

## THE EFFECTS OF SHADOWING TECHNIQUE ON NON-ENGLISH MAJORS' SPEAKING SKILLS AT HPU2: AN ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

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**Abstract:** *This research analyzes the impact of shadowing, the oral repeating of what is stated shortly after the language spoken, on speaking ability of Vietnamese non-English majors. The experiment was done with 60 freshmen at HPU2 in Vietnam who underwent thirteen-week therapy. The data collection comprised of the outcome of speaking exams and questionnaire. The findings revealed that speaking plus shadowing has a favorable influence on speaking ability. In addition, the findings suggested the participants' favorable view of the effectiveness of shadowing on English speaking skills enhancement. This research consequently suggests that shadowing strategies ought to be viewed as an effective supplemental strategy for training English speaking skills in EFL environment.*

**Keywords:** *Shadowing, non-English majors, speaking skills.*

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

In this day and age, English has become an international language. It is spoken, learnt, and understood even in those countries in which it is not a native language. Many sectors including medicine, engineering, education, advanced studies, business, technology, banking, computing, tourism, and other fields all rely heavily on English (Kadamovna, 2021). In Vietnamese context, English is also of great importance as according to MOET (2018), English is a compulsory subject in the new general education curriculum starting from grade 3 to grade 12. The core content of this subject helps students form and develop communication skills through exposing listening, speaking reading, writing skills and language knowledge (phonetics, vocabulary, and grammar). The main focus of English in the new general education program is the communicative language teaching This approach emphasizes the formation and development of students' communication ability.

Communication methods share some similarities with the learner-centered approach in

education. This mainstream regulates the teaching activities of teachers and the learning activities of students. It is undeniable that communication will not take place unless people can express the language to their partner. As a result, as years by, the role of speaking skill in English education has more emphasized than before. The importance of speaking effectively lies in its tremendous potential to induce change in language learning. Because of speaking, students can communicate with other students in our country or different countries to share ideas and opinions. Learning the speaking skill is the most important aspect of learning a second or foreign language and success is measured based on the ability to perform a conversation in the language (Nunan, 1995). Sharing the same notion, Ur (1996) lists speaking as one of the most important skills of all the four language skills because individuals who learn a language are referred to as the speakers of that language.

The basic purpose of English language instruction is to prepare pupils to speak effectively and properly in English. Language learners, on the other hand, seem to be unable to communicate easily and correctly as a result of a lack of comprehension in this area (Davies & Pearse, 2000). Many students claim that they have spent years learning English yet are still unable to speak it properly and clearly (Bueno, Madrid, & McLaren, 2006). For over 5 years, we have been teaching English as a foreign language to Vietnamese students. Despite the fact that they, like many other children in their circumstances, can read and write rather well, they are victims of a conventional education that did not put a strong importance on listening and speaking skills. To learn to speak, students must put in a lot of practice time. Teachers might model structures for their students and ask them to repeat them.

Shadowing method, also known as parody speech technique, was developed in the late 1950s under the term Shadowing Speech. This approach is widely regarded as one of the most successful methods in assisting students in developing all areas of speaking abilities, including Pronunciation, Prosody, and Rhythm. Simultaneously, this strategy assists learners in increasing their vocabulary, improving communication fluency, forming an impression of sentence patterns, and promoting autonomy in learning.

Several educational specialists have recently conducted studies on shadowing and its usefulness for foreign language acquisition in general and skills instruction in particular. However, much remains unclear regarding how to effectively assist language learners enhance their speaking abilities using the shadowing strategy. This study contributes to the research literature by filling gaps in the teaching practice of EFL speaking skills and revealing the effects of shadowing on students' speaking performance.

To fulfill the purpose of the study, the survey was seeking to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent does shadowing technique improve non-English majors' speaking performance?
2. What are non-English majors' attitudes towards shadowing technique?

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

## **2.1. Speaking skills**

Speaking is one of the four macro skills necessary for effective communication in any language, particularly when speakers are not using their mother tongue. Speaking is a very important skills, it helps people in communication to be able to convey their meaning or message to others. Speaking is a macro language skill that is actively used to convey messages and meanings (Asakereh, 2016). It can be seen that speaking skill is a language related to communication. It means that speaking is the skill of using language appropriately to express someone's ideas, opinions or feelings in order to provide or obtain information and knowledge from others.

In this current study, speaking is defined as the learner's ability to express himself/herself orally, coherently, fluently and appropriately in a given meaningful context.

## **2.2. The concept of shadowing**

Defined by Lambert (1992), shadowing entails a paced tracking of the heard speech in parrot style, the word-for-word repetition of a piece of information in one language, through the headphones. Originally, shadowing is a technique used by cognitive psychologists and neuropsychologists, and utilized as a method to improve simultaneous interpretation skills. However, Hamada (2011) argues that Lambert's (1992) definition does not encompass cognitive processes, a significant concept of shadowing. He claims that shadowing should be deemed as "an active and highly cognitive activity" (p. 140) rather than the auditory repetition. Jaramillo & Isaza (2016) describe shadowing as a method to train interpreters in Europe, and it is widely applied in Japan to improve English skills nowadays.

Seo & Takeuchi (n.d) shared the same opinion when it comes to the use of shadowing among the simultaneous interpreters. They stated that shadowing was originally regarded as a technique for training concurrent interpreters, but it is adapted in language classrooms by high school students and teachers. They believed that this practice enables learners to develop their mental resources and memorial abilities.

From the above definitions, we can define shadowing is an advanced learning technique where one listens to a text in your target language, and then speaks it aloud at the same time as the native speaker.

## **2.3 Related studies**

### ***2.3.1 Previous studies overseas***

In the early 1990s, Lambert promoted shadowing as a useful technique in the early stages of interpretation training, albeit admitting that its use in training was contentious. Shadowing did not grab the attention of language teachers until the present decade and was introduced into the teaching of foreign languages. Suzuki (2007) observed that using the shadowing method improved students' listening comprehension abilities. This is consistent with the findings of Chung (2010), Hamada (2018), and Sumarsih (2017). The research also indicates a measurable change in the participants' pronunciation, which may be linked to the efficiency of the shadowing approach utilized in the study employing an action plan that

generated phonological awareness among learners (Ulfa & Fatimah, 2019). Several researchers (Hamada, 2018 and Yahya, 2021) found that show that employing shadowing tactics improves pupils' speaking abilities. Shadowing has been shown in a few situations to augment the benefits of lengthy reading (Kadota, 2012).

### ***2.3.2 Previous studies in Vietnam***

Recently, some academics in our nation have paid attention to the usefulness of the shadowing strategy in developing students' speaking abilities. Some researchers have highlighted the relevance of the shadowing strategy in optimizing classroom activities for teaching pronunciation to learners (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2019; Ha 2020; Le, 2021). Nguyen et al. (2020) propose that using shadowing in interpreting lessons may improve interpreting fluency. To date, hardly has the effectiveness of shadowing technique in improving students' speaking been examined in the context of Vietnam in general and at Hanoi Pedagogical University 2 in particular. Such gaps have been the motivation for exploring EFL Vietnamese students' English-speaking improvement in the present study.

## **2.4. Methods**

### ***2.4.1 Pedagogical setting & participants***

This study was conducted in two English classes at HPU2 where the medium of instruction was English. 60 non-English majors were invited as participants in the study. They have no prior experience with shadowing technique for the purpose of developing speaking skills. With regard to ethical considerations, a consent form was prepared and explained to the participants to be signed by them. To ensure the confidentiality of the participants' identities, pseudonyms were used for them instead of their real names throughout the whole period of research. In addition, the researchers informed them that their participation would not have any advantageous concern on their grade in the course.

### ***2.4.2 Design of the study***

In this study, an action research design was used. Classroom Action Study is research aimed to aid teachers in determining what is occurring in their classrooms and then using that knowledge to create future adjustments. The selection of action research may have a significant influence on student performance development and may even signal open-ended outcomes. When teachers engage in action research, they may become more aware of the gaps between their beliefs and practices and what their pupils are thinking, feeling, and learning. The teacher served as the researcher in this study, which used action research. For a variety of reasons, action research is the best research method for this topic. To begin, both educators and students have shown an interest in studying and teaching English speaking, as well as improving students' English-speaking skills.

Furthermore, in addition to various other teaching tactics, the flipped classroom's unique viewpoint may be a good approach of meeting expectations. Second, action research is often carried out both outside and within the classroom. As a consequence, it is an ideal match for the current environment of the research. Third, action research is meant to affect

change while also serving as a starting point for future research. The study's findings on the influence of flipped classes on English speaking will result in some positive suggestions for teachers to assist students enhance their speaking talents.

### **2.4.3 Data collection & analysis**

#### **Instruments**

Students were required to complete a test at the beginning of the project and another at the end. The tests were designed using the figures to aid instructors in assessing their students' speaking skills, with an emphasis on appropriate vocabulary, accuracy, fluency, and pronunciation. They were marked by another teacher to ensure their validity. The purpose of this study is to compare the usage and improvement of shadowing technique after the completion of the intervention (not experiment).

Additionally, the notes utilized are gathered for comparison. The same pre-and post-tests were administered under timed conditions using audio recorder, and students were required to finish during class time. In order to evaluate and analyze the pre-and post-tests, the researcher adopted a Rubric for Assessing Speaking Performance – Level B1 introduced by Cambridge. This rubric is attached to the Appendix in order that more information can be provided.

The rubric evaluated subjects' responses on four different criteria: Vocabulary and Grammar, Pronunciation, Discourse management and Interactive communication. These features were the standards for scoring learners' writing abilities, and each of these features was marked on a scale valued from 0 to 5 points. To ensure the reliability and validity of the test, the researchers gave the same tasks to four English teachers to score it based on the adopted rubric. Based on the evaluation of each teacher, the adopted rubric was proven to be reliable and valid for scoring the pre- and post-tests.

In order to identify the participants' perception on shadowing in English, a survey was conducted at the end of the experiment. Participants were asked to provide information about their background details and perception on the effectiveness of shadowing and preferences toward shadowing.

#### **Data analysis**

The quantitative data from the pre-tests, post-tests, and questionnaires will be analyzed using SPSS version 26 for meaningful comparison in order to determine the efficiency of using shadowing method and students' success in acquiring speaking skills. The questionnaires were then analyzed by calculating the percentage of each aspect.

## **2.5. Results and Discussion**

### **2.5.1 Research questions 1: To what extent does shadowing technique improve non-English majors' speaking performance?**

#### **2.5.1.1 The students' overall speaking performance**

**Table 1.** The result of pretest and posttest

|                       | Pretest | Posttest |
|-----------------------|---------|----------|
| <b>N</b>              | 60      | 60       |
| <b>Mean</b>           | 3.26    | 3.54     |
| <b>Std. Deviation</b> | 0.36    | 0.62     |
| <b>Min.</b>           | 2.0     | 2.25     |
| <b>Max.</b>           | 4.0     | 4.5      |

According to the table, the mean scores for the pretest and posttest are 3.26 and 3.54 respectively. Furthermore, the standard deviation values obtained were 0.36 and 0.62. Clearly, there is a statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-tests of 60 pupils. This demonstrates an improvement in speaking abilities following exposure to shadowing techniques.

#### 2.5.1.2 The students' speaking performance in terms of speaking assessment criteria

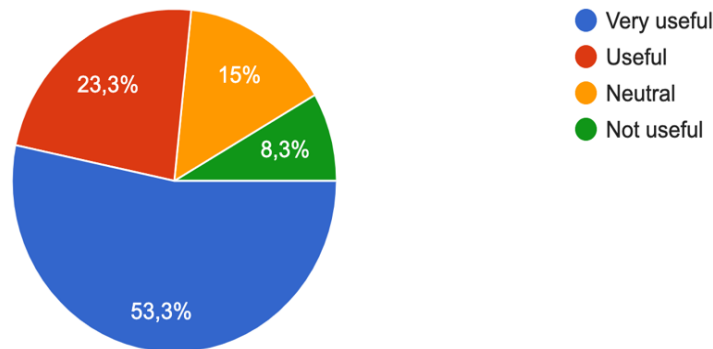
**Table 2.** The result of pretest and posttest in terms of speaking assessment criteria

|                           | Pre-test |                |      |      | Post-test |                |      |      |
|---------------------------|----------|----------------|------|------|-----------|----------------|------|------|
|                           | Mean     | Std. Deviation | Min. | Max. | Mean      | Std. Deviation | Min. | Max. |
| Grammar and Vocabulary    | 3.22     | 0.44           | 2.25 | 4.0  | 3.57      | 0.64           | 2.25 | 4.5  |
| Discourse management      | 3.25     | 0.42           | 2.0  | 4.0  | 3.52      | 0.79           | 2.0  | 4.5  |
| Pronunciation             | 3.24     | 0.46           | 2.0  | 4.25 | 3.5       | 0.65           | 2.0  | 4.5  |
| Interactive communication | 3.32     | 0.56           | 1.75 | 4.25 | 3.58      | 0.64           | 2.0  | 4.75 |

From the table, it can be seen that there is a difference in statistics of four speaking assessment criteria between pretest and posttest. The means of pretests are all below 3.3 when those of posttests are over 3.5. Especially, students' grammar and vocabulary score show the most improvement as it increases from 3.22 to 3.57. Pronunciation experiences the lowest improvement according to the means of pre- and post-tests.

#### 2.5.2 Research questions 2: What are non-English majors' attitudes towards shadowing technique?

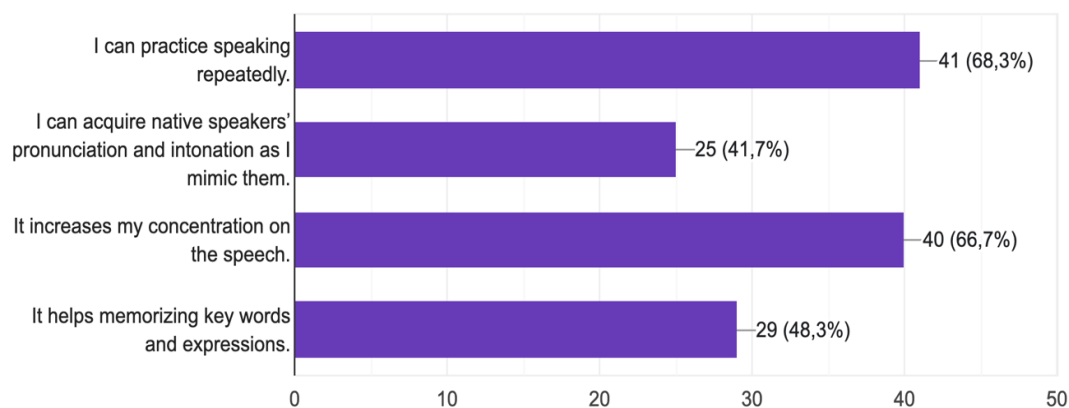
##### 2.5.2.1 Students' perceptions of shadowing method's effects



*Figure 2. Students' perceptions of shadowing method's effects*

This graph depicts students' perspectives on the importance of shadowing in improving speaking skills. Over 70% of students agree that the shadowing approach is extremely beneficial or useful for improving their speaking skills. This outcome exceeded my expectations. Because shadowing is an unusual strategy, it was anticipated that participants would decline to utilize it when they practiced with it. Surprisingly, this result motivates the author to assume that shadowing has an influence on students' speaking ability. 8.3% believe shadowing is ineffective. Perhaps they discovered a beneficial new approach for themselves, or perhaps they have no clue how to respond to my query. A tiny minority of participants did not provide feedback.

#### *2.5.2.2 Students' opinions of the reasons why shadowing method is useful for them*



*Figure 3. Students' opinions of the reasons why shadowing method is useful for them*

Figure 3 depicts the grounds behind their perspective as well as the number of responses. Shadowing boosted their speaking abilities for two main reasons: "I can practice speaking frequently," and "it boosts my concentrate on the speech." Unfortunately, only a small proportion of pupils (n=25) claimed to learning native speakers' intonation and

pronunciation.

#### 2.5.2.3 Students' admission to keep practicing shadowing

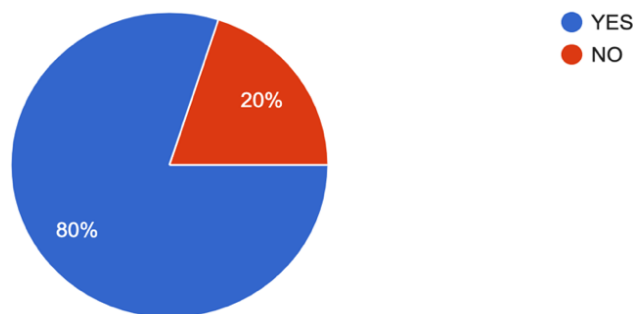


Figure 4. Students' admission to keep practicing shadowing

The pie chart depicts the likelihood that students will continue shadowing in the future. Clearly, 80% of students want to use this strategy in future practice to improve their English-speaking talents. Shadowing has been shown to increase participants' speaking skills in areas such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency, 20% are apprehensive to continue using the shadowing technique. Perhaps they discovered a different method that worked for them.

#### 4.3 Discussion

The current research confirms McLaughlin's (1978) theory of second language acquisition, which states that the process of learning a second language starts with stuttering language teaching, but that with time and adequate management, students will be able to automate the whole training process.

The study's findings and results demonstrated that utilizing shadowing method (conversation shadowing technique) in teaching speaking leads to improved oral exam performance of language learners. The findings of this study accord with those of Chung (2010), Hamada (2018), and Yahya (2021) who indicate how shadowing approach facilitates learning of appropriate dialogue. They have also said that speech shadowing is an experimental approach in which people quickly repeat speech after hearing it (usually through earphones).

Furthermore, the data indicate that shadowing strategies have been applied in the teaching of English as a second or foreign language. As a consequence of concentrating on shadowing approach in speaking teaching rather than pure instruction, the findings of this research may contribute to a link between language training and language usage.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

Recognizing the importance of speaking ability as well as the students' actual scenario of learning speaking in the researchers' environment, the researchers performed a study to assist the students in improving their speaking skills. The authors found a wide range of possibilities for non-English majors in practical teaching scenarios. First, the research



demonstrated that the shadowing strategy improved students' speaking abilities. Learners may highly recognize and retain the similarities and differences in actual communication by using a novel teaching strategy centered on articulation. As a result, they were able to reduce the uncertainty in the pronunciation of several consonants and sounds that were almost similar to convey. Second, the shadowing approach gave young learners the confidence to practice and enunciate their words in a more comfortable and enjoyable manner. It also provides light on strategies that may be used both within and outside of the classroom. Finally, students were able to improve their feeling of naturalness in communication, allowing them to actively participate in other classroom activities and find enjoyment in the shadowing approach.

Obviously, there were some limitations to the research. The sample size was relatively small, which influenced the research's findings and the extrapolation of the whole study to encompass additional groups of participants with different characteristics. Learner differences were also not taken into account. Furthermore, the research was unable to evaluate the role of other components in the process of implementing new teaching strategies, such as learners' personal characteristics or learning autonomy beyond class. As a result, the results of this research are limited to the investigation's instructional setting.

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## ẢNH HƯỞNG CỦA VIỆC ÁP DỤNG KỸ THUẬT SHADOWING TỚI KỸ NĂNG NÓI CỦA SINH VIÊN KHÔNG CHUYÊN Ở TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC SƯ PHẠM HÀ NỘI 2: MỘT NGHIÊN CỨU HÀNH ĐỘNG

**Tóm tắt:** Nghiên cứu đã phân tích tác động của nói nhại đối với khả năng nói tiếng Anh của sinh viên Việt Nam. Nghiên cứu được thực hiện trên 60 sinh viên năm thứ nhất trong 13 tuần. Dữ liệu thu thập bao gồm kết quả kiểm tra nói và bảng câu hỏi. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy luyện nói kết hợp với nói nhại có tác động tích cực đến khả năng nói. Ngoài ra, kết quả còn cho thấy những người tham gia có quan điểm tích cực về hiệu quả của kỹ thuật nói nhại trong việc cải thiện kỹ năng nói tiếng Anh. Do đó, nghiên cứu này khuyến nghị rằng chiến lược nói nhại nên được coi là một chiến lược bổ sung hiệu quả để rèn luyện kỹ năng nói tiếng Anh trong môi trường tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ.

**Từ khóa:** Kỹ thuật nói nhại, sinh viên không chuyên, kỹ năng nói.