

# THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SHADOWING TECHNIQUE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING

## ỨNG DỤNG KỸ THUẬT SHADOWING VÀO QUÁ TRÌNH DẠY VÀ HỌC TIẾNG ANH

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**Abstract:** *In teaching and learning English, learners have always been encouraged to fulfill and master four skills namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Undoubtedly, both listening and speaking skills are the most fundamental ones in the English learning process. There are numerical methods to facilitate English learning and teaching to be worldwide acknowledged for every single skill but the shadowing technique is one of the latest terms that helps develop the language learners listening, speaking, and potentially reading skills simultaneously. In this paper, an overview of the shadowing method will be described as a tool to assist English learning and teaching procedures, especially for listening and speaking skills. Also, this paper ends with a discussion on how to implement shadowing techniques in EFL classroom settings.*

**Keywords:** *Shadowing technique, listening and speaking skills, EFL classroom settings.*

**Classification code:** 1

**Tóm tắt:** *Trong dạy và học tiếng Anh, người học luôn được khuyến khích thành thạo bốn kỹ năng nghe, nói, đọc, viết. Hai kỹ năng nghe và nói đều là những kỹ năng nền tảng nhất trong quá trình học tiếng Anh. Có nhiều phương pháp để thúc đẩy cho việc học và dạy tiếng Anh đã được ứng dụng trên toàn thế giới cho từng kỹ năng riêng biệt, nhưng phương pháp “shadowing” là một trong những thuật ngữ mới nhất và đầy tiềm năng hiện nay để góp phần phát triển đồng thời các kỹ năng nghe, nói và đọc cho người học. Trong bài báo này, tổng quan về phương pháp “shadowing” sẽ được mô tả như một công cụ hỗ trợ quá trình học và dạy tiếng Anh, đặc biệt là cho các kỹ năng nghe và nói. Ngoài ra, bài báo cũng đưa ra các phương thức ứng dụng kỹ thuật “shadowing” vào thực tiễn các lớp học ngôn ngữ tiếng Anh.*

**Từ khóa:** *Kỹ thuật “shadowing”, kỹ năng nghe và nói, các lớp học ngôn ngữ tiếng Anh.*

**Mã phân loại:** 1

### 1. Introduction

Generally, learning and teaching English is a complicated task to do and it is noted that all English learners are expected to be able to master the four English skills. Among those skills, listening expertise is the most pivotal aptitude in learning English because listening is the first stage in acquiring and learning a language before the three other skills. There is no doubt when some language researchers suppose that from the early stage of language acquisition, learners will first start listening, talking, reading, and then writing, and listening skill is the essential bridge to facilitate the rest of the skills in foreign or second language learning [1] - [2]. Furthermore, there is also of the opinion that language learners need to be competent first in listening skills during a language learning process [3]. It is also found in several studies that listening which covers a complex process is the most challenging skill to contend with as a language learner [4] - [5]. Listening is not only the process of hearing what the speakers say but also the process of integrating

with the information that the speakers mention [6]. In the same line with this, Saricoban also partially agrees that listening is the ability comprising of identifying and understanding what speakers are saying which involves varied boundaries such as pronunciation, intonation, sentence and word stress, regional accent, grammar, and vocabulary to grasp its meaning. [1] Therefore, most of the students have difficulties with listening skills although various teaching listening methods have been applied in English language learning, but have not provided much significant improvement on learners' listening skills yet. It is an urgent demand to help the learners enhance their listening skills by applying different teaching methods to instruct listening skills for the learners to easily catch what the speakers mean. The shadowing technique has been recently deployed and proved as an alternative in the teaching and learning process of listening. Shadowing in this setting requires the students to vocalize the speech that they hear little by little to access meanings while shadowing. The second stage in language learning

and teaching is speaking expertise, which is also one of the most significant current discussions to be mastered by language learners. Speaking is considered a fundamental language skill that requires learners to address their ideas and senses in oral language. [7] It is noted that speaking is not an easy task and they require many efforts to conduct proper words and utterances in English. To become good English users, learners should be taught and mastered some special features of oral communication which are pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and to name but a few. Thus, instructors need to help their learners understand these factors in oral communication by using shadowing. Thanks to this method, the teacher can make students active in their oral communication practice in English, then, therefore, enhance their ability to pronounce new words correctly as well as deliver efficient intonation and stress. Among these elements, pronunciation is considered as the most vital aspect that should receive more attention. In the same line, pronunciation is claimed to be very crucial to improve speaking skills and it also gives a significant influence on determining the utterance meaning [8]. In teaching speaking skill, pronunciation refers to all those elements of speech that help for easy intelligibility flow of speech, involving segmental articulation, rhythm, and intonation [9]. The shadowing technique has a great contribution to effective pronunciation improvement. Additionally, the learners also somehow have gained a significant increase of the motivation after being instructed to use shadowing to learn English especially in learning pronunciation which is a very challenging part for second language learners. Also, shadowing practice exercises enable classroom settings more intriguing and aspirational in pronunciation correction and then, therefore, facilitate learners' competence in English speaking skills.

## **2. Shadowing technique**

### **2.1. Definition and types of Shadowing**

Shadowing has become an interesting topic in the English language teaching and learning field until now and this term has also received huge attention from linguists. The shadowing technique has been defined by many researchers from different perspectives. Shadowing is a language training technique initially developed by the American Professor Alexander Arguelles, which means "learners attempt to repeat or to shadow what they hear as quickly and accurately as they hear it" [10]. Since the early 1980s, shadowing has

been applied to English teaching and learning in Japan and China and it somehow has gained a great of achievements in teaching and learning English. Back in the day in 1973, Marslen-Wilson considered shadowing as a task for learners to repeat the speech when they hear it. In other words, when the audio has an utterance, the learners will repeat it before they have heard it all. [11] Lambert (1992) also defined shadowing as "a paced, parrot-style auditory tracking task, conducted with headphones" [12]. Other than that, Tamai (1997), one of the pioneers of shadowing research in EFL contexts defined shadowing as an active and highly cognitive activity in which learners track the speech they heard and vocalize it as clearly as they can while listening activity simultaneously incurs [13]. In the same line with this, it is also stated that "shadowing is a high cognitive action rather than a mere automatic memory action or parroting and it requires listening and speaking competencies to function at the same time to be effective in improving his/her skills in listening comprehension, speaking, and conversational activity" [14].

Additionally, the shadowing training technique has also been defined as the combination of different skills of listening, speaking as well as reading; and then these skills mutually facilitated to each other in the language learning and teaching acquisition. It is said that shadowing is the technique in which the listeners follow the speakers on the CD or recorder like a shadow or an echo and then reproduce words or phrases right after listening to a chunk of meaningful English without looking at the text [15]. Also, Kadota & Tamai (2004) stated that shadowing is defined as "an act or task of listening in which the learner tracks the target speech and repeats it immediately as exactly as possible without looking at a text" [16]. Not only agreed with other researchers, but shadowing also allows both listening and repeating occur at the same time when the speakers say exactly what they are hearing on video, CD, or MP3 by looking at or without looking at the material script if they can follow the native speaker without any difficulties. [17] Furthermore, it is pointed out that shadowing enables the learners to reproduce the heard speech within a short time without delay. In this shadowing training exercise, the learners' listening comprehension (receptive skill) and reproduction skills (speaking) are highlighted [18] – [19]. Moreover, the shadowing technique also has a great contribution to enhance all the skills of

listening, speaking, and reading by allowing students to listen to a recorded text, discuss what they hear, then listen to the recording while reading the text, and finally read along with the recording themselves without a record. This application of shadowing is aimed at fostering the mutual construction of meaning through multiple repetitions, summaries, retellings, and collaborative talk [20].

Though the shadowing technique has been clarified by numerical researchers, its classification has not received enough attention in the studies. It is noticeable that shadowing has been categorized into different types depending on the skills that are being conducted in the researches. Murphey claimed that there are varieties of shadowing reckoned in English language learning and teaching [21]. There are 5 kinds noted in the list of shadowing techniques:

1. Lecture shadowing: Listeners shadow a speaker or a recorded text silently in their mind when listening to a lecture.

2. Reading shadowing: A person reads a passage when his or her partner shadows.

3. Conversational shadowing: Listeners listen and shadow each other in a conversation.

4. Complete / listening shadowing: every word or every sentence that a speaker utters

5. Interactive shadowing: After hearing and shadowing the speech, selected information, questions or comments are added like a natural conversation.

On the other hand, shadowing is concluded to be classified according to the speed, involving “full shadowing” in which the listeners listen and shadow directly what the speaker says without pause whereas “slash shadowing” occurs when the listeners listen and repeat directly the speech with the pause. Additionally, based on using the script, shadowing can be classified into two major types, direct and indirect shadowing. In the case of direct shadowing, the listeners will listen and repeat directly without looking at the script and indirect shadowing is when the listeners listen and shadowing directly the speech by looking at the script [17].

## 2.2. Benefits of Shadowing

Shadowing researches have been conducted to examine the effectiveness of this new training method of English and it is proved that this latest technique has greatly contributed to English language learning and teaching, especially in

productive skill enhancement. There is no doubt when language learners are encountering difficulties in terms of listening and speaking skills. It is noted that the major reason making these skills to be hard to master is pronunciation. People around the world are born with different cultures as well as special instincts that influence their language uses. When English plays a role as a model international language, it definitely can be produced and recognized in a variety of accents or dialects. People can be identified as non-native or native speakers when they produce English in different ways regarding vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation. Many language researchers believe that learners’ pronunciation has been greatly improved thanks to the shadowing technique. It is informed that shadowing, a cognitive strategy that helps the learners’ pronunciation better [22] – [23]. Also, shadowing is revealed to be a method that gives a positive influence on learners’ pronunciation development by different mumbling activities to imitate and repeat heard speeches [24]. The finding of this benefit is continually reinforced by many linguistic researchers who considered shadowing activities to enable the learners to improve their articulation rates. Additionally, other perspectives in pronunciation such as word or sentence stress, intonation, and rhythm are thus efficiently enhanced [25]. Other than that, Murcia (1996) said that pronunciation training not only helps the learners produce like a native speaker as possible but also expects them to avoid fewer mistakes in spoken English [19].

As pronunciation has been improved, both listening and speaking skills are therefore enhanced. It is found that the benefits of shadowing were the improvements in multiple skills [26] – [27]. Shadowing is originally known as a training technique for interpreting skills that requires a high level of listening and speaking skills when learners must track the speech in one language carefully and simultaneously produce utterances in another language [28]. Lin (2009) proved that English listening comprehension and speaking ability are also reinforced in a study carried out with a group of Taiwanese EFL junior high school students [29]. Thanks to the pronunciation improvement from listening practice exercises when using the shadowing method, learners gradually tend to recognize the sounds and words easier, and then their listening comprehension skill is also facilitated. Hamada also informed that the shadowing method can help

speaking skills enhanced [30]. Additionally, in their study with 20 level A1 students from an Ecuadorian University Angel and Erika revealed that the more learners rehearse something new, the easier it becomes since they are exposed to practice language similarly day by day during a specific time. Remarkably, the learners have to gain more confidence when speaking English; and therefore their speaking fluency level also increased [31]. Hamza (2014) in his dissertation once reinforced that the students' speaking performance has been improved in terms of accuracy, fluency, and comprehensibility, and shadowing is believed to better the students' fluency the best. Also, he agreed with Angel M. and Erika V. that the shadowing technique in other words has increased learners' motivation in speaking English. The learners not only decrease the anxiety of making mistakes when speaking English but also feel motivated to be more self-confident to communicate in English fluently like the native speakers [17]. Other than that, many researchers are also of the same opinion that the knowledge of vocabulary and syntax has been increased. The shadowing activities enable the learners the vocabulary and spelling as well [32] – [33]. Not only benefit the learners in multiple skills enhancement but the instructors are also provided with numerical advantages. Firstly, the shadowing method can design and make the classroom activities more intriguing since the teacher can create competition to allow the students to compete to be winners so that they always try to listen carefully and then shadow the heard speeches exactly as they can to reduce the mistakes [19]. Additionally, the records are also well-prepared with authentic learning materials which allow the learners to immerse into the real language used in real-life situations, and thus enhance their memorized expressions which can be implemented in daily conversations in other similar circumstances.

Furthermore, shadowing is also not a time-consuming technique that can be easily incorporated into lessons and provide the students more opportunities to use English and develop multiple skills most effectively without too many pressures because they can self-monitor their learning and then self-correct at their speeds which are the most crucial factor for language learning acquisition. Also, the learners can self-control their English learning by searching on their learning materials that are appropriate to their specific demands or interests and then start

practicing this method to enhance their learning of English [34].

### **2.3. Shadowing technique implementation**

It can be seen that selecting appropriate learning materials is one of the most fundamental steps when the teacher decided to apply the shadowing method in English learning and teaching. First of all, materials can be varied ranging from the recordings of speeches with topics that will be taught in the curriculum to short pieces of audio or video with just one or two persons speaking only. It is noted that the speakers are not required to be native ones, but they should be proficient speakers of English. These recordings will be chosen upon difficulty levels according to the length, speed, and difficulty of the words or sentences. Levels of learners' language proficiency are also a factor to be considered when choosing the speeches. Unless the recordings are appropriate with learners' level, the learners have tended to be more distracted and demotivated. In other words, the students will get bored if the heard speeches are too easy or too harsh to follow. Additionally, these recordings of speech should also meet the learners' demands or interests. The piece of content should be intriguing and relevant to the learners. For instance, if the student expects to learn British, American, Australian, or Canadian accents, the appropriate audios must be taken into consideration. No matter what the learning materials are news reports, Ted Talks, podcasts, cartoons, movie episodes, TV shows, or Youtube videos, these contents should have transcripts since the benefits that they've provided the learners, especially for shadowing method implementation. In the following steps, the learners will listen to the audio twice at least. At this stage, they do not need to understand every single word or sentence but will be asked to think about the meaning of what the audio is about as well as to get used to the speaker's accent, rhythm, stress, and intonation. After the listening section, the next stage will be dedicated to learning the target contents. Learners will be engaged in vocabulary learning by checking pronunciation with the instructor and then checking word meaning individually or in pairs. Furthermore, at the same time, they also individually work on comprehension and key grammar checks with bilingual scripts. At this stage, target sentences that are consisting of complex grammatical items or sentences, as well as sentence meanings that are difficult to interpret, will also be reviewed with the

assistance of the instructor. This procedure was clearly described in Hamada's research in 2015. [12]. After the learners finish learning the content, they may go directly to the shadowing practice section. At this stage, the learners are asked to listen to the audio and try to repeat what the speaker says as quickly and as accurately as possible. It is noted that the instructor may require the learners to mimic the speaker's voice with or without the transcript, depending on the difficulty levels of audio and the learners' language competency as well. In this shadowing section, if the learners are beginners or lower-intermediate English learners, they should be provided a transcript to read when they repeat the word or sentence. In case the learners are more advanced, they can move forward to the shadowing without the transcript. At this step, the learners start mumbling, which means that they shadow the incoming sounds as exactly as possible for at least five times or more. At the same time, the learners also reviewed the difficult sounds and sentence meanings. Once they have practiced and felt more confident after shadowing, there are various ways that the instructor may facilitate the English learning achievement. Firstly, the students can record their voices using a computer or smartphone. These audios allow the learners to listen back and then recognize if they make any mistakes so that they can self-correct themselves and better in different benefits. Thanks to this method, they can enhance their pronunciation and make themselves as native-like as possible. Other than that, their fluency in speaking English is also reinforced, which greatly contributes to the learners' confidence to speak English more efficiently. Furthermore, the learners who are not good at listening will practice listening again and again and remake the heard speeches, which improves not only listening skills but also long-term memory for the knowledge of vocabulary and grammar patterns.

### 3. Conclusion

Shadowing is the latest technique that has provided multiple supports for English language learners. Thanks to the shadowing method, English learners are confident and motivated to speak English more efficiently and fluently. Pronunciation is the most difficult part that English language learners are facing in their language learning; however, the shadowing training has made pronunciation boundaries easier to approach. Additionally, the shadowing method also boosts the learners' listening skills which are

considered one of the most challenging skills to master when learning English. There are many benefits that the learners have achieved from the shadowing method, especially for listening, speaking, and potentially reading skills. The reading skills in accordance with the shadowing method have not received a lot of attention from linguistic researchers; thus, it is recommended that more studies will be conducted to investigate how shadowing training influences reading skills. Other than that, other researches should also be carried out to examine the shadowing technique advantages with the listening skills, especially in terms of academic examinations such as IELTS, TOEFL, or TOEIC to name but a few. These upcoming studies will somehow reinforce this latest method's merits and then provide more opportunities for the instructors and learners to enhance their English language learning and teaching in the future □

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