DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS OF NON-LINGUISTIC STUDENTS THROUGH USING THE SHADOWING METHOD

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ABSTRACT

The study discusses the most common issues that first year non-majored students encounter in the process of improving their English speaking skills; their regular methods of practicing speaking skill and their attitude toward these methods. It analyzes the results obtained from the questionnaire survey conducted before the experimental phase, which are examined in depth to gain insights into the participants' perceptions and attitudes towards the topic. The experimental lesson plans are made based on these research findings, which mainly concentrate on the categories that students find difficult and confusing. Likewise, by researching students' attitude toward regular learning methods for speaking skill, further additions can be added to the experimental plan so that it becomes more appropriate and easier for students to approach during the process. In short, the study is to provide a detailed overview of the theoretical foundation for the experimental phase using Shadowing technique.

Keywords: Shadowing Technique, Learning Speaking, Teaching Speaking, Teaching Methods

1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking English fluently and accurately remains a major challenge for many first-year non-English major students at Thai Nguyen University of Education. Despite learning English for 6-7 years in high school, students often lack confidence and oral proficiency when communicating in English (Le, 2021). Several factors contribute to students' limited English speaking abilities, including lack of exposure to authentic English, limited speaking practice, and reliance on grammar-translation methods in high school (Nguyen, 2022).

As noted by Le (2021), many first-year students have difficulty pronouncing English words correctly, using appropriate rhythm, intonation, and stress patterns, and speaking fluently without lengthy pauses. They frequently make grammatical errors and lack vocabulary needed for academic contexts. Their speaking lacks the depth and precision needed for academic discourse (Hoang, 2020). Consequently, many students feel anxious when asked to speak English in class and avoid communicating openly. Poor English speaking skills hinder students' overall English competence and limit their ability to participate effectively in an increasingly globalized academic environment.

Several researchers have highlighted the need for more communicative teaching approaches to equip students with practical English speaking skills (Le, 2021; Nguyen, 2022). However, most

English classes at Thai Nguyen University of Education continue to prioritize grammar and reading comprehension over oral communication skills. Speaking practice remains limited due to large class sizes and traditional teaching methods. More innovative and engaging methods are needed to provide meaningful speaking practice and build students' confidence.

In light of these challenges, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of shadowing techniques to enhance the English speaking skills of first-year non-English major students. Shadowing is an oral technique where learners listen to a model speaker and simultaneously repeat what they hear, trying to match the original speech as closely as possible (Tamai, 2005). Studies have shown shadowing can improve learners' pronunciation, fluency, listening comprehension, vocabulary use, and grammatical accuracy (Hamada, 2018). By deeply processing incoming speech, shadowing may also strengthen cognitive language processing pathways.

Several key benefits make shadowing a promising method for improving speaking skills. First, shadowing provides extensive listening and speaking practice through its repetitive process. The intensive exposure to fluent models may increase students' familiarity with English prosody, including stress, rhythm and intonation. Second, shadowing promotes active listening as students closely attend to the speaker's pronunciation, speed, and expression (Kadota, 2019). This focus on meaningful language processing could strengthen students' oral comprehension.

Third, shadowing may expand students' vocabulary and grammar by exposing them to new words and structures in context (Hamada, 2018). Fourth, shadowing helps learners notice gaps between their own speech and the model, enabling self-correction (Lam, 2020). This awareness can improve pronunciation and automaticity. Finally, the repetitive practice boosts learners' confidence and reduces anxiety speaking English (Nakayama & Santiago, 2020).

2.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
2.1. Research questions:
The study was carried out using the following questions to look into the efficacy of the shadowing method on first-year non-linguistic students:

(1) What are the Difficulties that First-Year Non-Major Students Encounter When Learning English?

(2) How Does the Use of Shadowing Technique Affect Students' Speaking Skill?

2.2. Participants:
There were two groups of 40–50 students in the class to participate. The first group was given lectures from videos with preset subjects to measure the follow-up technique. It could be a sketch, or a quick chat, etc. The students might try their best to mimic the tones of native speakers. The variety and shape of learning resources always varied according to the aptitude and absorption capacity of the student. The participants put in a lot of study time over the course of a semester to get the most accurate and unbiased insights into how shadowing impacts their speaking abilities.

The control group, on the other hand, learned everything by conventional classroom techniques, using exercises and knowledge from books all semester long. Both groups' knowledge gains were derived from the same subject matter at all times. The impact of the Shadowing approach on

learners' speaking skills were examined through a realistic and persuasive comparison between the two groups.

2.3. Data collection instruments
2.3.1. Tests
Pretests were first used as a diagnostic tool to set baseline skills, which enabled the authors to pinpoint the students' areas of strength and improvement. The researchers could systematically evaluate students' language competency, fluency, and accuracy of pronunciation by administering focused tests that were matched to the goals of the Shadowing approach. These evaluations, whether they took the shape of written assignments, interactive simulations, or oral exams, gave the reseachers a wealth of information on students' development and overall class trends, which made it easier to make data-driven decisions when developing and carrying out lesson plans. Regular post-tests allowed for the tracking of students' progress over time and provide both the researchers and students with tangible evidence of the learning objectives. *2.3.2.*

Questionnaire
To successfully collect data from a large number of participants in an organized manner, questionnaires were an indispensable tool. In the context of teaching English speaking to first-year non-major students using the Shadowing technique, surveys were a crucial tool for assessing the efficacy and acceptability of this pedagogical strategy. Typically, researchers created questionnaires that were specific to the goals of the study and covered topics like how students felt about the method, how confident they were in speaking English, how they felt about language learning, and how they had used the Shadowing technique overall.

2.4 Data collection procedure
The procedure of data collection was summarized into three main step as shown in the table below

Table 1.The procedure of data collection

EXPERERIMENT PLAN	
Pre-Questionaire	Questionaire included multiple-choice questions using Google Forms
Pre-test	Pre-test included a speaking test at B1 level
Experiment	Lesson plans using the shadowing tecnique (from week 1-8)
Post-Test	Post-Test included a face-to-face speaking test with multiple questions

The experimental process lasted eight weeks. To begin, a group of non-English-majoring students were invited to complete a questionnaire to assess their attitudes toward studying and speaking English. Prior to the experiment, they were given a pre-test to determine their starting point. The pre-test is based on Vstep's speaking exam sample for level B1 and consists of three parts: social interaction, solution discussion, and topic development.

Students were divided into two groups: group A and group B. Group B experimented for 8 weeks with 8 lessons, using the shadowing approach exclusively. Afterwards, group B will be

compared to group A, which studied complete lessons using standard teaching methods, in order to assess the effectiveness and influence of the shadowing technique on students' speaking skills. These two groups had the same number of students, and they were at an equal level.

After the learning progress, all the students were tested with a face-to-face speaking test with the teachers. This test included multiple questions and last for 5-7 minutes. The results from each group are recorded and compared to see the difference between them.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION
3.1 The issues that students encounter in the process of improving their English speaking skills.

No	Issues	Completely agree	Moderately agree	Slightly agree	Disagree
1	Afraid of speaking English because your grammar is not always correct	24,5%	26,4%	37,7%	11,3%
2	Speaking skill is the most difficult out of all the skills	20,8%	24,5%	37,7%	17%
3	Have difficulty finding a partner to practice speaking English	26,4%	28,3%	30,2%	15,1%
4	Have difficulty to arrange the words in your head into sentences	34%	32,1%	28,3%	5,7%
5	The difficulty in expressing ideas verbally in English.	35,8%	39,6%	22,6%	1,9%
6	Vocabulary is limited	37,7%	41,5%	18,9%	1,9%
7	The activities in your speaking class don't have any effect on you.	1,9%	17%	34%	47,2%

Table 1. The issues that students encounter

Observing the concerns listed in Table 1, we can see that one of the most common issues that students had while speaking English is a fear of making grammatical errors, which made it difficult for the other person to comprehend. This concern caused individuals to lack confidence in their grammatical abilities, prevened them from freely expressing their views through speech. Another issue is that they had difficulty finding an appropriate person to practice speaking English with. If

you could not find someone to practice and enhance your speaking abilities with, you would have a tough time making progress. Furthermore, certain other issues arised that impeded pupils' ability to speak English, such as a lack of required vocabulary and an inability to organize the language they had into a whole phrase. This put a lot of strain on pupils to communicate well while also losing confidence.

In brief, the process of strengthening pupils' English speaking abilities were difficult. Fear of speaking English owing to grammatical errors, difficulties finding companions to practice speaking English with, low vocabulary, and a lack of drive and confidence are all obstacles. To solve these issues, students were given several opportunities to practice speaking English, which helped them solidify their grammatical knowledge, extend their vocabulary, and become confident and competent in speaking English. With these solutions, students would be able to develop their English-speaking abilities and gain confidence and proficiency in the process of speaking English.

3.1 Students main difficulties in speaking English:

3.1.1 Students' difficulties in speaking English:

When speaking English, students often faced various difficulties that can hinder their proficiency. These challenges drange from a lack of vocabulary and grammar structure to mispronunciation, lack of interest in the topic, and not having enough preparation time. Understanding these difficulties is crucial to addressing them effectively and helping students improve their English-speaking skills.
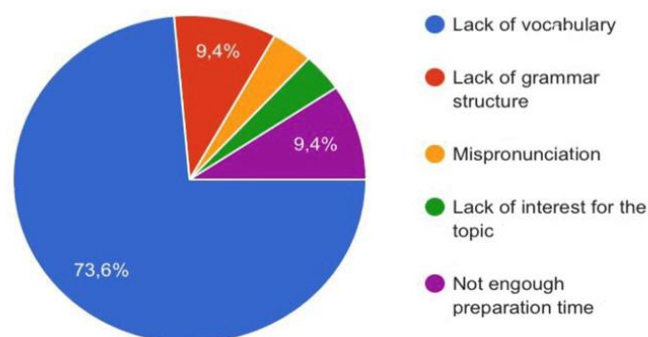

Figure 1. Students' opinions about the kind of difficulties.

These findings indicated the fact that improving student's vocabulary is the key to better speaking skill. English non-majors habitually need to seek for the right word, but they cannot come up with the one that fits the situation or material. This is a result of limited awareness to several vocabulary. This further lead to the inability to communicate comprehensibly in English, which again resulted in a loss of confidence and a lack of motivation to make conversations. As a result, students constantly used filler words in their talks and conversations or put up unfinished sentences.

Besides of the lack of vocabulary, non-majored students also had to face with the lack of grammar structure. Learning English grammar was and remained a huge and complex problem for all students. Most non English speakesr did not pay attention to grammar when they make conversations in English, especially daily life conversations. This lead to a habit of them not trying to correct themselves in formal speech and talks. When it had come to their attention that they

often made grammatical errors, they felt reluctant to talk openly in English due to the fear of making mistakes.

3.1.1   Students' mispronunciation in speaking English
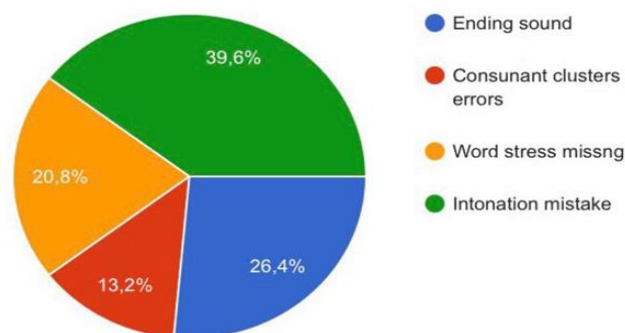
**Figure 2.** The errors that students commonly make when speaking English.

Every language has its own intonation rules, and its characteristics are different from other languages. For Vietnamese learners, English is not their mother tongue, they must practice to use intonation to make their foreign speaking become more natural. Although English and Vietnamese intonation have some similarities, big differences still exist between them. Vietnamese intonation focuses on the tone marks such as, acute, grave, hook above. In fact, Vietnamese students from primary school are taught that those tone marks are a component part of words which identify the meaning of words. They rarely know that tone marks are intonation elements. That is the reason why when Vietnamese students start to focus on improving English speaking skill, they always struggle at using intonation. Vietnamese students usually speak English with a flat tone. Their voices do not go up or down, they also do not stress the words. Some of them have trouble with messy intonation, they raise voice in wrong parts of sentences, especially in Wh-questions and tag questions. Those mistakes, in fact, lead to a lot of misunderstanding situations in reality.

On the other hand, a number of non-majored students found that ending sound was a huge obstacle in pronunciation. The majority of English words have a final sound. However, when speaking quickly, learners eventually skip or forget to pronounce the ending sounds during the talking process. In English, failing to pronounce the final consonant may lead to unwanted misunderstandings, making other people unable to understand the information the speaker wants to convey.

3.2 Improvement methods that students frequently use to improve their skills in speaking English:

### 3.2.1   Ways to improve that students use English speaking skill outside of the classroom:
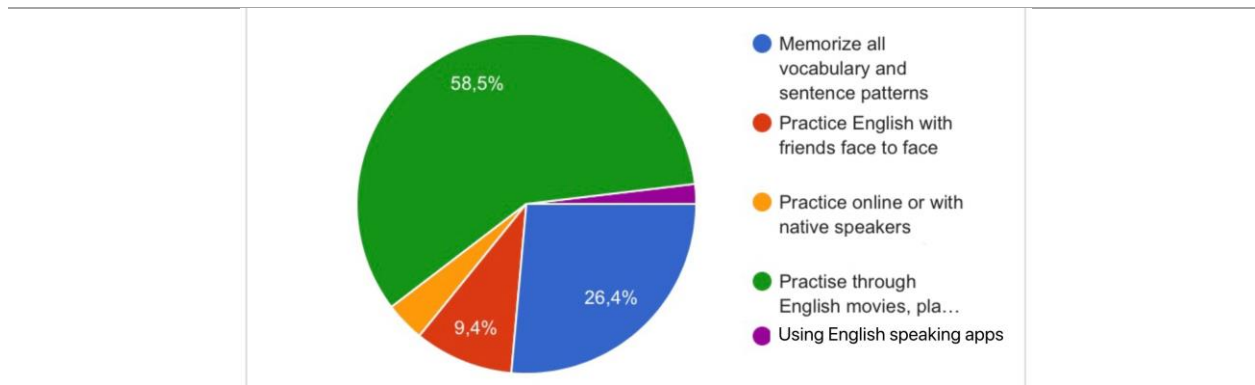
Figure 3. Students' opinions about ways to improve English speaking skill outside of the classroom

It is clear from the chart that the shadowing approach remained a top priority for practicing learners speaking skills. Indeed, practicing speaking through movies, music, etc. can help pupils improveed their standard IPA pronunciation. Along with that, they could practice intonation, and the accent was adjusted to regular English during practice. Along with it, speaking speed and vocabulary could be improved, particularly fluency. Similarly, the strategy of learning words and common sentence structures could help pupils develop a diverse vocabulary that can be used in every situation. In short, the shadowing method was well-developed among students and widely used even before scientific studies investigated its efficacy.

On the contrary, surveyors did not favor using speaking practice apps, communicating with native speakers online, or direct practice with partners. This is simply explained by the investment of time and long-term persistence. Furthermore, the native environment is Vietnamese, which limited students' opportunities to practice speaking. Apps with a pre-installed mode require payment to use, which discourages learners from using them.

**3.2.2   Ways to improve errors made when speaking English:**
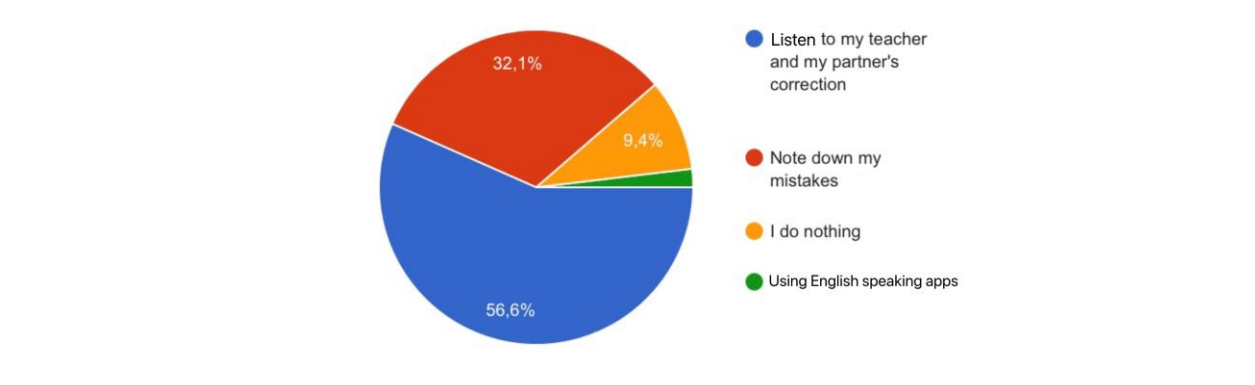
Figure 4. Students' opinions about ways to improve error made when

speaking English

Figure 4 clearly demonstrate that error correction during speaking practice is limited to corrections made by the teacher and class partners. On the plus side, this serves as a signal to improve speaking abilities in a targeted and shared manner so that we could all advance. On the other hand, this is a conventional and impersonal method of fixing faults. In a large class with many students, each student's levels are different, and fixing problems in class is only on the surface and cannot be fully utilized personally. Furthermore, noting errors is a method that is promoted. This is also a conventional method that is widely used and requires significant improvement to correct faults.
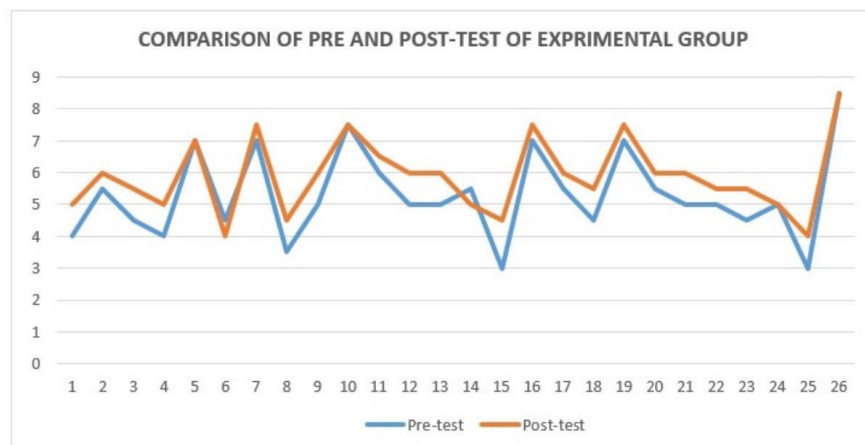
3.3 Results of pre-test and post-test
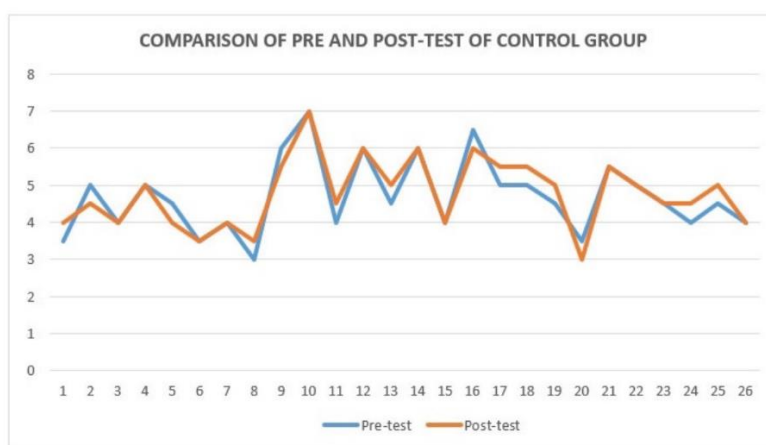
Figure 5. Comparison of pre and post-test of control group

Figure 5. shows the difference between the control group's pre- and post-test results. On a scale of ten, 26 students learned speaking skills using the standard method. The most striking finding is that up to 12 people maintained the same score after two examinations (almost half). Aside from that, only a few people's scores increased, but not significantly (6 people). However, up to eight participants slimmed down during the research period. The pre-test average score remained around 4.69 and climbed by roughly 0.07, and by the end of the research with the post-test, it had reached an average of 4.76. The traditional technique of teaching speaking skills, which continued to be utilized in the classroom, is clearly productive. Nevertheless, advancement is still gradual and ambiguous. On the other hand, it appears that it is not truly ideal for some learners.

Figure 6. Comparison of pre and post-test of experimental group

Figure 6. compares the results from the pre-test and post-test of the experimental group. It can be seen that there were noticeable changes in students's level of English-speaking skill based on the scale from 1 to 10. Among the 26 non-English-majoring students who took part in the experiment, 20 of them (accounting for 70%) had shown progress in their score based on the marking results of the post-test. In addition, the average score of the pre-test for the experimental group was 5.1, while that of the post-test was 5.9. Plus, the lowest score of the pre-test was 3. There were two students who scored 3 in the pre-test, which was the lowest; these two students scored 4 and 4.5 in the post-test. Thus, proving the experimental treatment did leave some effects even in students with very limited speaking skills. The results of the pre-test and post-test indicate that the participants' speaking skills witnessed a considerable difference after the intervention of the shadowing technique.

4. CONCLUSION

Grammar and vocabulary are clearly important difficulties in learners speaking skills development. This is the basis for all skills and must be developed. Determination and frequent study are particularly essential for vocabulary development. Having a restricted vocabulary that cannot be communicated in English has created a barrier for students. Furthermore, students only use speaking learning methods in classroom classes, and resolving problems encountered while practicing speaking skills is solely the responsibility of the teacher. It is important to point out that, in addition to classes, students have actively explored the shadowing method through music, movies, and so on. Furthermore, due to the differences between Vietnamese and English, the aspects of tone and syllable emphasis in phrases make training speaking skills tough and a significant task for pupils. On the other hand, some students continue to be unaware of the need of correcting errors made when developing speaking skills. In conclusion, surveying the first year non-linguistic students' speaking skills allowed us to identify the obstacles and challenges they face, as well as the current state of their speaking practice.

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