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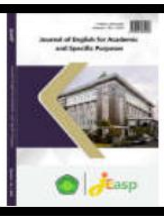

Enhancing Students' Speaking Achievement through The Shadowing Technique: A Quasi-Experimental Study at SMKN 2 Palembang

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Abstract

Speaking proficiency in English remains a persistent challenge in Indonesian vocational secondary education, where instructional emphasis on grammar and translation often constrains learners' opportunities for productive oral practice. This study investigated the effect of the shadowing technique on the speaking achievement of vocational high school students and examined their perceptions of the technique. A quasi-experimental, pre-test/post-test, non-equivalent control group design was employed with seventy eleventh-grade students at SMKN 2 Palembang, who were assigned to an experimental group (n = 35) receiving instruction through the shadowing technique and a control group (n = 35) receiving conventional instruction over ten sessions. Data were obtained through speaking tests scored on five components—pronunciation, fluency, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension—and through a structured questionnaire. Paired-samples t-tests indicated statistically significant gains within both groups, with the experimental group showing a mean increase of 33.26 points and the control group a mean increase of 13.20 points. The independent-samples t-test on the post-test scores returned $t(68) = 1.936$, $p = 0.057$, indicating a near-significant trend favouring the experimental group rather than a difference reaching the conventional 0.05 threshold. Questionnaire responses showed predominantly positive attitudes, including increased motivation, confidence, and engagement. The findings suggest that the shadowing technique is a promising instructional approach for fostering speaking achievement in vocational EFL contexts, while underscoring the need for larger samples and longer interventions

INTRODUCTION

English is now spoken by more than 1.4 billion people worldwide (Rao, 2019) and is widely regarded as the principal medium of international communication, education, technology,

diplomacy, and trade. Across the twenty-first century, English has evolved from being one foreign-language subject among many to a strategic competence indispensable for participation in a globalized economy in which states compete in trade, information exchange, and academic mobility. In such a setting, the capacity to speak English is no longer simply an academic asset; it is a practical necessity.

Among the four language skills, speaking is widely treated as the most immediate indicator of communicative competence, because it integrates the development of fluency, accuracy, and critical thinking (Goh & Burns, 2012; Ucan et al., 2023) and supports self-confidence, identity formation, and interpersonal relationships (Waldinger & Schulz, 2016). In educational contexts, oral proficiency in English serves as a key marker of successful language acquisition. Despite the worldwide expansion of English instruction, however, considerable variation in spoken proficiency persists across countries and regions. The 2023 EF English Proficiency Index ranked Indonesia 80th out of 113 countries (Education First, 2023), confirming that national proficiency remains comparatively modest. Disparities are also evident within Indonesia: regional EF EPI scores for Java, Sumatra, and selected urban centers reveal that some metropolitan areas perform better than smaller cities, although many provincial and vocational settings continue to face difficulties. These gaps are not merely numerical; they reflect a structural imbalance in opportunities for communicative language development.

Indonesian schools have taught English for decades, yet many learners still struggle to speak it confidently. A principal cause is the dominance of grammar-translation pedagogy: teachers frequently devote more time to explicit grammar instruction, translation exercises, and written assessment than to oral practice (Jassim & Dzakiria, 2018; Kustati, 2013). Consequently, students often acquire academic knowledge about English without developing corresponding conversational skills. This pattern conflicts with curriculum goals that prioritize communicative competence. Learners also report fear of making mistakes, anxiety about peers' judgements, and low self-confidence (Tanveer, 2007), all of which act as affective barriers to translating linguistic knowledge into spoken performance. Structural constraints exacerbate the problem in rural and vocational schools, where large class sizes, limited authentic input, and insufficient teacher training in communicative methodology reduce opportunities for productive oral practice (Kustati, 2013). Additional challenges include unfamiliar pronunciation patterns, limited vocabulary, and minimal exposure to English outside the classroom (Ahsan et al., 2020; Harshalatha & Sreenivasulu, 2024), with first-language interference further complicating phonological and syntactic production. Similar findings have been reported in Malaysia, where examination-oriented teaching has been linked to weak pronunciation, restricted vocabulary, and recurrent grammatical errors (Aziz & Kashinathan, 2021).

These difficulties are particularly consequential in Indonesian vocational high schools, whose graduates are expected to enter workplaces in which communicative English is increasingly required. Many vocational learners report low confidence and a marked reluctance to speak (Franscy & Ramli, 2022); limited opportunities for practice outside the classroom further impair fluency and pronunciation (Situmorang et al., 2024); and inadequate vocabulary, persistent grammatical errors, and low fluency remain common (Yaman, 2017). The shadowing technique has been documented as an effective means of developing fluency and pronunciation (Arboleda et al., 2023; Van et al., 2024) and of strengthening broader speaking competencies—including grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension (Astriyani et al., 2019). Nevertheless, the specific application of shadowing in Indonesian vocational secondary education, particularly in regional settings such as Palembang, has received relatively limited empirical attention, and prior

studies have tended to focus on performance outcomes with limited analysis of learners' perceptions and contextual fit.

The present study addresses this gap by examining whether the shadowing technique produces meaningful improvement in the speaking achievement of vocational high school learners, and how those learners perceive the technique. Five components of speaking-pronunciation, fluency, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension-were assessed, and learner motivation, confidence, and engagement were elicited through a structured questionnaire. The study addresses three research questions: (1) Is there a statistically significant difference in speaking achievement before and after instruction using the shadowing technique? (2) Is there a statistically significant difference in post-test speaking achievement between students taught with the shadowing technique and those taught conventionally? (3) What are students' perceptions of the use of the shadowing technique?

Two hypotheses guide the investigation. The null hypothesis (H0) states that there is no statistically significant difference in speaking achievement between students taught with the shadowing technique and those taught with conventional grammar-based instruction. The alternative hypothesis (H1) states that students taught with the shadowing technique will achieve significantly higher post-test scores than those taught conventionally. These hypotheses build on theoretical accounts of shadowing as a procedure that integrates listening and immediate oral reproduction, thereby reinforcing pronunciation, prosody, grammatical awareness, lexical retention, and comprehension. The repetition inherent in shadowing is also hypothesized to lower anxiety and bolster confidence, thereby mitigating affective barriers to oral production.

The conceptual framework of the study draws on established second-language acquisition theory. The input hypothesis (Krashen, 1981) posits that learner internalize linguistic structures through comprehensible input; shadowing operationalizes this principle by exposing learners to authentic speech and requiring near-simultaneous oral reproduction, supporting gains in pronunciation, intonation, and fluency (Hamada, 2021; Kadota, 2021). From a sociocultural perspective, the audio model functions as a scaffold supporting the learner's progression toward independent oral performance (Mizumoto & Takeuchi, 2020; Teng, 2022). The affective filter hypothesis further suggests that repeated, low-stakes oral practice can reduce anxiety and enhance confidence (Lee, 2022; Zhang, 2021). Within this framework, shadowing is the independent variable, and speaking achievement- operationalized through the five components named above- is the dependent variable. The study therefore tests whether shadowing can address the well-documented practice deficit confronting vocational learners at SMKN 2 Palembang.

METHOD

The study sought to determine whether, and how, the shadowing technique enhances the speaking achievement of vocational high school learners at SMKN 2 Palembang. The target population was eleventh-grade students whose speaking competence in pronunciation, fluency, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension required measurable improvement to meet curriculum demands. The investigation was designed to provide statistical evidence of the magnitude of the intervention's effect within a structured classroom environment, and to gather learners' perceptions of the technique.

A quantitative, quasi-experimental design with a non-equivalent control group was adopted. A quasi-experimental design was chosen because random assignment of individual learners across classes was not feasible within the school's organizational structure; intact classes

were therefore designated as experimental and control groups. The pre-test/post-test design allowed within-group change and between-group differences to be examined systematically.

The participants were seventy eleventh-grade students at SMKN 2 Palembang, selected through purposive sampling on the grounds of comparable prior achievement, common timetabling, and access. Two intact classes of thirty-five students each were assigned, respectively, to the experimental and control conditions. Both groups were taught by the same English teacher, holding instructional style constant across conditions to the extent permitted by the design. Data were drawn from learners' pre-test and post-test scores and from their responses to a structured questionnaire administered after the intervention.

Data were collected through a sequence of standardized procedures. A pre-test was administered to both groups using a common speaking prompt ("What do you do during the holidays?"), with responses scored on five components on a uniform analytic rubric. The experimental group then received instruction through the shadowing technique across ten sessions: learners listened to authentic audio models—primarily animated video narrations with clear pronunciation—and reproduced the speech in near-real time, with researcher guidance on pronunciation, intonation, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension. The control group received conventional instruction across the same number of sessions, focusing on explanation and structured practice without shadowing activities. At the close of the intervention, a post-test of identical format and topic was administered to both groups. Learners in the experimental group also completed a structured questionnaire designed to elicit perceptions of the technique.

Data analysis proceeded in three stages. First, raw scores were tabulated and classified by the five speaking components. Second, descriptive statistics-means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions across achievement bands-were computed in SPSS. Third, inferential analyses were conducted: paired-samples t-tests assessed within-group pre-test/post-test change, and an independent-samples t-test compared post-test means across groups. The significance level was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. Questionnaire responses were analyzed descriptively to triangulate the quantitative findings. Throughout, the procedures of data reduction, data display, and data verification were applied to ensure that analysis remained systematic and aligned with the research questions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive and inferential statistics for both groups are presented below. The descriptive analysis displays pre-test and post-test distributions for the experimental and control groups; the inferential analysis reports the within-group and between-group t-tests.

Score Range	Category	Experimental Group (Pre-Test)		
		Frequency/Percentage	Mean	SD
80-100	Very Good (A)	0 (0%)	-	-
79-79	Good (B)	0 (0%)	-	-
60-69	Enough (C)	0 (0%)	-	-
50-59	Poor (D)	0 (0%)	-	-
<50	Very Poor (E)	35 (100%)	32.92	4.61
Total		**35 (100%)**	**32.92**	**4.61**

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Score Range	Category	Experimental Group (Pre-Test)		
		Frequency/Percentage	Mean	SD
80-100	Very Good (A)	2 (5.71%)	82.00	0.00
79-79	Good (B)	10 (28.57%)	72.20	2.57
60-69	Enough (C)	19 (59.29%)	63.89	2.87
50-59	Poor (D)	4 (11.43%)	54.0	2.83
<50	Very Poor (E)	0 (0%)	-	-
	Total	**35 (100%)**	**66.17**	**7.25**

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores of the Experimental Group.

Table 1 shows a substantial gain in the experimental group's performance. At pre-test, all thirty-five learners fell within the "Very Poor" band, with a mean of 32.92 and a standard deviation of 4.61. At post-test, no learners remained in the "Very Poor" band; 5.71 % had reached "Very Good", 28.57 % "Good", 54.29 % "Enough", and 11.43 % "Poor", with a group mean of 66.17 (SD = 7.25). The change is consistent with a marked treatment effect within the experimental group.

Score Range	Category	Control Group (Pre-Test)		
		Frequency/Percentage	Mean	SD
80-100	Very Good (A)	0 (0%)	-	-
79-79	Good (B)	0 (0%)	-	-
60-69	Enough (C)	0 (0%)	-	-
50-59	Poor (D)	0 (0%)	-	-
<50	Very Poor (E)	35 (100%)	**39.83**	4.42
	Total	**35 (100%)**	**39.83**	**4.42**

Score Range	Category	Control Group (Pre-Test)		
		Frequency/Percentage	Mean	SD
80-100	Very Good (A)	-	-	-
79-79	Good (B)	-	-	-
60-69	Enough (C)	4 (11.43%)	61.50	1.97
50-59	Poor (D)	21 (60.00%)	55.24	2.64
<50	Very Poor (E)	10 (28.57%)	45.00	2.87
	Total	**35 (100%)**	**53.03**	**6.09**

Table 2. Control Group Descriptive Statistics of Pre-Test and Post-Test Score

Table 2 shows a more modest improvement in the control group. At pre-test, all thirty-five learners were in the "Very Poor" band, with a mean of 39.83 (SD = 4.42). At post-test, 11.43 % had reached the "Enough" band, 60.00 % the "Poor" band, and 28.57 % remained in the "Very Poor" band, with a group mean of 53.03 (SD = 6.09). Although improvement is evident, it is appreciably smaller than that observed in the experimental group.

Paired Sample T-Test

Group	Pre-Test	Post-test	Mean Diff	T-Value	Sig
Experimental Group	33.91	66.17	-33.26	-23.03	.000
Control Group	39.83	53.03	-13.20	11.05	.000

Table 3. Result of the Paired Sample T-Test

The paired-samples t-tests indicate statistically significant pre-test/post-test gains in both groups ($p < .001$). The within-group mean gain was 33.26 points in the experimental group and 13.20 points in the control group; the much larger gain in the experimental group is consistent with a substantial treatment effect.

Independent Sample T-Test

Variable	Mean Post-Exp	Mean Post-Cont	Mean Difference	T	Dt	Sig (2. tailed)
Speaking Achievement	63.86	58.54	5.321	1.936	68	0.057

Table 4. Result of the Independent Sample T-Test

The independent-samples t-test on post-test scores returned a mean difference of 5.321 points in favour of the experimental group, $t(68) = 1.936$, $p = 0.057$. This value does not meet the conventional significance threshold of $\alpha = 0.05$; the between-group difference therefore represents a near-significant trend rather than a statistically significant effect at the standard criterion. Read in conjunction with the unambiguous within-group gains, the result suggests that the shadowing technique generated a markedly larger improvement than conventional instruction, but that the present sample is at the threshold of the statistical power required to detect that difference between groups at $\alpha = 0.05$. The discussion that follows therefore treats the within-group evidence as the principal basis for inference, while noting the borderline status of the between-group comparison.

The instructional sequence for the experimental group followed a graduated structure. Learners initially read the transcript while listening, then shadowed the audio with transcript support, and finally shadowed without the transcript; group and individual practice followed in alternation. Throughout the intervention, the researcher observed clear improvements in the learners' capacity to express ideas, supported by repeated imitation of native-speaker models. Authentic animated video narrations supplied an accessible model of pronunciation, rhythm, and intonation, and the alternation between group and individual practice allowed learners to self-evaluate and to draw on peer support. The within-group results are consistent with prior findings that shadowing supports the development of speaking competence (Thongmak, 2021), that video-based input enhances motivation and self-confidence (Salim et al., 2020), and that systematically staged shadowing reduces anxiety (Sari & Jaya, 2023).

By simultaneously processing aural input and producing oral output, learners had the opportunity to internalize authentic English without excessive cognitive load, supporting the formation of contextual representations useful for real-world communication. Utami and Morgana (2022) similarly reported that shadowing strengthens phonological skill and accelerates the acquisition of sentence patterns; Shakirov (2024) likewise observed that repeated exposure and reproduction promotes the integration of speech forms. For vocational learners, who frequently respond well to practice-oriented and experiential pedagogy (Ngoc, 2023), the technique appears to combine engaging media, authentic content, and immediate active use of the target language in a manner well suited to the curriculum's communicative goals.

By contrast, the control group's progress, although statistically significant, was substantially smaller. Without sustained oral practice of the kind shadowing provides, learners' development plateaued at the level of guided explanation and structured drills. The marked within-group difference between the two conditions underlines the importance of techniques

such as shadowing for the development of fluency, accuracy, and confidence. The pattern is consistent with Huy's (2025) observation that learners with limited additional input beyond classroom instruction progress more slowly, and with Terzioglu and Kurt's (2022) finding that the absence of auditory and practical engagement is associated with stagnation in fluency and pronunciation.

Learners' perceptions, elicited through the structured questionnaire, were predominantly positive. Respondents reported that the technique facilitated communication, raised confidence, and made language learning more engaging. The staged structure of the activities and the use of animated video narrations with varied voiceovers were identified as particularly helpful, and many learners noted that the technique reduced their fear of making mistakes. These perceptions are congruent with the curricular orientation of vocational secondary education, which emphasizes both productive language use and learner autonomy. As Richards and Rodgers (2001) argued, speaking is central to second-language acquisition; in the contemporary economy, oral English is critical for vocational and industrial sectors (Pinatih, 2021). Embedding shadowing in speaking instruction therefore supports learners' workplace readiness, and is congruent with the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum and the Profil Pelajar Pancasila, both of which prioritize lifelong learning, communicative skill, and critical thinking.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

This study set out to evaluate the effectiveness of the shadowing technique for enhancing the speaking achievement of students at SMKN 2 Palembang, and to examine their perceptions of the technique. Both within-group analyses showed statistically significant gains; the experimental group's gain (33.26 points) was substantially larger than the control group's (13.20 points), and the between-group comparison on post-test scores returned a near-significant trend favouring the experimental group ($t(68) = 1.936$, $p = 0.057$). Learners' questionnaire responses were predominantly positive, reflecting increased motivation, confidence, and engagement. Within the limits of a single-school sample and a ten-session intervention, the findings support shadowing as a promising approach to speaking instruction in vocational EFL contexts.

Theoretically, the study contributes to the literature on input-based and practice-oriented approaches to communicative competence by providing classroom-level quantitative evidence that systematic exposure to authentic input combined with immediate oral reproduction supports phonological awareness, processing automaticity, and lexico-grammatical development. The findings extend prior work on shadowing into the Indonesian vocational secondary context, where it has hitherto been under-investigated.

Practically, the technique is a low-cost, adaptable instructional tool for teachers in vocational and career-oriented settings. Authentic audio materials and a graduated repetition sequence build a communicative learning environment that also lowers speaking anxiety, an important affective determinant of performance. From a policy perspective, the findings align with the Merdeka Curriculum's emphasis on learner autonomy and communicative engagement; integrating shadowing into curriculum design and teacher-education programmes is therefore advisable. Socially, strengthening learners' oral communicative skills supports labour-market access and equity, since vocational graduates frequently enter sectors in which speaking competence directly affects employment outcomes.

Three limitations qualify these conclusions. First, the between-group comparison on post-test scores did not reach the conventional significance threshold ($p = 0.057$), which counsels caution in over-generalising the result. Second, the intervention was short and conducted in a single school, limiting generalisability. Third, no delayed post-test was

administered, so the durability of the gains is unknown. Future research should therefore (a) replicate the study with larger samples drawn from multiple vocational schools, (b) extend the intervention duration and incorporate delayed post-tests, (c) examine the moderating effects of audio difficulty and speech rate, and (d) employ mixed methods, including learner interviews, to provide a fuller account of the affective and cognitive dimensions of shadowing.

In sum, the study provides quantitative and perceptual evidence that the shadowing technique can enhance vocational learners' speaking achievement and engagement, while underscoring the need for further empirical work to consolidate the between-group finding. The contribution lies in linking theoretical accounts of input, scaffolding, and affective filtering with classroom-level evidence in a context—Indonesian vocational secondary education—where speaking proficiency carries substantial occupational consequence.

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