BOOSTING ORAL PROFICIENCY THROUGH SHADOWING: A STUDY ON FLUENCY AND PRONUNCIATION GAINS IN EFL STUDENTS

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Abstract

Speaking fluency and pronunciation accuracy are essential components of oral proficiency in English language learning, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. This study aims to investigate the effect of the shadowing technique on students' speaking fluency and pronunciation accuracy in English language learning. The participants consisted of 32 eleventh-grade students from a senior high school in Palembang. The research employed a pre-experimental design with a one-group pretest-posttest approach. The instrument used was a speaking test conducted before and after the implementation of the shadowing technique to measure students' improvement. The statistical analysis revealed a significant increase in scores between the pre-test and post-test. The mean pre-test score of 5.06 increased to 8.81 in the post-test, with a significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.000, indicating a statistically significant effect. These findings demonstrate that the shadowing technique is effective in enhancing students' speaking fluency and pronunciation accuracy. Therefore, this technique is recommended as a practical method for improving speaking skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms.

Key Word: Shadowing Technique, Speaking Fluency, Pronunciation Accuracy, English Language Learning, EFL Students.

Introduction

In today's globalized and digitally connected era, speaking fluency and pronunciation accuracy are essential components of oral proficiency in English language learning, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. The demand for effective spoken English communication has increased significantly due to the widespread use of English in international education, business, and digital media. Fluency refers to the ability to speak smoothly, naturally, and without unnecessary pauses, while pronunciation accuracy involves the correct articulation of sounds, stress, and intonation. These two aspects often present challenges for EFL learners, thus requiring effective teaching techniques to support their development. Speaking is a core productive skill in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, and two key components that determine the quality of oral communication are speaking fluency and pronunciation accuracy (Nation & Newton, 2020). However, many EFL learners, especially in Indonesian contexts, struggle to speak fluently and pronounce words accurately. These issues often hinder their confidence and ability to communicate effectively in real-life situations.

One common problem faced by students is their limited exposure to natural spoken English and insufficient opportunities to practice spontaneous speech. As a result, their speech tends to be hesitant, fragmented, and marked by frequent pronunciation errors (Jaya et al., 2025). Traditional teaching approaches often focus more on grammar and written skills, leaving speaking skills underdeveloped. Therefore, it is essential to implement practical strategies that can

simultaneously enhance fluency and pronunciation.

The shadowing technique has emerged as a promising method to address these issues. Shadowing involves listening to a native speaker's audio and immediately repeating what is heard without delay. This process helps learners internalize natural speech patterns, including rhythm, intonation, and articulation, making their spoken English sound more fluid and accurate (Leon et al., 2024). Compared to mechanical drills, shadowing provides a more engaging and authentic practice environment (Salim et al., 2020).

Despite its growing popularity, existing studies on shadowing have mainly focused on listening comprehension or vocabulary acquisition (Olsson & Tbena, 2023). Few studies have simultaneously investigated the impact of shadowing on both speaking fluency and pronunciation accuracy, particularly within the context of intermediate-level EFL learners in Indonesia. This gap in the literature highlights the need for further research exploring how shadowing can be effectively integrated into speaking instruction.

The urgency of this study lies in the growing demand for effective speaking skills in academic, professional, and international settings. Fluency and pronunciation are not only linguistic features but also critical components of communicative competence that influence learners' success and confidence in global communication.

This study examines shadowing's influence on EFL learners' speaking fluency and pronunciation accuracy while proposing practical applications for educators through evaluation of an adaptable, resource-efficient technique for formal and autonomous settings.

The novelty of this study lies in its dual focus on two core speaking components fluency and pronunciation accuracy through an integrated shadowing approach using authentic audio materials. Additionally, this study adopts a quasi-experimental design to provide empirical evidence of the technique's effectiveness in the Indonesian EFL classroom context.

Speaking Skill in EFL Context

Speaking is recognized as one of the most complex and vital skills in learning a foreign language. According to Rao (2019), speaking is an interactive and dynamic process that involves constructing and sharing meaning through both verbal and non-verbal communication. This process requires learners not only to produce language but also to listen, interpret, and respond in real time. Despite its importance in daily communication, speaking remains a challenging skill for many EFL learners (Tran et al., 2024). In today's global context, teaching speaking should focus not only on linguistic accuracy but also on developing learners' communicative competence, enabling them to express ideas clearly and follow sociocultural norms of the target language (Askhatova, 2020). Effective speaking involves several components including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Pronunciation is crucial for producing sounds, stress, and intonation patterns accurately to ensure intelligibility, while grammar provides the necessary structure for meaningful sentences (Ditania, 2022). Vocabulary mastery allows learners to express their thoughts precisely, and a limited vocabulary often hinders communication (Alshammari, 2021). Fluency reflects the ability to speak smoothly and maintain conversation flow, even when minor errors occur (Namaziandost et al., 2019).

Lastly, comprehension enables speakers to understand and respond appropriately, facilitating meaningful interaction (Ningsih et al., 2021). Therefore, developing speaking skills in EFL contexts requires teaching methods that encourage authentic, interactive, and meaningful communication, helping learners gain both linguistic ability and confidence in using the language.

Speaking Fluency

Speaking fluency is one of the key components of communicative competence in second and foreign language learning. It refers to the ability to produce spoken language smoothly, naturally, and without excessive hesitation or unnatural pauses. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), fluency is especially critical because it reflects learners' capacity to express their thoughts spontaneously and interact effectively in real-life situations.

According to Nation and Newton (2020), fluency is achieved when a speaker can focus on conveying meaning rather than form. This means that the speaker speaks at a natural pace, uses connected speech, and shows minimal self-correction or repetition that disrupts communication. Unlike accuracy, which emphasizes correctness of grammar and pronunciation, fluency prioritizes flow and communicative effectiveness.

Fluency involves both speed and coherence. Speed refers to how quickly a speaker can produce language, while coherence refers to how logically and clearly ideas are connected. Gower, Phillips, and Walters (in ECJ, 2024) also highlight that fluency includes the speaker's ability to keep speaking, maintain interaction, and respond appropriately in real-time even when facing vocabulary limitations or making small errors.

Cultivating oral fluency necessitates sustained, purposeful engagement in pedagogically scaffolded environments that replicate real-world communicative demands. This process hinges on iterative cycles of practice in which learners negotiate meaning, receive timely and constructive feedback, and progressively develop automaticity. Such conditions are optimally aligned with cognitive theories of second language acquisition, which emphasize the importance of context-embedded, meaningful input and skill automatization. Techniques such as repetition drills, role plays, information gap tasks, and shadowing are often used to help students internalize language structures and improve processing speed. Among these, shadowing has proven to be particularly effective because it trains learners to speak along with a model, helping them develop rhythm, intonation, and speech automaticity (Namaziandost et al., 2019).

In sum, speaking fluency is not just about speaking quickly it is about speaking effectively and meaningfully in a way that is understandable to others. For EFL learners, fluency is a crucial indicator of communicative competence and should be fostered through consistent exposure to spoken language and interactive practice opportunities.

Pronounciation Accuracy

Pronunciation accuracy refers to a learner's ability to produce the sounds of a language such as vowels, consonants, stress, intonation, and rhythm clearly and correctly, so that spoken words are easily understood by listeners. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), accurate pronunciation plays a vital role in effective oral communication, as mispronounced words can lead to misunderstandings or hinder comprehension.

According to Celce-Murcia et al. (2017), pronunciation involves both segmental features (individual sounds) and suprasegmental features (intonation, stress, and rhythm). Mastery of these features is essential not only for intelligibility but also for conveying meaning accurately. Learners with poor pronunciation may be misunderstood even if their grammar and vocabulary are correct.

Liu et al. (2025) argue that accurate pronunciation enhances learners' confidence and willingness to speak. When students are aware that their speech is intelligible, they are more likely to engage in conversations and develop their overall speaking skills. On the other hand, persistent pronunciation errors can create a communication barrier and reduce motivation to speak.

In teaching contexts, pronunciation accuracy is often developed through listening and imitation, phonetic training, and corrective feedback. One effective approach is the shadowing technique, where learners listen to a native speaker and simultaneously repeat what they hear. This method improves learners' ability to mimic native-like speech patterns, refine their articulation, and internalize correct stress and intonation patterns (Leon et al., 2024).

In conclusion, pronunciation accuracy is a fundamental aspect of speaking proficiency that supports intelligibility, confidence, and communicative success. EFL learners benefit from structured and repeated exposure to authentic spoken English, along with techniques like shadowing, which combine auditory input with immediate oral output to reinforce accurate sound production.

The Shadowing Technique

Shadowing operates as a language acquisition strategy wherein learners auditorily process target-language input while concurrently reproducing it with maximal phonological fidelity and minimal latency. Originally introduced in interpreter training, this technique has gained popularity in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts for its effectiveness in improving learners' speaking fluency, pronunciation, and listening comprehension (Hamada, 2019b). Shadowing trains learners to mimic native speech patterns, including intonation, stress, rhythm, and pronunciation, helping them internalize the natural flow of language. According to Yavari and Shafiee (2019), shadowing promotes automaticity in language processing by encouraging learners to process auditory input rapidly and reproduce it in real time, thus bridging the gap between listening and speaking skills.

Several studies highlight the cognitive and linguistic benefits of shadowing. For instance, Hamada (2019a) found that shadowing significantly enhances EFL learners' pronunciation accuracy and oral fluency, especially when used consistently over time. The technique allows students to notice their own phonetic and prosodic errors and self-correct, which contributes to better phonological awareness (Foote & McDonough, 2017). Moreover, shadowing is beneficial in reducing speech hesitation, improving speech rate, and building learners' confidence in speaking English. It also enables learners to acquire language patterns unconsciously through exposure and repetition, aligning with Krashen's Input Hypothesis, where comprehensible input is internalized when it is meaningful and repeated in context.

Shadowing can be applied in various ways, including shadowing with subtitles, silent shadowing, and repetitive listening with delayed repetition, each offering different degrees of scaffolding depending on

learners' proficiency levels (Hamada, 2021). When integrated into classroom instruction or independent practice, the technique helps develop learners' oral skills in a more natural and communicative manner than traditional drills.

In conclusion, shadowing emerges as a pedagogically viable and empirically validated approach for enhancing core dimensions of oral production, particularly fluency development and phonological precision. Its efficacy in restructuring L2 speech processing mechanisms renders it particularly salient for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, where it bridges the gap between controlled practice and authentic communicative competence through systematic bottom-up skill automatization.

Methodology Research
Research Design

A pretest-posttest comparison group design was implemented to empirically evaluate the efficacy of the shadowing technique in enhancing two critical dimensions of spoken English: fluency and pronunciation accuracy among secondary-level EFL students. The design allows the researcher to compare the performance of students who receive the treatment (shadowing technique) with those who do not, in order to determine its effectiveness (Fraenkel et al., 2014)

Participant

This research involved a group of 32 eleventh-grade students from a senior high school located in Palembang. The participants were chosen using purposive sampling techniques. The study implemented a one-group pretest-posttest design, where the same class was evaluated both prior to and following the implementation of the shadowing technique. This design enabled the researcher to examine the impact of the shadowing strategy on students' fluency in speaking and accuracy in pronunciation by analysing changes in their performance over time.

Instruments

This study employed several instruments to collect data. The first instrument was a structured speaking test designed to evaluate students' fluency and pronunciation accuracy. Each participant completed the test individually, and their responses were recorded for assessment purposes, following the approach outlined by Thornhill-Miller et al. (2023). The second instrument was an adapted rating rubric derived from the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and prior studies. This rubric was used to assess students' fluency such as the flow of speech and presence of hesitation and pronunciation, including sound clarity, intonation, and stress (Miles & Huberman, 2019). Additionally, observation and field notes were utilized to document student engagement and participation throughout the shadowing sessions.

Procedure Research

The research was carried out over a six-week period, encompassing three main phases. In the initial phase, a baseline speaking test was administered to evaluate students' starting levels of fluency and pronunciation. This was followed by the treatment phase, during which students engaged in shadowing practice sessions three times per week. In each session, they listened to short audio recordings featuring native speakers and were instructed to repeat the speech simultaneously, with particular emphasis on mimicking pronunciation, intonation, and fluency. Finally, a post-test was conducted using

a comparable speaking task to assess any improvements resulting from the shadowing intervention.

Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed using quantitative methods. Students' pre-test and post-test scores were compared using paired sample t-test to measure students' improvement. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$.

Result and Discussion

The results of this study were obtained from the comparison between students' pre-test and post-test scores in speaking fluency and pronunciation accuracy after being taught using the shadowing technique. The speaking test was administered individually and assessed using a speaking rubric focusing on two components: fluency and pronunciation accuracy (Table 1).

Table 1. The Score of Pretest and Posttest

Name	Pre-test			Post-test		
	F	**P**	**T**	**F**	**P**	**T**
Student 1	3	3	6	5	4	9
Student 2	2	3	5	5	5	10
Student 3	3	3	6	5	4	9
Student 4	2	3	5	5	4	9
Student 5	3	3	6	5	4	9
Student 6	3	3	6	5	5	10
Student 7	3	3	6	4	5	9
Student 8	2	2	4	4	5	9
Student 9	2	2	4	5	4	9
Student 10	2	2	4	4	4	8
Student 11	3	3	6	5	4	9
Student 12	3	2	5	4	4	8
Student 13	1	2	3	4	4	8
Student 14	2	2	4	5	5	10
Student 15	3	2	5	4	4	8
Student 16	3	3	6	4	4	8
Student 17	3	2	5	5	4	9
Student 18	3	3	6	4	5	9
Student 19	3	2	5	3	5	8
Student 20	3	3	6	4	4	8
Student 21	3	3	6	4	4	8
Student 22	3	2	5	5	4	9
Student 23	3	3	6	5	5	10
Student 24	3	2	5	4	4	8
Student 25	2	3	5	5	3	8
Student 26	2	2	4	4	4	8
Student 27	2	3	5	4	4	8
Student 28	2	3	5	5	4	9
Student 29	2	2	4	5	5	10
Student 30	3	2	5	5	5	10
Student 31	2	2	4	5	5	10
Student 32	3	2	5	4	4	8

Table 1 shows the results of the comparison of pre-test and post-test scores of 32 grade XI students at SMA Palembang in the aspects of fluency (F) and pronunciation (P), with the total score (T) as the accumulation of both. In general, there was an increase in the scores of almost all students after the application of the shadowing technique.

Table 2. Paired T-test

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	5,06	32	,840	,148
	Posttest	8,81	32	,780	,138

Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences	t	df	Sig. (2-

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest - Posttest	-3,750	1,136	,201	-4,160	-3,340	-18,675	31	,000

Based on the statistical analysis presented in Table 2 (Paired Samples Test), it can be concluded that there is a significant improvement in students' speaking skills particularly in terms of speaking fluency and pronunciation accuracy after the implementation of the shadowing technique. The mean score for the pre-test was 5.06, while the post-test mean increased to 8.81, resulting in a mean difference of -3.750. The t-value of -18.675 with 31 degrees of freedom indicates a strong difference between the scores before and after the treatment. Furthermore, the significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) is 0.000, which is well below the standard threshold of 0.05, suggesting that the improvement was statistically significant and not due to chance.

The success of the shadowing technique is largely due to its engaging and immersive characteristics. This approach demands that learners attentively listen and instantly replicate the spoken language, minimizing any delay. As a result, it prompts students to concentrate intensively on key aspects of speech such as pronunciation, intonation, stress patterns, and rhythmic flow. According to Salim et al. (2020), shadowing enhances pronunciation and speaking fluency as learners engage in simultaneous repetition, which strengthens both listening and speaking skills. Similarly, Leon et al. (2024) asserts that shadowing helps learners process spoken language more quickly and effectively, supporting the natural development of oral communication skills.

Consequently, the statistically significant findings of this research offer concrete support for the effectiveness of the shadowing technique in enhancing students' speaking abilities within an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) environment, particularly in terms of fluency and pronunciation. These outcomes indicate that integrating shadowing into speaking lessons can serve as a practical and impactful strategy to foster learners' communicative competence.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that implementing the shadowing technique contributes significantly to improving students' speaking proficiency, particularly regarding fluency and pronunciation accuracy. The enhancement is demonstrated by the noticeable increase in students' scores from the pre-test to the post-test, reflecting a clear advancement in their speaking performance following the intervention. As a method that requires learners to actively listen and immediately repeat spoken input, shadowing has shown to be effective in refining pronunciation, intonation, and overall fluency in English oral communication.These results suggest that the shadowing technique is a valuable strategy in English language learning, especially for enhancing students' speaking skills. The technique offers an authentic and repetitive

learning experience that familiarizes students with the rhythm and sound patterns of the target language. Therefore, English teachers are encouraged to incorporate shadowing into their speaking lessons to provide learners with more opportunities for meaningful and engaging language practice.

For future directions, this study could be expanded by involving a larger number of participants, extending the duration of the implementation, or combining shadowing with other instructional strategies to further maximize students' speaking outcomes.

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