

THE EFFECTS OF SHADOWING TECHNIQUES ON GRADE 11 STUDENTS' ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS IN A HIGH SCHOOL IN PHU THO PROVINCE

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Abstract: *This study investigated the effectiveness of shadowing techniques in enhancing the English speaking skills of Grade 11 students in rural Phu Tho province, Vietnam. Using a quasi-experimental design, the research compared an experimental group (n=20) receiving shadowing treatment with a control group (n=20) following traditional instruction over an 8-week period. Speaking performance was assessed using the Cambridge A2-level rubric, which evaluates five components: content, vocabulary, language usage, fluency, and pronunciation. Results revealed statistically significant improvement in the experimental group's overall speaking skills, with an 8.0% increase compared to the control group's 2.2% improvement ($t=3.016$, $p<0.05$). Component-wise analysis showed shadowing's strongest impact on pronunciation ($d=0.89$) and fluency development ($d=0.71$). Students expressed overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward shadowing, with 95% indicating a desire to continue using the method. The findings suggest that shadowing techniques provide an effective pedagogical approach for developing speaking skills in resource-constrained rural educational settings, offering practical solutions for authentic language exposure and skill development.*

Keywords: *learning strategy, rural education, shadowing techniques, speaking skills*

I. Introduction

English has emerged as the universal language in today's globalized world, playing a critical role in business, diplomacy, science, technology, and finance. English skills are essential for accessing global knowledge, enhancing abilities, and are vital for future education, employment, and expanding

social connections. However, mastering English - especially speaking skills and pronunciation - presents unique challenges in rural areas. Students' fluency and pronunciation accuracy are hindered by remote locations, limited access to quality language instruction, and a lack of meaningful English interaction opportunities.

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The overarching aim of this study is to significantly improve the English-speaking skills of Grade 11 students in the rural area of Ha Hoa, Vietnam, by strategically incorporating shadowing techniques into their language instruction. By implementing this innovative approach, which involves actively imitating and repeating audio recordings of native speaker speech, the research endeavors to equip rural students with practical spoken English abilities applicable to diverse real-world communicative situations and prepare them for future academic and professional pursuits.

To achieve this aim, the following research objectives are established: (i) to investigate the impact of shadowing techniques on Grade 11 students' English speaking skills, specifically examining improvements in content organization, vocabulary usage, language accuracy, fluency, and pronunciation; and (ii) to explore students' attitudes regarding shadowing exercises, particularly relevant given recent curriculum updates emphasizing speaking skills in English examinations.

II. Literature review

2.1. Speaking skills: Components and assessment framework

Speaking skills, as defined by Bygate (1987), encompass the ability to express oneself orally in a coherent, fluent, and appropriate manner within specific communicative contexts. Brown (2004) further elaborates that speaking involves the productive use of oral language to convey meaning through the integration of multiple linguistic and paralinguistic elements. For the purpose of this study, speaking skills are conceptualized as a complex competency comprising four key components that can be systematically assessed and improved:

Pronunciation refers to the accurate production of individual sounds, word

stress, and intonation patterns that facilitate comprehensible communication (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). This includes segmental features (consonants and vowels) and suprasegmental features (rhythm, stress, and intonation).

Fluency encompasses the smooth, natural flow of speech with appropriate pacing, minimal hesitations, and reduced dependency on fillers or lengthy pauses (Nation & Newton, 2009). It reflects the speaker's ability to maintain continuous communication without excessive interruptions.

Vocabulary involves the appropriate selection and use of lexical items that convey intended meaning accurately and effectively within specific contexts (Thornbury, 2002). This includes both receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge.

Language Usage encompasses grammatical accuracy, appropriate sentence structure, and correct morpho-syntactic patterns that support clear meaning transmission (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). This component reflects the speaker's command of English grammatical systems in spontaneous communication.

Content Organization represents the speaker's ability to structure ideas logically, maintain topic coherence, and convey meaningful information appropriate to the communicative context (Brown, 2004). This includes idea development, relevance, and discourse management skills.

These five components provide the comprehensive analytical framework for measuring improvements in students' speaking abilities through shadowing techniques, as they collectively determine communicative effectiveness in real-world interactions and align directly with the assessment criteria employed in this study.

2.2. An overview of shadowing techniques

2.2.1. Definition

McDonald (2005, p. 456) defines shadowing as a research method where a researcher closely observes a member of an organization over an extended period, acting as a figurative “shadow” and taking detailed field notes. However, in language acquisition contexts, shadowing carries a distinctly different meaning focused on oral language development.

Lambert (1992) describes shadowing in language learning as the immediate repetition of heard speech, where learners act like an “echo” to spoken content, engaging actively in real-time speech reproduction. Hamada (2014) emphasizes its pedagogical role as a training technique designed to improve learners’ oral proficiency through synchronized or slightly delayed repetition of authentic audio input. Tamai (2005) further clarifies that shadowing involves listening to target language input and attempting to repeat it as accurately as possible, either simultaneously or with minimal delay.

Working definition for this study: Based on the reviewed literature and the specific context of this research, shadowing technique is operationally defined as: *a language learning method in which Grade 11 students listen to authentic English audio materials and repeat the content aloud with minimal delay, focusing on accurate reproduction of pronunciation,*

rhythm, and intonation patterns, with the primary objective of developing speaking skills including pronunciation accuracy, fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and speaking confidence.

This working definition establishes the boundaries and focus of the current study, distinguishing it from observational research methods and emphasizing its application as an interactive pedagogical tool for developing speaking skills in the Vietnamese rural educational context.

2.2.2. Types of shadowing techniques

Building upon the working definition established above, various scholars have categorized shadowing techniques using different classification frameworks. Understanding these typologies is essential for selecting the most appropriate approach for specific learning contexts and objectives.

Hamada (2014) classifies shadowing methods based on cognitive processing approaches: Bottom-Up Shadowing, which requires learners to practice shadowing before acquiring comprehensive knowledge of the target language, focusing primarily on sound reproduction; and Top-Down Shadowing, which involves learners utilizing their existing language knowledge and contextual understanding before engaging in shadowing activities.

Tamai (2005) provides a more detailed classification based on implementation procedures, as presented in Table 1:

Table 1. Classification of Shadowing Techniques

Types	Procedure
Full shadowing	Articulate the same sounds almost simultaneously while listening to audio input
Delayed shadowing	Repeat the audio content after a brief pause (1-2 seconds), allowing processing time
Silent shadowing	Listen to the text and mentally repeat it without vocalization
Parallel reading	Read aloud while simultaneously listening to the audio, following the written text
Speed reading	Read aloud as quickly as possible, prioritizing speed over comprehension

(Adapted from Tamai, 2005)

Rationale for Delayed Shadowing Selection: This study specifically adopts delayed shadowing as the primary intervention method for several pedagogically sound reasons. First, delayed shadowing provides Grade 11 students in rural Vietnamese contexts with the necessary processing time to decode audio input before reproduction, making it more suitable for intermediate-level learners. Second, this approach balances cognitive challenge with accessibility, allowing students to focus on both pronunciation accuracy and meaning comprehension simultaneously. Unlike full shadowing, which might overwhelm students with limited authentic English exposure, or silent shadowing, which provides insufficient oral practice opportunities, delayed shadowing creates an optimal learning environment for developing speaking confidence while maintaining accuracy standards.

The implementation incorporates elements of both bottom-up processing (sound reproduction focus) and top-down processing (contextual understanding), addressing the comprehensive speaking skill development objectives outlined in this study's research framework.

III. Methodology

3.1. Research design

Quasi-experimental design was employed to investigate the impact of shadowing techniques on Grade 11 students' English speaking skills in rural Vietnam, Ha Hoa High School in Phu Tho province. This method is valuable in educational contexts where random assignment is impractical and ecological validity must be preserved. Intact classrooms were assigned to experimental and control groups, with pre-test and post-test assessments measuring improvements in pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and language usage, and content organization..

This approach maintained educational priorities while providing empirical evidence on shadowing effectiveness for students with limited exposure to authentic English communication.

3.2. Participants

The study included 40 11th-grade students from two Ha Hoa high school classes, who were selected based on comparable midterm English speaking test scores ranging from 5.0 to 7.5 on a 10-point scale. This selection process ensured that the experimental and control groups had similar baseline proficiency levels, strengthening the research design by controlling for initial differences that might affect results.

3.3. Data collection instruments

Both pre-test and post-test utilized identical assessment frameworks based on the Cambridge A2-level speaking rubric to ensure measurement consistency. Each test comprised two main components:

Task 1: Reading Aloud - Students read a 150-word passage within 3 minutes, allowing assessment of pronunciation accuracy and reading fluency under controlled conditions.

Task 2: Structured Interview - A 5-minute individual interview consisting of personal introduction (1 minute), picture description (2 minutes), and opinion sharing on familiar topics (2 minutes). This task evaluated vocabulary usage, spontaneous fluency, and content organization.

Assessment Criteria: Five equally-weighted components were evaluated using a 10-point scale:

- *Content* (0-10): Ability to identify and explain ideas coherently
- *Vocabulary* (0-10): Range, accuracy, and appropriateness of lexical choices
- *Language Usage* (0-10): Grammatical accuracy and sentence structure

- *Fluency* (0-10): Speech rate, pause frequency, and communication flow
- *Pronunciation* (0-10): Accuracy of sounds, word stress, and intonation

Total scores ranged from 0 to 50 points, with trained English teachers conducting independent assessments to ensure reliability.

Likert Scale Questionnaire:

A 7-item questionnaire (adapted from Gardner's AMTB, 2004) measured students' attitudes toward shadowing activities using a 5-point Likert scale: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), Strongly Agree (5).

Questionnaire Structure:

- *Interest and Engagement* (Items 1, 5): Students' perceived enjoyment and motivation
- *Skill Development* (Items 2, 3, 4, 6): Self-reported improvements in pronunciation, vocabulary, confidence, and fluency
- *Method Evaluation* (Item 7): Future usage intentions and overall effectiveness

Content Validity: Items were reviewed by two experienced English teachers to ensure clarity and cultural appropriateness for rural Vietnamese contexts.

3.4. Research treatment

The experimental group (Class 11A3) received instruction through shadowing techniques over an 8-week period. The intervention began with an introductory phase where students were taught the purpose, benefits, and basic procedures of shadowing using short, simple audio clips. During weeks 2-7, students participated in twice-weekly in-class shadowing sessions. These sessions involved listening to curriculum-aligned audio materials from the Global Success 11 coursebook, repeating sentences after short pauses, and mimicking native

pronunciation, rhythm, and stress. Teachers provided immediate feedback, while peer and pair shadowing activities encouraged collaborative learning. Evening online support sessions offered further pronunciation guidance and Q&A opportunities. Daily independent practice was also required, with students submitting recorded assignments via Padlet for personalized feedback. The materials progressed in complexity over time, from short dialogues to longer, more natural speech. In the final week, students completed a post-test, performed a final shadowing task, and filled out a Likert-scale questionnaire. This structured approach balanced in-class instruction and self-directed learning, gradually reducing support while increasing learners' independence. A total of 16 sessions covered four main topics: Health, Generation Gap, and Cities of the Future

3.5. Procedures for data collection

The data collection procedures involve systematic steps to gather relevant data for analysis:

a) **Pre-Test Administration:** Before the treatment, the pre-test is administered to both the experimental group (EG) and control group (CG) to assess their initial speaking skills. This assessment establishes a baseline for comparison.

b) **Post-Test Assessment:** Following the 8-week treatment period, the post-test is administered to both the EG and CG to assess their speaking skills after exposure to the shadowing techniques (EG) or the regular curriculum (CG). This assessment allows for a direct comparison of progress.

c) **Likert Scale Questionnaire:** The Likert scale questionnaire is distributed to both groups to collect data on students' attitudes toward the shadowing techniques assignments. Participants provide responses indicating their level

of agreement or disagreement with statements related to the assignments.

3.6. Data analysis

Data analysis included pre-test statistics comparing experimental and control groups' initial speaking abilities using t-tests. Treatment analysis tracked shadowing assignment completion rates and

Likert scale responses over 8 weeks. Post-test analysis used descriptive statistics and t-tests to assess improvement in speaking skills between groups. Questionnaire analysis calculated mean scores for attitude statements, with results visualized through charts and graphs comparing pre-test and post-test performance.

IV. Findings and discussion

4.1. Pre-test and post-test results

Overall Performance Comparison

Table 2. Pre-test results by group

Group	N	Highest Score	Lowest Score	Total Score	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Experimental	20	39.0	18.0	588	29.40	3.31
Control	20	35.0	20.0	552	27.60	3.24

Table 3. Post-test results by group

Group	N	Highest Score	Lowest Score	Total Score	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Experimental	20	44.0	20.0	635	31.75	3.88
Control	20	37.0	20.0	564	28.20	3.57

Note: Scores converted from 100-point to 50-point scale to align with Cambridge A2 rubric (5 criteria × 10 points each)

The experimental group demonstrated substantial improvement from pre-test (M=29.40) to post-test (M=31.75), representing an 8.0% increase. In contrast, the control group showed minimal progress from 27.60 to 28.20 (2.2% increase), indicating shadowing's clear effectiveness.

Component-wise Performance Analysis

Table 4. Speaking skills components analysis (Mean scores out of 10)

Component	Group	Pre-test	Post-test	Improvement	Cohen's d
Content	Experimental	5.85	6.30	+0.45	0.52
	Control	5.52	5.64	+0.12	0.15
Vocabulary	Experimental	5.90	6.45	+0.55	0.63
	Control	5.60	5.72	+0.12	0.14
Language Usage	Experimental	5.95	6.20	+0.25	0.34
	Control	5.68	5.76	+0.08	0.11
Fluency	Experimental	5.80	6.35	+0.55	0.71
	Control	5.52	5.64	+0.12	0.16
Pronunciation	Experimental	5.90	6.45	+0.55	0.89
	Control	5.28	5.44	+0.16	0.22

Key Findings

Pronunciation: Largest improvement (+0.55 points, d=0.89) confirms shadowing's effectiveness in developing

phonetic accuracy through native speaker imitation.

Vocabulary & Fluency: Both showed significant gains (+0.55 points

each), indicating shadowing's dual impact on lexical expansion and speech flow enhancement.

Content: Moderate improvement (+0.45 points) reflects better discourse organization through exposure to structured audio materials.

Language Usage: Smallest gain (+0.25 points) suggests grammatical accuracy requires extended intervention periods.

Statistical Significance:

Independent samples t-test revealed significant differences between groups'

Overall Response Distribution

Table 5. Questionnaire response summary (N=20)

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Normal	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
1. The method was interesting	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	8 (40%)	11 (55%)	4.50	0.61
2. Improved pronunciation	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (10%)	9 (45%)	9 (45%)	4.35	0.67
3. Increased vocabulary	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	3 (15%)	10 (50%)	6 (30%)	4.05	0.83
4. Increased speaking accuracy	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (20%)	8 (40%)	8 (40%)	4.20	0.77
5. Engaging activity	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (10%)	7 (35%)	11 (55%)	4.45	0.69
6. Improved fluency	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	11 (55%)	6 (30%)	4.10	0.79
7. Want to continue	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	6 (30%)	13 (65%)	4.60	0.60

Key Findings

High Engagement: 95% of students found shadowing interesting (Item 1), with 55% strongly agreeing. Similarly, 90% considered it engaging (Item 5), indicating successful student motivation.

Pronunciation Impact: 90% reported pronunciation improvement (Item 2), aligning with quantitative test results showing the largest gains in this component.

Speaking Accuracy: 80% felt more confident speaking English (Item 4), crucial for rural students who often lack speaking opportunities.

Future Implementation: 95% expressed desire to continue using shadowing (Item 7), suggesting sustainable motivation and perceived effectiveness.

post-test performance ($t=3.016$, $df=38$, $p<0.05$). The experimental group's 2.35-point improvement compared to the control group's 0.60-point gain demonstrates the effectiveness of shadowing for rural Vietnamese students' speaking development.

4.2. Questionnaire results

The questionnaire was administered to all 20 experimental group students to capture their perceptions of the shadowing intervention. Results demonstrate overwhelmingly positive attitudes across all measured dimensions.

Vocabulary and Fluency: 80% reported vocabulary expansion (Item 3) and 85% noted fluency improvement (Item 6), though with slightly more variation in responses.

Implications:

The consistently high mean scores (4.05-4.60) across all items, with standard deviations below 0.85, indicate strong consensus among students regarding shadowing's benefits. The absence of negative responses (strongly disagree/disagree categories had 0-1 students maximum) demonstrates universal acceptance of the method. These positive attitudes correlate strongly with the quantitative improvements observed in speaking test performance, reinforcing shadowing's effectiveness for rural Vietnamese learners.

4.3. Discussions

The findings provide robust evidence that shadowing techniques significantly enhance English speaking skills in rural Vietnamese contexts. The experimental group's 8.0% improvement (29.40 to 31.75 points) compared to the control group's 2.2% increase (27.60 to 28.20 points) demonstrates clear pedagogical effectiveness, with statistical significance confirmed ($t=3.016$, $p<0.05$).

Component-specific Analysis

Pronunciation showed the largest effect size ($d=0.89$), confirming Hamada's (2016) findings that shadowing's auditory-motor integration directly improves phonetic accuracy. The +0.55-point improvement reflects students' enhanced ability to reproduce native-like sound patterns through systematic imitation practice, consistent with Lambert's (1992) theoretical framework emphasizing real-time speech reproduction benefits.

Vocabulary and Fluency both improved by 0.55 points, indicating shadowing's dual benefits. Contextual vocabulary acquisition occurred naturally through authentic audio exposure, aligning with Nguyen and Nguyen's (2019) research on the effectiveness of shadowing for lexical development. Fluency improvements resulted from repeated practice with connected speech patterns, supporting Sugiarto et al.'s (2020) findings on rhythm and pacing enhancement.

Content organization improved moderately (+0.45 points), suggesting that exposure to structured discourse models helped students organize ideas more coherently during spontaneous communication tasks.

Language Usage showed the smallest improvement (+0.25 points), consistent with research indicating that grammatical accuracy requires longer intervention periods

and explicit instruction rather than implicit acquisition through shadowing alone.

Student Attitudes and Sustainability:

The overwhelmingly positive questionnaire responses (means 4.05-4.60) align with quantitative improvements, indicating a strong correlation between perceived effectiveness and actual performance gains. The 95% desire for continued shadowing use suggests sustainable motivation, crucial for long-term language development in resource-limited rural settings.

Practical Implications

These results support shadowing as a viable solution for rural English education challenges. The technique requires minimal technology (audio devices), can be implemented with existing curricula, and provides authentic language exposure typically unavailable in remote areas. The intervention's effectiveness across multiple speaking components makes it particularly valuable for comprehensive skill development.

V. Conclusion and recommendations

This quasi-experimental study demonstrates that shadowing techniques significantly improve Grade 11 students' English speaking skills in rural Vietnamese contexts, with particular effectiveness in pronunciation and fluency development. The 8.0% improvement in overall speaking performance, coupled with strong positive student attitudes, supports shadowing as a practical pedagogical intervention for resource-constrained educational settings.

Recommendations for Practice

For Educators: Integrate shadowing into regular English curricula through systematic progression from simple dialogues to complex discourse. Provide adequate teacher training on shadowing methodology and feedback techniques.

For Students: Utilize shadowing as supplementary self-study practice, focusing on pronunciation and fluency development while maintaining realistic expectations for grammar improvement.

For Policymakers: Support shadowing implementation through resource allocation for audio materials, teacher professional development, and curriculum integration guidelines.

Future Research Directions

Extended longitudinal studies should examine shadowing's long-term retention effects and optimal implementation duration. Comparative research investigating shadowing combined with other innovative approaches could identify synergistic teaching methods. Qualitative research exploring student experiences and motivation factors would provide deeper insights into shadowing's psychological impacts on language learning confidence and engagement.

The study's findings contribute valuable evidence supporting innovative language pedagogy in rural educational contexts, offering practical solutions for improving English speaking skills despite resource limitations.

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TÁC ĐỘNG CỦA KỸ THUẬT SHADOWING ĐẾN KỸ NĂNG NÓI TIẾNG ANH CỦA HỌC SINH LỚP 11 TẠI TRƯỜNG TRUNG HỌC PHỔ THÔNG TỈNH PHÚ THỌ

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Tóm tắt: Nghiên cứu này nhằm đánh giá hiệu quả của kỹ thuật Shadowing trong việc cải thiện kỹ năng nói tiếng Anh của học sinh lớp 11 tại một trường THPT ở nông thôn Phú Thọ. Sử dụng thiết kế bán thực nghiệm, nghiên cứu so sánh một nhóm học sinh áp dụng Shadowing với một nhóm học theo phương pháp truyền thống. Dữ liệu được thu thập qua bài kiểm tra kỹ năng nói trước - sau can thiệp và bảng khảo sát thái độ học sinh. Kết quả cho thấy nhóm thực nghiệm cải thiện rõ rệt về phát âm, độ trôi chảy, vốn từ và sự tự tin ($t = 3.016$, $p < 0.05$). Học sinh cũng có phản hồi tích cực, cho rằng Shadowing giúp việc học hấp dẫn và hiệu quả hơn. Kết luận, Shadowing là phương pháp tương tác, nhập vai, hỗ trợ học sinh nông thôn vượt qua rào cản trong kỹ năng nói tiếng Anh, phù hợp với các lý thuyết giáo dục nhấn mạnh sự tham gia chủ động và tiếp xúc ngôn ngữ chuẩn.

Từ khóa: chiến lược học tập, kỹ thuật Shadowing, kỹ năng nói tiếng Anh, giáo dục vùng nông thôn

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