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**SCRIPTED ROLE-PLAYS TO SUPPORT EFL LEARNERS ABILITY  
TO PRODUCE CONNECTED SPEECH WHEN  
READING ALOUD**

Tesis para optar al grado de Magister en Innovación de la Enseñanza, Aprendizaje y  
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### **List of Acronyms**

CLT: Communicative language teaching

L2: Second Language

EFL: English as a foreign language

ESL: English as a Second Language

RA: Reading aloud

AR: Action Research

## **Abstract**

This study describes a five-session intervention aimed to explore the use of scripted role-play as a strategy to support the ability to produce connected speech in English in 9th graders from a private school in Chile. The success of the intervention was measured by using quantitative and qualitative data to describe students' progress towards the use of role-plays to support their oral production of linking words and weak forms. Through a descriptive analysis, the quantitative data was analysed to measure improvement in participants' oral production. These data were triangulated with a focus group to identify students' perceptions of said support. The interventions proved to be significant as participants achieved improvement on their speaking skills from a 38% to a 76% respectively as well as reading aloud in English. The result revealed the strategy was effective in terms of producing linking words and weak forms by reading scripted role-plays aloud.

**KEYWORDS:** scripted role-play, speaking skills, reading aloud, connected speech.

## **Resumen**

Este estudio describe una intervención de cinco sesiones destinadas a explorar el uso de juego de roles guionizado como estrategia para apoyar la capacidad de producir discurso conectado en inglés en estudiantes de primer año medio de un colegio privado en Chile. El éxito de la intervención se midió utilizando datos cuantitativos y cualitativos para describir el progreso y apoyo de la estrategia de juego de roles guionizado en relación con la producción oral de palabras de enlace y formas débiles. Mediante un análisis descriptivo, los datos cuantitativos se analizaron para medir la mejora en la producción oral de los participantes. Estos datos se triangularon con un grupo focal para identificar las percepciones de los y las estudiantes sobre dicho apoyo. Las intervenciones demostraron ser significativas, ya que en promedio hubo un aumento del 38% al 76% en los participantes, logrando no solo mejorar sus habilidades de expresión oral sino que también la lectura en voz alta en inglés. Los resultados revelaron que la estrategia fue eficaz en cuanto a la producción de palabras de enlace y formas débiles al leer juegos de roles guionizados en voz alta.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** juego de roles guionizado, expresión oral, lectura en voz alta, discurso conectado.

**CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION**

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is an international standard for describing language ability on a six-point scale. For instance, from A1 for beginners, up to C2 for those who have mastered a language. In accordance with the Council of Europe (2001), the A2 descriptor level of English qualification reflect that learners are able to communicate easily through a direct exchange of information on familiar and daily basis topics. Taking into this consideration, the Chilean National Curriculum of Education (2016) states learners in 9th grade should demonstrate content knowledge, coherence in the organization of ideas, and an appropriate use of language functions and sounds of the language in receptive skills (reading comprehension) leaving aside the productive skills of speaking skills. In the 9th graders group it is expected they are able to communicate and read fluently as comprehensively as possible with minimum errors not leading distraction to their peers to the interlocutor's message.

Nevertheless, the group of 9th graders from my educational context certified in A2 Key (KET) present difficulties and errors with connected speech and utterance fluency (production of weak forms and linking words). Koponen & Riggensbach (2000) states that being "fluent" is a concept that has been reserved for evaluating oral production of non-native speakers, where several conditions must be met to be deemed as such fluent.

Although the group of 9th graders are enthusiastic to learn English, their confidence and motivation when performing speaking have been affected. Therefore, the role to be covered within this goal is monitoring and exposing students to the language in real life situations as well as providing them opportunities to practice spoken English.

In this study, it was aimed to explore the use of scripted role-plays as a strategy to support 9th grader's ability to produce connected speech in English. According to Vargas (2018), role plays are used to enhance the students' oral speaking skills, as well as to motivate the learners to express themselves in the foreign language. This kind of technique, as a category of drama activities, has a lot of advantages that allow language learners to improve their language level in a different way.

In order to address the difficulties on the production of connected speech in 9th graders, it was implemented the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach since the role as a teacher under this strategy is being a facilitator rather than a straightforward instructor for communicative activities. For instance, Richards (2006) states fluency is developed by creating classroom activities in which students must negotiate meaning, use communication strategies, correct misunderstandings, and engage in meaningful interaction maintaining intelligible and continuous communication despite the communicative constraints.

**CHAPTER II**  
**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

## 2.1 Teaching and assessing fluency from the perspective of reading aloud

The concept of fluency has been discussed from the perspective of productive skills, particularly in relation to spoken language. According to Segalowitz (2016), the aspects of communication in influencing L2 fluency development are the link between cognition and utterance fluency, and these need to be positioned within the social context of communication. Consequently, the author argues that producing spoken language that is fluent in a second or foreign language is known to be more cognitively demanding than in L1.

The conceptualization of fluency by Richards et al. (1986) it is defined as “the features which give speech the qualities of being natural and normal, including native-like use of pausing, rhythm, intonation, stress, rate of speaking, and use of interjections and interruptions” (p. 108). Moreover, in the concept of fluency, Vargas (2018) points out is not only associated with using the language properly and in a natural rhythm, but it also incorporates pauses and interruptions that are typical on a daily life conversation as it is in L1. Consequently, learners are taught to speak and use L2 by providing them opportunities to do so and by exposing them to the challenge of facing real-world situations as they attempt to develop certain skills such as fluency.

The concept of fluency from the perspective of receptive skills, Lintunen et al. (2020) state fluency can be also approached from these perspectives, that is, listening and reading competences, even if these skills have rarely explicitly linked to fluency (measures) due to all the four linguistic skills rely on active cognitive processes are distinct but also intertwined. For instance, the existing literature on teaching and assessing fluency from the perspective of reading aloud, it is extensive and focuses particularly on the concern of teaching and assessing oral reading fluency. Aldhanhani & Abu-Ayyash (2020) state that this concern could give an inspiration for the curriculum designers to integrate oral reading fluency in their reading programs in the United Arab Emirates. Moreover, the same authors argue that a comprehensive reading programme should integrate reading assessments that measure students' skills at the beginning, throughout, and at the end of a reading programme since the importance behind assessing students' oral reading fluency is to help teachers to determine the fluency instruction that works best for students' needs and abilities. Furthermore, the results of student assessments allow teachers decide whether to develop, adapt, or integrate fluency strategies to engage students' interest and motivation for reading aloud. In addition, reading aloud assessments could also provide teachers with information about the progress that students have and have not achieved.

Li & Doyle (2021) conducted analytical research to present a theoretical discussion of the function of two overarching dimensions of reading fluency, that is to say, automatic word reading and prosody, and the relations between them from a perspective of cognitive science. In their study, Li & Doyle (2021) were able to conclude that fluent readers recognize words easily and automatically, making limited demands on mental resources such as active attention and short-term memory. However, their review also demonstrates that the directional relations of prosody and comprehension are not well understood and require further research. Furthermore, Nation (2009) state fluency in reading can be related to a cognitive fluency since reading requires the skills to recognize orthographic forms, connect them to their phonemic representations, and understand the meaning, that is, decode the message. These skills can be measured by reading speed; increased fluency in this context indicates that the decoding and recognition of the units become faster (Nation, 2009b: 62-64).

As a working definition of fluency, Uribe & Cavallieri (2018) conducted a study about fostering fluency in an EFL University Classroom. The authors state that a fluent speech in a second or foreign language means been able to speak at length, with a minimum of unfilled pauses in non-juncture positions, incorporating features of connected speech, producing correct intonation and stress patterns, using formulaic language, and being able to interact with an interlocutor. In addition, the authors were able to conclude that to foster fluency in EFL and ESL students by means of explicit instruction that leads to the acquisition of skills result in higher levels of competence. For instance, the first stage is to directly address the long-term benefits of strengthening speaking skills and to inform learners the reason why it is important to become more proficient in a language. Then, the role of a teacher plays onto the use of engaging teaching methods by drawing attention to the components of fluency that the teacher wishes to work on. Furthermore, the authors were also able to conclude that incorporating and using authentic material could be a good way of approaching the fostering of fluency considering both the students' requirements and the specifics of the educational environment.

## **2.2 The importance of reading aloud in English.**

Speaking a second or foreign language involves learning skills such as grammar knowledge, use of vocabulary, and being exposed to the language. The four language skills in English allow learners to comprehend and produce spoken language for proper and effective interpersonal communication. These skills are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. For instance, reading as with listening are receptive skills, as they requires the use of our sight, our hearing and our brain to comprehend the written equivalent of spoken language (Fli-Hi Institute, 2022).

Different theories exist in the literature regarding to the aspect of reading skills competence. Chapman (2022) states some students, especially beginners are reluctant readers, and they do not want to read aloud because they feel embarrassed. They do not like attention focused on them because they are not confident on their reading. However, reading aloud (RA) it is defined as a wonderful practice to help learners to read smoothly and build fluency skills, continuity and confidence. Moreover, reading aloud not only will help learners to comprehend what they are reading but also will allow them to listen back to their voice, therefore, hearing their own voices may help them to identify their unique writing voice.

Supraba et al. (2020) conducted research about the implementation of reading aloud in developing student's speaking skill on a group of first semester students of English Language Education Study Program. The authors were able to conclude that reading aloud is a reading activity by reading something loudly with the precise pronunciation, intonation and word stress. Conversely, Huang (2010) state that reading aloud has five functions in English language teaching namely:

- 1) Firstly, it is stated the function of *practice pronunciation*, due to reading aloud is a kind of comprehensive practice of pronunciation. It is also due to that the material for reading aloud is the passage with the certain content and circumstances. Naturally, in reading aloud the production of stress, intonation and rhythm are suitable applied.
- 2) Even though reading aloud help us to *improve oral English*, not only help to articulate English words, but also improve our English in terms of speaking effectively.
- 3) Throughout the five functions, the *get deeper understanding* is related to the fact of reading aloud is reappearance of all the original content of idea, feeling, attitude, and style in the form of voice. Therefore, regular reading not only can the students keep great attention but also help them to understand correctly in depth.
- 4) *Strengthen the knowledge*, by reading aloud can strengthen the knowledge such as the knowledge of pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary.
- 5) Lastly, it *improves the classroom atmosphere*. The author points out that during reading aloud, the feeling of excitement, suspense and sheer fun is shared among students.

Dealing with the statement above, the author argues that 'The reading purpose and approach must be authentic', that is to say, students should read the materials in a way that matches the reading purpose and the way people normally read (Huang, 2010, p. 149).

In previous studies on reading aloud in English, different variables have been found to be related to the improvement of English pronunciation. Nurani & Rosyada (2015) conducted research which aims in improving English pronunciation through reading aloud

assessments in EFL adults, it was concluded that the technique of reading aloud made learners have a joyful experience of learning pronunciation as it offers many advantages for creating a better circumstance of teaching and learning process. The fact that reading aloud integrates all skills of language competence and performance, learners can have a complete thought for understanding the concept of learning pronunciation by delivering the message of its meaning thoroughly. Consequently, a clear pronunciation made by learners lead them to meaningful communication.

Ayu et al. (2017) conducted a study to examine the efficacy of Interactive Read Aloud to help students to improve their English literacy achievements in secondary school students. In their study, Ayu, Diem & Vianty (2017) were able to conclude that students improved not only student's English literacy but also its four sub-skills in particular. The authors assumed that the use of Interactive Read Aloud has set students on active listening during reading aloud by the fact they were listening attentively and followed by making comments and or asking questions on in the discussion. The authors also agreed that the materials for reading aloud given to the students with certain contents and circumstances also contributed to the speaking improvement. Furthermore, the implementation of setting the tone and expressions helped students to focus on how the words were correctly pronounced with suitable stress, intonation and rhythm on certain parts of the story.

### **2.3 Benefits of reading aloud in EFL Chilean classrooms.**

Regarding to the benefits of reading aloud practice, the Chilean National Curriculum (Mineduc, 2016) state reading aloud is essential for students since activities and practice not only helps students to foster reading ability and basic skill but also it helps to improve oral expression and to support oral production skills. A broader perspective has been adopted by Fuentes (2013) who states that it has been proved that children who listen to stories on a daily frequent basis, achieve a greater development of all linguistic functions and become good readers. The same author also presents that reading aloud Reading aloud is essential for our students since it has benefits such as:

- 1) The build-up in knowledge about various topics.
- 2) The broadening of experiences.
- 3) The vocabulary improvement.

Among the benefits of RA, these are precisely focused on the ability to listen appreciatively into a development. Conversely, Chapman (2022) state reading aloud improves student's visual memory and ability to see images in their minds as well as their spelling. In other words, reading aloud is the best exercise students can do to improve their own writing and speaking skills competence.

This view is supported by Ninsuwan (2015) who conducted a study on the effectiveness of teaching English by using reading aloud technique, the results and findings suggested that reading aloud boosted students to have more self-confidence to pronounce the different or unfamiliar words. Also, the author was able to conclude that reading aloud technique helped students to develop their understanding gradually in a form of pronunciation by reading new words and unfamiliar sentence as well as it increased students' self-confidence towards reading aloud.

Thus far, several studies confirmed the effectiveness of reading aloud. Wright (2019) describes some of the knowledge and skills that children must develop in order to become successful readers. The author was able to conclude that through interactive read-aloud, children can learn about the world, learn new vocabulary, learn about text and how text functions are written. Regarding to literacy skills and strategies, the author points out that reading aloud also provide the opportunity to teach students a broad range of skills and strategies they will need as they become independent readers. For instance, in the early childhood years, young children need to develop phonological awareness (i.e., the ability to distinguish sounds in oral language), letter recognition, and knowledge of letter-sound relationships. These foundational skills can be supported through reading aloud. Children build phonological awareness through interactive read-aloud of books that play with language, such as books that include rhyme or alliteration.

Although these characteristics and benefits are posed in a different context than the EFL Chilean classrooms, it is important to consider the importance that it refers to the cognitive process that leads the strategy of RA, since it encourages an interest in reading, it engages students to be in contact with their emotions, and it develops attention and concentration. In addition, reading aloud sharpens learner's listening skills so that they are able to detect authentic dialogue and flowing narrative due to it helps to improve their diction and expression.

## **2.4 Connected Speech in Oral communication**

Pronunciation is the action of producing sounds of speech to communicate a message (Burns & Seidlhofer, 2019). For this reason, internalizing a good pronunciation of the foreign language is vital in oral communication. In addition, it is important to recognize that EFL students must aim at developing a good pronunciation, but this does not mean that they have to sound exactly like a native speaker. However, the issue on students who mispronounced words may arise when these mistakes might lead into misunderstandings to the audience. Consequently, Spanish learners find extremely difficult to utter a word that contains the voiced sounds. The main reason of this problem is that some of these sounds do not even exist in the Spanish language.

In relation to the connected speech, Alameen & Levis (2015) state that words spoken in connected speech often sounds quite different from those same words they are spoken in isolation. Once a word is spoken next to other words, the way it is pronounced is subject to a variety of processes. Also, the authors describes that in many elements of English pronunciation, non-native speakers need to speak in a way that is intelligible to their listeners, but connected speech processes make clear that non-native listeners must also learn to understand the speech of native words that may sound quite different from what they have come to expect, and their listening ability must be flexible enough to adjust to a range of variation based not only on their interlocutors but also on the formality of the speech. For instance, Chilean students have the tendency on do not pronounce the final /s/ in Spanish but surprisingly the sound /sh/ of a word in English. Some typical examples are the final /sh/ sound in the third person singular (e.g., he washes) and in plurals (e.g., bushes) replaced by the sound /tʃ/ and it sounds (e.g., he watches) or in plural (e.g., butches). Another explanation of this pronunciation problem lies in the Chilean phonological features as itself. As it was mentioned before, in most Chilean schools, neither primary nor in secondary school, students are aware of the correct pronunciation in English because of the constraint on teaching connected speech. As Brown & Kondo-Brown (2006) argues:

One of the problems with connected speech as a discipline is that it is not a discipline or even a sub-discipline. Connected speech has interested some teachers and researchers over the past 30 years, but only a few people have worked systematically on connected speech and those few have done so only sporadically. In the meantime, teachers continue to teach the phonemes of their language of focus and later wonder why their students 'pronunciation is still inadequate, that is, why their students cannot put the phonemes together in anything approaching a native-like manner (p.6).

Ashtiani & Zafarghandi (2015) compared the performance of reading and speaking in English on a control and experimental group of adults English Learners. To determine the impact of English Verbal songs on connected speech aspects of adults English learner's speech production, the treatment consisted of 18 sessions of singing preselected songs culled based on certain criteria. The authors were able to analyse the results, however, there was not any significant difference between the mean scores on the post-tests of reading aloud and speaking. The authors were able to conclude that providing the EFL learners verbal songs could positively affect connected speech aspects of both modes of speech production, reading aloud and speaking. In addition, this could also have significant impacts on the connected speech aspects of the second language learner's speech production. Another study by Suwartono & Mayaratri (2019) is also conveyed in terms of oral production. Their study consisted of selecting English songs and examining the improvement of English Connected Speech in a group of students in university.

The authors were able to conclude that providing EFL learner's English verbal songs could positively affect connected speech aspects of both modes of speech production, reading aloud and speaking,

In relation to oral communication, Gabrielatos (2002) states that pronunciation practice provides learners to be able to pronounce words correctly. The author addresses this assumption by clarifying term 'pronunciation' arguing the term is understood by EFL teachers as referring only to the 'correct' pronunciation of individual sounds and words in isolation. The author also states 'pronunciation' is used in a more comprehensive way, to include also the interacting phonological aspects, that is to say, the stress patterns of phrases and the interaction of sounds between endings and beginnings of words. Therefore, the resulting pronunciation and rhythm of these phrases and how it is defined above, pronunciation is one of the areas that can be improved through classroom procedures involving reading aloud practice.

## **2.5 Importance of connected speech when reading aloud.**

Previous research has established that the terminology of connected speech as well as the classification of connected speech processes varies widely. Firstly, Alameen & Levis (2015) state that connected speech processes can be classified into six main categories: linking, deletion, insertion, modification, reduction, and multiple processes. Referring to the previous example, the category of *linking*, is the only one that does not involve changes to the segments of words. Its function is to make two words sound like one without changes in segmental identity as in the phrases: some of [sʌm əv] and miss Sarah [mɪs sɛ.ɹə]. In addition, the authors refer to other types of links that include changes, however, these are in different categories from the previous phrases and classified under their category of modifications. For example, the /t/ in the phrase *hat band* would be realized as a glottal stop and lose its identity as a [t], i.e., [hæʔbæŋ d].

Secondly, Nicklin (2015) sheds light on the acquisition of English as a foreign language (EFL) connected speech by using the reading aloud technique. The study consisted of investigating the effect of text readability of said EFL acquisition connected speech. The author points out that reading aloud (RA) is one of the methods that students are given the opportunity to practice connected speech. The results of his study suggested that the use of RA as a main practice method can be used to improve a student's connected speech. In addition, although there was no evidence that the connected speech acquired during the period of his study, the author states that the use of complex texts to be read aloud could be successful in helping EFL students to acquire certain connected speech patterns.

## **2.6 The importance of teaching connected speech: Weak forms.**

In English, as in all other languages, functional words do not have a dictionary meaning the way content words such as verbs, adjectives, and nouns - have. They are limited in number and include auxiliary verbs, pronouns, articles, conjunctions and prepositions etc. Nearly all functional words have two pronunciation forms: a strong form and a weak form. The strong form (also called citation form/ full form) is stressed, and it is the pronunciation form that is usually found in the dictionary entry of the word (Brown & Kondo, 2006, p.33). As part of it was mentioned before, acquiring a foreign language is a process of studying grammar contents, vocabulary, instruction and also pronunciation. That is to say, phonetics concerns speech sounds including production, perception and acoustic analysis at the same time while phonology is the study of the sound system of a given language analysis and classification of its.

Currently, English is a part of subjects in all Chilean Schools' core, however, the time and school background is a constraint for students to point out that English pronunciation seems to be less used by teachers. In most cases, neither primary nor secondary school, students are aware of the appropriate use of the English pronunciation. Therefore, on behalf teaching content and functions words, students are actually learning the 'production' of weak and strong forms. This turns significant since the students' aim is to speak as naturally as native speakers and the extensive work with weak and strong forms that may facilitate their perception in natural speech.

## **2.7 Communicative Language Teaching Approach**

The present action research is meant to use the Communicative Language Teaching Approach as a teaching method, specifically the use of scripted role plays to enhance student's speaking ability through the reading aloud process. Spada (2007) states since the late 1970s, there have been different definitions and interpretations of the communicative approach in second language (L2) or foreign language instruction. Not surprisingly, this has turned into several misconceptions of CLT and how it is implemented in the EFL or ESL classroom. For instance, learners who study English as a foreign language (EFL) usually have limited opportunities to speak English outside the classroom and have also limited exposure to English environment if it is not during an English lesson at school. Therefore, the teacher's role is being a facilitator to provide students opportunities to interact and develop speaking activities for improving their proficiency in English as well as their fluency while reading aloud. The same author argues that differences in interpretation and implementation of CLT are sufficiently problematic for a language teaching method, since the CLT approach has lost its relevance to L2 teaching.

Moreover, Moeller & Catalano (2015) state that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a term that has been discussed since emerged as a significant approach that can be used in many contexts among all the disciplines, that is to say, linguistics, methodologists, and curriculum developers. Both authors emphasize that pair work, group work, cooperative learning, the use of authentic materials, culturally lesson content and interactive tasks focused on the cognitive and affective domains should be integrated into foreign language classrooms.

A broader perspective has been adopted by Akbarova (2021) who discusses the method of “The Communicative Language Teaching” through interactive strategies for motivating learners and help them to improve their communication skills. Akbarova (2021) states that CLT is different from other approach of foreign language teaching since it emphasize the communication in context on real-life situations. The author also states that even though grammar is important in CLT approach, the main focus is on communicating a message in the target language. In addition, the author also points out that the most important factors that needs to be required by the learners is to express their thoughts or request their needs in everyday situations without worrying about mastering a perfect grammar. Furthermore, the author argues that the use of only the target language in the classroom differentiates this approach from other language teaching methods. It is suggested the following principles of Communicative Language Teaching:

1. The goal is to learn to communicate in the target language.
2. The emphasis is on meaning, comprehension, elaboration rather than on the structure and form of the language.
3. The use of authentic materials.
4. The teacher is a guide, counselor, organizer, facilitator who helps learners to communicate in English and motivates them to work with the language.
5. The personal experiences of language learners are considering as common factor of the classroom learning.
6. Learners interact with each other through pair or group work and through writing.
7. Sequencing of contents and structures is determined by learner’s interests.
8. The use of interactive activities such as, gap filling, role-plays, games, dialogues, problem-solving, discussion, and etc., in the language teaching.

Richards (2015) states that the Communicative competence was said to whether the ability to use the language for different communicative purposes as well as the ability to use language that is appropriate to the context of its use. For instance, the setting, the participants and the activity being developed. The author also state that CLT created a great deal with institutions worldwide since soon these organisms started to rethink their teaching, their syllabuses and classroom materials.

This view is supported by Mangaleswaran & Aziz (2019) who conducted action research to examine the impact of the implementation of CLT on students' speaking skills. It was demonstrated that teachers seemed not to use the first language at all and strictly restricting their students from using languages other than English language since the usage of English in the classroom was carefully corrected and guided by the teacher at all times. The findings on the study suggest implementing CLT since it was shown that the teachers provided learners with activities whether to be carried out in pair or groups, and students were very excited to have a chance to do and act specific roles with their friends in front of the classroom, that is to say, using CLT encourages teachers to provide a chance to the students to express and exchange their ideas in English.

From the perspective of teachers and the practices of CLT, Rahman et al. (2018) conducted research to explore ESL teacher's beliefs and their classroom Practices of said approach. According to Rahman et al. (2018) both teachers participants believe that CLT classroom should be learner centered. They also state that learners should be involved in meaningful and collaborative work through the means of cooperative and collaborative work.

## **2.8 Use of role-playing to support reading aloud**

A review of literature shows that several researchers have indicated the benefits of employing the role-playing technique. Although the present study does not address the reading comprehension as a skill itself, it is important to point out the benefits of the RA technique as well. For instance, Mojgan & Mosayeb (2018) used the role-playing technique for storytelling classes and found out that had a more significant effect on the narrative writing in this group of Iranian young EFL learners than the reading a story aloud technique. Also, the authors were able to conclude that the narrative writing was implicitly enhanced by engaging in the role-playing classes. Participants also learnt concepts such as style, pattern, organization, characters, relationships and imaginative thinking from said technique and used them in their narrative writing.

In the same vein, Abdoun & Melgani (2021) state that reading as a receptive skill competence is important as it is part of the four main English language functions to master in language teaching since there is a reciprocal relationship between the academic success and learner's academic reading skill. Their study aimed to research the Effectiveness of using reading-aloud and thinking-aloud strategies on student's reading comprehension of EFL learners by following the competency-based approach. The authors sustain that the analysis revealed that using RA and thinking aloud in teaching EFL learners. In addition, in terms of the process of reading, this led to a considerable product when it is followed correctly, that is to say, by the end of a successful reading

process, readers are able to understand and read fluently by using the strategies of interpreting the express meaning of the text.

## **2.9 Scripted role-play technique**

The educational use of role-play has become more widespread in the EFL/ESL classroom. Harmer (1989) advocates the use of role-play for two reasons, because it is fun and motivating. He also points out its quieter students get the chance to express themselves in a more direct way and the word of the classroom is broadened to include the outside world. According to Freeman (2000) incorporating role-playing in the classroom makes a difference in the activities because it facilitates communication in the classroom. When the activities are taking place, teachers serve as an advisor, answering students' questions and observing their progress.

Most research on the use of role-play technique has been carried out. Suryani (2015) explored the effect of using role play in teaching speaking ability. The findings showed an increase of the students' speaking since there was a significant score difference between the pre- test and post-test. Similarly, these results were confirmed in a study carried out by Krebt (2017) who inquired about the effectiveness of using role-play as a classroom technique on Iraqi EFL college students' speaking skill, it was determined that role play techniques provide a kind of interesting environment for the students to flourish in. In addition, such environment leads to better attention in learning and stimulate them to participate in role-play techniques. In role-play techniques, students take a new identity and learn to use a foreign language for everyday interaction.

Firstly, the ability to create a communicative environment in the classroom is one of the main teacher's main responsibilities. In addition, the teacher's role in role-playing learning is to teach students and explain the topic. Secondly, as teachers, we never know if students will be engaged in such activities, as it is reading aloud since reading is typically a self-indulgent activity that most students like doing in private. Others enjoy reading, but they prefer not to do so at school precisely.

However, despite their disinterest, some students are required to read aloud in front of their peers while also following instructions.

Thirdly, role plays can help students to find emotional and academical connections with the text. It is assumed that teachers must have used role plays to consolidate new functional language, practice for a real-world activity, or prepare students for exams. A great technique to engage background knowledge, contextualize the text, and explore the location is to combine reading and role play (Wünsch-Nagy, 2013). Finally, Krebt (2017) state that it is a great method to practice speaking in public and use new language. Even, drama teachers emphasize how acting, and dramatization helps learners in long-term

memory retention of specific phrases, passages, events, and ideas. In view of all that has been mentioned so far, one may suppose that it comprises the present action research postulates to support student's oral production connected speech in English by reading scripted role-plays aloud.

Using this approach, researchers have been able to determine the efficacy of the use of scripted role-plays in teaching. Idham et al. (2022) conducted a study to explore the effect of role-playing techniques focused on the speaking skills of undergraduate students from Iraq. As it was previously mentioned, the authors also agree that recently education has been placed on student-centered education to ensure that EFL learners are able to master the four language skills (receptive skills such as listening and reading, and productive skills such as speaking and writing). According to Wulandari et al. (2019) the role-play it seems to be very attractive activity for the students to use the script. In addition, Idham et al. (2022) state that role-playing may be divided into three categories: fully scripted, semi-scripted, and unscripted. The first type of role play is the one where all the words are written down in a fully scripted role-play. The authors also state that the main goal of a dialogue, after all, is to make each piece of a language meaningful and easy to remember. According to Livingstone (1983) in the semi-scripted role play there are missing words and students should know how to fill the gaps with the words that fit the situation.

However, Idham et al. (2022) state that students also need to be chosen the materials based on a real-life context. Moreover, the authors state that this type of role-playing can be used with students at the upper beginner to intermediate level of English proficiency since they already know how to master more complex tasks since semi-scripted role-play is less structured and less controlled than fully scripted role-play. The authors were able to conclude that role play is an excellent strategy for developing student's speaking skills competence. Also, among the benefits of using role-play in the EFL classroom, the authors state that

- a) It helps students to build their confidence and inventiveness by motivating themselves to practice in speaking activities.
- b) Students become proficient in English as a result of regular role-playing activities.
- c) It builds-up vocabulary for selecting appropriate words for each situation depending on the context.

**CHAPTER III  
METHOD**

### **3.1 Type of research**

The present study corresponds to action research with a mixed method approach. According to Burns (2010) "Action research is part of a broad movement that has going on in education generally for some time. It is related to the ideas of 'reflective practice' and 'the teacher as a researcher' as it involves taking a self-reflective, critical, and systematic approach to exploring own teaching contexts described as a qualitative research method" (p. 2). For instance, the Model of Kemmis and McTaggart's (1988) cyclical AR model, as cited in Burns (2010, p. 9) involves the main components of Action Research including a development of plan for improvement based on defining an issue to be implemented in a plan.

Moreover, the use of mixed- methods enables researchers to answer researcher questions with sufficient depth and breadth. On one hand, the quantitative approach helps a researcher to collect data from a large number of participants; this, increasing the findings to a wider population. On the other hand, qualitative approach provides a deeper understanding of the problem being investigated. Both, quantitative results can be triangulated with qualitative findings. The process of triangulation is the use of multiple data to develop a comprehensive understanding of a research problem. (Carter et al., 2014)

The present study is linked to action research since a problem was identified, which was related to the students' oral production while reading aloud. Also, it is important to take into consideration that the group of 9th graders do not have communicative issues when it comes about to speak English. Nevertheless, when it comes to read aloud, some oral mistakes arise which are not expected because of their level of English.

#### **3.1.1 Participants**

This action research study was carried out in a private school from Talca, Chile. The sampling is the type of non-probabilistic purposeful sample composed by 31 students enrolled in 9th grade B in an age range of 14 to 15 years old. Regarding the purposeful sampling technique, previous studies have based their criteria for selection of participants, for instance, Sharma (2017) explains the pros of a purposive sampling, is useful in these instances because it provides a wide range of non-probability sampling techniques for the researcher to draw on. Moreover, Rai & Tapha (2015) on their study related to purposive sampling method in research, both state that a more powerful tool for performing research and extracting the best data from samples is the purposeful method, which heavily relies on the knowledge, judgment, and intelligence of the researcher. Therefore, purposive sampling is the sole option when some of the units are really significant and cannot be missed out, despite some of its disadvantages.

In other words, the group of 9th graders were selected on the basis of the degree of EFL

instruction they had considering their formal English learning process started when they were five years old in kindergarten. Also, this group was chosen particularly because they presented difficulties to produce orally weak forms and did not make any linking, which led to mispronunciations when reading aloud above their enthusiasm to learn English, and their inner motivation to participate into any challenge related to the English language components (speaking, listening, writing, reading comprehension, and culture).

### **3.2 Research questions and objectives**

This action research aims to explore the use of scripted role-plays as a supportive strategy on 9th grader's ability to produce connected speech in English. It is also meant to follow the postulates as Action Research for contributing to the practical concerns of students. Also, it attempts to formulate mechanical intellectual puzzle, that is to say, how does scripted role play technique support student's oral production of linking and weak forms. Mason (2002) states mechanical arguments should not be confused with causal ones because, although they usually involve an attempt to explain how and sometimes why social phenomena work, often in relation to other phenomena, they rarely are based on the idea of a cause–effect relationship between variables. Nor should they be confused with the idea of simple description. In this case, the first criteria upon this action research were to provide a useful strategy to enhance some aspects of their speaking skills to produce connected speech and present a technique to support their speaking skills unable to mastered during online lessons.

Research question:

How can the use of scripted role-plays support 9th graders' connected speech when reading aloud in English?

The objective of this action research is to explore the use of scripted role-plays as a supportive strategy on 9th grader's ability to produce connected speech in English in a Chilean school.

Specific objectives:

- To examine students' oral production of linking and weak forms when reading scripted role-play aloud.
- To describe in students' oral production progress when linking and weak forms are practiced through reading scripted role-play aloud.
- To identify students' perceptions towards the use of scripted role-play to support their oral production of linking and weak forms.

### 3.3 Research problem

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is an international standard for describing language ability on a six-point scale. In accordance with the A2 descriptor level of English qualification, learners are able to communicate easily through a direct exchange of information on familiar and daily basis topics (Council of Europe, 2001). Taking into this consideration, the Chilean National Curriculum of Education (2016) states learners in 9th grade in high school should demonstrate content knowledge, coherence in the organization of ideas, and an appropriate use of language functions and sounds of the language in receptive skills (reading and writing) leaving aside the productive skills (speaking and writing). In the group of 9th graders in high school, it is expected they are able not only to communicate but also to read fluently as comprehensively as possible with minimum errors not leading distraction to their peers to the interlocutor's message. Nevertheless, it has been observed that the group of freshmen students certified in A2 Key (KET) present difficulties and errors with connected speech and utterance fluency (production of linking words, and weak forms) while reading aloud. In response to this problem, the following study aims at exploring the use of scripted role-plays as a supportive strategy on 9th grader's ability to produce connected speech in English in a private Chilean school.

### 3.4 Stages of the action research

The action plan of this study consisted of 5 sessions of 25 minutes long twice per week. These sessions have been performed on site and they have been conducted during their regular schedule. Each session has a particular learning objective through the development of dynamic activities and the use of 2 instruments for data collection (See Appendix A, B and C). Table 1 presented below shows the information in detail:

*Table 1. Action Plan design*

<b>Session</b>	<b>Learning objective</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Data collection instrument</b>
1	Assess students' initial level of production of linking words and weak forms	Video introduction to present a role-play.	Pre- Checklist students' initial level of production of linking words and weak forms	Checklist: Linking words and weak forms.

2	Demonstrate the ability to master a role-play.	Students are grouped in pairs to practice the conversation by choosing their role of the dialogue previously watched in the video.	A formative assessment: students read a scripted role-play aloud while performing and master a role-play.	Field notes
3	Present the strategy of connected speech : Linking words.	Review of consonant + vowel and vowel + vowel. Students are grouped in pairs to practice, produce and function connected speech by using the strategy of linking words.	Formative assessment: the students read a story aloud while practicing linking words sounds.	Field notes
4	Identify linking words on a scripted role- play.	Review of consonant + vowel and vowel + vowel. Students are grouped in pairs to practice, produce and function connected speech by using the strategy of linking words.	Formative assessment, students' reading aloud an interview and use of linking words while through identifying them and practicing it.	Field notes
5	Present the strategy of connected speech: Weak forms and identify its functions in English.	Review and practice the most common expressions by using weak forms on a scripted role-play.	Formative assessment: students read aloud on the list of the common expressions by using weak forms on a scripted role-play.	Field notes
6	Evaluate students' final oral production of linking words and weak forms in a scripted role-play.  Assess participants' perceptions towards the use of linking words, weak forms and scripted role-play to support their oral production in English.	Performing a role-play by using weak forms on a scripted role-play.	Post-Checklist students' final level of production of linking words and weak forms  Focus group	Checklist: Linking words and weak forms.  Focus group

### **3.5 Data collection techniques**

This action research study primarily relies on qualitative methods; however, quantitative methods were also incorporated using a pre and post checklist to examine students' oral production of linking words and weak forms when reading aloud. In order to gather the data required for this study, three different instruments were used to collect the data consistent with the specific objectives defined for this research.

#### **3.5.1 A Pre and a Post Checklist**

The first instrument to examine the level of features of connected speech on student's oral production of linking words and weak forms when reading aloud scripted role-play was a checklist. The chart comprises 15 statements split into two dimensions: weak sounds and linking words (See Appendix A). The first dimension corresponded to "Weak forms" and 10 most common expressions in dialogues. The second dimension corresponded to "Linking words", five common expressions were selected to produce linking words as part of connected speech production from students. Both dimensions were created and adapted based on Brown's book (2014) most common expression in English. In order to facilitate the initial and final assessment, the teacher listened to the students and circled "yes" or "no" in response to the connected speech production.

#### **3.5.2 A Focus group**

After the intervention, the second instrument used regarding the third specific objective was a focus group in Spanish (See Appendix B). Brown (1999) states that participants in focus groups should have an interest in the topic at hand and they should be willing to participate constructively. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, 10 participants were selected randomly from the group of 9th graders in high school to answer at five questions which mainly pointed out to know their perception towards the use of scripted role-play to support their oral production in English. The focus group was set in Spanish since participants are more confident to speak their mother tongue rather than speaking in English. In addition, the focus group may allow students to being part of a spontaneous responses in regard to expose their perceptions towards to how supportive has been the use of scripted role-play on their oral production of linking and weak forms. The focus group was recorded along with the technology of using a voice-recorder to be later transcribed.

### **3.5.3 Observations**

The third instrument to collect data were field notes (See Appendix C). These written records described students' oral production progress when linking and weak forms were practiced orally. Phillippi et al. (2017) states field notes can be collected in a variety of formats, including written, dictated, and even visual sketches. Taking small notes during the interaction can assist our memory but should not interrupt the flow of the moment or distract ourselves or the participants. In addition, the main aspect is to describe their progress on oral production of linking words and weak forms to support their perception towards the use of scripted role-play technique. Also, it was a chance to remember not only student's behaviour, gestures, and moods but also other features of the classroom as a setting while the action research was conducted.

### **3.6 Data Analysis Techniques**

As part of the final process, the data analysis was followed by conceptual content analysis to determine the existence and frequency of concepts. Also, the triangulation method to research different sources helping to ensure reliability and credibility. For quantitative data, a paired *t* test as statistical test was used since it is categorized as a type of *t* test for a single sample because it is tested the difference between two paired results, in this study it was used to compare the means of the pre and post checklists in order to statistically establish the amount of change of Pre to that Post checklist for the same subjects (Kim, 2015). Based on the previous, Heigham & Croker (2009) states in regard to triangulation technique is to obtain different perspectives on a phenomenon by gathering data from different participants and using a variety of data collection methods like observations, interviews, and questionnaires. The data was coded along with content analysis for identifying and describing key information and concepts towards the use of scripted role-plays as a supportive strategy on 9th grader's ability to produce linking and weak words in English.

**CHAPTER IV  
FINDINGS**

In this chapter, the data collected at the beginning and at the end of the teaching strategy implementation is presented and analysed according to each specific objective.

#### **4.1 Specific Objective 1: To examine students' oral production of weak forms and linking words when reading scripted role-play aloud**

In order to examine students' oral production of Weak Forms and Linking Words when reading aloud, a pre and post checklist were used to be after compared by using *T-Test formula* for 2 Sample Means. It is important to report that participants did not have difficulties to communicate using L2. However, the instances of reading texts aloud have demonstrated students struggle in terms of how words are linked and stressed. Therefore, the following analysis was done through the comparison of quantitative data derived from the pre and post checklists used for assessing students' oral production of Weak Forms and Linking Words.

##### **4.1.1 Student's paired *t*-test: percentage of success**

The **student's paired *t*-test** allows to compare the means of two series of measurements performed on the same statistical units. Therefore, the present action research used the percentages of success from 30 students' oral production of weak forms and linking words when reading scripted role-play aloud at two moments, before and after the intervention. Consequently, the student's paired *t*-test was used to detect a change in their oral production of weak forms and linking words between the two dates, it was defined as *paired* because every participant was measured twice, and the data was organized by pairs as they were appropriately considered as independent samples.

After that, a *t*-Test from the type of *Paired Two Sample for Means* was done in Excel by using the data analysis tool of said software. The hypothesis was that the strategy of reading scripted role-plays aloud in English was supportive in participant's oral production. Following the basic format for reporting the result of a *t*-test was in terms of *N* (degree of freedom)= the *t* statistic, *p* = *p* value for analysing the relationship between the results from the percentage of success achievement by the 30 participants. It is relevant to addressed that the abbreviations *M* stand for mean and *SD* standard deviation respectively. The output percentages of success can be seen in *Figure 1. t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means*.

Figure 1. *t*-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means

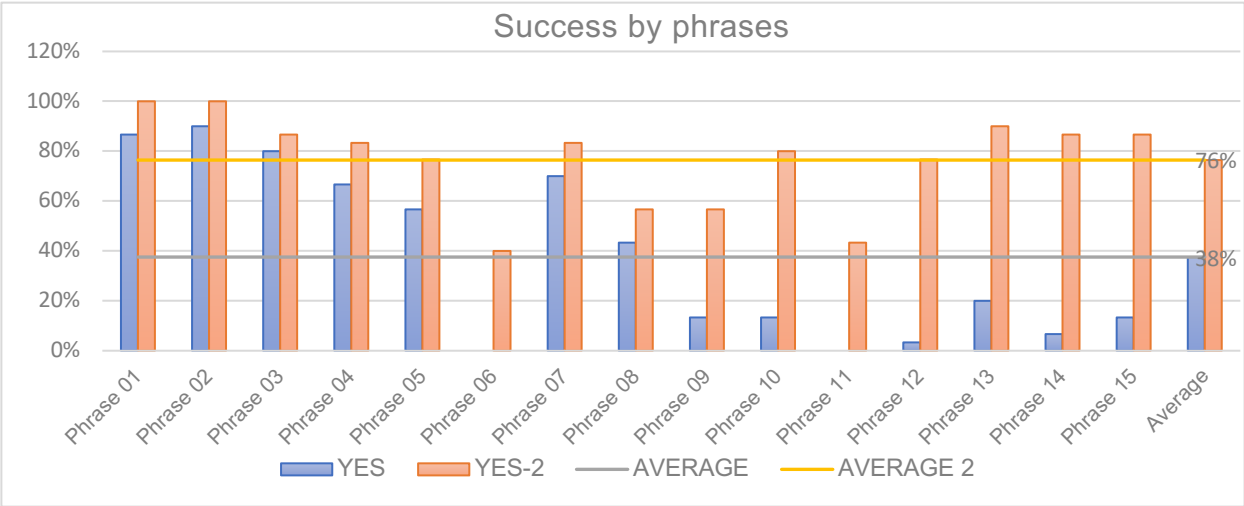
	<b>Pre- Checklist</b>	<b>Post- Checklist</b>
Mean	0,3760	0,7643
Variance	0,009956577	0,010952746
Observations	30	30
Pearson Correlation	0,33950108	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	29	
<i>t</i> Stat	180.832	
<i>P</i> ( <i>T</i> <= <i>t</i> ) one-tail	0,0000000000000000117066	
<i>t</i> Critical one-tail	1,699127027	
<i>P</i> ( <i>T</i> <= <i>t</i> ) two-tail	0,0000000000000000234132	
<i>t</i> Critical two-tail	2,045229642	

The paired *t*-test's results and its statistical significance is determined on the two-tailed formula on these checklists, and the *P* value is less than 0,005. In a small sample (*N*=30). The pre-test (*M* = 0.3760, *SD* = 0.1002) and the post-test (*M* = 0.7643, *SD* = 0.1048). Therefore, this difference is considered statistically significant, *t*(30)= -18,11980055, *p* = 0,0000000000000000234132 due to the group of students improved their oral production of connected speech after a move from *M*= 38% (*SD* = 0,1002) to *M*= 76% (*SD* = 0,1048). In addition, considering a conventional criteria, this difference is also statistically significant in terms of the *confidence interval*, that is to say, the *mean* from the Pre-checklist minus Post- checklist equals -0.3883 with a 95% confidence interval of this difference, which is stand for, from -0.4323 to -0.3444. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted.

#### 4.1.2 Findings about the Oral Production of Weak Forms and Linking Words by phrases

Results on student's oral production of connected speech by reading scripted role-play aloud are shown in standard vertical bar graphs. The x-axis represents the different categories of Weak forms and Linking Words phrases elaborated to be examined while the y-axis represents the percentage of oral production by phrases. Graph 1 shows the results obtained from the Pre and Post Checklist named as a percentage of success, these are presented under the criteria of "Yes" on the blue bars and it stands for that participants were able to produce the prompts of connected speech while the red bars presented as the criteria of "YES- 2" corresponds to the post checklist. The two lines in between the graphs are the average from both checklists' results, that is to say, success on the initial (Gray line) and final (Yellow line) checklist as it follows the criteria of the pre and post intervention for students' oral production done.

Graph 1. Pre and Post Checklist- Success by phrases



The following Table 2 was elaborated in order to be clearer in accordance with the pre and post checklist. The phrases were adapted from Adam Brown’s book and its chapter “*Weaking and Linking*”. Brown (2014) states that in terms of pronunciation there is a logical perspective of when it comes to the content words pronunciation, since they are the ones that provide the most information, and these should be said clearly and loudly (stressed). But only if the function words are not spoken clearly and loudly can this be accomplished (unstressed). In other words, contrast is necessary for some elements to stand out. The fact that they have weak forms is one way that many function words—but not all—are demonstrated to be unstressed in connected discourse. They frequently have the /schwa/ vowel during this process, although other processes, such as the loss (elision) of the /h/, may also be present. Additionally, the term “*Miscellaneous expression*” corresponds to weak forms but not necessarily function word, however, presented in our daily practice.

Table 2. Pre and Post Checklist- Success by phrases in percentage

Weak forms			Pre	Post
1.-	Article	I've got <b>a</b> new dress	87%	100%
2.-	Article	That's <b>an</b> apple	90%	100%
3.-	Auxiliary Verb	Have you <b>been</b> here long?	80%	87%
4.-	Auxiliary Verb	It <b>was</b> a beautiful day	67%	83%
5.-	Conjunction	We need some salt <b>and</b> pepper	57%	77%
6.-	Conjunction	It was <b>as</b> big as an elephant.	0%	40%
7.-	Preposition	She works <b>at</b> night.	70%	83%
8.-	Preposition	That book's <b>from</b> Julia.	43%	57%
9.-	Miscellaneous expression	He <b>just</b> cried	13%	57%
10.-	Miscellaneous expression	<b>So</b> don't!	13%	80%
Linking Words				
11.-	Final vowel + initial consonant	We got <u>into</u> national costume	0%	43%
12.-	Final consonant + initial consonant	Is the classroom <u>big</u> enough?	3%	77%
13.-	Final consonant + initial vowel	Please, <u>hand out</u> these worksheets	20%	90%
14.-	Linking [W] occurs after /əu/	Showing, show it	7%	87%
15	Final vowel [j] + initial vowel after /OI/	Enjoying, enjoy it	13%	87%
<b>Average</b>			38%	76%

On one hand, what is interesting about the data are the percentages shown in Table 1 indicates there was not significant difference between the oral production of Weak Forms presented on articles, auxiliary verbs, and prepositions, that is to say, on average most of the 30 students produced the phrases correctly in both checklists. However, a remarkable difference presented on a significant difference to state that the highest percentage of the production of Weak Forms and the easiest phrases to be produced by students at the initial and final checklist were the expressions that include articles, auxiliary verbs, and prepositions. On the other hand, there was not increase as it is confirmed by the lowest percentages of oral production of Weak Forms in the initial checklist contained expressions with conjunction words also used to connect words on phrase 5, and miscellaneous such as 'He just cried' and 'So don't'. However, the most surprising aspect of the data is that students improved 40% on the oral production of conjunctions on phrase 6. Interestingly, there were also differences in the phrase 10 that reveals an increase of a 67% improvement from participants' oral production of Weak Forms. Based on the percentages shown from student's oral production of Linking Words, the most striking result to emerge from the data is that the percentages shown in Table 1 which indicates the highest percentage and the easiest phrases to be linked by students at the initial checklist were the expressions that include vowel sounds, that is to say, "Final consonant + Initial vowel" with 20% of oral production. Besides the lowest percentage of

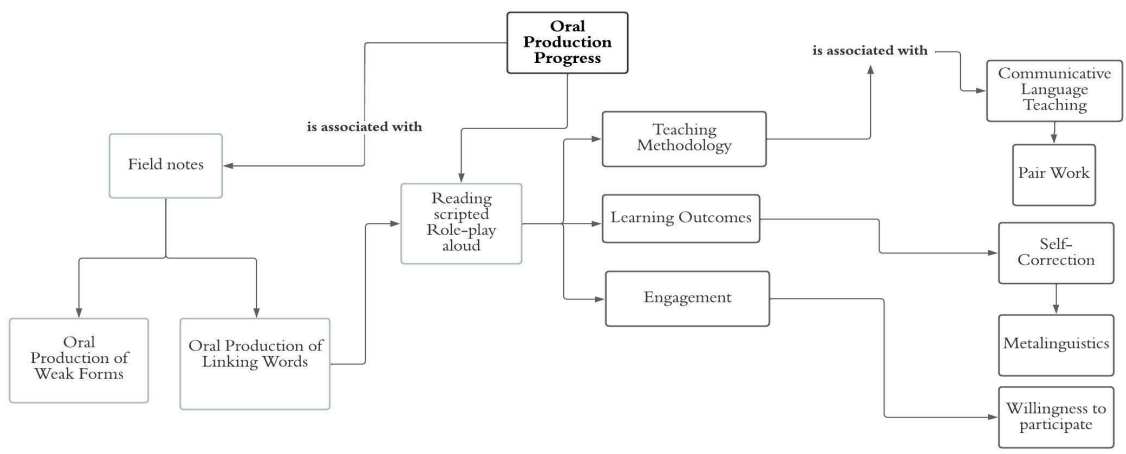
oral production which were presented on phrases contained a “Final vowel + Initial consonant”, a “Final consonant + Initial consonant” and a “Final consonant + Initial vowel”.

These data are in contrast with the percentages shown in the pre checklist since it reveals those participants shown a significant improvement in their oral production of linking words. Overall, these results confirm that after 5 sessions intervention, the use of scripted role-plays strategy for reading aloud supported student’s oral production of Weak forms and Linking Words. As a conclusion of this analysis, the pre-checklist did show not only an inconsistent performance but also an expected one. Therefore, it can be stated that the strategies of weak forms and linking words presented and practiced during the intervention provide important insights into a significant improvement in participants’ oral production of connected speech in English. In other words, the use of scripted role-play strategy supported students’ oral production of connected speech in English.

**4.2 Specific Objective 2: To describe students’ oral production progress related to their weak forms and linking words practiced through reading scripted role-play aloud.**

In order to describe student’s oral production progress when reading aloud Weak Forms and Linking Words found on scripted role-plays, descriptive field notes observations were used during the five sessions’ intervention. This instrument that developed over time contained descriptive data as well as reflective information concerning specific observations which are shown through Figure 2.

Figure 2. Conceptual Map from Field notes.



Source: Own author.

The conceptual map was elaborated based on the field notes taken during the five sessions' intervention. It was possible to conceptualize a set of categories and subcategories from these observations. These are: *Teaching Methodology*, *Learning Outcomes*, and *Engagement*.

#### 4.2.1 Teaching Methodology

Category : Teaching Methodology  
Sub-categories : Communicative Language Teaching, Pair Work.

Based on the field notes taken, the first category is *Teaching Methodology*, and its first sub-category is *Communicative Language Teaching* and *Pair Work*. This teaching methodology was essential to develop the five sessions intervention since students worked together into the same goal of practicing scripted role-plays by reading them aloud, among all the intervention the most repetitive observation that was included during the whole development:

*T: "Now, a scripted role-play will be provided to be read aloud in pairs. Remember that instead studying the formulas, you need to use the language and interact with your partner" (S1S5\_DI).*

In addition, the material used on each session was meant to be with the learning objective of communicational competence skills practice.

Moving onto the next sub-category of *Pair Work*, it is important to point out that the focus of the field notes was students' oral production progress, however, it was surprisingly meaningful that some students felt more confident by practicing the scripted role-plays with their peers. Additionally, it was very interesting the way they were working together since individuals showed respect to their classmate's accent and/or production of words in English and even it was registered the following comment:

*- SX: "Try to make the word like Adele (the singer) does" (S3S5\_DI).*

Therefore, it was quite surprising the fact they were able to contextualize accents into celebrities and English Native Speakers to understand the use of Weak Forms.

#### 4.2.2 Learning Outcomes

Category : Learning Outcomes  
Sub-categories : Metalinguistic, Self- Correcting

The second category is *Learning Outcomes*, and its sub-categories are: *Metalinguistics* and *Self-Correcting*. The concept of metalinguistics emerged based on the fact that the

group of participants were actively thinking, talking, and using L2 for interacting. Therefore, reading aloud by using the strategies of Weak Forms and Linking words required an active level awareness and thought about language, whether consciously and even automatically due to the group of students were actually able to make a relationship between the language theory and what it was learnt during the sessions' intervention. Some participants were insightful during the topics of the intervention since few discussions arose related to contents such as:

- S1: *"Miss, ¿Por qué ahí hay linking si la /W/ es una consonante? ¿O no?" (S2S5\_DI)*
- S2: *"No, en inglés es una vocal y es consonante en español. ¿Cierto Miss?" (S2S5\_DI). During the third session' intervention students elicited information such as,*
- S3: *Miss, how do I know when a word is weak? (S3S5\_DI)*
- S4: *"The teacher explained that weak forms are present on prepositions, content words and function words, right Miss?" (S3S5\_DI).*

The sub-category of *Self-correcting*. it was observed that students were actively practicing and learning from their mispronounced words while their classmates were producing them. This sub-category is quite important to highlight since it is part of students' progress on their oral production of connected speech in English as they were self-correcting. I heard from many students suggestions like:

- SY: *"¡Wow! ese acento" (S2S5\_DI).*
- SZ: *"No, aquí no hay linking" (S3S5\_DI).*
- SX: *"No, you shouldn't pause here, link it!" (S5S5\_DI).*
- SG: *"Aquí hay linking porque termina en una vocal y la palabra que sigue empieza con una vocal también, ¿Cierto?" (S3S5\_DI).*
- SY1: *"Me gusta porque te sale como británico, más elegante, no sé" (S4S5\_DI).*

#### **4.2.3 Engagement**

Category : Engagement  
Sub-categories : Willingness to participate

The third category of *Engagement* and its sub-category of *willingness to participate*. The environment in the classroom turned into an attractive way of learning for students. Participants were making comments related to how motivating was practicing role-playing with their peers, and this led to a spontaneous participation due to the scripted role-plays were elaborated, designed, and adapted considering students' interests, for instance; the opportunity to perform roles as certain celebrities, and also contexts they could face as a tourist in an English-speaking country and/ or environment. For instance:

T: *“Students were making comments that during their holidays they watched movies with subtitles in English as they were listening to music and checking the lyrics, so they realized how important was to know the use of linking words and weak forms in their everyday life” (S5S5\_DI).*

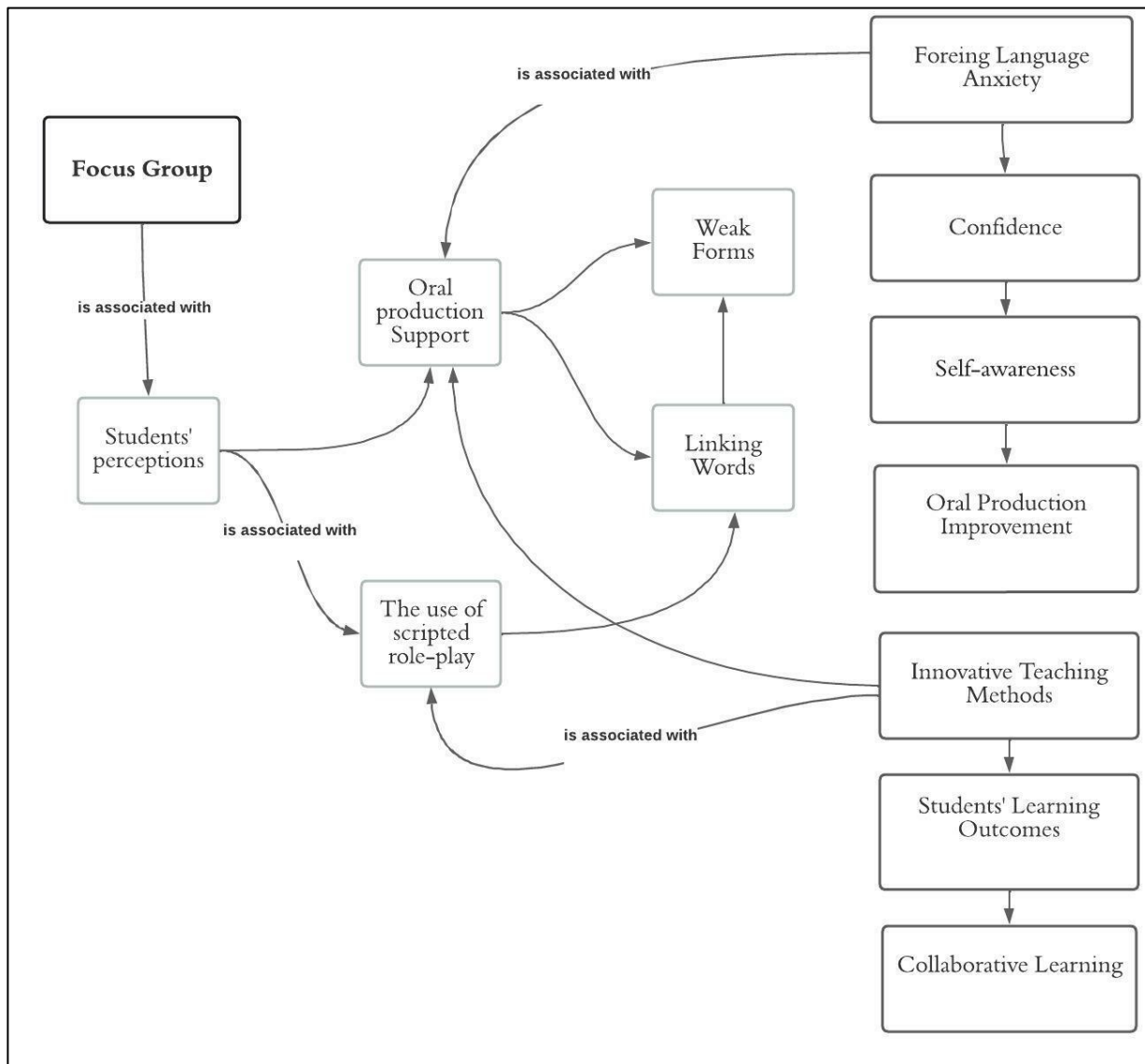
- SY: *“Sí Miss, en las vacaciones practiqué mucho porque veía películas con subtítulos en inglés y me di cuenta cuando los actores hablaban que pronuncian como usted nos enseñó, eso de las weak forms” (S4S5\_DI).*

- SX: *“Yo me di cuenta con las canciones porque los cantantes de Estados Unidos o del Reino Unido pronuncian diferente cuando cantan” (S4S5\_DI).*

**4.3 Specific Objective 3: To identify students' perceptions towards the use of scripted role-play to support their oral production of linking words and weak forms.**

To identify students' perceptions towards the use of scripted role-play to support their oral production of Weak Forms and Linking Words, a focus group was organized. The organization consisted of choosing 10 students randomly to be part of the focus group by answering 5 questions elaborated in Spanish due to participants were more confident to speak their mother tongue instead of using English. The data collected from the focus group is presented as a conceptual map in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Conceptual map from the Focus Group.



Source: Own author.

### 4.3.1 Subcategory 1: Foreign Language Anxiety

The first subcategory of *Foreign Language Anxiety* emerged onto the following comments:

- S1: *“A mí me daba miedo que alguien dijera que no pronunciaba bien inglés y eso como que me daba vergüenza” (FGD1).*
- S4: *“Tenía miedo de leer en voz alta en las clases inglés porque temía hacerlo mal” (FGD1).*
- S6: *“Antes de las intervenciones igual sentía mi inglés al hablarlo en voz alta, no era tan fluido” (FGD1).*

Participants were asked to share their perceptions towards their feelings on speaking English before intervention started. Students were able to overcome the feelings of fear, worry, and nervousness when it comes to speak English. It can be also noticed in the students' answers that participants feel a certain spirit of satisfaction when they expressed their “fear” as a situation that used to happen in the past.

### 4.3.2 Subcategory 2: Confidence

The second subcategory was *Confidence*, this subcategory arose based on how the strategies and methodologies implemented during intervention supported their confidence towards speaking English. According to student's points of view, it was stated:

- S1: *“Me siento mucho más segura cuando me piden leer párrafos o bien textos en la clases de inglés” (FGD1),*
- S4: *“Siento que la etapa de la inseguridad de leer en voz alta y de las dificultades en la pronunciación, ya está superada” (FGD1),*
- S7: *“Ahora siento más seguridad” (FGD1),*
- S8: *“Entiendo mejor y esto me ha generado más confianza al participar en clases” (FGD1),*
- S9: *“Me hizo sentir más confianza en mí misma” (FGD1).*

Improving the skill of confidence was not the aim of this study, however, participants pointed out their perceptions towards the strategies and methodologies of teaching used during the intervention as a positive instance of being exposed to the language and speaking English with their peers. In fact, once students were able to understand and identify the main fear, their confidence of speaking English changed considerably due to practice and repetition was part of the essence of this action research.

### 4.3.3 Subcategory 3: Self- awareness

The third subcategory was *Self- awareness*. Participants shared their perceptions towards the use of both strategies of connected speech as they understood them and put them into practice afterwards. Some students stated that;

- S2: *“Ahora al tratar de expresarme en inglés, sé cómo se pronuncian ciertas palabras o cómo iría la unión entre dos palabras para hacer que suene más fluido” (FGD1),*
- S6: *“Siento que mi lectura en voz alta ha mejorado, y aunque quizás mi inglés no sea perfecto en la pronunciación, sé diferenciar cuando tengo que hacer linking o weak en las palabras, o sea, sé cuándo hacerlo y cuando no” (FGD1),*
- S8: *“Hay palabras que no se escriben como se pronuncian y también depende del acento porque lo que más se recalca normalmente es el inglés estadounidense y el inglés británico que son bastante diferentes, entonces estas estrategias de linking words and weak forms, se pueden aplicar a todas las palabras, son como reglas que se aplican a todas las palabras, entonces no es como que uno se tenga que aprender las palabras en específico porque con saberse la regla la puede aplicar a todo el vocabulario” (FGD1).*

Particularly, both strategies of connected speech (weaking and linking) supported their pronunciation in English because they have already studied when it is precise to link certain expressions when it comes to read aloud, provoking a self-consciousness of their English-speaking skills as well as identifying the difference in between the British accent and American accent. Despite of their perceptions related to their English proficiency; they were honest to state being able to communicate without hesitation since intervention was brought into the classroom.

### 4.3.4 Subcategory 4: Oral Production Improvement

The fourth subcategory was *Oral Production Improvement*, since scripted role-playing encouraged students to be involved in conversations, some of them stated that:

- S4: *“O sea yo no hablo un inglés perfecto pero por ejemplo ahora si digo palabras de corrido porque por lo general antes de conocer linking words, yo me frenaba en las palabras, entonces ahora las puedo decir de corrido y eso siento que suena mejor que andarse pausando a cada rato” (FGD1),*
- S5: *“Yo también he notado diferencias, en la confianza y en la fluidez por así decirlo porque gracias a esto he aprendido a leer más fluido, es decir, aprendiendo esto uno lee más fluido” (FGD1),*
- S6: *“Siento que tengo una lectura más fluida y un habla también más fluida y eso como que me hace como más segura al momento de hablar y como a sentirme capaz de poder hacerlo” (FGD1),*

- S8: *“Pues confirmando lo que han mencionado mis compañeros, se nota que hay una diferencia en mi pronunciación y al leer principalmente” (FGD1).*

From the main differences before and after the AR was conducted, students revealed that using scripted role-play improved their oral production in English due to their perceptions pointing out at the changes in their fluency and their pace at reading aloud. It is remarkable to mention that the scope of this study was not technically improving fluency, however, the concept as itself was mentioned by many of them.

#### **4.3.5 Subcategory 5: Innovative Teaching Methods**

The fifth subcategory was *Innovative Teaching Methods*, students also pointed out the practical activities done while the action research was conducted. Some of them stated;

- S1: *“¿Si me gustó aprender?, pues sí, principalmente porque por un lado yo lo encontraba necesario aprenderlo y usted lo enseñó de una manera bastante divertida especialmente con los juegos de roles, lo llamativo de las presentaciones, daban ganas de estudiárselo y aprendérselo para mejorar así la pronunciación y la lectura” (FGD1),*
- S3: *“A mí me gustó sobre todo porque fue una forma distinta para aprender porque es más fácil en cierta forma, y que nos integrara estos conocimientos de forma extra a las clases normales, se me hizo mucho más fácil aprender” (FGD1),*
- S4: *“A mí me gustó porque fue entretenido y dinámico y esto ayuda mucho para un futuro y especialmente si es inglés porque abre puertas al mundo y esto mejora lo que es la pronunciación, la conexión de las palabras y que suelen ser difíciles porque no todos saben inglés, entonces esto facilita y lo hace más entretenido, estuvo muy bueno aprender la estrategia de linking y weaking” (FGD1),*
- S6: *“A mí me más que nada me facilitó por la manera en que nos enseñó usted con los juegos de roles y todo eso más que por regirse a una clase clásica por así decirlo, más dinámico y variado, eso me facilitó mucho el aprendizaje” (FGD1),*
- S10: *“Esta actividad es bastante atractiva y dinámica y una entretenida forma de enseñarnos inglés” (FGD1).*

Students' comments indicated that teaching strategies used were innovative, dynamic, and attractive ones. By the time it came to introduce this new practice inside the classroom, I faced it as a challenge, however, once the motivation was achieved by using communicative-oriented approaches students were able to improve speaking skills competences as important as knowledge in English as a subject and from my side to strength and improve my own teaching methods.

#### 4.3.6 Subcategory 6: Students' Learning Outcomes

The sixth subcategory was *Students' Learning Outcomes*, participants shared their knowledge and skills attained after the intervention, therefore, some of them stated:

- S1: *"En el caso de los juegos de roles, yo lo encontré como algo práctico debido a que en sí son muchas cosas de la vida diaria, situaciones de la vida diaria en las cuales uno ocupa esas palabras usualmente; por ejemplo, 'Estar en la casa de un amigo' y una puede ocupar esas palabras clave como usted nos dice y pronunciaciones clave para ese tipo de palabras. Y en sí siento que mejoró mi expresión oral precisamente, el tener un vocabulario más amplio y tener las respectivas pronunciaciones de cada uno y poder expresarse mejor" (FGD1),*

- S2: *"Al aprender ambas estrategias pude notar grandes avances a nivel personal y en sí aprender algo nuevo en especial la parte de idiomas ya que siempre me ha llamado más la atención" (FGD1),*

- S3: *"Linking words lo entendí más que nada como que si hay una frase, no hacer tantas pausas, entonces así se lee de corrido, y en el weaking forms era más que nada la pronunciación por ejemplo yo lo he visto en las películas o en las canciones que no marcan mucho y hay gente que las omite (sounds)" (FGD1),*

- S6: *"Me ayudó a comprenderlo más, además de lo que han dicho mis compañeros que les ayudó a la pronunciación, a la seguridad al hablar y a la fluidez" (FGD1),*

- S9: *"Me gustó la simpleza de esta técnica ya que pude otra grandes avances en muy poco tiempo y una mejora notable tanto para pronunciar como para escuchar a una persona nativa del habla inglesa (FGD1),*

- S10: *"Más que cambiar mi pronunciación o darme más confianza, me enseñó que el inglés tiene un mayor trasfondo. Yo antes no sabía que hay palabras que se pueden conectar, con las estrategias que nos enseñó se me hizo más fácil; primero entender esta nueva mecánica y también me ayudó a entender que el inglés no es tan sólo leer, sino que tiene algunas características o reglas que te van a ayudar a entenderlo y a hablarlo mejor" (FGD1).*

Based on participants' perceptions towards the use of scripted role-play to support their oral production in English, it can be stated that learners have reliably demonstrated an improvement and learning upon the completion of the intervention. Also, participants are able to identify the use of both strategies taught in different contexts; for instance, songs, movies, and celebrities who are English Native speakers. Furthermore, students mentioned their pronunciation changed positively after the intervention as a remarkable experience from this action research.

### 4.3.7 Subcategory 7: Collaborative Learning

The seventh subcategory was *Collaborative Learning*, this sub theme arose from students' perceptions due to the work in pairs and collaboratively was very highlighted on their comments. Some of the participants stated:

- S5: *“La actividad de juego de roles me sirvió mucho para poder practicar el inglés, es más fluido y en tiempo real con mis compañeros, siento que al hacer eso es un trabajo mutuo porque si uno no sabe la palabra, nos ayudamos entre sí, y se produce ayuda colectiva” (FGD1),*
- S3: *“Yo creo que fue una súper buena idea porque en el futuro quizás si uno se va a otro país, uno debe mantener un diálogo con personas y más encima si uno hace esto con otros compañeros, ellos nos corrigieron en case de cualquier error, como lo que me pasó a mí en ciertas ocasiones” (FGD1),*
- S6: *“La actividad de juego de roles al ser interactiva como que mejoró la comprensión, y al realizarla con nuestros compañeros, tenemos más confianza, nos pudimos ayudar y sentir más la actividad y mejora en todo” (FGD1),*
- S8: *“Me gustó trabajar de esa forma haciendo las actividades en conjunto” (FGD1),*
- S10: *“Se hace más dinámico ir aprendiendo al mismo tiempo que el otro porque hay una gran habilidad que es estar trabajando con un compañero y que los dos tengan el mismo nivel de inglés para ir aprendiendo juntos y enseñando cosas al otro si alguno no sabe, entonces es una forma bastante didáctica y se pasa bien” (FGD1),*
- S9: *“Aparte de ser entretenido, esto de la expresión oral fue compartida, eso significa que la conversación en inglés puede ser mucho más fluida y ayuda a entender a otra persona que también habla inglés y así esto sirve en un futuro” (FGD1),*

Participants shared their perceptions based on how efficient the development of activities as teamwork was. Working in pairs was meaningful for them as they understood the use of role-plays as an interactive strategy to be done inside the classroom. They reflected as they helped each other to reach their goal of producing weak forms or linking words when they were practicing them. This is due to students sharing their knowledge with their peers as they were respectful and empathetic when it came to supporting their classmates' pronunciation by giving and receiving feedback.

**CHAPTER V  
DISCUSSION**

This chapter describes the data collected and previously analysed during the five sessions carried out during this action research study. It will be organized in accordance with the specific objectives, and additional information on limitations and implications of this study will also be provided.

### **5.1 Regarding to Specific Objective 1: To examine students' oral production of weak forms and linking words when reading scripted role-play aloud.**

The first specific objective aimed to examine student's oral production of connected speech in English when reading aloud by running a pre and post checklist which contained fifteen most common expressions used in English, specifically on Weak Forms and Linking Words. The findings showed that the lowest percentage of success in oral production before the sessions' intervention corresponded to Linking Words. This may be due to participants' lack of knowledge of said strategy as they were not aware of its existence to support their speaking skills. It can also be added that participants were not familiar with the contents of syllables sounds which become unstressed until this present study was carried out, therefore, the students' schemata on this subject needed to be activated by using the terminology they were familiar with. A great part of participants added that even though they considered their English was not as fluent as they wish it was, they did recognize that the main progress was to be understood by the audience while speaking the L2. Based on the *t*-test results, there was a significant improvement on their oral production progress of said strategies, that is to say, from a 38% to a 76% respectively. These results are in agreement with Suriyani's (2016) findings which showed an increase of the students' speaking skills since there was a significant score difference between the pre- test and post-test conducted for exploring the effect of using role play in teaching speaking ability.

Prior studies have also noted the importance of assessing fluency in EFL/ESL students, Uribe & Cavallieri (2018) state that to foster fluency in EFL and ESL students by means of explicit instruction leads to the acquisition of skills resulting in higher levels of competence. The current study found that after five sessions students were able to improve their oral production in English features of connected speech of Weak forms and function words of Linking Words.

Another important finding was that participants did not present difficulties to produce Weak Forms presented on articles, auxiliary verbs, and prepositions in both checklists. As mentioned in the literature review, Uribe & Cavallieri (2018) state the role of a teacher plays onto the use of engaging teaching methods by drawing attention to the components of fluency that the teacher wishes to work on and incorporate by using authentic material could be a good way of approaching the fostering of fluency considering both the students' requirements and the specifics of the educational

environment. Consequently, the first session was fundamental since role-plays were contextualized in terms of how it is mastered, participants were able to identify the interaction that needs to be addressed and after that, they were able to use it as a practical activity.

Wünsch-Nagy (2013) state that in role-play techniques, students take a new identity and learn how to use foreign language for everyday interaction. Consequently, the use of scripted role-plays actually promoted students to be exposed to the language and culture by performing daily life situations they might face in English speaking contexts. The present action research study also confirms that the strategy of reading scripted role-plays aloud is associated with a cognitive process. Lintunen et al. (2020) state fluency can be approached from the perspective of receptive skills, that is, listening and reading competences, even if these skills have rarely explicitly linked to fluency (measures) due to all the four linguistic skills rely on active cognitive processes are distinct but also intertwined. Participants were able to recognize functions words and theory which is behind the connected speech of Weak forms and function words by using Linking words. These results confirm the association between both, as Nation (2009) state fluency in reading can be related to a cognitive fluency since reading requires the skills to recognize orthographic forms, connect them to their phonemic representations, and understand the meaning, that is, decode the message. In addition, a strong relationship between reading aloud and pronunciation has been reported in the literature, Gabrielatos (2002) state the resulting pronunciation and rhythm of these phrases and how it is defined above, pronunciation is one of the areas that can be improved through classroom procedures involving reading aloud practice.

Moreover, very little was found in the literature on the matter of reading English aloud in Chilean classrooms, however, Fuentes (2013) argues that reading aloud benefits on teaching Spanish as a subject in Chilean classrooms involves the build-up in knowledge about various topics, the broadening of their world of their experiences and the increase in vocabulary. It also sharpens learner's listening skills so that they are able to detect authentic dialogue and flowing narrative due to it helps to improve their diction and expression which conversely happened to the 30 participants of this study.

## **5.2 In relation to Specific Objective 2: To describe students' oral production progress related to their weak forms and linking words practiced through reading scripted role-play aloud.**

Three categories and a total five subcategories per each emerged from the data collected:

1. *Teaching Methodology: Communicative Language Teaching and Pair Work*
2. *Learning Outcomes: Metalinguistics and Self-correcting and*

3. *Engagement: Willing to participate.*

### **5.2.1 Category 1: Teaching Methodology. Subcategories: Communicative Language Teaching and Pair Work.**

Prior studies that have noted the importance of using the Communicative Language Teaching Approach as a teaching method for ESL and EFL learners. According to Spada (2007) there have been different definitions and interpretations of the communicative approach in the L2 or foreign language instruction. Not surprisingly, this has turned into several misconceptions of CLT and how it is implemented in the EFL or ESL classroom. For instance, learners who study English as a foreign language (EFL) not only have limited opportunities to speak English outside the classroom but also have limited exposure to English environment if it is not during an English lesson at school. Consequently, the relationship between the CLT method and the use of the technique of reading scripted role-play in English aloud has been reported in the literature in terms of its implications to enhance student's speaking ability through the reading aloud process.

However, Spada (2007) also points out that differences in interpretation and implementation of CLT are sufficiently problematic for a language teaching method, since the CLT approach has lost its relevance to L2 teaching. Additionally, the methodology of teaching mentioned was essential to be used with the group of individuals of the present action research study as it is consistent with that of Mangaleswaran & Aziz (2019) who conducted action research to examine the impact of the implementation of CLT on students' speaking skills, these findings demonstrated that teachers seemed not to use the first language at all and strictly restricting their students from using languages other than English since the usage of it inside the classroom was carefully corrected and guided by the teacher at all times. The observations registered from the present action research study did report that the use of L1 was not explicitly necessary to be used for depth explanations and/or guiding the different tasks when it came about practicing the reading scripted role-plays aloud in pairs, respectively.

In accordance with the field notes registered during the ongoing of the present action research, a previous study conducted by Mangaleswaran & Aziz (2019) have demonstrated that the impact on implementing CLT approach pose the teachers as agents who provided learners with activities whether to be carried out in pair or groups, the effect of said impact was they had students were very excited to have a chance to do and act specific roles with their friends in front of the classroom. Additionally, in hand by the reflection from the teachers on their lesson objectives and students' performances showed a progress in terms of interest in speaking and also ability to finish the required

tasks. As a conclusion, the methodology of teaching mentioned was essential to be used with the group of individuals of the present action research.

### **5.2.2 Category 2: Learning Outcomes. Subcategories: Metalinguistic and Self-Correcting.**

Participant's oral production progress was explained in detail based on field notes, and the output percentages of achievement on the pre and post checklists. The present action research study confirms that students' oral production improved since participants were able to understand the features of connected speech and language functions when they were reading scripted role-plays aloud. Consequently, this finding is consistent with that of Krebt (2017) who inquired about the effectiveness of using role-play as a classroom technique on EFL college students' speaking skill. In addition, the present study has demonstrated that students were actively thinking, talking, and using L2 for interacting.

Also, Freeman (2000) states that incorporating role-playing in the classroom makes a difference in the activities because it facilitates communication in the classroom. In addition, this study confirms that when the activities are taking place, teachers serve as an advisor, answering students' questions and observing their progress. In this study, the findings were mainly registered by field notes from what is what observed.

Regardless the subcategory of *Self-correcting*, it can be stated that it is broadly linked with the awareness participants shared to have perceived after knowing the theories behind the use of connected speech and function words as itself. Consequently, this statement confirms that the strategy of reading scripted role-plays aloud is whether effective as it is beneficial. As mentioned in the literature review, Ninsuwan (2015) conducted a study on the effectiveness of teaching English by using reading aloud technique, the findings suggested that reading aloud boosted students to have more self-confidence to pronounce the different or unfamiliar words. Also, the reading aloud technique helped students to develop their understanding gradually in a form of pronunciation by reading new words and unfamiliar sentence as well as it increased students' self-confidence towards reading aloud.

### **5.2.3 Category 3: Engagement. Subcategory: Willing to participate**

Consistent with the literature, the present action research study found that participants who reported that being into such environment where everyone were speaking English led them to a better attention in learning and stimulate them to participate in role-play techniques. In accordance with the present results, Wünsch-Nagy (2013) states that on role-play techniques, students take a new identity and learn to use a foreign language for everyday interaction. Also, these results match those observed in a study conducted by

Danilina (2022) who states that role-play proved beneficial as it boosted the learners' interest in the discussion and engaging opportunity to change the routine of their lessons. Additionally, the present action research found that participants reported being aware of the Weak Forms and Linking Words phrases when reading English aloud as they considered to have developed a good pronunciation even though they do not sound exactly well as a native speaker. This finding was also reported by Huang (2010) who states that reading aloud has five functions in foreign language teaching, such as practice pronunciation, improve oral English, get deeper understanding, strengthen the knowledge, and improve the classroom atmosphere.

Furthermore, participants paid attention to the teacher's explanation and could achieve the tasks very well. Moreover, the development of the action research not only enabled students to be exposed into daily life contexts in English but also aid the teacher's classroom practices. Spada (2007) adds teacher's role is being a facilitator by providing students opportunities to interact and develop speaking activities for improving their proficiency in English as well as their fluency while reading aloud. Freeman (2000) adds incorporating role-play in the classroom makes a difference in the activities because it facilitates communication in the classroom as the teacher serves as an advisor by answering students' questions and observing their progress.

### **5.3 Regarding to Specific Objective 3: To identify students' perceptions towards the use of scripted role-play to support their oral production of linking words and weak forms.**

The third specific objective pursuit the aim of identifying students' perceptions towards the use of scripted role-play to support their oral production of connected speech in Weak Forms and Linking words. Consequently, seven subthemes emerged from students' responses. These were set as: *Foreign Language Anxiety, Confidence, Self-awareness, Oral production improvement, Innovative Teaching Methods, Student's Learning Outcomes* and *Collaborative Learning*.

#### **5.3.1 Subthemes 1- 2: Foreign Language Anxiety/ Confidence**

In reviewing the literature, Chapman (2022) states some students, especially beginners are reluctant readers, and they do not want to read aloud because they feel embarrassed, they do not like attention focused on them because they are not confident on their reading. Very little was found in the literature on the association between the emotions and attitude towards how a non-native English speakers deals with speaking a foreign language in front of their peers. However, participants did a remarkable emphasis on their speaking fluency since it dramatically changed after the interventions were developed as they feel more confident when it comes about reading English aloud and also able to interact with others without feeling awkward in case there were words misspelled or mispronounced.

### **5.3.2 Subthemes 3-4: Self-awareness/ Oral production improvement**

Participants mentioned and agreed that the use of this strategy helped them not only to communicate effectively with their peers but also to improve their pronunciation. They also added that learning both strategies of connected speech in English by reading scripted role-play aloud helped to understand syllable sounds and connections between words through a dynamic and attractive technique of practicing English in a natural way instead feeling pressure of being assessed. The Chilean National Curriculum of Education (Mineduc, 2016) state reading aloud is essential for students since activities and practice not only helps students to foster reading ability and basic skill but also it helps to improve oral expression and to support oral production skills. It is important to bear in mind the possible bias in these responses, because in accordance with the main difference between the “before” and “after” the intervention in students’ oral production and speaking skills competence, they referred as it was great personal progress on the domain of reading English aloud since their confidence was truly consolidated due to the awareness and knowledge in both strategies learnt.

### **Subthemes 5-6-7: Innovative Teaching Methods/ Student’s Learning Outcomes/ Collaborative Learning.**

Consistent with the literature, this action research found that participants reported feeling more confident whether for practicing as well as for asking for support to produce connected speech and/or language function of linking words among their peers.

Also, participants added that the aim of speaking as naturally as native speakers and the extensive work with weak and strong forms may facilitate their perception in a natural speech in front of a daily life context as it was during the practice of reading scripted role-plays aloud. These three subthemes were grouped since the findings were unexpected and suggest that combining these three elements in the classroom are essential to achieve the aim of the present study. These results reflect those of Mangaleswaran & Aziz (2019) who also found that using CLT encourages teachers to provide a chance to the students to express and exchange their ideas in English.

### **5.3.3 Limitations**

One of the main limitations that this study presented was time constraints, particularly due to the current global pandemic COVID-19. During the week 26 of 2022, the school community faced a total lockdown of said disease outbreak. Even though, there was the opportunity to continue the action research by implementing the sessions' intervention as asynchronous learning, the aim of this action research was not carrying it out through online lessons because of the interaction needed for mastering role-plays and the

teaching methodology used with the group of students on creating such meaningful interaction could not have been achieved by using private rooms, however, monitoring and observations could also have been affected. Therefore, it was decided to postpone the sessions' intervention until the lockdown was lifted. Nevertheless, the fourth and fifth session intervention were also interrupted because The Chilean Health Authority instructed to the Ministry of Education in Chile to extend the winter school break period, that is to say, increasing it from 2 to 3 weeks in July 2022. This external limitation affected the on-going action research and the process since it had to be postponed until Week 30-2022.

### **5.3.4 Implications**

This study intends to be beneficial to other researchers who are investigating useful strategies to support speaking skills competences in EFL/ESL learners. Also, the expansion of the scope of this research study is advised to be done with different levels of language proficiency since it can be replicated in different areas, universities, institutions, schools, and tutoring. Also, this present study aimed to explore the use of scripted role-plays as a supportive strategy on students' oral production of connected speech in Weak Forms and Linking Words when reading English aloud. Therefore, it is necessary to reflect upon the use of Scripted role-play since it has different aspects which can be beneficial in the teachers' practice as itself and students' learning as well depending on the language focus that needs to be developed. Furthermore, the practice of reading scripted role-play aloud comprises soft skills (attitude), the productive skill competence of speaking and receptive skills of reading comprehension and listening comprehension along with cultural competences. For instance, in terms of cultural factors inside the classroom is present because the topic chosen to be performed it should be related to environments when English needs to be spoken. In terms of reading comprehension skill competence, students are in contact with their emotions and knowledge to interpret and perform a certain role. Speaking competences skills are also present since they are reading the scripted role-play aloud and they are understanding the message to the interlocutors. Listening skills competences are present when the interlocutor is listening actively receiving the message as they are interacting each other and eventually there should be an oral response. This practice can be tackled in all EFL, and ESL learners' background and teachers must learn how to contextualize and adjust these strategies concerning the importance to improve their teaching practices.

**CHAPTER VI  
CONCLUSIONS**

## 6.1 Summary of the main findings

Zuber-Skerritt (2021) posed Action Research as a form of collective self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice their own social or educational practices, as well as their understating of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out. The group of participants also known as sample can be any group with a shared concern. In addition, the approach of is only action research when it is collaborative, though it is important to realise that the action research of the group is achieved through the critically examined action of individual group members. (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988, 5).

The issue that was addressed in this action research was upon the communicative skills of a group of students from a private school in Chile. The speaking skills competences domain that English lessons had in the 9<sup>th</sup> graders was affected by the lack of self-confidence towards speaking English in front of their peers or the self-awareness for mispronounce certain words. This can be supported by comments such “I was scared at speaking English”, made by the majority of participants of this study when asked about their own perceptions from reading aloud in English. Consequently, as a supportive solution for the previous issue, this action research aimed at exploring the use of scripted role-plays in English to support the ability to produce connected speech in English when reading aloud. Thus, the contents of said scripted role-plays were elaborated in order to practice and master connecting words and phrases in English.

Regarding specific objective 1, to examine students' oral production of weak forms and linking words when reading scripted role-play aloud, it can be concluded that the results of this investigation show that students improved their oral production of connected speech significantly. First, this is proven by participants' percentages of success to the checklists carried out at the beginning and the end of the intervention. Before the intervention, the results indicated that most of the participants were not able to produce connected speech as it was expected . After the intervention, once the strategies of Weak Forms and Linking Words were implemented, participants demonstrated not only to be able to read the scripted role-plays aloud but also aware of the use of connected speech in English. Due to the fact both checklists were recorded before and after the intervention, participants also had the opportunity to listen to themselves, there was a general tendency of feeling proudness as positive towards their progress. For example, most of the participants reacted impressed and the comments reflected positive responses such as *I can't believe it is me... Thank you Miss*. Last, this clearly yields that participants were committed with the same task, they felt very encouraged to improve their speaking skills and also motivated to learn more about English language functions.

Concerning specific objective 2, to describe students' oral production progress related to their weak forms and linking words practiced through reading scripted role-play aloud, it can be concluded that field notes data highlighted the importance of recording all the aspects involved while the intervention was undertaken. Firstly, the communicative approach led to a positive response in participants due to the fact they were able to interact with their peers in real life situation contexts, supported by a scripted role-play and also practicing their speaking skills competences in pairs. For example, *I like this activity, I feel more comfortable by working with my classmate since I know them very well.* Secondly, the skill of self-correction was present in this study, students were aware of when linking clauses happen in order to the flow of words were not interrupted. The environment in the classroom was collaborative among the group work, participants reacted very cooperative when their peers could have mispronounced words, for instance participant 1 went back to correct the word or phrase as soon as was able to be said correctly by being supported with the group of students. Thirdly, the term of metalinguistic was present in this action research, participants shared their thoughts about the language and how sound as fluent as possible while speaking English and eliciting their own explanation to their peers to understand the theory behind the use of Weak Forms and Linking Words. Lastly, these data suggest that oral production of connected speech can be achieved through the practice of reading scripted role-play in English aloud in pairs.

Regarding specific objective 3, to identify students' perceptions towards the use of scripted role-play to support their oral production of linking words and weak forms, it can be concluded that this study has found that generally the matter of implementing features of connected speech in English in lessons can be as attractive as productive in EFL and ESL learners. Particularly, this study found that participants struggled with foreign language anxiety, due to the fear of public speaking, their self-confidence in hand by their self-awareness, specifically when they were not known of how pronounce certain words in English. However, once the intervention concluded, participants were able to notice that their oral production of English significantly improved. In addition, the group of 9<sup>th</sup> graders sheds lights on the innovative teaching methods implemented during the sessions and how their learning outcomes were consolidated.

## **6.2 Personal Reflections**

How can the use of scripted role-plays support 9th graders' connected speech when reading aloud in English? The reading aloud scripted role-plays supported the connected speech in English to the group of freshmen students in high school from a private school in Chile. It was not only a support to read fluently but also, students were precise and certain of feeling more comfortable and confident when it comes about reading in front of audience. In addition, the group of teenagers mentioned that the most

meaningful moments were when it came practicing in pairs because they were able to feedback to each other if they produced mispronounced words in English. The action research was a success in terms of how effective this strategy was in the group of 30 students.

In terms of connected speech, the group of 9th graders were very interested about the theory behind phonology and phonetics in English; these in hand by the role play strategy students agreed that all the contexts were fruitful in terms that they can face those scenarios in the future, and they already know how to interact with English speakers.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

Although the current study is based on a small sample of participants, the findings suggest the insights gained may have important implications for teachers willing to implement innovative teaching strategies by using dynamic activities to expose students to the language of English. Also, it is highly regarded that well-distributed group work encouraged in the classroom, for this allows learners to work collaboratively within their peers as well as developing social skills of which aspects of spoken delivery result in communicating meaningful in class. In addition, further research in this field would be of great help in EFL and ESL students oral production of English when reading aloud, materials and instruments used in this action research can be adjusted into any school context, university context and/or any group of EFL and ESL learners.

As a conclusion, the findings of this study have a number of important implications for future practice, as well as for updating the current Chilean Curriculum of Education in the matter of teaching English as a subject in the Chilean classrooms with the pursuit of meaningful learning in our students.

**CHAPTER VII  
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**CHAPTER VIII  
APPENDIX**

## 8.1 Appendix A. Checklist

Summary of Connected Speech Process				Date : Checklist:		
WEAK FORMS				Production:		
1.-	ARTICLE	"a"	/ə/	I've got <b>a</b> new dress	YES	NO
2.-	ARTICLE	"an"	/ən/	That's <b>an</b> apple	YES	NO
3.-	AUXILIARY VERB	"been"	/bɪn/	Have you <b>been</b> here long?	YES	NO
4.-	AUXILIARY VERB	"was"	/wəz /	It <b>was</b> a beautiful day.	YES	NO
5.-	CONJUNCTION	"and"	/ənd /	We need some salt <b>and</b> pepper.	YES	NO
6.-	CONJUNCTION	"as"	/əz/	It was <b>as</b> big as an elephant.	YES	NO
7.-	PREPOSITION	"at"	/ət/	She works <b>at</b> night.	YES	NO
8.-	PREPOSITION	"from"	/frəm /	That book's <b>from</b> Julia.	YES	NO
9.-	MISCELLANEOUS	"just"	/dʒəst/	He <b>just</b> cried	YES	NO
10.-	MISCELLANEOUS	"so"	/sə/	<b>So</b> don't!	YES	NO

LINKING WORDS			Production:	
11.-	FINAL VOWEL + INITIAL CONSONANT	We got into <u>n</u> ational costume	YES	NO
12.-	FINAL CONSONANT + INITIAL CONSONANT	Is the classroom <u>b</u> ig enough?	YES	NO
13.-	FINAL CONSONANT + INITIAL VOWEL	Please, hand <u>o</u> t these worksheets	YES	NO
14.-	LINKING [W] OCCURS AFTER /əv/	Showing, show it	YES	NO
15.-	FINAL VOWEL [j] + INITIAL VOWEL AFTER /ɔɪ/	Enjoying, enjoy it	YES	NO

**8.2 Appendix B. Field notes**

	<b>Observations recorded</b>	<b>Analysis</b>
<p><b>Participants' oral production progress.</b></p>		

### 8.3 Appendix C. Focus group

#### Focus Group

1.- Before the intervention, what was your perception of your reading aloud in English? Has it changed? How?

2.- After the intervention, what is your perception about practicing scripted role-plays? Did it help you to improve your oral production and expressions in English?

3.- What did you learn from the strategy of "Linking words" and "Weaking forms"?

4.- Have you noticed any differences in your reading aloud performance in English after learning the Linking words and Weaking forms strategy by practicing through scripted role-plays? Mention what they would be.

5.- Did you enjoy learning about linking words and weaking forms?  
forms"?