PADLET AS A TOOL FOR DEVELOPING VOCABULARY AND PRONUNCIATION IN THE FIRST YEAR OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

Padlet as a tool for developing vocabulary and pronunciation in the first year of secondary education

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Abstract

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL), vocabulary and pronunciation are perceived as the essential aspects of developing students' English knowledge. This study explored how effectively Padlet can develop EFL learners' vocabulary and pronunciation. It was conducted at a secondary school in Ibarra, Ecuador, with 20 participants. It used a cross-sectional correlational research design, and data was collected using a mixed-methods approach. Thus, a pretest, a posttest, a rubric, and a survey were applied as research instruments to evaluate the participants' vocabulary and pronunciation. The data collected was analyzed using Microsoft Excel to describe the results in frequencies and percentages. The results show that Padlet provides a supportive and engaging space for students to practice pronunciation, leading to the development of their vocabulary and pronunciation. Therefore, Padlet can be applied as an effective digital tool to address the pronunciation and vocabulary challenges of language learners, promoting a more dynamic and inclusive approach to EFL teaching.

Keywords:

English as a foreign language, vocabulary, pronunciation, padlet, technology.

Resumen

En el Aprendizaje del Inglés Como Lengua Extranjera (EFL, por sus siglas en inglés), el vocabulario y la pronunciación se perciben como aspectos esenciales para mejorar el conocimiento del idioma en los estudiantes. Este estudio exploró la eficacia de Padlet para desarrollar el vocabulario y la pronunciación de los estudiantes de EFL. La investigación se llevó a cabo en una Unidad Educativa en Ibarra, Ecuador, con la participación de 20 estudiantes. Se empleó un diseño de investigación correlacional de corte transversal, y se recopilaron datos mediante un enfoque de método mixto. Se utilizaron como instrumentos de investigación un pretest, un postest, una rúbrica y una encuesta para evaluar el vocabulario y la pronunciación de los participantes. Los datos recopilados se analizaron con Microsoft Excel para describir los resultados en términos de frecuencias y porcentajes. Los resultados indican que Padlet proporciona un espacio de apoyo y motivación para que los estudiantes mejoren la pronunciación, lo que contribuye al desarrollo de su vocabulario y pronunciación. Por lo tanto, Padlet puede ser aplicado como una herramienta digital efectiva para abordar los desafíos relacionados con la pronunciación y el vocabulario en el aprendizaje de idiomas, promoviendo un enfoque más dinámico e inclusivo en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera.

Palabras clave:

Inglés como lengua extranjera, vocabulario, pronunciación, padlet, tecnología.

Introduction

In the last two decades, the use of applications and technological tools to facilitate student learning has increased, demonstrating positive results in developing cognitive skills (Alvarado-Barboza, 2023). Likewise, the impact of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) on promoting education globally is significant; in fact, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization included them in the fourth Sustainable Development Goal for 2030, aiming to reduce learning gaps within the population (UNESCO, 2015).

Likewise, learning methodologies are oriented toward using technological tools to facilitate understanding and enhancement among language learners. In this regard, Delgado et al. (2022) stated that technological resources are essential to promote autonomous and collaborative learning to improve the learning process. Therefore, the use of applications such as Padlet allows for synchronous, asynchronous, and dynamic tasks that motivate students to continue researching and sharing information, thereby fostering the generation of innovative knowledge and language skills (Moreira & Alvarez, 2022; Delgado et al., 2022; Giler-Loor et al., 2020; Méndez & Concheiro, 2018).

While educational tools have been used since the 1990s, there is a stark contrast in their application between developed nations in North America and Europe, and countries in Latin America. Cabrera and Ochoa (2021) indicated that in Latin countries, the use of technological resources is limited and has only recently been integrated into educational curricula, which created a significant necessity to bridge this gap. The main challenges in incorporating technology in the institutions include insufficient teacher training, lack of motivation, technological recourses, and limited development of curricula focused on practical learning, which hinders the acquisition of competencies in the language, such as

pronunciation and vocabulary (Ponce-Merino et al., 2019; Cango-Patiño & Bravo-Reyes, 2020).

Learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Ecuador remains underdeveloped despite implementing public policies to promote the application of technology in teaching languages. Alvarado et al. (2020) claimed that the lack of technological resources in educational institutions is the main key factor that limits the development of digital methodologies in schools nationwide. However, Jaramillo-Domínguez and Tene-Pucha (2022) claimed that Ecuadorian teachers and students perceive using digital applications as an effective way to improve language learning. In this way, applying technological tools, such as Padlet, can be beneficial for learners to develop their vocabulary and pronunciation in EFL learning (Jahara & Abdelrady, 2021; Moreira & Alvarez, 2022).

Therefore, the present study was designed to introduce the use of Padlet and find its effectiveness in developing the vocabulary and pronunciation subskills of first-year students at a secondary school in Ibarra. Thus, it provides valuable data on the benefits of applying innovative tech tools for teaching English as a Foreign Language in Ecuador by addressing the following research questions:

1. How does the use of Padlet help to develop pronunciation in the first year of secondary education students?

2. How does using Padlet influence the first year of secondary education students developing their authentic vocabulary?

3. What are the students' perceptions regarding using Padlet to develop their vocabulary and pronunciation?

Literature Review

English Language Learning

English is considered a lingua franca in education, communication, and business worldwide. McGranth (2013) claimed that in countries where learners do not speak English as a first language, this language provides them with different academic, personal, and professional opportunities. Therefore, students can be part of this language spread worldwide in different fields such as education, scientific research, tourism, banking, and business (Rao, 2019).

Patel and Jain (2008) indicated that each language is based on the cultural, structural, and social behavior systems people use to convey a message a subject uses according to their nature or context. For these reasons, teaching English in countries where this language is not spoken is challenging. Alvarez and Ha (2022) described English as a foreign language process that teaches students how to write, read, listen, and speak to efficiently convey a message. However, there are still challenges related to vocabulary acquisition and pronunciation development of language learners because vocabulary is considered to be different from grammar and pronunciation, which leads to communication breakdown (Simon & Taverniers, 2011).

Pronunciation skills

Improving pronunciation skills in EFL contexts is a relevant field in language acquisition. Khasawneh (2023) stated that pronunciation plays an important role in speaking a second language since it requires students to construct and share meaning through sounds, phonemes, intonation, and rhythm. Thus, it comprises these components to communicate effectively and refers to how a word or language is spoken (Palmer, 2023).

Pennington (2021) claimed that pronunciation has been revived in language teaching because of its importance in effectively conveying the message. Likewise, Djurayeva (2021) emphasized the importance of pronouncing English words correctly for non-native speakers to gain confidence and motivation to use their English skills in different situations. In this way, it is essential to apply different pedagogical techniques that allow learners to acquire and produce sound more accurately by being aware of the importance of phonology in learning EFL (Jahara & Abdelrady, 2021).

In language learning, students with accurate pronunciation tend to decrease their speaking anxiety level and improve their confidence and motivation to use the language in the classroom (Jahara & Abdelrady, 2021; Moreira & Alvarez, 2022). Therefore, teachers must apply different strategies and techniques to guide learners to avoid many unnatural pauses to convey general meanings and a fair range of expressions (Sukmana et al., 2023).

EFL Vocabulary Development

Laufer and Nation (2013) claimed that vocabulary refers to a group of words people know and use to convey a message effectively. The authors stated that vocabulary words include the words used for understanding when we listen, think, or read, as well as for speaking and writing. Therefore, receptive and productive vocabulary is essential for adequate comprehension and communication in learning any language and for developing fluency and the ability to express ideas and thoughts efficiently. Thus, vocabulary development in EFL contexts is fundamental to associating students' later academic achievements and language abilities (Sun & Bin, 2022).

Siyanova and Webb (2016) explained that teaching vocabulary in EFL contexts is challenging because students have limited exposure to the language and learn most words only through classroom instruction. Furthermore, students' motivation and

predispositions to learn new vocabulary in L2 are low, making communicating in English challenging and difficult to carry on regular and casual classroom conversations (Ling & Aziz, 2022).

Therefore, teaching vocabulary in EFL contexts requires educators to apply different approaches and strategies based on learners' diverse needs. Vu and Peters (2021) explained that EFL teachers and learners must be aware of repetition and quality of attention as the main conditions where incidental vocabulary can occur. This way, challenges related to students, teachers, and teaching methods can be faced efficiently (Elmahdi & Hezam, 2020).

Padlet in EFL instruction

Waltermeyer et al. (2020) claimed that Padlet is a relevant Web 2.0 tool that could be applied in face-to-face and online contexts to engage students with the course content and to provide collaboration opportunities to improve their knowledge. According to Fisher (2017), Padlet is a free online bulletin board that allows users to create and share posts such as videos, audio, text, images, links, and documents usually used for teaching.

Moreira and Alvarez (2022) indicated that Padlet is a virtual post board that can be shared with language learners to improve their English skills and motivation through the exposition of authentic and meaningful technological-based activities. Furthermore, Alabbad and Bin (2020) said that Padlet is a practical technological tool that encourages students to be in the language learning process since it allows them to create interactive boards to share their ideas, projects, and resources.

Regarding the variables of this study, Nasim et al. (2022) claimed that applying students who are exposed to technological tools such as Padlet develop their segmental (individual sounds) and suprasegmental levels (larger chunks of speech), which leads to significant

increment of pronunciation. Besides, Alabbad and Bin (2020) claimed that vocabulary instruction using Padlet is an effective process for improving the English lexicalization of students and developing English vocabulary.

Previous Studies

The primary purpose of this study was to find the efficacy of using Padlet for developing vocabulary and pronunciation in the first year of secondary education in Ibarra, Ecuador. Thus, it is essential to point out various research focusing on the connection between the principles, methods, and theories of teaching vocabulary and pronunciation using technological tools such as Padlet. Russo and Cabrera (2020) conducted a mixed-methods study to find the teachers' perceptions on using Padlet for teaching EFL in Ecuador. In this research, 30 English teachers participated, and the main findings indicated that applying this kind of technology in the ELT process brings students' attention, promoting more effortless and faster language learning.

In a study conducted in an Ecuadorian public secondary school, Moreira and Alvarez (2022) indicated that students introduced to Padlet significantly improved their English skills. The authors indicated that students perceived using Padlet as a beneficial technological tool to learn and generate many new vocabulary words quickly and freely, enhancing their writing skills. Also, regarding collaboration, the implementation of Padlet helped students to collaborate, share, and provide feedback to their classmates, making them engaged in the writing and speaking tasks.

Regarding vocabulary, Cárdenas and Lozano (2024) conducted a study with twenty-six Ecuadorian EFL students in a secondary school. This study followed a mixed methods approach based on Dawadi et al. (2021) to explore how practical the application of Padlet can be in improving reading comprehension skills. The findings indicated that integrating

Padlet into the language lessons significantly impacted students' vocabulary retention and recall among all the participants in this study, facilitating interaction, improving speaking skills, and expanding vocabulary proficiency.

Finally, Elizondo (2023) studied implementing technological tools from Web 1.0 to Web 3.0 in English language classrooms. The author explained that integrating technology into EFL classrooms in Latin American countries is challenging due to the lack of internet connection, devices in schools, and teacher training. However, he emphasized the necessity of applying technology in classrooms because it provides innovative tools such as Padlet with different features to improve students' pronunciation, collaboration, and self-regulation in the 21st century.

Method

Research Design

The present study will investigate the effectiveness of using Padlet to develop students' vocabulary and pronunciation from the first year of secondary education at a public school in Ibarra, Ecuador. It applied a cross-sectional correlational design, as data will be collected over a specified period (Molina et al., 2017). Furthermore, a mixed-method approach was adopted to answer this study's research questions. Dawadi et al. (2021) suggest this complementary and flexible research method combines qualitative and quantitative data collection procedures.

Setting and Sampling

A convenience sampling technique will be applied to choose the participants for this investigation (Otzen & Manterola, 2017). Thus, twenty Ecuadorian EFL students from a secondary public institution participated in this research. The students were from the first year of secondary education, their ages ranged from 14 to 16 years, and they were at an

A1 and A2 level of English proficiency according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). All the participants belonged to the same classroom; their native language was Spanish, and they attended English as a Foreign Language subject thrice weekly.

Instruments

For data collection, a pre-test, a post-test, a rubric, and a survey were used to determine Padlet's effectiveness in developing vocabulary and pronunciation. Comparing these two instruments provided essential information about Padlet's efficacy or inefficacy in learning through the application of a rubric. The rubric criteria were divided into the production of sounds, word stress, phonetics, vocabulary, and intonation and rhythm. In addition, it included five ratings: excellent (10-9), good (8-7), intermediate (6-5), fair (4-3), and poor (2-1). Likewise, a nine-question survey was applied online using Google Forms to obtain students' perceptions of using Padlet to develop their vocabulary and pronunciation.

The collected data was entered into Microsoft Excel, and entry errors were cleaned. Using Microsoft Excel, the survey and pre-and post-test results were tabulated, and results were expressed in frequencies and percentages to identify the impact of using the Padlet to enhance students' vocabulary and pronunciation.

Results

This section displays the main findings after applying this study's research instruments. Table 1 and Figure 1 indicate the results that students obtained during the pre-test, which was applied to assess their initial knowledge before starting the intervention and having a starting point to measure students' progress.

Table 1.

Pre-test results

Scores	Excellent (10-9)	Good (8-7)	Intermediate (6-5)	Fair (4-3)	Poor (2-1)
Number of students	1	15	4	0	0

Note. Note. The table shows the results obtained through the pre-test.
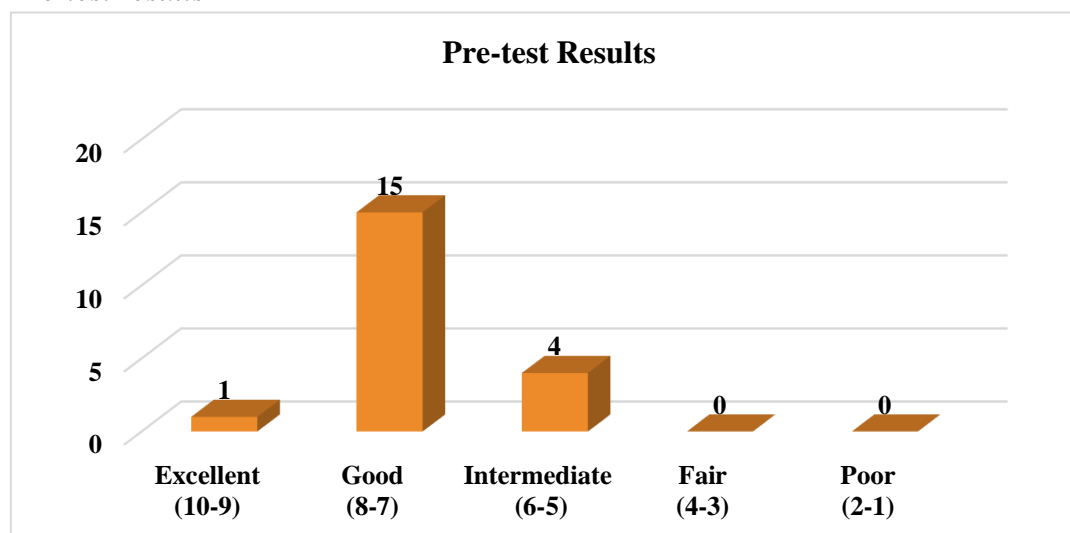
Figure 1

Pre-test results

Table 1 and Figure 1 categorize students' scores based on their performance into five ranges: excellent, good, intermediate, fair, and poor. The results show that most students (15) obtained an average of 7 and 8 points, indicating good final test scores. Moreover, four students got scores between 6 and 5 points, which placed them in the intermediate

category. On the other hand, only one student achieved an excellent score of 9 and 10 points, and no students got less than four points.

After applying Padlet in the EFL lessons, the students were asked to take a post-test to determine the efficacy of this technological tool in developing their vocabulary and pronunciation. Additionally, table 2 indicates that students developed their vocabulary and pronunciation skills during the intervention.

Table 2
Post-test results

Scores	Excellent (10-9)	Good (8-7)	Intermediate (6-5)	Fair (4-3)	Poor (2-1)
Number of students	4	16	0	0	0

Note. The table shows the results obtained through the post-test

Figure 2
Post-test results
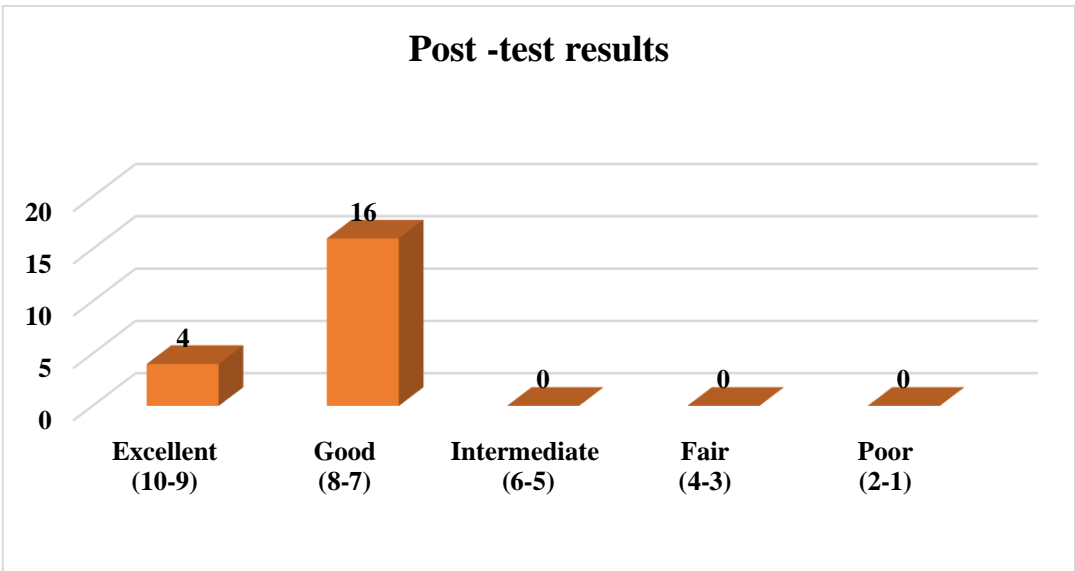
Likewise, according to Figure 2, most students (16) obtained good final test scores, averaging 7 and 8 points. Four students got excellent scores, averaging between 10 and 9 points. On the contrary, any learners obtained less than four points. From the data

obtained, it can be claimed that applying Padlet helps students enhance their vocabulary and pronunciation skills. Alvarado-Barboza (2023) supports the results by indicating that applying tech tools such as Padlet facilitates EFL learning. Likewise, Padlet is a technological application that can assist students enhance their vocabulary and pronunciation of L2 (Elmahdi & Hezam, 2022; Nasim et al., 2022).

Finally, Table 3 displays the students' perceptions of using Padlet to develop their vocabulary and pronunciation. The survey consisted of five closed questions and four open-ended questions. The closed questions are presented in Table 3 with their evaluation criteria, while the open-ended questions were analyzed using a thematic analysis procedure.

Table 3
Students' Perceptions of Using Padlet

Questions	Criteria	Results
1. How easy or difficult was it to use Padlet?	a) Very easy	15%
	b) Easy	60%
	c) Neutral	25%
	d) Difficult	0%
	e) Very difficult	0%
2. How much did you enjoy using Padlet to learn vocabulary and pronunciation?	a) I liked it a lot.	40%
	b) I liked it somewhat.	40%
	c) I felt neutral about it.	20%
	d) I did not like it much.	0%
	e) I did not like it at all.	0%
3. Which Padlet activity helped you the most to learn vocabulary?	a) Activities you are going to do during the week.	55%
	b) Plans for Christmas.	0%
	c) Plans for your summer vacation.	10%
	d) Inventing a new device.	35%
4. What aspects of your pronunciation do you think improved with Padlet?	a) Word sounds	70%
	b) Rhythm	15%
	c) Intonation	15%
	d)Word stress	0%
5. Which Padlet activity helped you the most to develop your pronunciation?	a) Activities you are going to do during the week.	40%
	b) Plans for Christmas.	0%
	c) Plans for your summer vacation.	10%
	d) Inventing a new device	50%

Note. Table three shows the students' answers in percentage for the closed questions

As shown in Table 3, the participants found Padlet very easy (15%) and easy (60%) to use. Student 2, for example, indicated that Padlet is easy to use and that it is easy to learn new vocabulary. From the findings of the open questions, Student 10 explained that with the help of a voice recorder, Padlet was easy to use to learn new words and their pronunciation. Moreira and Alvarez (2022) corroborated these results by indicating that Padlet is an easy and interactive tool that helps students improve their vocabulary and pronunciation, which can lead to the authentic use of the language.

Furthermore, in question two, 40% indicated they enjoyed integrating Padlet to develop their vocabulary and pronunciation tasks. The other 40% indicated they liked it somewhat, and the remaining 10% felt neutral. As a result, Student 8 stated that I enjoyed learning by watching my classmates' uploaded projects; thus, I could learn and practice the pronunciation of new words. Regarding these results, Alabbad and Bin (2020) explained that due to the practical application of Padlet, students enjoy and are encouraged to share their ideas and projects in an interactive and call-attention manner.

Moreover, in question three, the students perceived that conducting the activities they were going to do during the week (55%) and inventing a new device (35%) were the tasks that mostly helped them increase their EFL vocabulary, and 10% indicated they learned by talking about Plans for summer vacation. Russo and Cabrera (2020) confirmed these results by indicating that applying activities with the integration of Padlet can increase their vocabulary and pronunciation since it promotes students' attention and motivation to learn the language.

In the open questions, most students agreed that the Padlet activities helped them learn new words used in everyday life. Likewise, Students 3 and 7 indicated that inventing a new device was an enjoyable activity since they used many new words and had the

opportunity to practice them. Cárdenas and Lozano (2024) obtained similar results in their study; they claimed that integrating Padlet into the EFL lessons helps students increase their vocabulary retention and recall of new words among all the investigation participants.

According to the students in question four stated that Padlet helped them develop mainly their correct pronunciation of word sounds (70%), followed by rhythm (15%) and intonation (15%). The participants did not find Padlet helpful in developing their word stress. Student 13 supported these results by indicating that Padlet helped me realize that some words were mispronounced when recording the videos. Besides, Student 16 explained that using Padlet helps me identify my pronunciation mistakes and correct them. Elizondo (2023) corroborated these results by emphasizing that using Padlet is an innovative and collaborative tool that helps students increase their pronunciation through frequent interactions between students and the application of authentic tasks.

As a final point, in question five, 40% of students indicated that Padlet activity helped them to develop their pronunciation through the activities that they are going to do during the week. The 50% of students preferred activities about inventing a new device and only the 10% about plans for their summer vacation.

Conclusions

Padlet is a digital and easy-to-use bulletin board that allows students to create and share different resources, efficiently supporting the EFL teaching-learning process. Using a mixed-methods approach, this study determines the efficacy of integrating Padlet to develop students' vocabulary and pronunciation. Based on the data gathered, students' vocabulary and pronunciation significantly improved after participating in different activities. Furthermore, the students perceived Padlet as an innovative, easy, and joyful tool that encouraged them to share their ideas and projects interactively and communicatively. This can be corroborated by the pre and post-test results, where students increase their scores from intermediate to good and excellent criteria. These results are corroborated by a lot of previous research that found the application of Padlet beneficial for improving students' vocabulary and pronunciation in EFL contexts (Cárdenas & Lozano, 2024; Elizondo, 2023; Moreira & Alvarez, 2022). Based on the findings of this investigation, it is recommended that the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education should provide public schools with Internet and technological resources to facilitate the integration of Padlet in the EFL teaching-learning process. Moreover, as a suggestion for EFL teachers, it is important to apply tech tools such as Padlet to improve students' language skills efficiently. Finally, future researchers could use this study to analyze the importance of teacher's feedback on students' vocabulary and pronunciation using of Padlet as a technological tool in EFL learners.

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