

# A study on the effectiveness of using shadowing technique on pronunciation skills of non-English majored students at Thuongmai University

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**Abstract:** Speaking as well as pronunciation is one of the weak points of Vietnamese students when learning English. Lack of motivation, insufficient English-speaking environment, and inappropriate learning methods are some of the causes that lead to their poor pronunciation. The study investigated the impact of the technique of shadowing on pronunciation skills of non-English majored students at Thuongmai University. With the participation of 48 freshmen from Marketing Faculty, the data collected from survey questionnaires and interviews were analyzed to find out the students' challenges in pronouncing English and the effectiveness of shadowing technique on developing participants' pronunciation. The outcomes proved that consistent shadowing practice significantly enhanced students' English pronunciation.

**Keywords:** English pronunciation, shadowing technique, speaking, learning method

## 1. Introduction

English is regarded as a means of direct communication with individuals from different countries all over the world. Pronunciation involves several key elements, including the correct articulation of vowels and consonants, the blending of sounds, and connected speech, which refers to the natural flow of language. Other crucial aspects including word stress, rhythm, sentence stress, and intonation contribute to clear and effective communication. Thus, proficiency in pronunciation is vital to prevent misinterpretation between the speaker and the listener. Actually, numerous Vietnamese students learning English for many years still have challenges in pronouncing English despite various methods to practice pronunciation. Consequently, the researcher conducted a study on the effectiveness of shadowing technique on assisting students to practice and improve their pronunciation.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Pronunciation

Younes & Mueller (2020) defines pronunciation as the act of making language's sounds. Additionally, Seong et al. (2020) claims that pronunciation is related to the physical features of speech in which there is the awareness of producing sounds. It is the fact that pronunciation plays the important roles in the real communication which consists of sound production and its perception.

Linguistic experts have classified the elements

of English pronunciation into various groups. Additionally, Duranti et al. (2015) claims that there are several components which make up pronunciation such as phonemes, sound linking, and intonation. Furthermore, Saito and Saito (2016) categorizes pronunciation as a linguistic element encompassing language sound, stress, rhythm, and intonation.

### 2.2. Shadowing

Goodwin (2004) emphasizes that in addition to repetition, mirroring, and imitative conversation techniques, shadowing is a viable instructional approach for mimicking the intonation patterns of native speakers at the discourse level. Shiota (2012) also defines shadowing as a method involving the repetition of the same sounds while listening to audio or recorded speech. In summary, based on the provided explanations, it can be concluded that shadowing serves as a technique facilitating the learning and practice of sound production, contributing to enhanced oral performance by learners.

## 3. The study

### 3.1. Participants

Due to the limited framework the researcher paper, it is impossible to carry out the study with all non-English majored students at Thuongmai University. Therefore, the researcher intended to deliver the survey questionnaires to 48 first-year students from 18 to 21 at the Faculty of Marketing, both males and females participate in the survey. These students' English proficiency is not particularly good because

of the limited practice opportunities at high school before, so entering university, they still face many challenges in learning English.

**3.2. Procedure:** Totally, forty-eight freshmen who were not majoring in English and were enrolled in Marketing Faculty willingly participated in a 12-week research project aimed at enhancing their pronunciation skills through the implementation of the shadowing method. These learners committed to practicing the method on a weekly basis and received step-by-step guidance on its application. They are asked to practice listening and repeat 12 given short audios. These MP3 audios as well as the scripts were chosen carefully from Life Pre-Intermediate coursebook and then sent to the participants. All of the chosen practicing materials are about daily English conversations with some popular topics such as lifestyles, competitions, transport, the environment, work, holidays and so on. During the initial phase, they listened to the audio, followed by reading the script and identifying syllables corresponding to stressed and unstressed sounds. Then, they practiced mumbling the sound, the intonation as well as the rhythm.

**3.3. Methods**

To gather data for this study, the researcher utilized a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods including a survey questionnaire and interview questions. These instruments were crafted to gather information about the participants' attitudes toward English pronunciation, their challenges, and the perceived effectiveness of the shadowing practice in enhancing pronunciation. After obtaining the results, charts and tables were used to illustrate the collected data. The findings from interviews and additional details will serve as supplementary data for analysis, commentary, discussion, and recommendations.

**4. Findings and discussion**

**4.1. Findings**

**4.1.1. The Current Situation of Non-English Majored Students' Pronunciation**

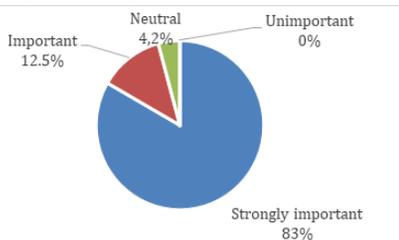


Chart 4.1: Students' perception on the importance of pronunciation

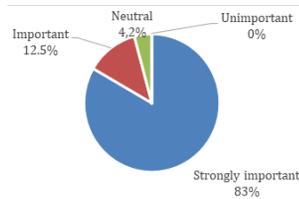


Chart 4.2: Students' amount of time spent on practicing pronunciation

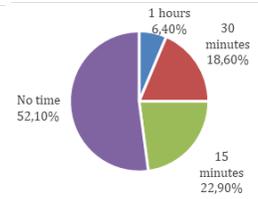


Chart 4.3: Student's proficiency in pronunciation

As can be seen from the charts, data collected from survey questionnaires indicated that the majority of respondents (95,8%) were much aware of the significance of pronunciation in English however, 52,1% of whom admitted that they did not spend any time practicing pronouncing English words. Thus, it was unsurprising that most of them (83,3%) stated that they are not good at their pronunciation.

Table 4.1: Students' problems in pronunciation

Pronunciation problems	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly agree
Miss ending sounds	36 (75%)	10 (20,8%)	2 (4,2%)	0%	0%
Pronounce like Vietnamese	39 (81,3%)	9 (18,7%)	0%	0%	0%
Forget to link sounds	35 (72,9%)	13 (27,1%)	0%	0%	0%
Do not put stress on words/sentences	30 (62,5%)	15 (31,3%)	3 (6,2%)	0%	0%
There is no intonation	41 (85,4%)	3 (6,3%)	4 (8,3%)	0%	0%

It is clearly from the table that a majority of students accounting for 85,4% and 81,3% respectively indicated that they had the most challenging in intonation and pronouncing like Vietnamese. Additionally, a considerable percentage of students firmly avocated that some mistakes they often made while speaking namely missing ending sounds (75%), forgetting to link sounds together or put stress on words or sentences (72,9%). Though learners considered pronunciation as a key in communication and had a desire to improve their weakness in pronunciation, they had low motivation. Additionally, one of the reasons as they shared in the interview was insufficient English-speaking environment for them to practice, as well as the differences between the Vietnamese sound system and English one. These above barriers hindered learners from improving their pronunciation, thus, it is essential to find a suitable and potential way to support them pronounce better.

4.1.2. *The Effectiveness of Using Shadowing Technique on Learners' pronunciation*

As for the pronunciation improvement, based on the data collected from the survey questionnaire, after 12 weeks, the vast majority of participants started to see progress in their pronunciation and had positive attitude towards the changes in different aspects of pronunciation like individual sounds, word stress, sentence stress, intonation and fluency.

Table 4.2: *Students' improvement in pronunciation*

Opinions	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Improvement in individual sounds	48/48 (100%)	0%	0%	0%	0%
Improvement in word stress	48/48 (100%)	10/48 (100%)	0%	0%	0%
Improvement in sentence stress	43/48 (89,6%)	5/48 (10,4%)	0%	0%	0%
Improvement in intonation	44/48 (91,7%)	4/48 (8,3%)	0%	0%	0%
Speak more fluently	46/48 (96,8%)	2/48 (3,2%)	0%	0%	0%
Speak more naturally	45/48 (93,6%)	3/48 (6,4%)	0%	0%	0%

Specifically, all students (100%) observed positive outcomes in enhancing their pronunciation of individual sounds and word stress. A great number of participants (91,7%) expressed notable improvement in intonation band 89,6% of them reported heightened awareness of sentence stress in their spoken language. Furthermore, a massive number of respondents strongly agree that they enhanced pronunciation skill when they can speak more naturally and fluently (96,8% and 93,8% respectively). Additionally, when students were interviewed about their commitment to sustaining shadowing as a practice and their willingness to advocate the technique to their peers, unanimous agreement was reached among all participants. This collective endorsement was attributed to the perceived benefits derived from their experiences with shadowing practice.

4.2. **Discussion**

The findings indicate that participants held a positive view of the shadowing activities, viewing them as a viable method for enhancing pronunciation skills. This can be attributed to the nature of the shadowing practice, wherein students not only had the chance to hear sounds but also immediately produced them. This technique proves effective as it allows students to concentrate solely on pronunciation without the distraction of additional demands.

Furthermore, the immediacy required in shadowing prompts learners to produce sounds promptly after hearing them, potentially enabling them to practice all pronunciation features simultaneously while minimizing the opportunity for learners to invent their own pronunciation during practice. This result aligns with Hsieh's (2013) assertion that shadowing aids learners in adapting to the natural flow of English sentences and contributes significantly to overall improvement in pronunciation performance. Foote (2017) advocates that shadowing holds potential as a method for assisting learners in enhancing both pronunciation and fluency. Moreover, this author emphasized the significance of the shadowing process, in which students listened to the original files carefully, analyzed the script, tried to imitate speaking as closely as possible, and then recorded themselves. Implementing these recommendations guarantees the effective application of the shadowing technique for enhancing learners' pronunciation.

5. **Conclusion**

The study has illustrated that numerous significant impacts of the shadowing technique were proven to be effective on enhancing students' pronunciation. First and foremost, the whole participants addressed highly progressive in their pronunciation performance shown in the results from survey questionnaires and interviews. After a 12-week experiment, learners showed the respectable improvements in their pronunciation. Specifically, their awareness of some pronunciation aspects was also raised such as individual sounds, word stress, sentence stress, linking sounds, intonation and so on. Shadowing technique can be regarded as an effective learning method that is worth applying among learners because of its potentials in assisting English learning students enhance their pronunciation.

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