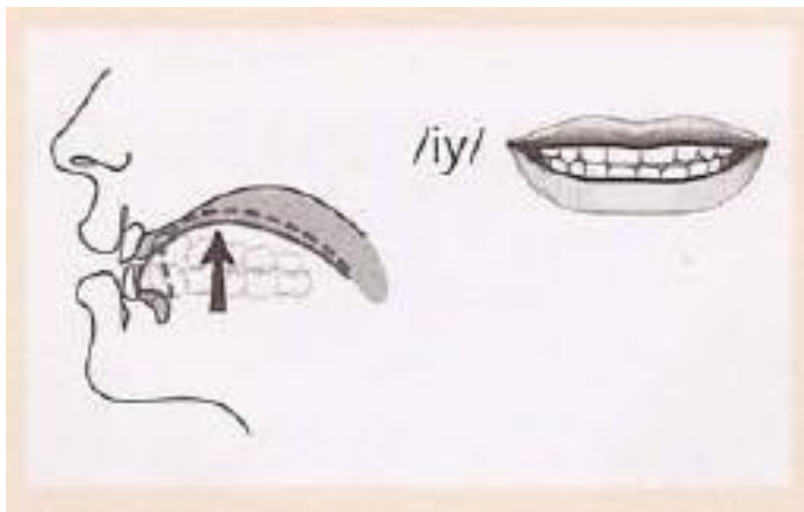


Figure 2. Illustrates the mouth diagram of vowel /ɪ/. According to the IPA it can be represented as /ɪ/, but in other phonetic alphabets it is represented as /iy/.

Source: Baker and Goldstein, 2007, p.4.

Short iota /ɪ/

As mentioned by Baker and Goldstein (2008), the vowel /ɪ/ is a vowel in which almost all of the students have difficulties with the sound. Some of the students confuse it with /i/ because most of the languages have only that sound in common. It is worth to mention that there are many pairs of words in English that are only distinguished by the way they are pronounced /i/ or /ɪ/. Therefore, if a student fails to hear and produce these sounds, it can lead to misunderstanding. In order to articulate the vowel /ɪ/, students first have to practice the sound /i/. Second, open their mouth a little more. Third, students do not have to put their mouth into a smile. Finally, students put their tongue down a little. The vowel /ɪ/ is shorter and more relaxed than /i/ (Baker and Goldstein, 2007)

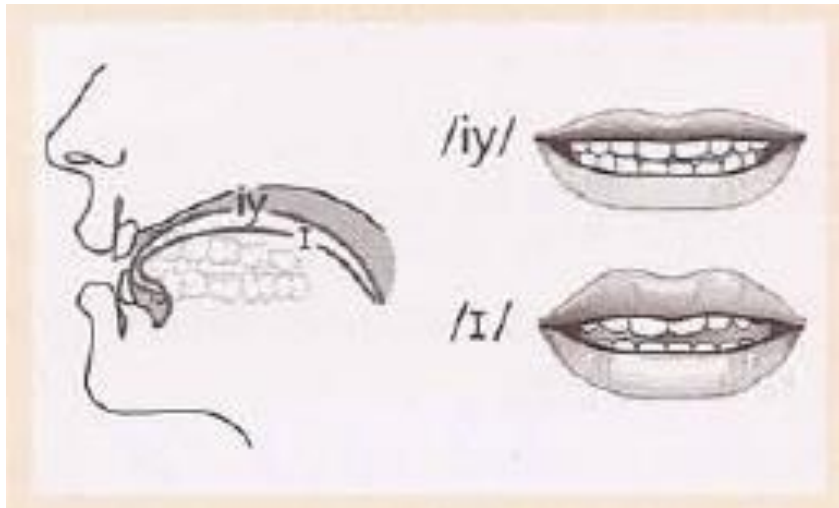


Figure 3. Illustrates a mouth diagram of vowels /i/ and /ɪ/.
Source: Baker and Goldstein, 2007, p.8.

Epsilon /ɛ/

Conforming to Baker and Goldstein (2007), in order to pronounce the vowel /ɛ/, students have to practice the sound /ɪ/. Then, students have to open their mouth a little more. The sound /ɛ/ is short and relaxed. Students can also use a finger or a pencil to help them know how wide and open their mouths should be.

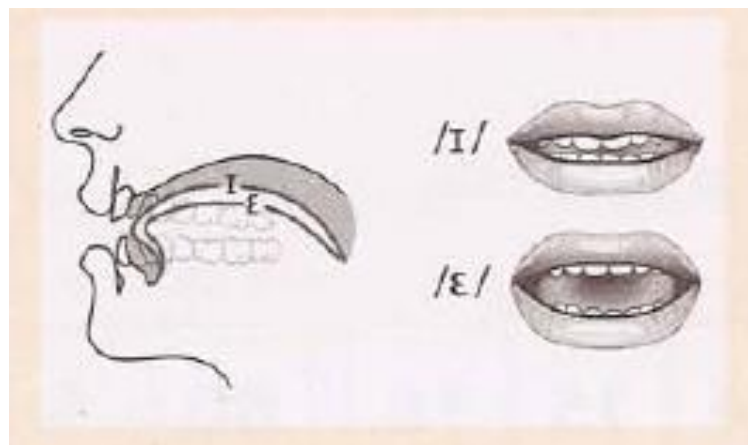


Figure 4. Illustrates the mouth diagram of /ɪ/ and /ɛ/.
Source: Baker and Goldstein, 2007, p.12.

Diagraph /æ/

As mentioned by Baker and Goldstein (2008), in order to pronounce the vowel /æ/ students have to practice the vowel /ε/. Then, students have to open their mouth open wide to articulate the vowel /æ/. Finally, push their tongue forward. The tongue has to remain at the bottom of the mouth and the tip of the tongue touches the bottom front teeth. It is very easy to see the difference between /æ/ and /ε/ in the mouth.

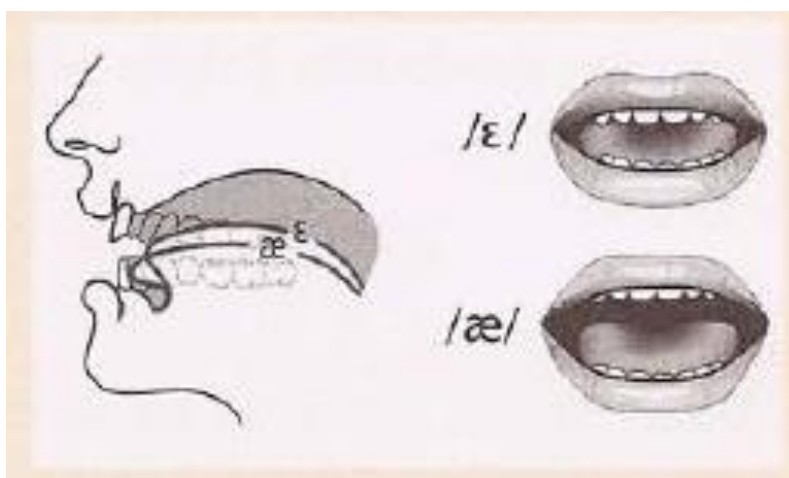


Figure 5. Illustrates the mouth diagram for /ε/ and /æ/
Source: Baker and Goldstein, 2007, p.20.

2.2.6 Communicative Approach

In order to apply instruments on this research, the investigator has to carry out ludic activities on which students have to speak. Therefore, the communicative approach has been chosen as a theory that nurtures this investigation. In agreement with Richards and Rodgers (2014), the Communicative Approach suggests that the main objective of language teaching

is making communicative competence and the necessary procedures to teach the four language skills that allow the interdependence of language and communication.

The Communicative Approach aims to use procedures that let students work in pairs or groups, so that they use the available language resources when having problem-solving tasks. These problem-solving tasks may provide different communicative purposes, but what is essential is that at least two people interact. This interaction should include a person that has an intention to speak while the other person responds and increases the conversation.

According to Richards and Rogers (2014), the Communicative Approach is characterized by different features. Some of them are described as follows: Students acquire a language by being exposed to meaningful learning. Dialogs are focused on communicative functions (requests, rejections, descriptions, and so forth.) and are not memorized. Language items are contextualized which means that students have to be immersed into meaningful and real contexts where they can use the target language. The language learning is designed for communication rather than learning structures, sounds, or words. There is a need of seeking effective communication where students express their needs and opinions clearly. Drilling may occur occasionally when necessary. Comprehensible pronunciation is sought in order to avoid misunderstandings and unclear messages.

The use of any device is allowed, as long as it helps students. Devices will be chosen according to the students' age, interests, among others. Students are challenged to speak, read, and write since the first moment of the class as a way to develop the language skills from the beginning. Moreover, Spanish will be used in a rational way when it is absolutely necessary because sometimes students need to compare their native language with the target language they are learning. Therefore, translation will be allowed if it benefits or helps

students when they need it. Additionally, students can start reading and writing from the first day. The main objective of the Communicate Approach is that students learn the target linguistic system by struggling to communicate and developing communicative competence. Furthermore, the sequence of units will be determined by any consideration of content, function, or meaning that might keep students interested. It is recommended that teachers encourage students with different ways to make them use the language and create it. The teacher will promote the interaction in class by exposing students to work in pairs and groups. Finally, the intrinsic motivation will arise as soon as students are interested in saying what they want to communicate.

According to Andreu & García (n.d), “In a communicative approach, we understand that didactic games or ludic-educational games are those included in the program of our subject in which we present a real context and a need of using the language and a specific vocabulary with a ludic-educational purpose. We can simulate in the classroom or on a screen a real situation that requires the students’ knowledge to carry it out”. (p. 122).

Moreover, (Zhu, 2012), states that “Games are communicative in essence, and so using games in English teaching and learning can well realize the fundamental idea of the Communicative Language Teaching Approach.” (p. 802). Therefore, the researcher thinks that the Communicate Approach will help students to develop their speaking and pronunciation skills and at the same time he wants to carry out ludic activities in which students use and apply the language while having a pleasure and entertainment.

2.2.6.1 Classroom Activities for the Communicative Approach's Application

Richards (2016), states that teachers and material writers have always searched different ways to create classroom activities that reflect the communicative approach's methodology. Thus, one of the goals of the CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) is to increase fluency in students. According to Richards (2006), "Fluency is developed by creating classroom activities in which students must negotiate meaning, use communication strategies, correct misunderstandings, and work to avoid communication breakdowns." (p.14). Richards (2006) also adds that teacher can mix practice of fluency with practice of accuracy, which concentrates on exposing students to correct the use of language. Some examples of fluency tasks are roleplays where students have to perform different characters according to a specific topic. Students have to improvise what they are going to say, but they have to take into account that they have to follow the topic given by the teacher.

Another activity to enhance fluency can be acting out a dialog in front of the class. The teacher and a student simulate a specific issue, such as a conversation between a customer service agent and a customer over the phone. After that, students are asked to recreate a similar situation based on what the teacher and student presented at first, but they do not have to use the exact language. Later, every group presents their dialog in front of the class. On the other hand, some activities to practice accuracy can be putting students to practice dialogs where there are two students practicing the dialog and one student monitoring the dialog. The monitor's role is to check if his classmates are using the language correctly. Students have to rotate and change roles while the teacher will be moving around to make sure students are listening and speaking. The teacher will correct the students if necessary.

Another activity to train accuracy includes a grammatical item where students work in groups and check a grammar exercise. On this activity, students have to choose which grammatical form is correct based on a previous exercise presented and practiced by the teacher. In the end, groups read out their answers and teacher monitors if the answers are correct.

2.2.7 Constructivism

According to Soler (2006) constructivism is the belief that students are the protagonists of their learning process. This means students build their knowledge through their experiences. Constructivism focuses in the creation and active modification of thoughts, ideas, and models about phenomena. Additionally, constructivism affirms that learning is influenced by the socio-cultural context in which the learner submerses.

Constructivism provides a different approach. In the words of Soler (2006), “It is us who impose to the real world what we experiment, a meaning that remains pinned to the experience itself. Moreover, an ultimate reality shared does not exist, but the reality is the result of the same constructivist process. All events or concepts can be structured within the world with different meaning and perspectives” (p.30).

Additionally, Marcus (2013) states that “The idea of using games for learning purposes fits well with the constructivist approach to the process of acquiring knowledge.” (p.269). Since constructivism is an approach where students create and acquire knowledge by experimenting, the use of games help students to achieve those goals and become builders of their own learning process. The basic principle of constructivism is based on the idea that an individual can build his own knowledge by collecting information and having resources

provided by the environment or a facilitator (Marcus , 2013). This means teachers are responsible of facilitating ludic resources and activities in order to enrich the language skills of their students.

2.2.7.1 Assumptions of Constructivism

According to Soler (2006), there are some assumptions that affect the essence of constructivism. All of these assumptions taken as a whole provide a coherent framework of reference. First, learning is a process on which learners build a representation or model of the reality. Second, the interpretation of reality is personal and represents a perspective about the outer world. Third, learning is a cooperative process because the creation of concepts will depend on the fact of sharing perspectives with other learners about a particular problem.

Fourth, learning is an active process on which the meaning is built from what is known based on the learner's experience and it renews progressively. Fifth, knowledge is always placed in a different and authentic context reflecting the socio-cultural environment within a learning community. Sixth, the evaluation of learning must encourage students to learn. The results from learning are verified when it shows how each learner has contributed to increase the specific research field of their learning community. Finally, the results of learning are the different interpretations and mental elaborations of learners who compare and contrast their contributions to the others. At the end, they try to reach a consensus about the new constructs and learning models.

Chapter III

Methodological Framework

In line with Hurtado & Toro (2007), the methodological framework is the core of a research because it provides the definition of the subject population, the sample's selection, the design and application of the instruments, the data collection, tabulation, and the analysis and interpretation of the data. The methodological framework answers the question about the methodology that will be implemented in the research to achieve the objectives proposed by the investigator. Additionally, the investigator has to specify the population, determine the sample, present the design, and type of investigation that he is going to put into practice. Furthermore, the researcher has to include the instruments that will be employed and establish the procedures to be used in order to analyze the results (Hurtado & Toro, 2007).

3.1 Research Method and Scope

There are different research methods depending on the objectives and goals that the investigator wants to reach. In the words of Kumar (2008), "Research methods may be understood as all those methods and techniques that are used for conducting a research. Research methods or techniques, thus refer to the methods the researcher uses in performing research operations." (p.4) It is also worth to mention the definitions of research and method in this section of the research project. According to Barrantes (2002), a research emerges when there is an awareness of a problem that needs to be clarified or when there are circumstances or facts that make the achievement of a goal more difficult. Therefore, a research is carried out in order to solve a problem and satisfy the investigator's interest. On

the other hand, a method refers to the planned procedure that a researcher follows in the scientific activity to discover the ways to solve his investigation's problem (Barrantes, 2002).

There are three kinds of research methods: quantitative, qualitative and mixed. All of them will be explained below. According to Hernández et al (2010), the quantitative method consists of using the data collection to prove hypothesis based on the numerical measurement and statistical analysis, to establish behavior patterns and test theories. Some of the characteristics of this method includes the measurement of phenomena, the use of statistics, the validity of hypothesis, and the result of the cause-effect analysis.

In line with Hernández et al (2010), the qualitative method employs the data collection without measuring numerical amounts to discover or test research questions throughout the interpretation process. Some of the characteristics of this method are that it explores phenomena deeply, it is basically conducted in natural environments, meanings are taken from data, and it is not based on statistics.

Conforming to Hernández et al (2010), the goal of the mixed method is neither replacing the quantitative method nor the qualitative method, but considering the strengths of both kinds of inquiry by combining them and trying to minimize their potential weaknesses. Some of the characteristics of this method are that it implies the collection, analysis, and integration of quantitative and qualitative data, generates quantitative and qualitative inferences, it is based on pragmatism, and uses sampling in a simultaneous and frequent way.

For research purposes, the investigator has chosen the qualitative method, since this method is the commonest when conducting an investigation related to Education and Literature. Additionally, the researcher will use instruments that will help him to analyze and

evaluate his research objectives by using merely qualitative techniques such as observations and questionnaires. Regarding the scope, it is important to indicate that a scope depends on the research strategy or design the investigation intends to use. For example, how the data will be collected, how the sample will be collected, and other components of the investigation process. Therefore, there are different kind of scopes. These scopes are divided into exploratory, descriptive, correlational, and explanatory (Gómez, 2006).

The scope chosen to carry out this research is the descriptive one, as stated by Hernández et al (2010), this scope aims to describe the properties and characteristics of peoples' profiles, groups, communities, processes, objects, or any other phenomenon under analysis. This research describes some weaknesses students have when pronouncing the front vowels and how ludic activities may help them to enhance the pronunciation of these sounds.

3.2 Selections and Description of Populations and Participants

To carry out this research project, the investigator has chosen a seventh-grade group from a public high school located in Downtown Grecia. Additionally, the majority of the students are teenagers, and the project took place on Thursdays between 1:20 p.m. and 2:45 p.m. during the English lessons of the group 7-6.

3.2.1 Description of the Institution

The institution in which this research project is conducted corresponds to a public day school called Liceo León Cortés Castro. This institution is located one kilometer away from Grecia's Parrish Temple in a calm neighborhood named León Cortés Castro. This high school operates from 7:00 a.m. to 4:20 p.m. and it belongs to the Ministry of Public Education of Costa Rica (MEP). This institution is the first public secondary school of

Grecia's canton and was founded in 1943. It was named in honor of the ex-president of Costa Rica Mr. León Cortés Castro who had been the principal of the first primary school for men in Grecia, and was also considered as a benefactor by Grecia's citizens. It is worth to say that this institution has the largest population of high school students of Grecia's canton and its surroundings. Therefore, it has always been affected by many social issues such as drugs, delinquency, and violence. Besides, it has the highest rate of school desertion.

The mission of the Liceo León Cortés Castro is to provide academic educational services, as well as the strengthening of spiritual, moral, civic, and cultural values that enables students to face successfully their future life to achieve a more equitable, prosperous, and supportive society. Moreover, the vision of the Liceo León Cortés Castro is to achieve academic excellence in harmony with the scientific and technological advances that allows the development of human beings with comprehensive education, as well as empowering students to join the society in a full and positive way.

3.2.2 Description of the Population

The population of this research corresponds to seventh graders at Liceo León Cortés Castro. Most of the students are adolescents between thirteen and fourteen years old. The majority of students live in Downtown Grecia and its surrounding districts. There are eight groups of seventh grade, and there is an average of twenty students in each group. Students attend school from Monday to Friday, and the schedule is from 7:00 a.m to 4:10 p.m. Sometimes students leave school earlier when there are teachers' meetings or any other contingency. Seventh grade students take thirteen subjects such as Social Studies, Civics, Math, Science, English, French, Arts, Music, Religious Education, Physical Education, Industrial Arts, and Home Economics.

3.2.3 Description of the Participants

The principal of the institution has assigned group 7-6 to the researcher of this study. She recommended this group as she thinks it is a well behaved and hardworking group to work with, and it fits the schedule of the researcher. This group has twenty-four students, thirteen of them are women and eleven are men. Students' ages range from thirteen to seventeen years old. A few of them are repeaters and older students. Most of the students live in Downtown Grecia while others live in the surrounding areas such as El Poró, San Roque, Sarchí, and Peralta.

3.3 Implemented Strategies

The investigator is going to implement instruments to collect his data and analyze the results. These instruments were devised by the researcher as strategies to achieve the objectives of this investigation. The participants will answer different questions to know if their teacher uses ludic activities to encourage them to speak English and enhance their pronunciation of the front vowels. Also, an observation will be carried out to know if the teacher is employing ludic activities and how students behave in the classroom environment.

Furthermore, the researcher is going to put into practice three ludic activities to see the results and progress students can obtain in order to enhance their pronunciation of the front vowel sounds. Finally, the researcher is going to administer a pre-test to evaluate the previous knowledge students have in the pronunciation of the front vowels and a post-test to assess the progress and improvement students have got through the ludic activities implemented by the investigator.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

3.4.1 Observation

According to Barrantes (2002), an observation corresponds to a systematic process in which a specialist collects information related to certain problems. He continues by saying that an observation allows investigators to get information about how phenomena and events occur. In order to evaluate the behavior and interaction of the teacher and the students in this research project, the investigator decided to make an observation. This observation consists of a checklist with thirteen statements in which the researcher obtained information regarding the class behavior, teacher's feedback, and the use of ludic activities, among others. The instrument used to make this observation is shown below:

	Always	Sometimes	Never
1. The teacher carries out ludic activities.			
2. The students enjoy the activities carried out by the teacher.			
3. The teacher carries out activities in groups.			
4. The students correct the pronunciation of their classmates when working in groups.			
5. Students speak English constantly.			
6. The teacher speaks English during the whole class.			
7. The teacher provides immediate feedback to the students.			

8. Students make mistakes when speaking English.			
9. Students mispronounce the front vowel sounds.			
10. The teacher encourages students to participate in oral activities.			
11. The teacher corrects the students' pronunciation.			
12. The teacher answers students' questions in English.			
13. The teacher emphasizes the correct pronunciation of the vocabulary or isolated words that he is teaching.			

Table 1. Observation's check list

3.4.2 Questionnaire

In the words of Siniscalco and Auriat (2005), "A formal standardized questionnaire is a survey instrument used to collect data from individuals about themselves, or about a social unit such as a household or a school" (p.3). Some of the advantages of questionnaires are that they provide an efficient way to collect data, they are useful for collecting information on sensitive matters, and they are economical. On the other hand, some disadvantages can appear such as: the response to questionnaires is often low, they may provide only a snapshot of the situation, and sometimes questionnaires provoke answer that are socially desirable, (Patten, 2017). The researcher designed a questionnaire with eight close questions and two open questions based on the attitude of students towards pronunciation, how they would feel if they carried out ludic activities to enhance their English pronunciation, and what kind of games they liked, among others. The investigator also included a part in the questionnaire

where students had to fill up with their age and the place where they live. It is worth to mention that this questionnaire was applied in Spanish since most of them have a very basic and limited English level. The researcher made this decision in order to obtain the most precise information and answers from them. The whole questionnaire appears below:

Edad: _____

Lugar donde vive: _____

Cuestionario

Este cuestionario tiene fines educativos. Las respuestas son confidenciales.

A- Lea cuidadosamente las siguientes preguntas. Coloque una X en los cuadros que usted considera como respuesta a cada pregunta.

B-

1- ¿Le gustan los juegos en la clase de inglés?

Sí

No

2- ¿Qué tipo de juegos prefiere?

Juegos interactivos en la computadora

Juegos de mesa

Juegos para estar en movimiento dentro del aula.

Juegos dirigidos por el profesor

3- ¿Le gusta recibir retroalimentación inmediata cuando aprende inglés?

Sí

No

- 4- ¿Prefiere juegos individuales o grupales?
- Individuales
 - Grupales
 - Ambos
- 5- ¿Le gustaría exponerse a nuevos temas de una manera interesante?
- Totalmente de acuerdo
 - De acuerdo
 - En desacuerdo
 - Totalmente en desacuerdo
- 6- ¿Se sentiría cómodo interactuando con sus compañeros de clase en un juego?
- Totalmente de acuerdo
 - De acuerdo
 - En desacuerdo
 - Totalmente en desacuerdo
- 7- ¿Se sentiría cómodo en un ambiente de competencia amistosa?
- Totalmente de acuerdo
 - De acuerdo
 - En desacuerdo
 - Totalmente en desacuerdo
- 8- ¿Que tan a menudo realizan juegos en la clase de inglés?
- Siempre
 - A menudo
 - A veces
 - Casi nunca
 - Nunca

C- Responda de manera específica y sincera cada pregunta.

9- ¿Considera usted que la pronunciación del inglés es difícil o fácil? Justifique su respuesta.

10- ¿Qué le parece la idea de realizar juegos para mejorar su pronunciación en inglés? Justifique su respuesta.

3.4.3 Pre-test and Post- test

The pre-test and post-test consist in short paragraphs that contain the four front vowel sounds /i, ɪ, æ, ε/ the researcher has selected to carry out this study. The topic of each paragraph belongs to the MEP's English Program for seventh graders. Each student took the test individually and read the paragraph to the researcher.

3.4.3.1 Pre-Test

The pre-test consists of an eight-line paragraph that is based mostly on the front vowel sounds that the researcher intends to help students to enhance (See Appendix A). The objective of this instrument consists on identifying the weaknesses students have when pronouncing the front vowel sounds. Casually, this objective corresponds to the first specific objective of this research. Additionally, this pre-test also contains an evaluation checklist that the researcher will use to measure three criteria: pronunciation, communicability and fluency. As it was told before, students have to read a paragraph to the investigator. The title of the paragraph is "My Favorite Trip." In order to evaluate the pre-test the researcher listened to the students carefully, identified which front vowels were the most mispronounced, helped some students to pronounce words they did not know, and took some notes in regards to the attitude students had when taking the pre-test. The researcher, who took into account different vocabulary and grammar structures that the students are familiar with, wrote the paragraph. The researcher applied the test in order to get an idea of how students mispronounce the different front vowels sounds he would teach for three weeks. In order to take this test, students were called one by one in a separate classroom and were asked to read the complete paragraph.

3.4.3.2 Post-Test

The post-test consists of a seven-line paragraph that is also based on most of the sounds studied during the performance of the ludic activities (See Appendix B). These sounds correspond to the front vowel sounds selected to carry out this study. The title of the paragraph is “My friend Ben.” The researcher also wrote the paragraph for this post-test, and he considered choosing words and expressions with the front vowel sounds he presented during the application of the ludic activities he prepared for the students. The researcher created a similar paragraph as the one he used during the pretest because he wanted to know if students were able or not to learn and improve the sounds he taught for three weeks. Therefore, he applied the post-test in order to measure the progress and enhancement students got after applying the ludic activities. Students took the quiz, and they were called one by one in a separate classroom and they were asked to read the whole paragraph.

In order to evaluate the post-test , the researcher also used the same check list for the pre-test, but in this case the checklist was implemented to evaluate the usage of ludic activities to enhance the pronunciation of front vowels (post-test). This check-list consisted of three criteria where the researcher assesses the fluency, pronunciation, and communicability of every student. There is a scale from one to four according to the score that each student of this study may achieve. The researcher will give each student a score based on the fluency, pronunciation, and communicability students have when reading a short text containing the front vowel sounds. The checklist to evaluate the pre-tests and post-test is shown below:

Rubric	Does not meet expectations 1	Needs Improvement 2	Meets Expectations 3	Exceeds Expectations 4
Fluency	Hesitates too often when speaking	Speaks with some hesitation	Speaks with some hesitation, but communication is achieved	Speaks smoothly with little hesitation
Pronunciation	Has frequent problems with the pronunciation of front vowels /i, ɪ, ε, æ/	Makes errors in the pronunciation of front vowels /i, ɪ, ε, æ/ what make difficult to convey meaning	Clear and accurate pronunciation of the front vowels /i, ɪ, ε, æ/ with few problems	Pronounces clear and accurate the front vowels /i, ɪ, ε, æ/
Communicability	Purpose is not clear; needs helping communicatively	Tries to communicate, but not very accurate	Communicates effectively; the purpose is clear	Stays on task and communicates effectively

Table 2 shows the checklist to evaluate the pre-test and post-test

The researcher also applied some ludic activities and created checklists to evaluate the performance and interaction of the students. These instruments were created in order to fulfill the second specific objective of this research, which consists in applying some ludic activities to enhance the pronunciation of the front vowel sounds. The checklists and ludic activities are attached to the appendixes of this study (See Appendix C)

3.4.4 Ludic Activities

The researcher prepared three ludic activities in which he taught the correct realization of the front vowels. The objective of these activities was enabling students to recognize and distinguish the features of each sound. The details and description of each ludic will be shown below.

3.4.4.1 Pronunciation Journey.

This activity is the same that was explained in the theoretical framework (See Page 30), however, the researcher made some adaptations so that he could take advantage and teach only the first front vowel sounds. Before applying this activity, the investigator created a PowerPoint presentation in which he showed the students how the long i /i/ and short i /ɪ/ were produced. Additionally, the PPT also contained examples of words including these sounds, examples of minimal pairs and listening exercises. Once the investigator taught and explained how these sounds were pronounced, he proceeded to start the Pronunciation Journey activity (See Appendix D). For this activity, students were given the same map of the original game and a list of four minimal pairs containing the sounds /i/ and /ɪ/. The investigator explained the instructions of the game and showed the students how to play by modeling the activity with the teacher that was in charge of the group. After that, students were asked to play in pairs, and the investigator and the teacher monitored the activity.

3.4.4.2 Four-sided Dominoes.

As it was told on the first activity, this game was also explained in the chapter II of this research (See Page 31) . This activity was also adapted since the original activity includes all the vowel sounds of English. Because of this, the investigator decided to design dominoes cards containing only the front vowel sounds. Before playing this game, the investigator likewise created a PowerPoint presentation in which he showed the students how the epsilon /ɛ/ and diagraph /æ/ were produced. Additionally, the PPT also contained examples of words including these sounds, examples of minimal pairs and listening

exercises. The researcher gave the instructions of the game and then students played in pairs or threesomes. Also, students were told to play either on the floor or placing their cards on their desks. Every group had a student that was responsible to keep the score and deal the same number of cards to his classmates. If students were playing in trios, they had to place one card in the middle as a starter. The purpose of this game was matching words that contained the same vowel sound (See Appendix E). Additionally, students were given a key that included all the words and their corresponding front vowel sound. At the end the student who placed and matched all his or her cards was the winner.

3.4.4.3 Recognizing the Front Vowels Through a Song

This was the last ludic activity the researcher prepared for this investigation. The purpose of this activity consisted in reviewing all the front vowels, students learned during the two previous ludic activities. Therefore, the researcher chose a classic ballad in English called “Truly, Madly, Deeply” and designed a worksheet containing two exercises (See Appendix F), the first exercise had the lyrics of the song in which students had to fill out the blanks with the words missing. By the way, all the words missing contained the front vowel sounds. Additionally, the researcher attached the list of the words missing, since he thought it would be easier for students to complete the blanks. Once students filled out the words missing, they had to complete the exercise number two which consisted in classifying the words missing according to their front vowel sound.

3.5 Validation of instruments

The instruments were validated in group 7-1 at Liceo León Cortés Castro. There were 21 students present in the class. All of them participated during the validation of the instruments. The researcher told the students they would participate in the implementation of some ludic activities to enhance the pronunciation of the front vowel sounds. All the instruments for this study were validated.

Chapter IV

Data Analysis

Before carrying out the data analysis of this study, it is important to mention that only the most revealing data gathered from the pre-test, observations, questionnaire, and post-test were taken into account. Moreover, the figures and tables only show the information generated from group 7-6 at Liceo León Cortés Castro. In addition, the opinion of the supervising teacher will be discussed in this chapter. According to Hernández et al (2010), once the data has been decoded, transferred to a matrix, saved in a file, and organized, the researcher proceeds to analyze them. He also adds that a qualitative analysis implies organizing the collected data, making a transcription manually if necessary and coding the information.

1.1 Analysis and Interpretation of the Results

In this part of the chapter, the collected data will be analyzed and interpreted by the investigator. The instruments of this investigation were applied to the students who showed up on the dates in which the investigator was allowed to conduct his study.

4.1.1 Observation

Hernández et al (2010) suggest that a qualitative observation is not a simple contemplation because it implies going into deeper social situations and keep an active role, as well as having a permanent consideration. The researcher must be attentive to details, events, and interactions. The researcher decided to make an observation in order to evaluate and get important information about the way the teacher and students behave in the classroom context. Furthermore, the researcher took into account the performance of ludic

activities and the pronunciation of the front vowels. Additionally, he used specific checklists and considered different aspects that are mentioned below.

4.1.1.2 Observation of the Class

The observation of the class was performed on Thursday, October 26, 2017. It was the first time the researcher met the students. It is worth to mention that only twelve students attended the class that day. The absenteeism was due to ANDE Teachers' Convention, in which some students were told that a large number of teachers would not show up because they would attend the convention.

The first observation took place when the researcher arrived. That day, he arrived ten minutes late and he could make his observation for only thirty minutes because he also needed to apply the pre-test to the students. During this lesson, the teacher was showing some PowerPoint slides related to *Wh- questions* in the present and past tense and a reading about Manuel Antonio National Park. The teacher conducted a reading of a paragraph and some wh-questions, where students read one by one. Some of them were not feeling comfortable when the teacher asked them to read; they hesitated too much and had no fluency when reading the text. One of the students had difficulties when reading from the screen, so she had to take a picture with her cellphone and read the text on that device.

Regarding the facilities and furniture of the classroom, it is important to mention that the place is very hot. Therefore, having a class in those conditions it is sometimes a challenge for both, the teacher and the students, because there is no air conditioning nor fans inside this classroom. In addition, the researcher noticed that most of the desks of the students are scratched and without paint. Additionally, the ambient sound of the classroom is quite noisy

because the classroom is located in one of the school pavilions where many students pass through.

The results obtained from the checklist for the class observation are shown in the following table:

	Always	Sometimes	Never
14. The teacher carries out ludic activities.			X
15. The students enjoy the activities carried out by the teacher.			X
16. The teacher carries out activities in groups.			X
17. The students correct the pronunciation of their classmates when working in groups.			X
18. Students speak English constantly.			X
19. The teacher speaks English during the whole class.		X	
20. The teacher provides immediate feedback to students.		X	
21. Students make mistakes when speaking English.	X		
22. Students mispronounce the front vowel sounds.	X		
23. The teacher encourages students to participate in oral activities.		X	
24. The teacher corrects the pronunciation of the students.		X	

25. The teacher answers students' questions in English.			X
26. The teacher emphasizes the correct pronunciation of the vocabulary or isolated words that he is teaching.		X	

Table 3 shows the results of the observation of the class

During the observation, the teacher who was conducting the class did not carry out any ludic activities. He prepared some Power Point slides where he covered a reading with some wh- questions. Even though the class did not contain any ludic activity, the researcher thinks it is very important to use visual aids such as a video-beam to project the material and handouts because students need those didactic resources to understand the topics better. Nowadays, most of the public institutions of primary and secondary education in Costa Rica can provide these devices to teachers in order to use technology and innovate their classes in some way. During the English class, it is important to use these visual aids because teachers can project videos or images to draw students' attention easily and help students with visual skills to retain more information.

Students never enjoyed the activities carried out by the teacher. Some of them were boring and did not motivate the students. The researcher also considers that, at a certain point, reading slides in Power Point becomes monotonous and boring for some students. Therefore, a teacher should find different ways to present a reading or any grammar topic using different programs such as Prezi or another app or software to present those topics.

The teacher did not carry out his activities in groups, but he let the students to sit in pairs and read the questions and work on the text together. Some of them already have

friends in their classroom, so they prefer to sit and work with them whenever a teacher decides to carry out an activity.

The students did not correct their classmates when working in pairs. It seems students in this group do not have a basic knowledge on pronunciation and they have not interiorized the sounds and their articulation. In regards to the use of English by students, the researcher perceived that students did not speak the language during class because the English program of the MEP is more focused on learning vocabulary and applying reading comprehension strategies than in teaching students to talk and communicate in the target language.

Additionally, it is important to mention that students of the third cycle of Public Education in Costa Rica only take three English lessons per week. Therefore, learning and teaching to speak English in public high schools is a big challenge for both students and language instructors.

On the other hand, the teacher spoke in English as much as he could during the whole class. Most of the times he had some interventions in Spanish because students were not able to understand the instructions and explanations. It is important to mention that students of group 7-6 do not have an advanced level in listening and language comprehension in English; consequently, the teacher has to translate and explain most of the content of the lessons in Spanish.

4.1.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire of this study was applied to the students the same day the observation and pre-test took place. Only twelve students were able to fill out the questionnaire. It is important to mention that only some questions of the questionnaire contain figures because it was necessary to show concise results while in other questions such as the *open* and *yes no questions*, the researcher chose to comment the results he had got as it was not necessary to tabulate that information. Additionally, the questionnaire was applied to the students in Spanish due to the low level of English students have and also to get more precise answers from students. For purposes of this chapter, the questions and option will be presented in English. The results are shown below.

Question 1: Do you like to play games in the English class?

In relation to question 1, eleven students (91,6%) out of twelve (100%) answered that they like the use of games when they learn English. Only one student (8,3%) answered that he does not like to play games when learning English. The researcher inferred from these results that most of the students of group 7-6 like to play games during their English class.

Question 2:

11- What kind of games do you prefer?

- Interactive computer games
- Board games
- Get-up-out of your- seat games
- Teacher-led games



Figure 1. Students' preferences towards different kind of games

Source: Rodríguez, 2017.

The figure above shows that the majority of students (58,3%) prefer the get-up-out of your seats games. While two students (16,6%) out of twelve (100%) prefer the board and only one student (8,3%) prefers the interactive computer games. Finally, two students (16,6%) out of twelve (100%) prefer the teacher-led games. The researcher noticed that students like to work on the floor when they are completing a task. Therefore, when he performed the ludic activities he took this information into account so that the students could play on the floor and feel more comfortable inside the classroom.

Question 3:

Do you like to receive immediate feedback when learning English?

- Yes
- No

Based on the results of this question, ten students (83,3%) out of twelve like to receive immediate feedback when learning English. While only two students (16,7%) answered they do not like to receive immediate feedback. This response from most of the students shows that students want to receive feedback in order to improve their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills when they learn English.

Question 4:

Do you prefer individual or group games?

- Individual
- Group
- Both

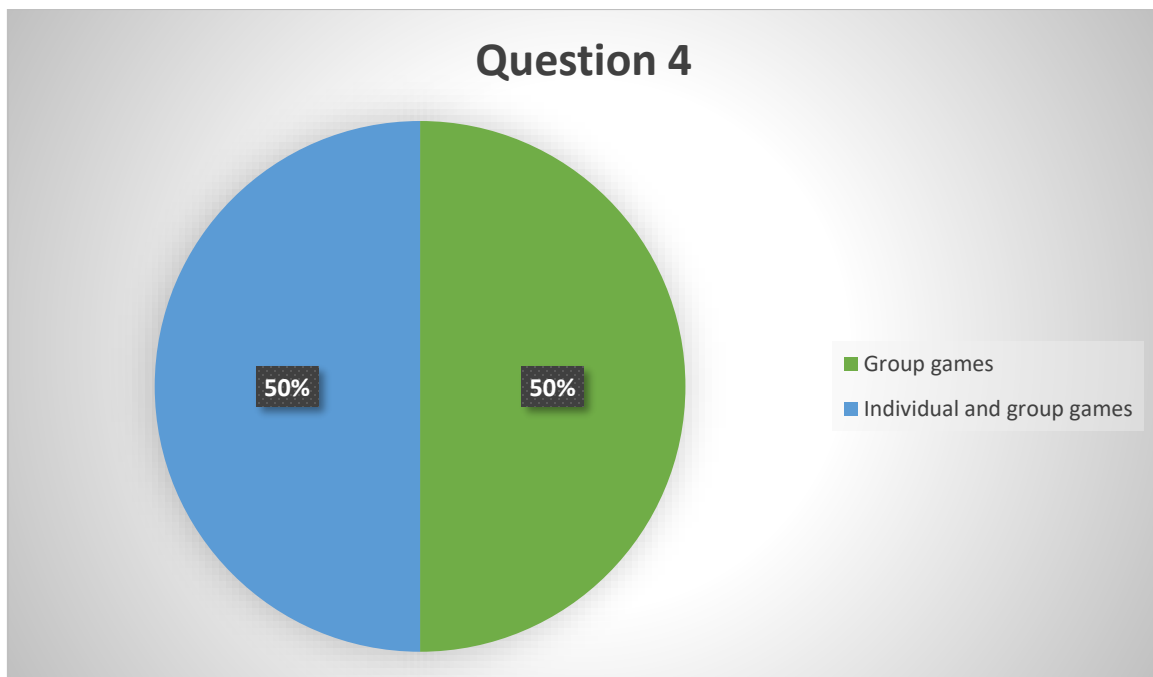


Figure 2. Student's attitude towards individual and group games
Source: Rodríguez, 2017.

Based on the results of this question, six participants who represent the 50% of the students answered that they prefer group games. While the other six participants, that represent 50%, answered that they like both individual and group games. The researcher found out that the majority of students like to play games with two or more people at the same time. Additionally, he concludes that some students like the games in-group, while others prefer the group games, but want to play individually depending on the activity.

Question 5:

Would you like to get exposed to new information in an interesting way?

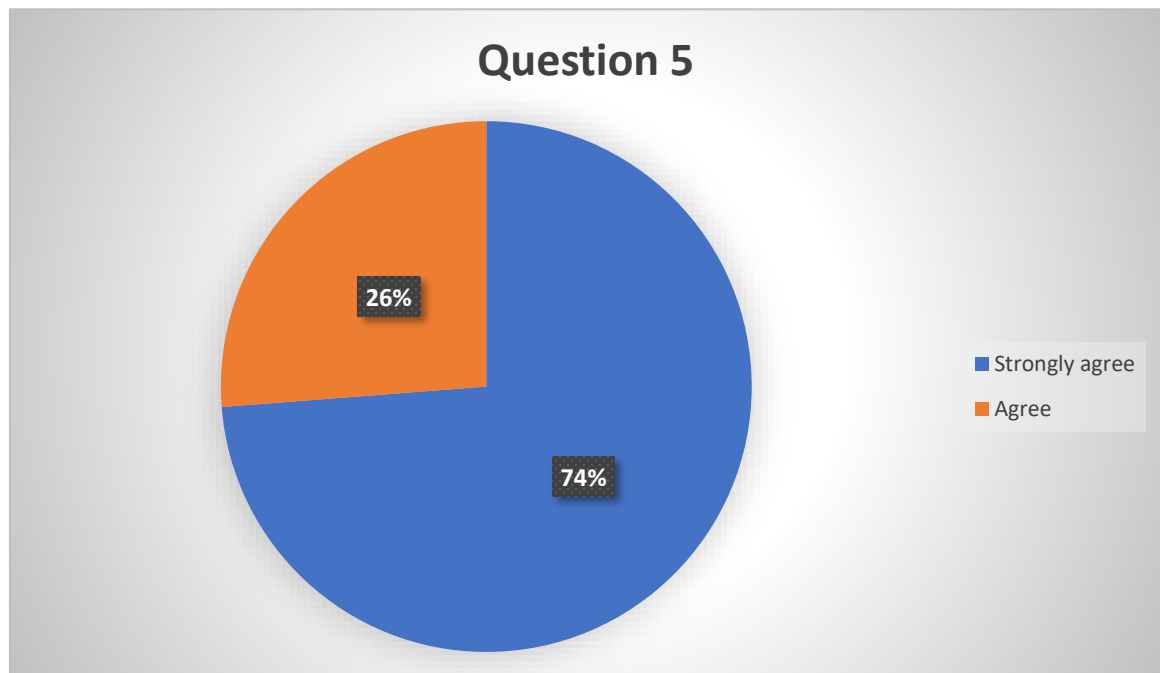


Figure 3. Student's opinion towards being exposed to new information in an interesting way

Source: Rodríguez, 2017.

In relation to question 5, eight participants who represent the 74% of the students strongly agree to be exposed to new information in an interesting way. While four participants that represent the other 26% answered that they agree. The researcher created this question in order to know if students wanted to learn pronunciation in different interesting ways, such as the games and ludic activities he prepared for this study.

Question 6:

Would you feel comfortable interacting with peers?

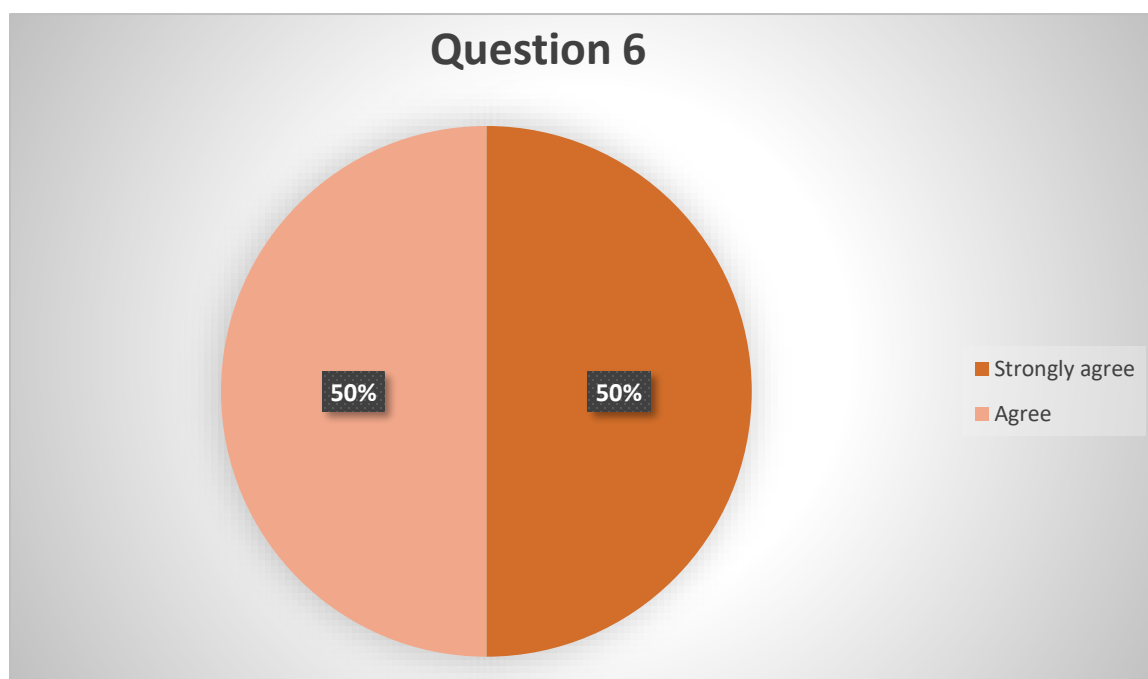


Figure 4 shows if the students feel comfortable interacting with their classmates in class
Source: Rodríguez, 2017.

Based on the results, six participants that represent the 50% of the students answered they strongly agree to interact with their peers and feel comfortable with it. The other six participants that represent the 50% answered they agree to interact with their peers and feel comfortable doing it. The researcher also found out that students in group 7-6 always wanted to work in groups and interact, but sometimes some of the students were working by themselves because they did not have a peer to work with.

Question 7:

Would you feel comfortable having a friendly competition?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

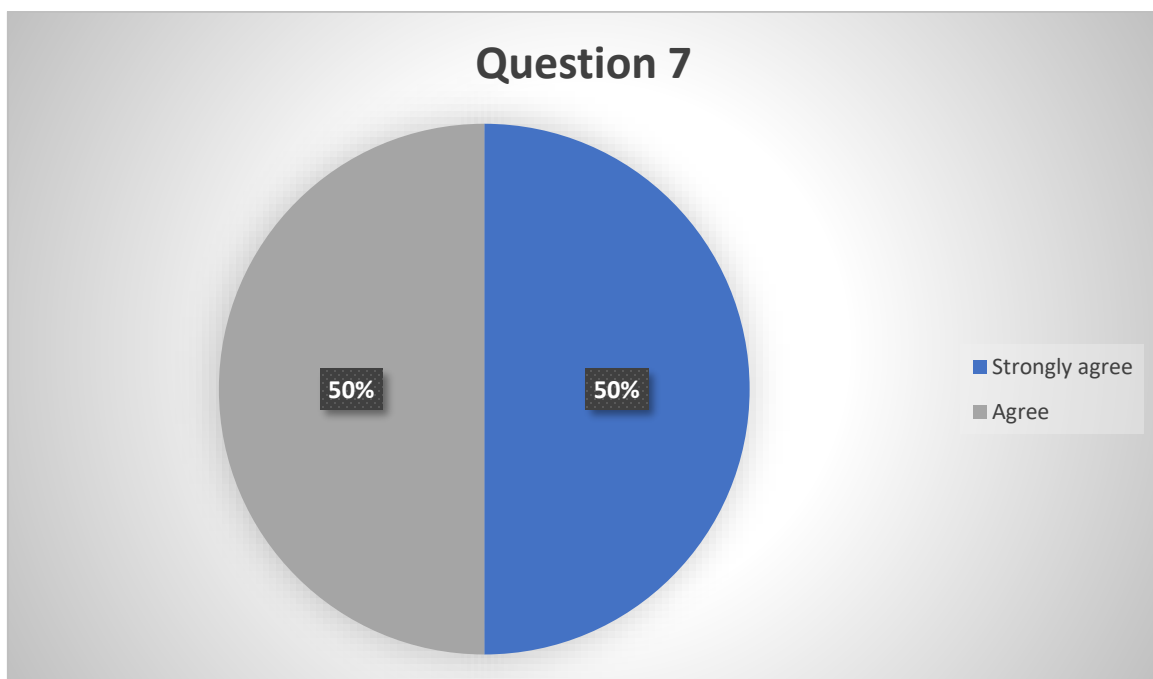


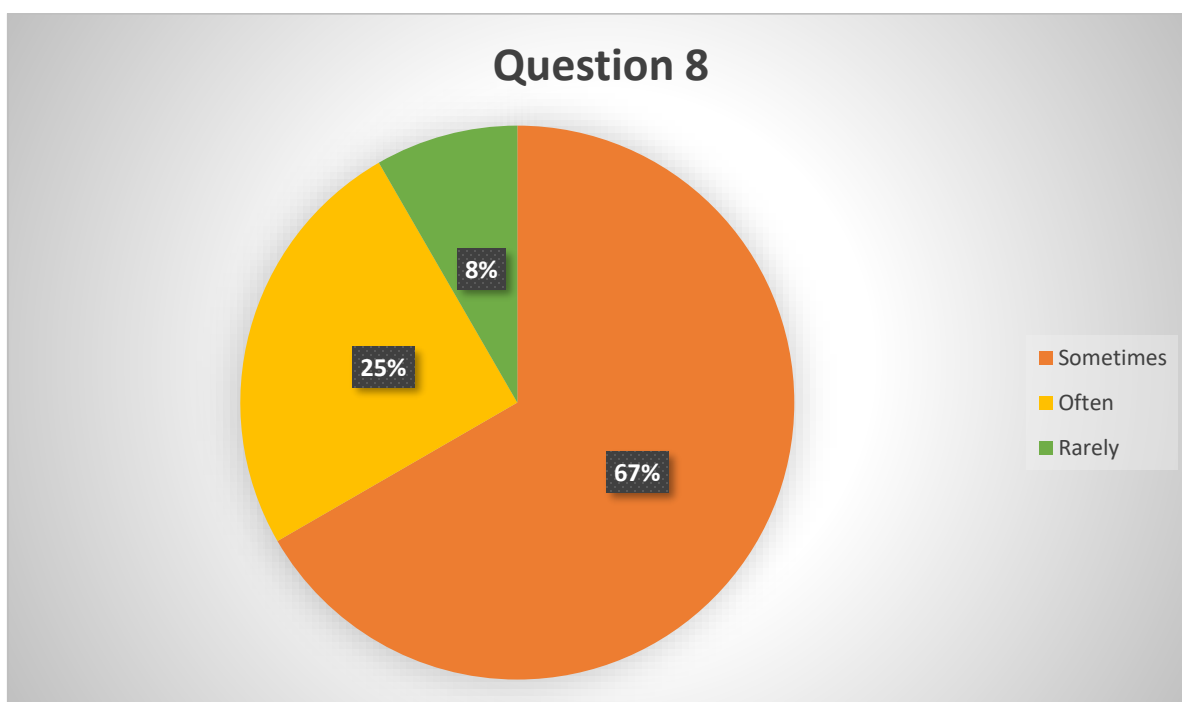
Figure 5. Student's opinion towards having a friendly competition
Source: Rodríguez, 2017.

In relation to question 7, six participants who represent the 50% of the students answered they strongly agree to have a friendly competition with their classmates. On the other hand, the other six participants answered they agree and feel comfortable to have a friendly competition with their peers.

Question 8:

How often do you play games in the English class?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

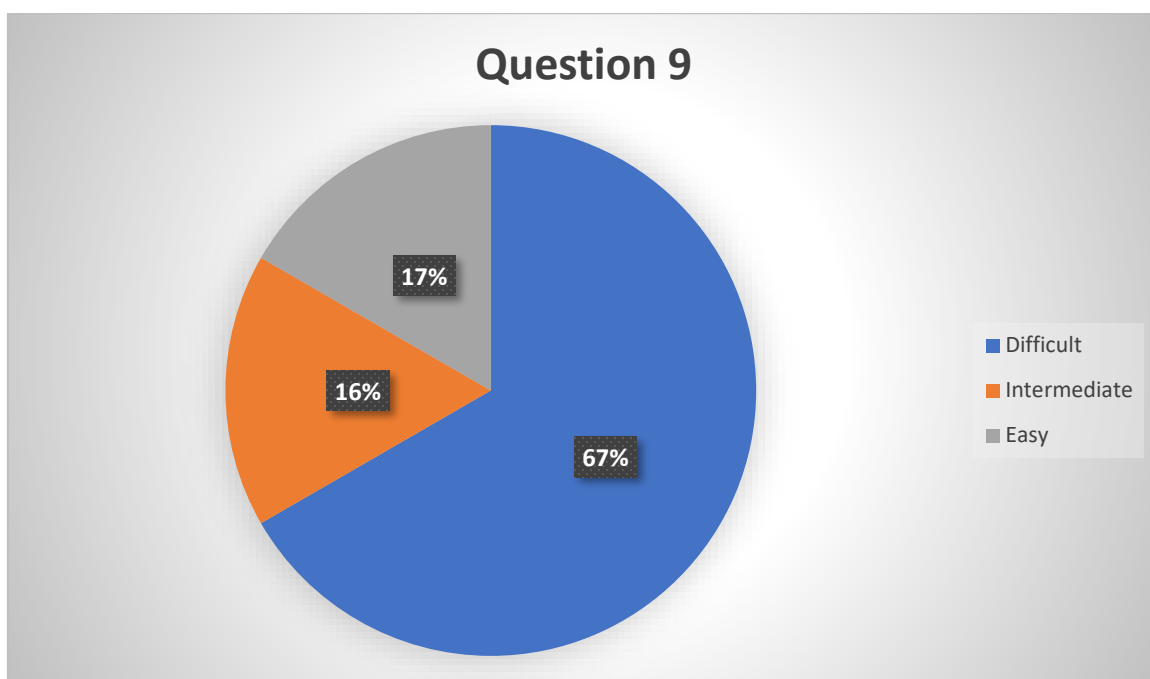


*Figure 6 shows how often students play games in the English class
Source: Rodríguez, 2017.*

In relation to question 8, eight participants who represent the 67% of the students answered they sometimes play games in the English class. Three participants who represent the 25% of the students answered they often play games in the English. Only one student who represents the 8% of the students answered he has rarely played games in the English class.

Question 9:

Do you consider English pronunciation difficult or easy? Justify your answer.



*Figure 7 shows students' opinion towards English pronunciation
Source: Rodríguez, 2017.*

Regarding question 9, this question was an open question, so students were free to write their own opinion. However, most of the answers were similar, so the researcher decided to create a figure to show the results. The researcher found out that 67% represents eight students that think English pronunciation is difficult. 16% represents the students that

think English pronunciation is neither difficult nor easy, and the other 17% of students think English pronunciation is easy. Most of students consider that English pronunciation is difficult because the language is written with the same alphabet or letters that they use in their native language, but when they have to speak or pronounce a word, things change radically.

Furthermore, some of them were honest to admit they do not like English; therefore, a couple of them during the performance of the ludic activities were not paying attention and showing any interest. Additionally, some of them answered they struggle a lot with English because it is a difficult subject for them at high school. The ones who answered English pronunciation is easy said that most of the times they only need to know how to pronounce the vowels and consonants of the alphabet correctly in order to guess which the pronunciation of a word is. Finally, the other two students who answered English was neither difficult nor easy, admitted that they sometimes do not study English or listen to music frequently, so they do not know sometimes how to pronounce certain words.

Question 10:

What do you think about playing games to enhance your pronunciation? Justify your answer

As question 10 was an open one, students were also able to express and justify what they think about playing games to enhance their pronunciation in English. As it was expected by the researcher, all the students answered it was a great idea to play games because they are fun and all people like games. Moreover, some of them answered that the best way to learn any topic is by playing games as it helps them to develop their mental agility.

4.1.3 Pre-Test and Post-Test

The pre-test and post-test were applied to the students in order to achieve two specific objectives of this study. It is important to remember that the pre-test and post-test are valuable instruments that help the researcher to diagnose student's previous knowledge on pronunciation and evaluate the students' progress after participating in the ludic activities.

4.1.3.1 Pre-test

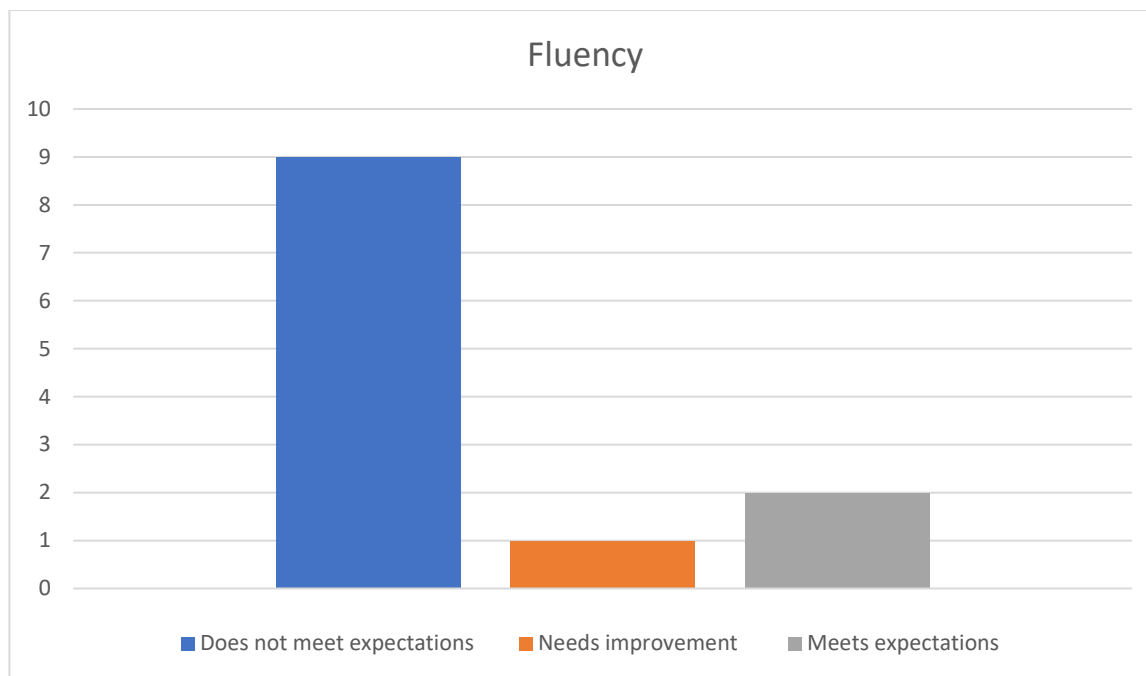
Once the researcher ended up the observation of the class and collected the complete questionnaires, he proceeded to apply the pre-test to the students. The pre-test of this study was designed to identify the weaknesses students have when pronouncing the front vowel sounds. The pre-test was applied the same day the researcher made his observation and asked students to fill out the questionnaire.

The teacher told the researcher he could go to a separate classroom and continue with the pre-test. One by one, the students entered the classroom and took the pre-test. Only twelve students were able to take the pre-test that day. Once the students took a seat in front of the researcher's desk, he introduced himself and told them he was carrying out a study that consisted on helping seventh grade students to enhance their pronunciation by doing some ludic activities. He also explained what the pre-test was about, and he said it would not be evaluated as part of their English grade and it would be only taken into account for educational purposes. After giving the instructions clearly, he asked students to read the short paragraph, he started listening to the students and taking notes. As it was mentioned in chapter 3, the researcher created a checklist in which he evaluated three rubrics: fluency,

pronunciation, and communicability. The results obtained from that checklist will be explained below.

Fluency

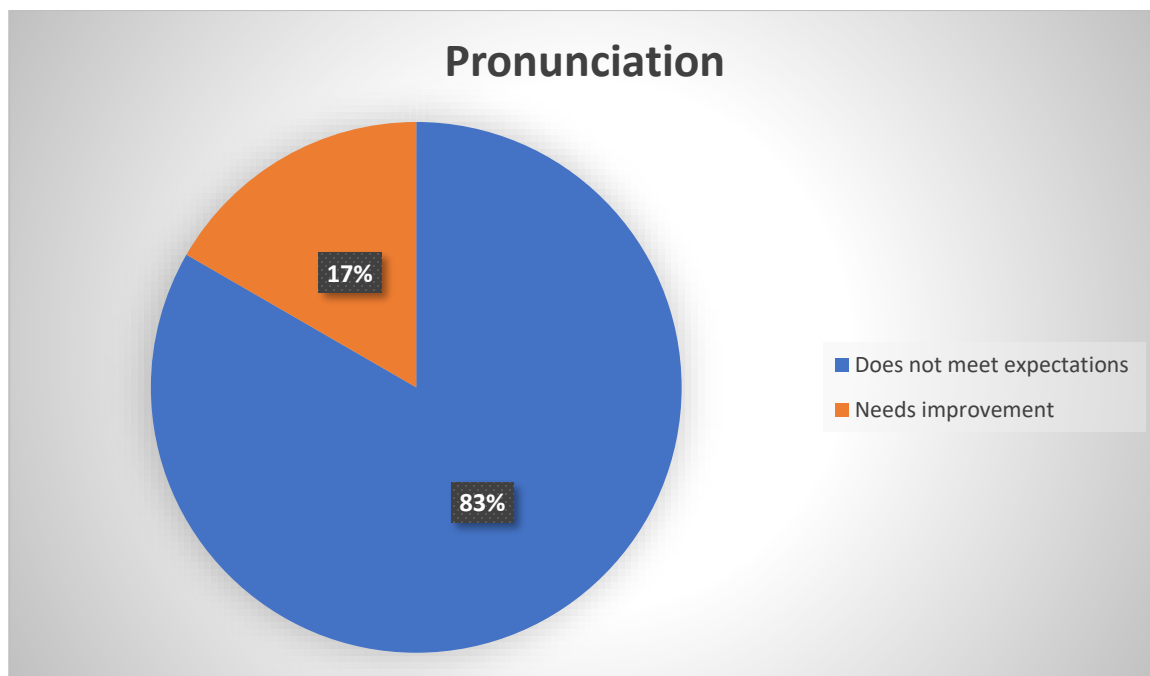
During the application of the pre-test, the researcher found out that most of the students of group 7-6 hesitated too often when reading the paragraph. Therefore, the fluency of these students did not meet the expectations of the researcher. He also noticed that students were somewhat nervous when they read the text. In fact, one of them sweated a lot when he was taking the test. Additionally, four students told the researcher English was very difficult for them, so they said they would try to read the text despite their struggle. Moreover, some other students asked for help in order to continue reading the paragraph because they said they did not know how to pronounce many words from the text. The researcher also noticed that one of the students was reading some words backwards, thus he considers that this student could have a possible learning disability such as dyslexia. Despite many students did not read fluently, two of them read with some hesitation, but they were able to communicate.



*Figure 8 shows the fluency scale of students during the pre-test.
Source: Rodríguez, 2017.*

Pronunciation

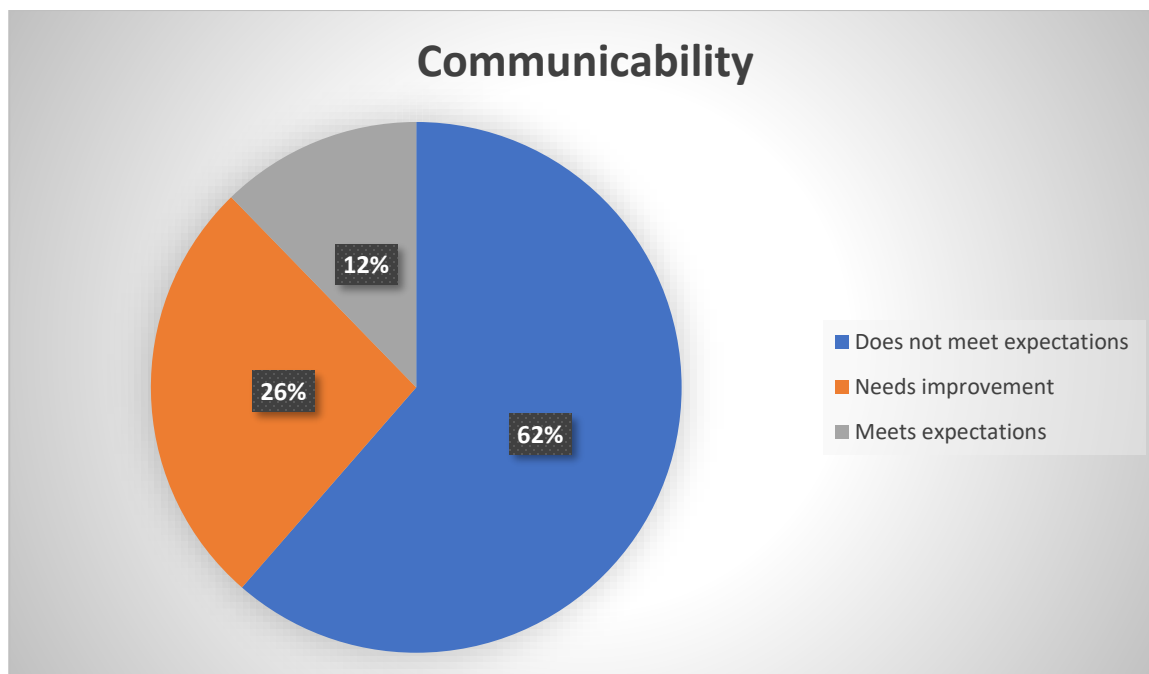
Regarding the pronunciation of the students during the pre-test, the results kept almost the same as in the rubric of fluency. Hence, ten students (83% of the students) had frequent problems with the pronunciation of the front vowels /i, ɪ, ε, æ/ and did not meet the expectations of the test. Students were not able to articulate and pronounce most of the words correctly since they did not know how to make the difference of the minimal pairs /i/ vrs /ɪ/ and /ε/ vrs /æ/. Only two of the students (17 % of the students) made mistakes in the pronunciation of front vowels /i, ɪ, ε, æ/ and was difficult to convey meaning. It is worth to mention that these two girls told the investigator they really liked English and according to their teacher, they were good students, as well.



*Figure 9 shows the results of pronunciation rubric of students
Source: Rodríguez, 2017.*

Communicability

In relation to communicability, the researcher found out that seven students (62% of the students) did not meet the expectations because their purpose was not clear and needed help in communicability. While three students (26% of the students) tried to communicate, but they could not do it accurately. Finally, only one student despite her weaknesses in fluency and pronunciation, was able to communicate effectively, and the purpose was clear. The results related to communicability are shown below.



*Figure 10 shows the results of the communicability rubric of students
Source: Rodríguez, 2017.*

Ludic Activities as Independent Variables

After the application of the pre-test, the investigator carried out three ludic activities. The investigator prepared the three activities in order to achieve the pronunciation enhancement of the front vowel sounds. It is worth to mention that the investigator chose the ludic activities based on the preferences that students showed when they answered the questionnaire. The two games that were chosen for this purpose were taken and adapted from the book *Pronunciation Games* by Mark Hancock. As a final activity, the researcher chose a song in order to use music as a ludic strategy to learn pronunciation.

Ludic Activity 1

The first activity consisted in a game called Pronunciation Journey. In order to carry out this activity, the investigator prepared a Power Point presentation and a handout in which he introduced the first two front vowel sounds /i/ and /i/. This day, twenty students attended

the class and most of them were not present when the researcher had come for the first time. After learning the difference between both sounds, he introduced the game and explained the instructions of the game. At the end of the game, most of the students said they had enjoyed it and that they would have liked to have another class to continue learning the next two sounds and playing games to learn pronunciation.

Some other students said they had difficulties to distinguish the difference between the two sounds, but despite that, they liked the class. The researcher also took advantage of the occasion and asked the teacher if he could provide some feedback to him. The teacher said the activity was fun, and he perceived that most of the students had enjoyed the game and laughed when learning the /i/ sound due to the tenseness of the mouth when articulating the sound. He also recommended to give clearer instructions for the next time because some students did not understand at some point what the game was about, and he said it would be a good idea to add sentences with the sounds in the Power Point slides instead of dialogues.

Ludic Activity 2

The second game was the four-sided dominoes in which each domino card had four different words containing the four front vowel sounds. For this game, the teacher also prepared a Power Point presentation where he reviewed the first two sounds /i/ and /ɪ/, and introduced and taught the other two front vowel sounds /ɛ/ and /æ/. Students were told to work in pairs or groups of three. Besides, some of them decided to play the game on the floor.

Few students expressed that having the four sounds together was kind of confusing, even though they were given a key indicating which words belonged to each of the four front

vowel sounds. The teacher said the game was really nice because it was creative and he had perceived students enjoyed the board game and were eager to participate. However, he recommended to find a way to enhance the students' spelling during the activity next time.

Ludic Activity 3

The last activity was a review of the four vowel sounds through a song. The investigator gave each student the lyrics of the song “Truly, Madly, Deeply” by Savage Garden in which some of the words were missing. In this activity, the students had to listen to the song twice and fill in the blanks with the words that were missing. The researcher also provided a word bank in which students could find the missing words.

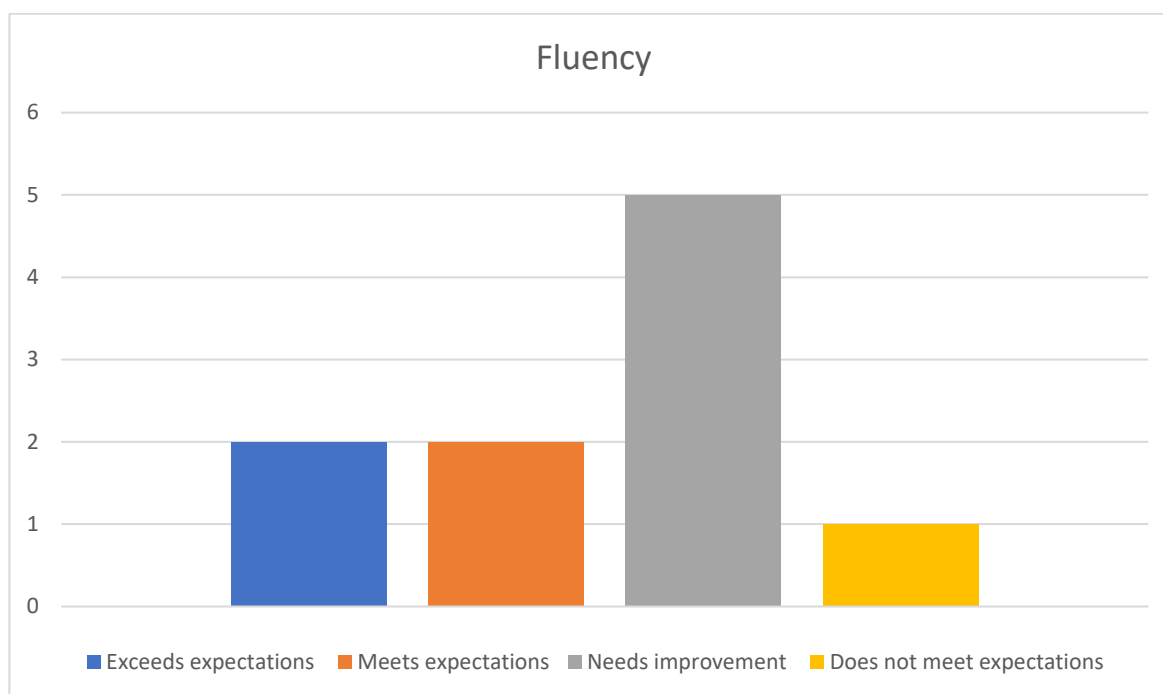
That week, students were taking their finals, so they were somehow a little stressed and distracted. Additionally, students at first told the researcher the song was very old, so they did not show so much interest on the activity. Even though, students listened to the song twice, most of the students could not complete or understand the words missing. At the end, the researcher sang the song to the students and they actually paid more attention and offered him applauses. The researcher ended up the activity by classifying the words missing according to the sound the words belonged to. As a way to thank and acknowledge the students effort, the investigator gave each student a “Tapita Navideña” as a present.

4.1.3.2 Post-test

At the end of the last ludic activity, the post-test was applied to the students. This time the researcher stayed in the classroom in which he performed the ludic activities, and the teacher and students moved to another classroom. The post-test of this research was designed to evaluate the usage of ludic activities to enhance the pronunciation of the front vowel

sounds. Once again, the students entered the classroom and one by one took the test in front of the investigator's desk. The investigator told the students to look first in the paragraph, and try to identify all the sounds that they studied for the last six lessons.

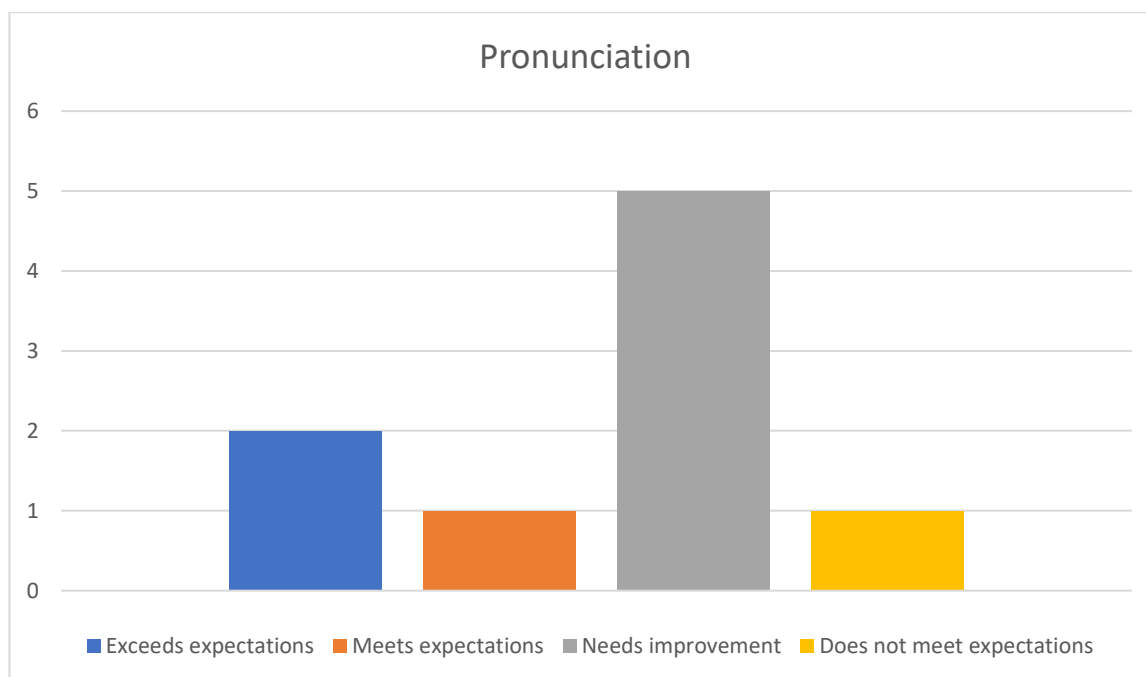
The researcher could only apply the post-test to twelve students because the rest of the students were having lunch and studying for the exam they had in the afternoon. The application of the post-test showed that students improved at least the pronunciation of one of the four vowel sounds that the researcher intended to enhance. It is important to mention that a couple of students that were not present in the application of the pre-test decided to take the post-test and they got positive results. To evaluate this post-test the researcher also used the same checklist he implemented for the pre-test. The results are shown below.



*Figure 11 shows the improvement of fluency in students
Source: Rodríguez, 2017.*

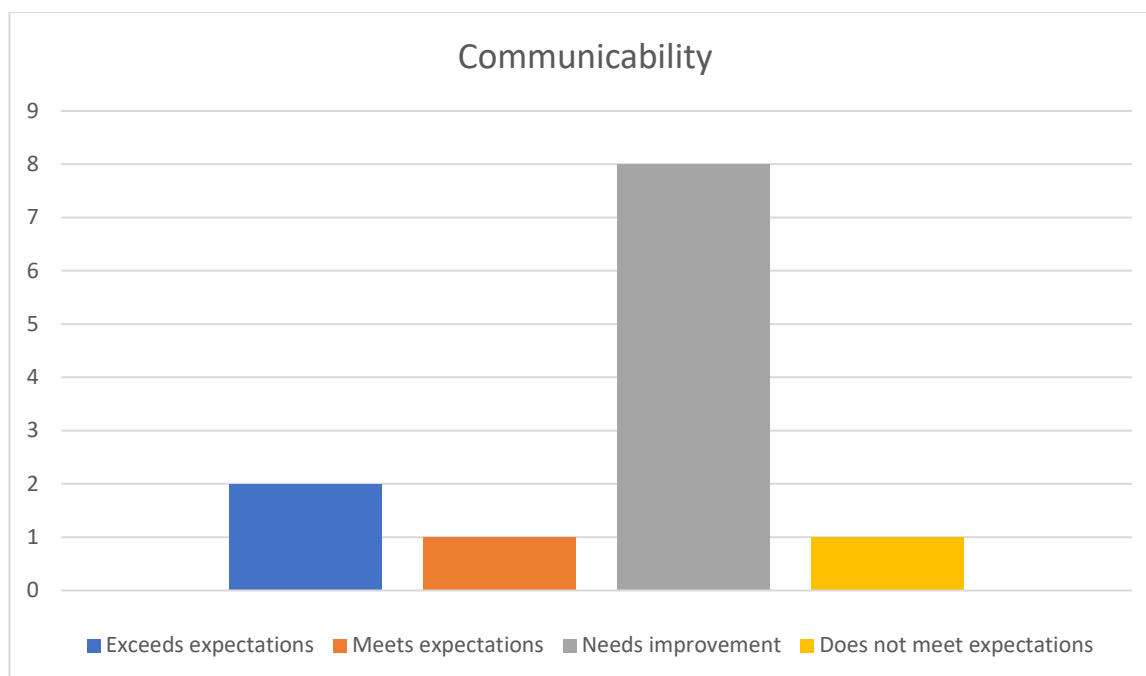
The figure shows that five students (41,6%) still need improvement in their fluency. While one student (836%) aimed to meet the expectation of the post-test this time. Other two

students (16,6%) exceeded the expectations in their fluency. Finally, only one student which represents 8,3% of the students who took the post-test did not meet the expectations.



*Figure 12 shows the improvement of pronunciation in students
Source: Rodríguez, 2017.*

The figure shows that five students (41,6%) still need improvement in their pronunciation. Even though they still need to improve, at least they were able to pronounce one of the front vowel sounds correctly. While two students (16,6%) aimed to meet the expectation of the post-test because their pronunciation was good and the researcher thinks they can improve more with more practice. The other two students (16,6%) exceeded the expectations of the researcher, as they were able to pronounce most of the words perfectly and showed a successful progress. Finally, only one student which represents 8,3% of the students who took the post-test did not meet the expectations in this rubric either.



*Figure 13 shows the improvement of communicability in students
Source: Rodríguez, 2017.*

According to the figure above, eight students (66,6%) still need some improvement to communicate. Only one student (8,3%) aimed to meet the expectations in the rubric of communicability. Fortunately, two students were able to read and pronounce the words of the text successfully (16,6%) which led to aim exceeded expectations in their communication skills. Finally, only one student (8,3%) failed the rubric of communicability; therefore, she did not meet the expectations.

The results of the post-test showed that in general, five students still need to improve their fluency, pronunciation, and communicability. Although some students did not meet the expectations in the pre-test, they could improve a little their fluency and pronunciation in the post-test. Moreover, two students exceeded the expectations of the post-test, as they both showed so much interest during the performance of the ludic activities and the investigator perceived that they liked English, and it was easy for them to learn the pronunciation of the

front vowel sounds. The other two students who met the expectations showed positive results as well and they were able to pronounce and read fluently most of the words. Despite one of them was not present at the moment when the pre-test was applied, she could improve a lot through the ludic activities and volunteered to participate in the application of the post-test.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter is the last one of the research project, and it will be split into conclusions and recommendations. The implementation of the instruments and their results achieved the findings of this study. Before describing the conclusions and recommendations, it is important to mention what conclusions are about. According to Pérez (2000), once the study has been undertaken, the researcher is able to interpret the collected data and arrive at conclusions. She continues saying that conclusions are the research essence and the bundle of new ideas the investigator has obtained.

Additionally, it is important to pay attention not only to the global conclusions, but also to the specific ones because at the end the general and partial conclusions will be an interrelation of the whole study (Pérez, 2000). Therefore, the researcher will keep in mind all the general and specific conclusions according to the objectives of his investigation. Moreover, it is noteworthy to emphasize that the researcher is going to provide his conclusions and recommendations in accordance to the data collection and results he has gathered from the instruments he has devised to carry out this study. These instruments correspond to the class observation, students' questionnaire, pre-test and post-test, and the ludic activities he implemented to enhance the pronunciation of the front vowel sounds of the 7-6 students at Liceo León Cortés Castro. In relation to the recommendations' section, the investigator will offer suggestions for present and future research about this topic and provide guidance to other investigators to explore deeply on this interesting topic.

5.1 Conclusions

5.1.1 To identify the weaknesses of students when pronouncing the front vowel sounds

In order to accomplish the first specific objective of this research, it was necessary for the investigator to make an observation, distribute a questionnaire, and administer a pre-test. The researcher designed these instruments to identify which problems or circumstances might interfere in the correct articulation and pronunciation of seventh grade students.

Therefore, he first made an observation where he could obtain information about the teacher and students' behavior during the class; also, he could observe the teacher's methodology, activities, and strategies he used to teach his class. Additionally, the researcher could detect some mistakes students made when speaking English and the way they pronounced the front vowels sounds; finally, he could monitor if the teacher corrected the students' pronunciation, as well.

Through the class observation, the researcher could conclude that while the teacher did not carry out any ludic activities, he used visual aids such as a video beam to show the material to the students. This resource is a great way to draw students' attention instead of putting them to write in their notebooks. In regard to the students' performance during the class, it is important to mention that students' English level is very low due to different reasons such as the lack of enough weekly English lessons for students, MEP's English program is still more focused on teaching students to read and write the target language, rather than teaching more strategies to speak and pronounce the language correctly.

The investigator also noticed that the teacher tried to speak and give directions in English as much as he could, but there was always a need of students to ask the teacher to

translate certain words and explain the instructions in Spanish. Therefore, he could also conclude that English teachers in public high schools have no other way than using the students' native language constantly.

After making the observation of the class, the investigator proceeded to distribute a questionnaire in which students answered some questions related to the use of ludic activities and English pronunciation. Through this questionnaire the investigator found that most of the students like games when learning English, and they prefer to play games where they can move around the classroom and be out of their seats. Additionally, students like to receive immediate feedback in their English class, as well as work and play games in groups and individually. Furthermore, the investigator found that students sometimes play games in their English class even though he was not present in any of those moments. The open questions of this questionnaire helped the investigator to conclude that most of the students think English pronunciation is difficult because it is a language that is written with the same Roman alphabet that Spanish, but when it is spoken, it changes dramatically. Despite that, they continue reading and pronouncing words the same way as in Spanish. Finally, the investigator concluded that students showed interest in the questionnaire through games to enhance their pronunciation of the language, as they think games are good to learn and practice.

The last instrument the researcher used to achieve the first specific objective of this study was the application of a pre-test in which he found out that most of the students did not meet the expectations of the test as they could neither pronounce, read fluently, nor communicate efficiently the text they read to the investigator. Through the application of the pre-test the investigator could conclude that most of the students read and pronounced the

words in the same way they were written in the text. As it was said before some students made mistakes when pronouncing some vowels and consonants because they thought words could be pronounced in the same way that in Spanish. Additionally, the investigator perceived that students are not aware of the intonation and the correct stress of some words either. Finally, he found out that few students who took the test said they did not like English and some others think they found the language a difficult subject for them at school which generated negative results.

5.1.2 To apply some ludic activities to enhance the pronunciation of front vowel sounds

Ludic activities were applied by the researcher in order to enhance the pronunciation of the selected vowel sounds for this study. The investigator prepared three ludic activities that consisted on identifying minimal pairs, matching vowel sounds, and listening to a song. The researcher found out that ludic activities promoted a pleasant environment that allowed students' participation and made learning more effective. Through the application of the ludic activities, it is concluded that activities have to be fun and entertaining in order to motivate students to learn English and improve their pronunciation.

During the observation, the researcher noticed that the teacher did not perform any ludic activity to enhance the students' pronunciation. Even though, the students answered in the questionnaire that the teacher sometimes offered games in the class. It was noted that students had not had play a game before in which they could learn how to pronounce words in English and recognize minimal pairs or vowel sounds. Therefore, students felt motivated and found interesting and funny the way the front vowel sounds are pronounced when the ludic activities took place. Students laughed a lot when the researcher explained how to articulate the /i/ sound because the impressions they had on this sound were they had to tense

their jaw and spread their lips into a false smile. Some students had difficulties to distinguish the difference between the minimal pairs at the beginning of the ludic activities because for some of them the word pairs were very similar and sounded the same.

The researcher was always monitoring the students' participation during the games, and tried to provide immediate feedback as much as he could. He also noticed that despite many students said they liked to work in groups, some of them did not have classmates to work with during the first ludic activity, so he tried to find a way to integrate the students in the next ludic activities. He realized some of them preferred to work individually not because they wanted, but because they were excluded when working in groups. The researcher noticed that working in pairs or groups helped each other to understand better the ludic activities as well as interchange ideas and provide peer feedback. The researcher also concluded that working and playing games in groups help students to develop not only their communicative skills, but also their social skills as they have to talk and interact with their classmates.

5.1.3 To evaluate the usage of ludic activities to enhance the pronunciation of front vowel sounds

In order to achieve the last specific objective of this study, the researcher applied a post-test. Through this post-test, the researcher could conclude that the usage of ludic activities helped students to enhance the pronunciation of the front vowel sounds. Even though, some students still need to improve and practice more these vowel sounds. Most of them were able to identify and pronounce one of the sounds correctly. The investigator noticed that the sound /i/ was the most retained by the students, as he thinks it was the sound students laughed the most when they practiced and articulated it.

Regarding the two students who exceeded the expectations of the post-test, the researcher even felt emotion because these students improved and aimed to pronounce the words correctly. The researcher thinks the application of the ludic activities worth all the effort, since most of students, at least, learned how to pronounce one or two front vowel sounds correctly.

5.2 Recommendations

In this section of the chapter, the researcher is going to provide some recommendations for further studies related to the effect of ludic activities to enhance the pronunciation of the front vowel sounds.

It is recommended to distribute and organize the time in a way the researcher can apply more instruments and teach the front vowels sounds in detail. The researcher only had six lessons to apply the instruments and teach the sounds, but he considered that more lessons were needed to let students internalize and study the sounds, and offer more ludic activities to practice and review these sounds.

It would be interesting to see if ludic activities can be a useful tool to teach other language skills such as grammar, listening, reading, and speaking. The researcher found out that students enjoyed playing games and showed a significant improvement in their pronunciation. Therefore, he suggests carrying out ludic activities for students, so that they can practice and improve their English skills when they listen, read, speak and write in the target language.

The researcher recommends looking for games that can be suitable to the students' ages and English level. It is important to adapt the game if necessary because sometimes games are designed for a purpose that was not the intended by the teacher. However, a teacher can make some adaptations according to the objectives he wants to achieve, so that he can take advantage of the activity and teach the specific topic he aims.

Additionally, in the researchers' opinion it would be a great idea to use more technology in the English class. Nowadays students are always using their cellphones and tablets for doing different tasks and playing games. Consequently, teachers could use those resources as a way to draw students' attention and understand how they operate in the digital world. There are different apps teachers can use to review and teach different topics according to the purposes of their class.

For further ludic activities that involve the use of music, the researcher thinks it is necessary to look for modern songs adapted to the students' preferences. The researcher thought it was a great idea to use a classic English ballad song, because it was a slow song and he thought students would be able to listen to the lyrics clearly. Although students could fill out the missing words in the lyrics, they thought the song was old and boring. The researcher thinks most of the modern songs sometimes are faster, and students cannot get the lyrics. However, there are some new English ballads that the researcher may use in further ludic activities that can be attractive and interesting for students.

The researcher thinks it would be a great idea for future studies to carry out ludic activities not only to improve other vowel sounds, but also apply other games and strategies to help students to enhance and learn the correct stress, rhythm, intonation patterns and, linking of words in connected speech. The investigator noticed that students neither knew

where the stress of some English words were placed, nor the intonation of short and long sentences. These other aspects of pronunciation are also essential to achieve effective communication when speaking.

Finally, the investigator recommends making sure students fully understand the instructions of the activities and games. As well as find ways to enhance not only the pronunciation, but also the spelling of words. One of the things the teacher recommended on the first ludic activity to the investigator was giving clear instructions and find a way to enhance the students' spelling in further classes.

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Appendixes

Appendix A.

Pre-test

Pronunciation Oral Test

Objective: To identify the weaknesses of students when pronouncing the front vowel sounds.

This instrument was made for investigation purposes. Your answers will be confidential. It is not part of your percentage on your final grade.

Instructions: Read the following text. Consider all the elements of pronunciation: sounds, intonation and rhythm.

My favorite trip

Hi, I am Christina. Three years ago, in September I went to France. I visited that country because my friend Alex was there. The first night, we had dinner in Paris and the restaurant was really fancy and neat. Alex said he wanted to eat a crepe and I ordered a cheese pizza. As a dessert we had apple pie with vanilla ice cream. After that, we went to see the Eiffel Tower and we felt fantastic. Next day, we went on a ship tour through the Seine River, we had an incredible day. Last day, we had to take a taxi to get to the airport. This was the best trip ever.

Appendix B**Pronunciation Oral Test****Objective:** To

This instrument was made for investigation purposes. Your answers will be confidential. It is not part of your percentage on your final grade.

Instructions: Read the following text. Consider all the elements of pronunciation: sounds, intonation and rhythm

Read the following text. Consider all the elements of pronunciation: sounds, intonation and rhythm.

My friend Ben

Ben is my friend, and I have to say he is a happy man. He always wears a red hat, a green t-shirt, and black pants. He likes cheese pizza and iced tea. Sometimes he reads a book about pirates that live in a ship. He says the men of the ship live in the middle of the sea. One of them has a girlfriend called Wendy who is pretty and wears glasses. One day she went to a restaurant and had dinner with Peter Pan. The pirates got angry and beat him on his face.

Appendix C.

Checklist to evaluate the performance an interaction between students during each ludic activity

Criteria	Always	Sometimes	Never
Students enjoyed the ludic activity.			
Students spoke in English during the ludic activity.			
Students pronounced the minimal pairs correctly.			
Students understood the instructions of the ludic activity.			
Students were willing to speak in English during the ludic activity.			
Students were able to distinguish the difference between front vowel /i/ and /ɪ/ when they were pronounced by the teacher.			
Students were able to work in pairs or groups.			

Notes:

Appendix D

Pronunciation Journey

Objective: To apply some ludic activities to enhance the pronunciation of front vowel sounds.

Preparation: The researcher makes copies of the map for each student. Then he chooses some pairs of words containing front vowel sounds /i/ and /ɪ/. The word pairs should differ in only one sound. These are some examples:

sheep/ ship eat/ it seat/ sit heel/ hill

Presentation:

1. The researcher writes the minimal pairs in two vertical columns on the board. He labels the lists left and right.

Left	Right
sheep	ship
eat	it
seat	sit
heel	hill

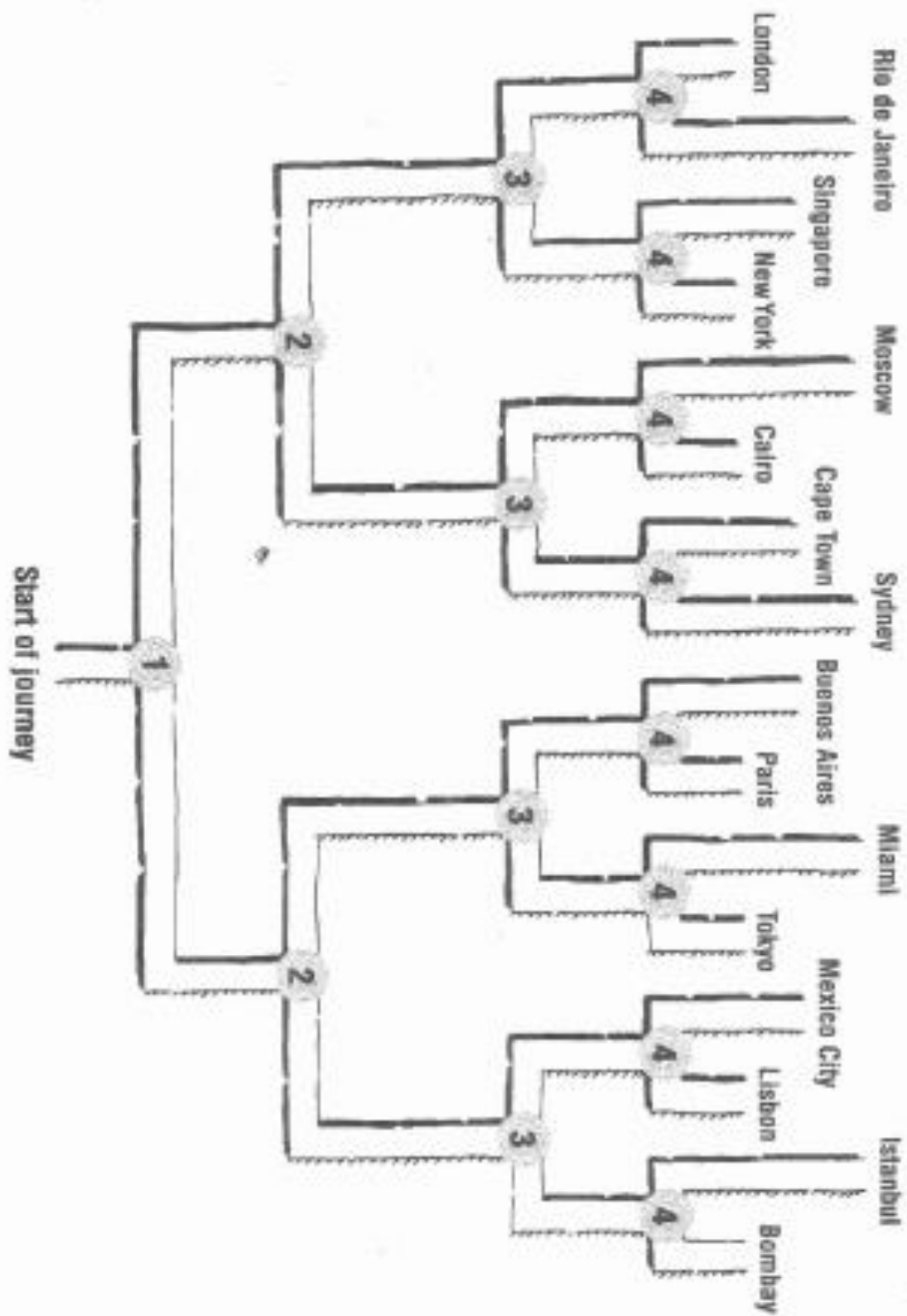
2. The researcher reads out the words from the board and asks students to say which list they belong to.

Instructions:

3. The researcher distributes the maps to every student. He points out that at each of the numbered intersections, there is a choice of turning left or right.
4. The researcher tells the students he will read four words from the board, one for each intersection. For each word, students must turn left or right according to whether the word is from the left or the right-hand list on the board. When the researcher has said the four words, students should then arrive at one of the destinations on the top of the map. For example:

sheep – eat – sit – hill —————▶ Singapore

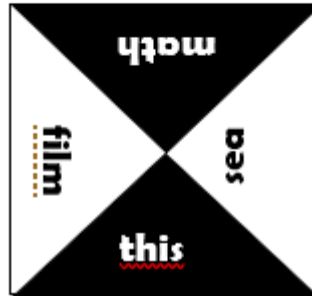
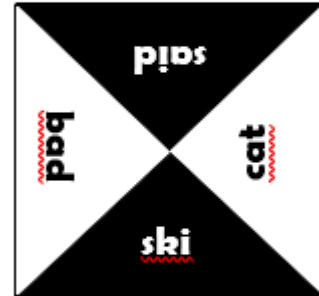
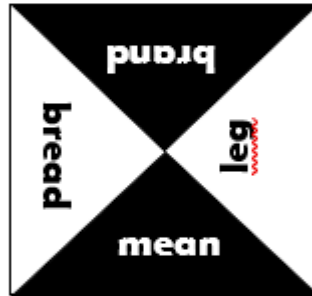
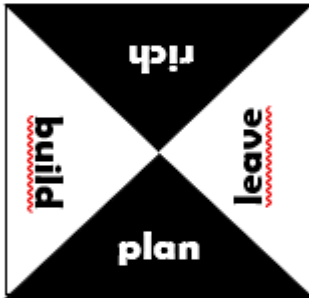
5. The researcher goes over the route along with the students to check the correct route.
6. The researcher repeats the activity several times using four pair of words or using other minimal pairs.
7. Finally, the researcher gets students to play in pairs or small groups. Students take turns to read out words and trace the route on the map.



Taken from Pronunciation Games by Mark Hancock

Appendix E

Four-sided dominoes



Appendix F

Recognizing the front vowels through a song

Objective: To apply some ludic activities to enhance the pronunciation of front vowel sounds.

Preparation: The researcher makes copies of the lyrics to each student. The teacher will explain that there are words on the lyrics that are missing. Students have to listen to a song to fill in the blanks with the words that are missing. All the words missing belong to the front vowel sounds in English. Finally, students classify the words depending on their front vowel sound.

Instructions: Fill in the blanks the words that are missing. Then classify the words according to their phonetic sounds.

"Truly Madly Deeply" by Savage Garden

I'll be your _____
 I'll be your _____ I'll be your _____
 I'll be your hope I'll be your love
 Be everything that you _____
 I'll love you more with every _____
 Truly, _____, deeply do
 I will be strong I will be faithful
 'cause I'm counting on
 A new beginning
 A reason for _____
 A deeper _____, yeah

[chorus:]

Missing words

pleasure
 sea
 need
 meaning
 dream
 wish
 stand
 living
 breath
 fantasy

I want to _____ with you on
a mountain

I want to bathe with you in the _____

I want to lay like this forever

Until the sky falls down on me

And when the stars are shining

brightly in the velvet sky,

I'll make a wish it to _____

Then make you want to cry

The tears of joy for all the

_____ and the certainty

That we're surrounded by the

comfort and protection of

The highest powers

In lonely hours

The tears devour you

Be everything that you _____

I'll love you more with every breath

Truly, madly, deeply do

Classify the missing words according to their phonetic sound.

/i/

/ɪ/

/ɛ/

/æ/
