



APPLYING THE SHADOWING TECHNIQUE TO ENHANCE SPEAKING PROFICIENCY AMONG ENGLISH MAJORS: OBSTACLES AND REMEDIES

Nguyen Thi Anh Nguyet, Nguyen Phuong Anh

Hanoi Metropolitan University, Vietnam

Email address: nguyetdaihocthuo.edu.vn

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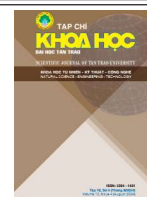
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Abstract:

This research examines the efficacy of the shadowing strategy in enhancing speaking proficiency among third-year English majors at Hanoi Metropolitan University. The study utilized a mixed-methods approach, including quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, to emphasize students' confidence, fluency, and pronunciation. Results indicate that although the majority of participants exhibited enhancements in fluency and pronunciation, difficulties remain. Primary challenges encompass restricted access to suitable resources, cognitive stress, and the struggle to keep a regular practice regimen. Furthermore, students underscored the necessity of consistent feedback to evaluate progress and target certain areas for enhancement. The difficulty of aligning with the natural tempo of native speakers frequently resulted in dissatisfaction and diminished motivation. In light of these findings, we advocate for organized, supervised shadowing sessions, the supply of varied, interest-aligned resources, and a comprehensive feedback mechanism. Customizing shadowing resources for varying competence levels and including other activities, such as role-playing, may further augment language acquisition. This study highlights the significance of organized support in optimizing the effectiveness of shadowing for enhancing speaking proficiency.



ÁP DỤNG PHƯƠNG PHÁP SHADOWING ĐỂ NÂNG CAO KỸ NĂNG NÓI CHO SINH VIÊN CHUYÊN NGÀNH TIẾNG ANH: NHỮNG RÀO CẢN VÀ GIẢI PHÁP

Nguyễn Thị Ánh Nguyệt, Nguyễn Phương Anh

Trường Đại học Thủ Đức, Việt Nam

Địa chỉ email: nguyetdaihocthudo.edu.vn

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Tóm tắt

Nghiên cứu này xem xét hiệu quả của chiến lược shadowing trong việc nâng cao kỹ năng nói của sinh viên năm ba chuyên ngành tiếng Anh tại Trường Đại học Thủ đô Hà Nội. Nghiên cứu sử dụng phương pháp hỗn hợp, bao gồm khảo sát định lượng và phỏng vấn định tính, tập trung vào sự tự tin, trôi chảy và phát âm của sinh viên. Kết quả cho thấy mặc dù đa số người tham gia có sự cải thiện về khả năng trôi chảy và phát âm, vẫn còn tồn tại một số khó khăn. Các thách thức chính bao gồm sự hạn chế về nguồn tài liệu phù hợp, căng thẳng nhận thức và khó khăn trong việc duy trì lịch trình luyện tập đều đặn. Hơn nữa, sinh viên nhấn mạnh tầm quan trọng của việc nhận được phản hồi thường xuyên để đánh giá tiến độ và tập trung vào những điểm cần cải thiện. Khó khăn trong việc bắt kịp nhịp độ tự nhiên của người bản ngữ thường dẫn đến cảm giác không hài lòng và giảm động lực học tập. Trên cơ sở những phát hiện này, chúng tôi khuyến nghị tổ chức các buổi shadowing có hướng dẫn, cung cấp các tài liệu đa dạng và phù hợp với sở thích cá nhân, cũng như xây dựng cơ chế phản hồi toàn diện. Việc điều chỉnh tài liệu shadowing theo từng cấp độ năng lực và kết hợp với các hoạt động hỗ trợ như đóng vai có thể giúp tăng cường hiệu quả tiếp thu ngôn ngữ. Nghiên cứu này nhấn mạnh tầm quan trọng của hỗ trợ có tổ chức trong việc tối ưu hóa hiệu quả của shadowing để nâng cao kỹ năng nói.

1. Introduction

Learners are able to internalize the sounds and patterns of the target language through the process of shadowing, which assists them in overcoming frequent pronunciation issues and developing a speaking style that is more natural. Shadowing is a useful activity for English language learners because it helps them improve their listening comprehension and develop their ability to speak with confidence and accuracy, both of which are essential components of effective communication. When it comes to the English curriculum at Hanoi Metropolitan University (HNMU), speaking competency is given a high priority. This is accomplished through a planned set of classes that are aimed to gradually improve students' ability to communicate with others. Beginning with Speaking 1 in the first semester and continuing through Speaking 4 by the end of the sixth semester, these modules offer English majors a comprehensive training framework that begins with Speaking 1 and continues through Speaking 4. Students are instructed to concentrate on fundamental speaking abilities at the first stages of their education. These skills include fundamental pronunciation, conversational fluency, and basic interactional methods. Students are required to display advanced skill by the time they reach Speaking 4, which includes participating in intricate conversations, honing their intonation, and becoming proficient in approaches that are helpful for giving presentations. A significant number of English students at HNMU commonly engage in shadowing as a supplementary practice to reinforce what they learn in formal classrooms. This is due to the fact that speaking abilities are important in both academic and professional settings. Students have the opportunity to develop their speaking abilities outside of the classroom through the use of shadowing, which is a self-directed strategy. This helps students prepare for proficiency exams and future responsibilities in their careers.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the utilization of the shadowing technique by English students in their third year at HNMU in order to enhance their speaking abilities. This study intends to determine the extent to which shadowing influences students' levels of self-assurance, fluency, and pronunciation, as well as to identify potential barriers that may hinder the success of this method. As an additional objective, the research endeavors to suggest practical methods that can assist students in overcoming these hurdles and making the most of the benefits that shadowing can offer. The research that was conducted gives insights that can be beneficial to both the HNMU curriculum and more general language teaching techniques. These insights were obtained by examining the application of this technique.

Research Questions

1. How effective do these students perceive the shadowing technique to be in enhancing their confidence, fluency, and pronunciation?
2. What challenges do third-year English majors at Hanoi Metropolitan University face when applying the shadowing technique to improve their speaking skills?
3. What potential solutions could address the identified obstacles and improve the effectiveness of the shadowing technique in speaking skill development?

2. Literature Review

The shadowing approach, which has its origins in neurology and psychology (Cherry, 1953, page 978), has evolved into a well-known strategy in the field of language learning. This is especially true in East Asia, where it is commonly included into language programs (Kadota & Tamai, 2004, page 10). According to Saito (2013, p.47), research conducted in Japan and Korea demonstrates that shadowing is an effective method for enhancing

listening comprehension and pronunciation, and that it can be adapted to both formal classroom settings and self-study environments. However, problems such as cognitive overload and anxiety have been identified, which has prompted calls for incremental pacing and structured support to ease these challenges (Shiki et al., 2010, p. 5). Studies conducted by Hamada (2019, p.198) confirm the benefits of shadowing for intermediate to advanced learners (B2-C1 levels), which include improving comprehension and fluency. The meta-analysis conducted by Li (2018) provides additional evidence that shadowing has a favorable impact on speaking fluency. The study highlights considerable improvements in both speed and comprehension (Li, 2018, p. 201). The purpose of this analysis is to highlight the function that shadowing plays in assisting learners in internalizing language structures, which ultimately results in improved automaticity and cohesiveness in speech. Nevertheless, the demands that shadowing places on cognitive resources and linguistic adaptation point to the necessity of developing individualized strategies that are based on the learners' exposure levels and the languages they have previously studied. The significance of these findings lies in the fact that adaptive shadowing approaches that are tailored to different degrees of competency and preferences in learning are required.

Despite the fact that it is still a fresh approach to English training in Vietnam, shadowing has demonstrated encouraging outcomes here. According to the findings of research conducted by Hoang (2019, page 47) and Thu (2021, page 89), shadowing is an effective method for Vietnamese learners to dramatically enhance their pronunciation and fluency, thereby lowering the occurrence of common phonological faults that are distinctive to English speakers. Nevertheless, because Vietnamese has a different tonal quality than English, students frequently have difficulty adopting English intonation and stress patterns,

which can have an effect on rhythm and overall fluency (Ngoc, 2018, p. 13). In addition, Pham (2018, page 13) draws attention to these difficulties in pronunciation, particularly with regard to vowel sounds. This underscores the necessity of modifying shadowing strategies in order to overcome these language-specific obstacles. It has been demonstrated in additional research conducted by Thu et al. (2020, page 29) that shadowing has the ability to boost learners' confidence and natural speech rhythm, particularly when it is incorporated into classroom activities. Additionally, Tam (2022, page 147) highlights the usefulness of shadowing in preparing students for proficiency examinations such as the TOEIC and IELTS by fostering the development of critical speaking and listening skills of the students. On the other hand, students' capacity to practice effectively and make continuous development is hindered by obstacles such as restricted access to resources written by native speakers and inconsistent feedback from teachers (Minh, 2023, page 138). Additionally, Vietnamese studies usually emphasize challenges relating to learner motivation and the significance of feedback. This is in addition to the limits that are associated with the resources. Students frequently complain that they do not receive regular support, which has a negative impact on their ability to self-motivate and advance in pronunciation and fluency. Utilizing shadowing to its full potential in Vietnamese situations is made far more difficult by the fact that there is a substantial lack of resources and feedback mechanisms.

This study intends to solve these issues by investigating practical ways for adopting shadowing among university students in Vietnam. The importance of structured guidance, a range of resources, and a constant feedback system will be emphasized over the course of this investigation. The purpose of this strategy is to improve the efficiency of shadowing in terms of increasing English-speaking skills within a context in which

such methodologies are still in the process of getting established.

3. Methods

The research will employ a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative methodologies, to investigate the influence of the shadowing technique on the enhancement of speaking skills. Quantitative data will be obtained using structured surveys, and qualitative insights will be acquired through semi-structured interviews, yielding a thorough comprehension of the method's efficacy and implementation variables.

Sixty third-year English majors at Hanoi Metropolitan University, aged twenty to twenty-three, participated in the study, with data collecting occurring from August to October 2024. The cohort comprised predominantly female students, totaling 53 out of 60, with merely seven male students. This gender distribution mirrors the overarching demographic trend within the department. The majority of these students attained a B2-C1 level of English proficiency according to their course assessments, while one student achieved a C2 level, as evidenced by their International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score. At the outset of the study, hardly 10 percent of participants possessed verified English language certifications, including TOEFL or IELTS.

The students were prepared for their imminent graduation tests, heightening their necessity for consistent practice and enhancement of speaking skills, rendering them suitable subjects for assessing the impact of the shadowing approach on language competency. Their varied academic backgrounds and specific emphasis on improving their speaking skills corresponded effectively with the aims of this study. A survey distributed via Google Forms was utilized to collect data. The survey incorporated both quantitative and qualitative questions to assess participants' perceptions of the shadowing method and its

impact on their language competence. Participants were solicited for feedback on the case, addressing specific areas such as listening comprehension, pronunciation, and fluency. Google Forms facilitates the accessibility, completion, and analysis of survey responses.

The data analysis will employ graphics, such as bar charts and pie charts, to visually depict survey results and demonstrate participants' impressions of the shadowing method's efficacy. Quantitative data will be computed, whereas qualitative replies will be classified and synthesized..

4. Results

4.1. Effectiveness of Shadowing Method

The survey and interview results show how Hanoi Metropolitan University third-year English majors use and benefit from shadowing. Most students practiced shadowing for less than three months, with 73.3% and 43.3% doing so for less than a month. Few (6.7%) shadowed for over six months. Interview replies revealed that the short duration was generally due to students' early difficulties adapting to shadowing and academic commitments that made long-term, continuous practice difficult. Students felt that long-term shadowing may produce more benefits, but scheduling frequent practice was difficult. Over half (55%) practiced shadowing two to three times per week, whereas 11.7% practiced everyday. The interviews showed that students who practiced more often saw fluency and confidence improve, but everyday practice was difficult.

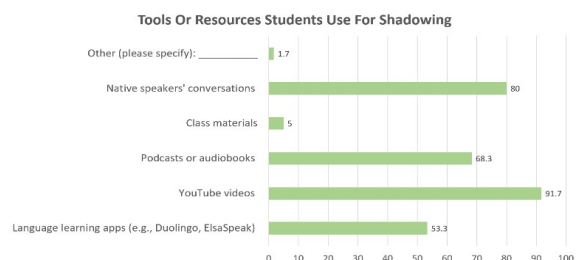


Chart 1. Student Preferences for Shadowing Materials

Since shadowing takes constant practice, those who practiced less than once a week saw little gain. Students agreed that increasing practice frequency would be advantageous but stressed the need for solutions to fit shadowing into their hectic schedules. YouTube videos (91.7%), native speaker talks (80%), and podcasts or audiobooks (68.3%), were students' top resources. Duolingo, a structured language learning program, was used by 53.3% of students. Interviews showed that students valued native speaker talks for motivation and listening and pronunciation improvement. Some students thought challenging themselves with BBC News and other real-world media improved listening comprehension. Classroom materials were the least preferred, suggesting students prefer free digital tools for engagement and authenticity. Shadowing was highly successful for 20% of students, moderately effective for 46.7%, and neutral for 25%. Shadowing improved pronunciation, confidence, and fluency for students, with constant practice being crucial.

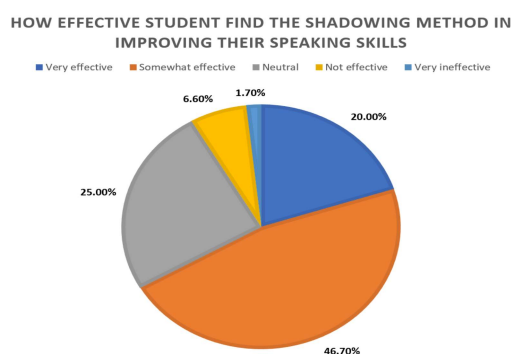


Chart 2. How Effective Students Find the Shadowing Method in Improving Their Speaking Skills

However, those with neutral or negative experiences cited a lack of systematic instruction and feedback as restrictions. Students strongly desired regular feedback to assess progress and improve specific areas, particularly pronunciation correctness and sentence fluency, according to interview feedback.

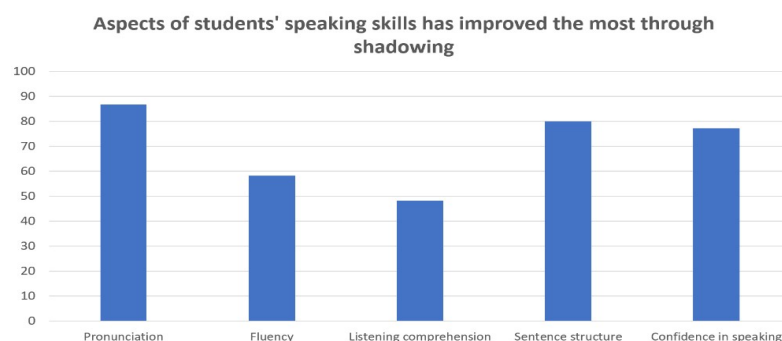


Chart 3. Which Aspects of Students' Speaking Skills Has Improved the Most Through Shadowing

Students indicated gains in pronunciation (86.7%), sentence structure (80%), speaking confidence (77.3%), and fluency (58.3%). In interviews, students enjoyed shadowing's pronunciation benefits, which allowed them to replicate native tone and cadence. Students spoke more smoothly and cohesively with better sentence building. However, some students noticed the cognitive difficulties of combining grammar with fluency, suggesting that grammar exercises should

supplement shadowing and promote natural language use.

4.2. Challenges When Using "Shadowing" technique

Based on survey and interview replies, the main difficulties students have when utilizing the shadowing approach are mentioned in this section. 76.7% of students reported that it was challenging to stay motivated for regular practice, making this the most notable obstacle.

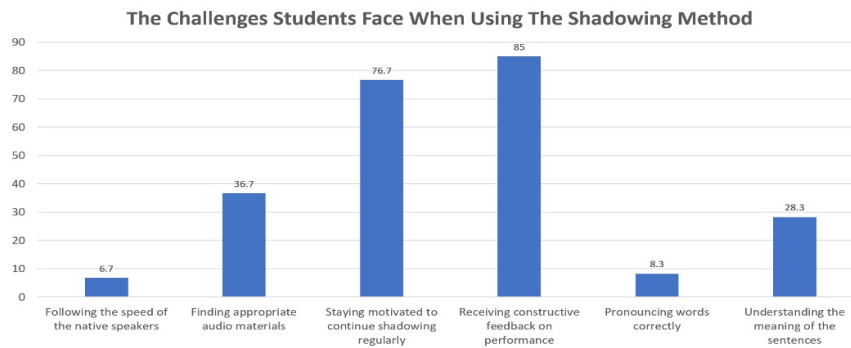


Chart 4. The Challenges Students Face When Utilizing the Shadowing Method

Many students believed that shadowing needed a great deal of concentration and perseverance, which frequently resulted in a gradual decline in motivation in the absence of adequate support or incentives. Furthermore, 85% of participants said they did not receive regular feedback on their shadowing performance, which made it difficult to determine whether they had improved. Students were left in the dark regarding their development due to the lack of feedback, highlighting the necessity of consistent evaluation assistance. According to the interviews, students wanted feedback that was especially focused on helping them with their pronunciation and fluency because these were the areas in which they had the most difficulty.

stay engaged, choosing pertinent and interesting resources is essential for effective practice. A few students also mentioned that the pace and complexity of native speech presented extra difficulties while using sophisticated resources like news broadcasts. During shadowing, 46.7% of students reported occasionally experiencing cognitive exhaustion, making cognitive overload a common difficulty.

How often student experience cognitive overload (feeling mentally tired) during shadowing practice

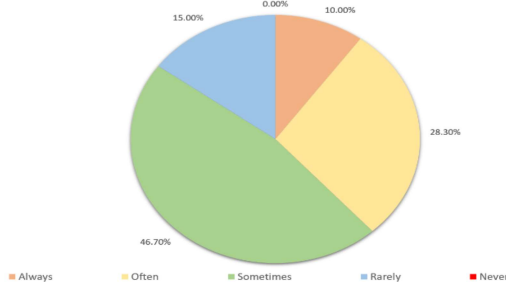


Chart 5. Frequency of Cognitive Overload During Shadowing Practice

The challenge of finding appropriate shadowing materials was another obstacle, as reported by 36.7% of students. Since students indicated that they require materials that align with their interests and level of proficiency in order to

How effective student find the shadowing method in improving their speaking skills

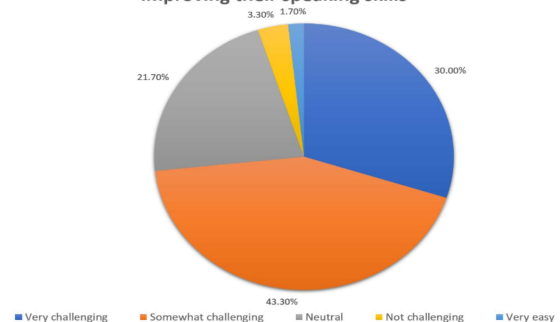


Chart 6. How Challenging Students Find it to Follow the Speed of the Native Speakers in Shadowing Exercises

This was especially noticeable during longer sessions when listening and mimicking native speech simultaneously became mentally taxing. Furthermore, 43.3% of students found it difficult to follow the natural pace of native speakers, and 30% found it extremely difficult, which frequently resulted in frustration and despair. In short, students cited obtaining relevant resources, managing cognitive demands, getting regular feedback, and staying

motivated as the top reasons for employing shadowing. These findings highlight the necessity of regular feedback mechanisms, resource customization, and organized support to improve the efficacy of the shadowing method for language learning.

4.3. Proposed Solutions

The chart below illustrates that the majority of students—76.9%—strongly think that the input they get is beneficial. According to 23.1% of students, the feedback is beneficial. None of the students disagree, strongly disagree, or are ambivalent about the feedback’s usefulness. Feedback is essential to language acquisition because it helps students understand their areas of strength and weakness. For the feedback to be really beneficial, it must be precise, useful, and constructive. Students ought to be open to criticism and use it to their work. Feedback that is precise and unambiguous aids students in understanding their areas of improvement. Without being unduly negative, constructive criticism assists students in identifying areas in which they need to improve. Positive reinforcement can increase students’ confidence and motivation.

Helpfulness For Improving Shadowing Skills When Received Feedback

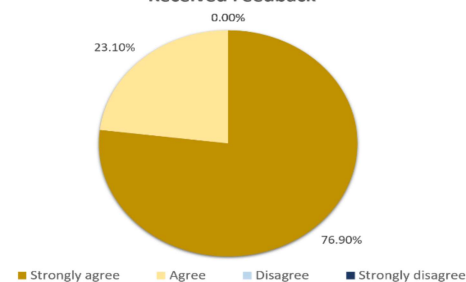


Chart 7. Students’ Opinion about Helpfulness in Improving Shadowing Skills When Received Feedback

The graph highlights several key areas where students believe the shadowing method may be improved to help them become better speakers. Regular feedback was cited as the most crucial element by 57 students, or 95% of the respondents. This suggests that students value feedback and criticism from teachers or peers in order to identify areas for improvement and improve their pronunciation, intonation, and fluency. Furthermore, 31 students, or 51.7% of the respondents, stated that having access to a wider range of shadowing tools was essential. This implies that engaging and diverse resources are necessary to sustain motivation and satisfy different learning preferences.

What Students Think Could Help Make The Shadowing Method More Effective For Improving Speaking Skills

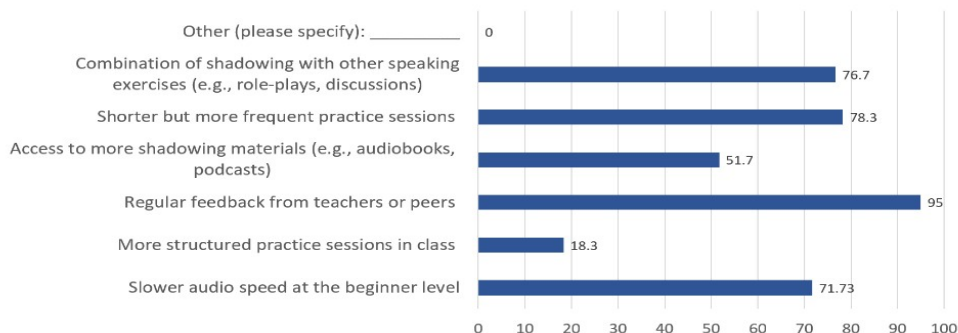


Chart 8. Suggestions from Students for Shadowing Practice

Furthermore, 46 students (76.7%) expressed interest in combining shadowing with other speaking exercises such as role-plays and dialogues. This suggests that integrating shadowing into a broader language learning framework can increase its efficacy and provide opportunities for more in-depth

language practice. Finally, 43 students, or 71.73%, said that novices would benefit from a slower audio tempo. This implies that resources that are appropriately paced are necessary for students at different proficiency levels. Overall, these findings highlight the importance of providing students with regular feedback, a variety of materials, and opportunities for structured practice to optimize the advantages of the shadowing method.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

5.1 Discussion

According to the results, third-year English majors at Hanoi Metropolitan University face a number of obstacles that prevent the shadowing approach from reaching its full potential as a tool for improving pronunciation, fluency, and confidence. The majority of students demonstrated gains in sentence structure (80%), fluency (58.3%), and pronunciation (86.7%), highlighting the importance of shadowing in language learning. Nonetheless, challenges including sustaining motivation (76.7%), obtaining appropriate resources (36.7%), and managing cognitive overload (46.7%) were prevalent. The fast-paced nature of native speaker audio frequently caused problems for students; 43.3% of them found it moderately difficult to keep up, and 30% found it extremely difficult.

These difficulties can be addressed using many strategies to improve language learning shadowing. First, the program should include structured and guided practice. Teacher-led shadowing exercises could start with slower, simpler content and progress to more complicated, faster-paced items. Scaffolding the challenge level allowed pupils to practice listening and speaking without cognitive overload. Second, improving feedback mechanisms would boost motivation and continual progress. Regular feedback from teachers or peers can help students improve pronunciation, intonation, and fluency. Technology

like language applications that provide real-time pronunciation and fluency feedback could enhance teacher feedback. This dual method would give students fast, actionable feedback and let them self-assess and track their development. Access to various and engaging shadowing materials that match kids' interests and ability levels is another solution. This may mean offering a curated library of popular YouTube channels, audiobooks, podcasts, and news pieces in multiple languages. Beginners may benefit from slower speech rates and clear pronunciation, while advanced learners may gain from natural speech patterns. Students are more motivated to shadow when resources are related to their interests, such as entertainment, technology, or world news.

Along with shadowing, role-playing and conversational practice can help students apply pronunciation and fluency in dynamic circumstances. Role-playing exercises let students recreate real-life situations, reinforcing language patterns and intonations learned during shadowing. Shadowing and other activities can make practice sessions more engaging and prepare students for real-world language use. Finally, progressive shadowing can reduce cognitive strain and pace issues. Teachers might start with shorter sessions with slower audio and increase duration and speed as students gain comfort and familiarity. Breaks during lengthier sessions and shorter, easier segments can help students manage mental tiredness, while gradually introducing faster-paced materials can help them adapt to native speaker tempos. To sum up, guided practice sessions, feedback systems, diverse resources, supplementary activities, and a progressive approach could create a supportive framework that maximizes shadowing benefits for English majors and addresses the main challenges identified in this study.

5.2 Conclusion

Students majoring in English can significantly profit from this study shadowing technique, notably in terms of pronunciation and fluency and other areas. The success of this endeavor, on the other hand, is contingent upon consistent practice, the quality of resources, and controlled feedback mechanisms. The implementation of feedback channels for continuing evaluation, the provision of resources that are connected with students' interests, and the incorporation of guided shadowing sessions into the curriculum are among the most important recommendations. It is possible that the impact of shadowing could be further enhanced by adapting materials to meet varying levels of language proficiency and incorporating supplemental activities, such as role-playing for example. In the future, research should take into consideration a larger sample size and a longer period in order to conduct a full investigation of the consequences of the shadowing approach. In addition, investigating the impact that shadowing has on other language abilities, such as listening and comprehension, could provide a more comprehensive perspective on the ways in which it can be utilized in the process of language acquisition for Vietnamese students.

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