The Effectiveness of Shadow-Reading With and Without Written Script on Pronunciation of Iranian Intermediate EFL Students

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Abstract

Pronunciation is essential to appropriate communication because the incorrect use of pronunciation inevitably leads to the message being misunderstood by the receptor. In spite of its importance, L2 learners often regard pronunciation as the most difficult language skill to learn. In this study, shadowing as an act or task in pronunciation, in which the learner tracks the target speech and repeats it immediately as exactly as possible, is recommended to enhance the students' pronunciation. More specifically, this study aimed at investigating the effect of shadowing with and without written script on the Iranian EFL students' pronunciation. 77 participants out of a population of 99 students were randomly picked through the administration of Preliminary English Test (PET). The participants were three groups of intermediate level. The First group, containing 27 students, did shadow-reading with written script (group A); the second group comprising 25 students, who did shadow-reading without written script (group B); and the third, consisting of 25 learners, who acted as the control group. Each shadowing lesson was conducted with the detailed instructions as recommended by Kadota and Tamai (2004). The data were collected through the administration of a pre- test and a post-test. The analysis of the test scores, using a one-way ANOVA, revealed that the experimental groups (A & B) performed statistically better in pronunciation. It also revealed that the shadowing with written script group performed statistically better than the without written script group. The implications of this study are that shadowing, as a fruitful technique, can be incorporated into the teaching of the pronunciation to the EFL students.

Key words: Shadow-Reading, Pronunciation, Written Script, Non-Written script, Intermediate EFL Students.

Introduction

English is the official language in a large number of countries, However it may not be the most spoken language in the world; it is indicated that the large number of people in the world use English to communicate on a regular basis (Delian, 2014). It is also the most commonly used language among foreign language speakers. Throughout the world, also people with different languages mostly use English to communicate with each other.

Delian (2014) asserts researches from all over the world show that most often; English is used for business communication. Its importance in the global market place, therefore, cannot be underestimated. The fact that many countries have made English as an official language shows

the importance of the English language in educational field. Consequently, the English language teaching (ELT) has become one of the major growth industries around the world in the recent years.

A common mistake made by the most international students studying English as a second language is not paying sufficient attention to English pronunciation. This deprecation of the importance of pronunciation is mainly because students tend to think mistakenly that pronunciation is less important compared to other aspects of the English language such as grammar, lexicology and vocabulary. Pronunciation is essential to appropriate communication because the incorrect use of pronunciation inevitably leads to the message being misunderstood by the receptor.

Pronunciation is a key to all effective communications; without the ability to pronounce correctly, messages are easily misunderstood, communication breaks down and the sender of the message can easily become frustrated or irritated.

Many teachers are not aware of the importance of pronunciation. In the first step, they emphasize the role of grammar and vocabulary learning in the acquisition of a target language. The overwhelming majority of English language teachers help students become competent above all in listening and reading (Harmer, 2001: 183). Secondly, many of them think that pronunciation study is too difficult and worse, boring for young learners. Besides, teachers complain about the lack of high quality and suitable teaching and learning materials and about the lack of time to practice pronunciation. According to Harmer (2001: 183), 'they feel they have too much to do already and pronunciation teaching will only make things worse.

ELT practitioners, researchers, teachers and teacher trainers are continuously seeking for new techniques to improve learner's proficiency. Shadowing is one type of the oral training to promote students repetition of English sounds and which has been used to enhance oral performance recently (Hamada, 2012). Several studies have pointed out the positive effect of shadowing on different areas of language (Tamai, 2005; Murphey, 2001).

As the experts in this area argue the basis of this technique is audio in the language that learners are learning. In a simple term, the shadowing refers to "repeating", or "shadowing" what learners hear as quickly as they hear it while listening (Tamai, 2005; Murphey, 2001).

"Shadowing is a good way to improve a foreign language precisely in that it draws attention to every single word of an utterance, especially structure words which normally do not even register when heard" (Déjean as cited in Nakanishi & Ueda, p. 4)

The effectiveness of shadowing in classrooms has been investigated throughout the field on second language acquisition (Kuramoto & Matsuura, 2002; Lambert, 1992; Murphey, 2001; Mochizuki, 2006; Toda & Liu, 2007; Tamai, 1992, 1997, 2001, 2005). Murphey (2001) sees shadow reading as a pedagogical technique that taps into a common phenomenon in people's discourse: the tendency to repeat silently or aloud what interlocutors or speakers themselves say. It is becoming one of the most effective techniques for oral practice in the language classrooms.

The results of the different studies have shown that accent, pronunciation, speed of speech, insufficient vocabulary, different accent of speakers, lack of concentration, anxiety, and bad

quality of recording are the major problems encountered by EFL learners. Considering this point, shadowing is repeating what is heard at time, it can enable EFL teachers to help students develop effective learning strategies and ultimately improve their English pronunciation abilities.

The study was motivated by previous findings showing that shadowing had a positive and significant effect on EFL learners' pronunciation, considering this assumption shadowing incorporated with written script is more effective than shadowing without script (as cited in Hamada, 2012) .

This study has been conducted to investigate the effectiveness of shadow reading with and without written script on pronunciation of Iranian intermediate EFL students. This is the so called feature that makes the present study different from other studies of its kinds.

Research Questions

In this part three research questions and subsequently three hypotheses have been noted of.
The present study addressed the following research questions:
Q.1. Is there any statistically significant difference between shadow reading with written script and non-shadow reading?
Q.2. Is there any statistically significant difference between shadow reading without written script and non-shadow reading?
Q.3. Is there any statistically significant difference between shadow reading through written scripts and without script in terms of pronunciation?

Research Hypotheses

Three hypotheses have been addressed in the present study:
H1. There is no statistically significant difference between shadow reading with written script and non-shadow reading.
H2. There is no statistically significant difference between shadow reading without written script and non-shadow reading.
H3. There is no statistically significant difference between shadow reading through written scripts and without script in terms of pronunciation.

Methods

Participants and Research Settings

The participants of this study were a total of 77 students picked out of 93 Persian-speaking studying English as a foreign language (EFL) course at a language institute in Zanjan-Iran. They were all male with the age range of 17 to 20. The estimated proficiency level of participants was determined to be intermediate.

However, to ensure the participants' proficiency level, the Oxford Preliminary English Test (PET) was administered and based on the results they were randomly assigned into three groups; the first containing 27 students, who did shadow-reading as the experimental group (group A) with written script; the second entailing 25 students who did shadow-reading as the next experimental group (group B) without written script; and the third consisting of 25 learners, who acted as the control group (group C or non-shadowing). Table 1 shows the students' background information**.**

Table 1: Students' Background Information

Properties	Group A	Group B	Group C
-Age	17-20	17-20	17-20
-Gender	Male	Male	Male
-Institutional level	Intermediate.	Intermediate.	Intermediate.
-Native language	Persian	Persian	Persian
-Target language	English	English	English
-The length of studying the target language	5-6 years	5-6 years	5-6 years
-Where they learn the language	Institution and school	Institution and school	Institution and school
- Treatment .	Shadow reading (with script)	Shadow reading (without script)	Non-Shadow reading

Aught the reading and processes for comprehending through conventional methods. The classes were held three times on odd days of the week (Sundays-Tuesdays-Thursdays).

Instrumentation
In order to check the homogeneity of the learners as the participants of this study, a proficiency test taken from PET by Jenny Quintana (Cambridge University Press, 2012) was administered to confirm that there was no significant difference between the language knowledge levels of the selected participants. The pronunciation pre-test is to check the learners' preliminary pronunciation level of English. The pronunciation posttest is to determine learners' progress after treatment.

Data Analysis
In order to test the hypotheses formulated in this study, different statistical procedure were used. The row data of the pretest and posttest were collected. In order to analyze the data, it was fed

into SPSS and through running the one-way ANOVA, the descriptive statistics was used to find out any statistical significant differences between these three groups mean scores.

Results and Discussions

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to evaluate the relationship among the three groups' scores on pretest. Table 2 shows descriptive statistics of these groups. In each case, the number of participants (N), mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) are given. Cronbach's alpha (α) represents the percent of reliable or consistent variance in each group. For example, Cronbach's alpha suggests that the pretest can be viewed as 77% reliable.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the Pretest across the Groups (α= 0.77)

Groups	N	M	SD	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval		Min	Max
					Low	Up		
S.R (with script)	27	16.70	2.44	.47	15.7	17.6	11	21
S.R (without script)	25	17.64	2.44	.48	16.62	18.65	12	22
Non-shadowing	25	17.6	1.93	.38	16.8	18.39	14	23
Total	77	17.29	2.30	.26	16.77	17.82	11	23

The results of the one-way ANOVA to see the observed differences among the groups are presented in the table 3 As the results indicate, there was no significant difference among the three groups, $F (2, 74) = 1.40$, $p = .25$, meaning that this study met the assumption that all groups were equal in terms of proficiency at the outset. Once this assumption was met, the posttests were administered after the treatment.

Table 3: One-way ANOVA Results for the Pretest

| Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between Groups	14.74	2	7.37	1.40	.25
Within Groups	389.39	74	5.26		
Total	404.13	76			

Note: p > .05

A One-way ANOVA between subjects was conducted to determine the effect of treatments on the students' pronunciation progress. The first statistical analysis was the descriptive statistics of

the posttest. Cronbach's alpha (α) represents the percent of reliability was 0.81. It means that the posttest can be viewed as 81% reliable.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of the Posttest across the Groups (α= 0.81)

Groups	N	M	SD	SE	95% Confidence		Min	Max
					Low	Up		
S.R (with script)	27	24.07	.72	.14	23.78	24.63	23	25
S.R (without script)	25	20.72	2.22	.44	19.80	21.63	16	25
Non-shadowing	25	18.13	1.94	.37	20.41	19.12	15	21
Total	77	21.54	3.27	.36	20.78	22.28	15	25

This descriptive statistics is followed by graphical representation of the groups' means at the post test. Figure 1 shows the mean differences among the groups at the posttest.
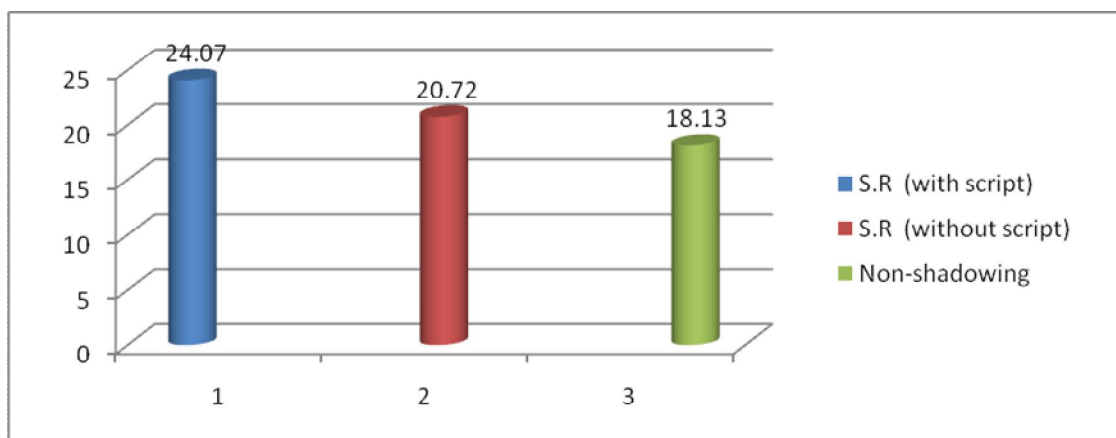
A one-way between/within groups' analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the effect of shadowing with and without scripts on pronunciation at the posttest. This statistical tool was employed to determine to what extent the observed differences among the groups are statistically significant. Descriptive statistics of the results for one-way between and among the groups are displayed in Tables 5.

Table 5: One-way ANOVA Results for the Posttest

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between Groups	533.11	2	266.55	90.04	.00
Within Groups	211.69	74	2.86		
Total	744.81	76			

Note. p < .05

The between-groups factors were instruction methods with three levels (shadowing with script, shadowing without script, and control). The test main effect was significant, F (2, 74) = 93.17, *p* = .00, indicating that there was a significant difference among the groups. In other words, it was confirmed that shadowing with and without written script had a considerable and significant influence on the students' pronunciation compared to non-shadowing condition at the posttest.

Table 6 : Multiple Comparison of Three Groups at the Posttest

LSD

Groups (I)	Tr (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error.	Sig	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Group A Shadowing With script	Shadowing Without script (B)	3.35	.47	.00	2.40	4.30
	Non-shadowing(C)	5.94	.43	.00	5.15	6.91
Group B Shadowing Without script	Shadowing With script(A)	-3.35	.47	.00	-4.30	-2.40
	Non-shadowing(C)	2.59	.39	.00	3.87	3.37
Group C Non-shadowing	Shadowing With script(A)	-5.94	.43	.00	-6.91	-5.15
	Shadowing Without script(B)	-2.59	.39	.00	-3.37	-3.87

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Conclusion
The current study was based on the belief that the English language learners would benefit from shadowing practice to improve their pronunciation. Specifically the aim of this study was to investigate the amount of shadowing influence with and without written scripts on pronunciation. The results revealed that shadowing by the help of written scripts in pronunciation is more effective than following the script silently while listening without looking at it.
The findings of this study can be summarized as follows. The first research question was whether or not shadowing with written script would be capable of improving students' reading comprehension as compared to control group. According to the posttest scores, shadowing with written script improved students' reading comprehension significantly.
The second research question was whether or not shadowing without written script could enhance the effects of pronunciation. The comparison of this group with the non-shadowing group showed more gains on the posttest scores, indicating that this type of shadowing seemed to enhance the learners' pronunciation. This was reflected through a comparison of posttest scores in which the gain of the shadowing class was higher than that of the non-shadowing class.
The next controversial point rose when the amount of shadowing with script influence was compared to its counterpart, shadowing without written script. Data analysis revealed that the combining shadowing practices with written scripts is more effective than the second. Although

the two types of shadowing were significantly effective, but the first group's posttest scores showed substantial improvement. Hence, following Kuramoto's (2007) assertion that the incorporation of written texts increases the effectiveness of shadowing rather repeating written scripts after listening without looking at, it is necessity to use scripts to have more progressive pronunciation experiment.

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