

THE IMPACT OF SHADOWING ACTIVITY ON EFL STUDENTS' SPEAKING FLUENCY

Lailakul Amelia Putri ¹, Irmayani², Khoirul Huda³

¹lailakul.2022@mhs.unisda.ac.id, ²irmayani@unisda.ac.id, ³khoirulhuda@unisda.ac.id

UNIVERSITAS ISLAM DARUL 'ULUM LAMONGAN

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ABSTRACT

Speaking fluency remains a major challenge for many EFL learners, particularly in vocational high schools where students often have limited opportunities to practice spontaneous oral communication. Although various instructional techniques have been introduced to improve speaking performance, traditional speaking instruction may not sufficiently provide intensive practice for developing fluency. Therefore, this research examined the effectiveness of shadowing activities in enhancing students' speaking fluency in a vocational high school context. The study used a quasi-experimental design with an experimental group and a control group. The sample consisted of 60 tenth-grade children, with an equal number of students in each group. The experimental group was taught through shadowing activities, and the control group was taught through the traditional method of speaking. Data were collected through speaking performance exams like pre-tests and post-tests. The data were examined via descriptive statistics and an independent sample t-test. The results indicated that students' speaking fluency was improved more by using shadowing activities than standard teaching. In addition, the post-test findings indicated a substantial difference between the two groups, with the experimental group having a higher mean score than the control group. The study also shows that shadowing can be a useful teaching method to enhance EFL students' speaking fluency.

Keywords: EFL Students, Shadowing Activities, Speaking Fluency, Vocational High School, Quasi-experimental Study

A. INTRODUCTION

Students' capacity to interact and engage with other students is vital to their success in school and their future employment. Students prepared to follow vocational programs should be able to express their thoughts clearly and constructively, share accurate information about themselves with others, and manage peer interactions well, such as not being discouraged or disrespected by peers or having peers be supportive and caring by conversing with others (Datu & Sulindra, 2025; Richards, 2006; Simanjuntak et al., 2024). Therefore, proficiency in English is a crucial part of successful academic achievement for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students.

Many EFL learners are good at speaking, but they have difficulty communicating fluently in English because they lack opportunities to improve their speaking abilities (Shalehah & Rahmawati, 2025; Surayya et al., 2024). Fluency refers to one of the characteristics of oral production. Fluency is described as the ability to speak with little delay in producing oral language (Segalowitz, 2010; Tavakoli et al., 2020). Fluency is described as the rate of speech and the capacity to put concepts together without extensive pauses (Kahng, 2014). From a cognitive point of view, fluency is strongly associated with automatic language processing, which lessens the cognitive load of speech output with repeated practice (Dekeyser & Suzuki, 2025). Learners' speaking rate and confidence steadily increase when they utilize language regularly in relevant communicative contexts (Suzuki & Kormos, 2020; Tavakoli et al., 2020). Repeated communicative practice also plays a significant function in helping learners keep continuous speech output in interaction (Bygate, 2009). However, lack of speaking practice and restricted exposure to actual conversation are still the biggest challenges in developing fluency in EFL courses (Hapsari et al 2025).

Previous research has indicated that the speaking fluency of students is affected not only by linguistic competence, but also by psychological factors related to speaking performance and Limited vocabulary mastery, grammatical difficulties, and pronunciation problems often prevent students from speaking fluently (Sabilla & Kaniadewi, 2025). Moreover, worry and low self-confidence often decrease students' eagerness to talk and actively participate in classroom interaction (Irmayani & Masrurroh, 2023; Surayya et al., 2024). Many EFL classes are still dominated by memorization and regulated speaking activities, thus providing students with limited opportunity to practice spontaneous communication (Misrawati et al., 2023). This may lead to EFL learners' lack of confidence in their ability to converse in English and hence affect their fluency in conversing in English (Fachrunnisa & Nuraeni, 2022; Mustamir, 2024). Due to EFL learners having had very little opportunity to practice speaking fast and fluently in English. Furthermore, students may feel anxious about speaking English in front of others and this anxiety could affect their performance in class, which may inhibit students' development of speaking fluency (Zahro, 2020).

To face these problems, it is necessary to implement teaching strategies that include listening and speaking practice at the same time. One technique that is getting more and more attention is shadowing, when students listen to spoken language and repeat the words they hear as fast as they can. With the advancement of technology and language pedagogy, it is important to know how this approach is used today and its possibilities in the classroom of the future. (Hamada, 2021). This activity allows learners to practice processing auditory input and producing spoken output, which can enhance pronunciation, rhythm, and participation in shadowing activities has increased students' ability to produce spoken language more fluently and with greater confidence. (Petalolo et al., 2024). The effectiveness of shadowing is directly tied to the Automaticity Theory that says that repeated practice allows learners to understand language more quickly and effectively (DeKeyser & Suzuki, 2025; Segalowitz, 2010). As learners become more automatic in processing language, they are more likely to be more fluent in conversation (Nation, 2018; Suzuki & Kormos, 2020).

Previous research has indicated good effects of shadowing activities on students' speaking performance. Learners who engage in shadowing activities typically enhance fluency, pronunciation, and continuity of speech output (Hamada, 2021; Surayya et al., 2024). Students who are taught using shadowing strategies are likely to perform better than those who are taught conventionally in speaking (Rohmah, 2025). Besides, fluency is seen as one

of the key aims of communicative language training as it indicates the learners' ability to communicate naturally, successfully, and spontaneously in real-time contact (Derwing & Munro, 2015). However, there are still a number of research gaps. First, many past researches have studied general speaking ability in general and have not particularly investigated speaking fluency as a separate concept (Misrawati et al., 2023; Pratama & Isnaini, 2024). Second, most of the studies on shadowing activities have been conducted in general secondary schools or higher education contexts, whereas vocational high school contexts are underexplored despite students' special communicative demands in terms of workplace preparedness (Mu & Wasuntarasophit, 2025). Third, there is little quasi-experimental research comparing the effectiveness of shadowing activities and traditional teaching approaches to improve speaking fluency in Indonesian EFL classrooms, but there is a lot of research on shadowing (Surayya et al., 2024). Therefore, additional context-specific research is required to provide more conclusive data on the impact of shadowing activities on students' fluency development.

Considering these factors, the present study is intended to investigate the effectiveness of shadowing activities towards students' speaking fluency in a vocational high school context. The present study is a quasi-experimental study, and it compares students taught through shadowing techniques and students taught through traditional speaking education. The results are expected to provide empirical evidence of the significance of shadowing activities in enhancing students' speaking fluency, notably in terms of smoothness, continuity, and reduced pauses in speech. This study makes a specific contribution by considering only speaking fluency as a main variable instead of the broader speaking ability. Moreover, the study is set in a vocational high school context, which has been relatively under-researched in earlier studies. The use of a quasi-experimental methodology is also expected to produce more empirical evidence on the usefulness of shadowing activities, adding theoretically and pedagogically to the development of EFL speaking education.

B. METHOD

This study employed a quasi-experimental design with a quantitative approach to investigate the effectiveness of shadowing activities in improving students' speaking fluency (Creswell, 2017). The study involved two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group received instruction through shadowing activities, while the control group was taught using conventional speaking instruction. The research was conducted at SMK NU 1 Simo Karanggeneng Lamongan, East Java, Indonesia. The treatment was conducted in four sessions before the students completed the post-test. This study selected participants from eleventh grade. Two intact classes with relatively similar academic characteristics were purposively selected. They were similar with respect to their English proficiency and had been recommended by their English teacher. The experimental group consisted of 30 students in Class XI A; the control group included 30 students in Class XI B.

The study employed a pre-test and post-test using a speaking test as a research instrument. Participants performed short speech monologues based on familiar topics such as personal experiences. Their speaking performances were assessed using an analytic speaking rubric. The focus in this study was on the students' speaking fluency as the main variable that was statistically analysed. Fluency was on the basis of smoothness, continuity of speech, and few pauses in speaking performance. Other components of speaking such as pronunciation, grammar, comprehensibility, and confidence were considered only as supporting features in

the scoring method. Participants were scored on a 1-5 scale, with higher scores indicating better fluency performance.

During the instructional treatment, were conducted five sessions each lasting 90 minutes; the first meeting was used to administer the pre-test participants in the experimental class pre-test. Participants in the experimental class, speaking instruction was delivered through shadowing activities, and were in the experimental group; the stages of the shadowing activities were pre-shadowing, during-shadowing, and post-shadowing. In the pre-shadowing stage (Hamada, 2021). Students listened to short audio recordings that contained vocabulary related to the topic to learn about the vocabulary. During-shadowing consisted of having students repeat the input they heard immediately or with a slight delay to allow them to produce the speech continuously. In addition, during the post-shadowing stage, students retold the story and completed short task-based speaking to focus on producing fluid speech. In comparison, the control group was instructed in traditional speaking methods by using dialog practice, textbook-based activities, and questioning and answering verbally without shadowing. Furthermore, data analysis was performed using descriptive and inferential statistics with JAMOWI software. The mean and standard deviation of the students' speaking fluency scores were calculated by the descriptive statistics. Normality of data distribution and homogeneity of variance assumptions were tested using the Shapiro–Wilk test and Levene's test, respectively (Field, 2013). An independent samples t-test was used to compare post-test scores between the experimental and control groups (Pallant, 2020). The effect size was also assessed by Cohen's *d* to assess the magnitude of the treatment impact (Cohen, 1988).

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Effectiveness of Shadowing Activities on Students' Speaking Fluency

This subsection presents the findings regarding the effectiveness of shadowing activities in improving students' speaking fluency. The analysis focuses on the comparison of students' speaking performance before and after the implementation of the treatment in both the experimental and control groups. The data were obtained from speaking performance tests administered during the pre-test and post-test stages. The treatment was conducted through four instructional meetings involving 60 eleventh-grade students of a vocational high school, with 30 students assigned to the experimental group and 30 students assigned to the control group. The differences in students' speaking fluency achievement between the two groups are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' Speaking Fluency Scores

N	Experimental Pre-test	Experimental Post-test	Control Pre-test	Control Post-test
1.	56	76	48	66
2.	60	82	52	70
3.	64	80	56	72
4.	52	72	46	64
5.	68	86	62	76
6.	54	74	50	67
7.	62	84	54	71
8.	66	85	58	74
9.	58	75	47	65
10.	61	79	53	69
11.	65	88	57	73
12.	57	76	49	66
13.	53	73	45	62
14.	70	90	60	75
15.	63	82	54	70
16.	55	74	48	65
17.	67	85	56	72
18.	51	71	44	61
19.	60	78	52	68
20.	69	89	61	76
21.	56	77	50	67
22.	72	92	63	78
23.	54	73	46	63
24.	64	81	55	71
25.	68	87	58	74
26.	52	70	47	64
27.	62	83	53	69
28.	58	76	49	66
29.	66	88	62	77
30.	61	80	51	68

The results of the students' speaking fluency exam showed that the students in the experimental group showed a significant improvement in post-test scores following teaching with shadowing exercises. Most of the students could speak more effectively with fewer pauses and more regularity in their speech. But the control group also showed some improvement after the typical speaking class, but not as much as the experimental group. The study indicated that shadowing activities had a positive impact on students' speaking fluency.

Furthermore, descriptive statistics for experimental and control groups are presented in Table 2. As shown above, the experimental group exhibited a significant improvement after the shadowing activities.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Students' Speaking Fluency Scores

Group	Test	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median	Sd
Experimental	Pre-test	30	51	72	61.0	60.8	5.97
Experimental	Post-test	30	70	92	80.2	80.0	6.22
Control	Pre-test	30	44	63	52.9	52.5	5.53
Control	Post-test	30	61	78	69.3	69.0	4.69

based on the data above, the mean score of the experimental group increased from 61.0 to 80.2. Moreover, the post-test scores of the experimental group were more varied than the pre-test scores, with a minimum score of 70, a maximum score of 92, and a standard deviation of 6.22. This shows that there are differences in the improvement of students' scores after the introduction of shadowing activities. At the same time, the control group members also improved when they were taught to speak in the customary manner. The mean score increased from 52.5 in the pre-test to 69.3 in the post-test. But the improvement of the control group was smaller than that of the experimental group. Results showed that the students who engaged in shadowing activities improved more in speaking fluency than the students who received standard training.

Furthermore, the experimental group obtained a higher maximum score than the control group in the post-test. These results indicate that students who participated in shadowing activities demonstrated greater improvement in speaking fluency, particularly in terms of speech fluidity, coherence, and consistency, with fewer pauses during speaking performance. To further examine whether the obtained scores met the assumptions required for parametric analysis, the normality of the data distribution was first analyzed using the Shapiro–Wilk test, as presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Shapiro–Wilk Normality Test

Group	Test	W	p-value	Interpretation
Experimental & Control	Pre-test	0.965	.081	Normal
Experimental & Control	Post-test	0.975	.266	Normal

As shown in Table 3, the results of the Shapiro–Wilk normality test revealed that both the experimental and control groups obtained significance values greater than 0.05 in the pre-test and post-test. Specifically, the significance value was 0.081 for the pre-test and 0.266 for the post-test, indicating that the data were normally distributed. Therefore, the normality assumption was fulfilled, allowing the researchers to proceed with parametric analysis using an independent samples t-test. Before conducting the t-test, the homogeneity of variance between the two groups was examined, and the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Variable	F	Df	Df2	Sig.
Pre -Test	0.280	1	58	.599
Post - Test	3.47	1	58	.068

Table 4 presents the results of Levene's Test for equality of variances. The significance values for the pre-test and post-test were 0.599 and 0.068, respectively, which were higher than 0.05. These findings indicate that the variances of the experimental and control groups

were homogeneous. Thus, the assumption of equal variances required for the independent samples t-test was satisfied. After confirming that the data met both normality and homogeneity assumptions, the independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups, as presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Independent Sample t-test

Variable	Statistic	df	p	Mean difference	SE difference	Lower	upper
Experimental & Control	7.66	58	<.001	10.9	1.42	8.05	13.7

Table 5 displays the results of the independent samples t-test comparing the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups. The experimental group achieved a higher mean score ($M = 80.2$, $SD = 6.22$) compared with the control group ($M = 69.3$, $SD = 4.69$). The statistical analysis showed a significant difference between the two groups ($p < .001$), indicating that students who participated in shadowing activities achieved significantly better speaking fluency performance than those who received conventional speaking instruction. These findings suggest that shadowing activities contributed positively to improving students' speaking fluency.

Following the results of the independent samples t-test, further analysis was conducted to provide a more detailed explanation of the magnitude of the difference between the experimental and control groups. The effect size analysis was performed to determine the practical significance of the shadowing activities on students' speaking fluency, as presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Effect Size (Cohen's d)

Variable	Cohen's d	Interpretation
Experimental vs Control	1.98	Very Large Effect

As presented in Table 6, the effect size value indicates the extent to which shadowing activities influenced students' speaking fluency improvement. The effect size obtained was 1.98, which is considered a very large effect. The result reveals that shadowing activities are effective in improving speaking fluency of pupils. Students that participated in shadowing activities spoke more smoothly, with more confidence, and with fewer pauses than students receiving conventional education, and spoke more continuously. Additionally, the big effect size indicates that the difference in speaking fluency performance between the experimental and control groups was significant after the implementation of the shadowing activities.

The results of this study indicated that shadowing activities helped effectively to increase students' speaking fluency at the EFL at the vocational high school. The findings indicated that students who participated in shadowing activities had greater performance in speaking fluency than students who received standard speaking teaching. This improvement shows that continuous hearing and immediate oral repetition may allow learners to gain more fluency, continuity and confidence in spoken communication. These results indicate that shadowing activities can be a useful tool to enhance students' production of spoken English more easily and continuously in speaking performance.

The enhancement of students' speaking fluency may be related to the features of shadowing exercises, in which listeners hear spoken input and instantly repeat it orally. Repeated exposure to the spoken English made students more comfortable with pronunciation patterns, rhythm, emphasis and intonation which encouraged them to produce speech with fewer hesitations and pauses. As noted by (Segalowitz, 2010; Tavakoli et al., 2020). fluency is strongly associated with the ability to produce speech fluently with little interruption. It seems that students who engaged in shadowing activities in the present study tended to have more continuity and stability in their oral performance as they were continuously involved in repetitive listening and speaking practice.

In addition, the frequent exposure to communicative oral practice might have boosted the students' confidence in speaking English. According to Nation (2018), when language is used frequently in meaningful communication, language development takes place and learners are able to retain speech production in a better way. In the instructional sessions, students practiced repeating dialogues, oral texts and speaking activities repeatedly. This stimulated the students to participate actively in spoken conversation. Therefore, students seemed more confident and less hesitant to use English in the post-test performance. The findings of the present study are also consistent with other studies investigating the effectiveness of shadowing exercises in EFL learning settings. Shadowing exercises can improve learners' oral performance by repeated auditory input and spoken repetition (Hamada, 2021; Petalolo et al., 2024; Surayya et al., 2024). Previous research has shown that children who shadowed improved in their speaking confidence, fluency and pronunciation. The present study demonstrated similar patterns, with students in the experimental group speaking more fluently and hesitating less. The present findings are in agreement with previous research and support the notion that shadowing activities may be a successful teaching technique for developing speaking fluency in EFL classes.

Moreover, the findings are consistent with the concepts of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) that stresses the importance of meaningful communication and active use of language in classroom interaction (Richards, 2006). The exercises used in shadowing promoted the students' involvement in oral communication through the frequent listening and speaking practice. Instead of relying on memorisation, students learned to respond to spoken language in real time, which led to more authentic speaking experiences in the classroom." Such a communication exercise could have helped the pupils to be more fluent and confident when they did speak tasks. In general, the results indicate that the shadowing activities could bring considerable benefits to enhance the students' speaking fluency in vocational high school EFL study. Learners may gain higher automaticity and confidence in spoken communication through regular oral practice, more exposure to spoken English, and communicative contact. Thus, shadowing exercises can be an effective instructional method to enhance the development of speaking fluency in EFL classes.

D. CONCLUSION

This study examined the effects of shadowing activities in enhancing speaking fluency of students at a vocational high school. The results revealed that students engaged in shadowing activities considerably outperformed students who received traditional speaking instruction in terms of speaking fluency. The experimental group exhibited significant improvement in speech performance in terms of speech smoothness, continuity, and less hesitation. These findings imply that shadowing activities may contribute to students' speaking fluency by

means of repeated listening and oral repetition practice in EFL learning environments. This study, however, is not generalizable as the participants were limited to one vocational high school, and the study was focused exclusively on speaking fluency. Moreover, the period of the therapy was quite brief, which made it difficult to study the long-term impacts of shadowing activities. Future researchers are encouraged to use larger sample size, longer treatment duration, and wider speaking components such as pronunciation, grammatical error, and comprehensibility for comparable investigations. This study also offers practical implications to English teachers, particularly in the context of vocational high schools. It shows that shadowing activities can be practiced as an effective instructional method to assist students' speaking fluency development in the EFL classroom.

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