The impact of the Shadowing Technique on EFL Learners' Linguistic Enrichment: A Case Study
L'impact de la Technique de l'Ombrage sur l'Enrichissement Linguistique des Étudiants d'ALE: Étude de Cas

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ABSTRACT:

In today's world, people are living under the effect of globalization and English became the language of all fields; learning this language is a necessity to excel in any domain. Nevertheless, the process of learning a foreign language can be challenging. One of the most common problems that learners confront is foreign language speaking anxiety. In order to address any issues, teachers are continuously expanding and adapting several techniques such as shadowing which is a recent concept that consists of instant repetition of what is heard. From this point, the aim of this research is to measure the effectiveness of the incorporation of shadowing technique in lowering the learners' speaking anxiety. This study was conducted at the University of Oran 2 in the department of finance targeting second year students. The data were collected via the utilization of an anxiety scale. The results disclosed that applying this technique reduced learners' speaking anxiety, strengthened their communication skills, and allowed them to be more comfortable and relaxed. Indeed, it can be understood that the use of this technique has mainly focused on productive skills, even though reading the transcript of the shadowed material is very common. Accordingly, it can lead to the development of reading fluency. It is recommended to investigate the effect of the shadowing technique on receptive skills.

KEYWORDS:

Communication skills; foreign language; learners' speaking anxiety; shadowing technique.

RÉSUMÉ:

Dans le monde d'aujourd'hui, les gens vivent sous l'effet de la mondialisation et l'anglais est devenu la langue de tous les domaines; apprendre cette langue est une nécessité pour exceller dans n'importe quelle sphère. Néanmoins, le processus d'apprentissage d'une langue étrangère peut être un défi. L'un des problèmes les plus courants auxquels les apprenants sont confrontés est l'anxiété liée à la langue étrangère. Afin de résoudre tous les soucis, les enseignants développent et adaptent plusieurs techniques telles que l'ombrage qui est un concept récent qui consiste d'une répétition instantanée de ce qui est entendu. À partir de là, l'objectif de la présente recherche est de mesurer l'efficacité de l'incorporation de la technique d'ombrage dans l'abaissement de l'anxiété de parole des apprenants. Cette étude a été menée à l'Université d'Oran 2 dans le département de finances ciblant les étudiants de deuxième année. Les données ont été recueillies via l'utilisation d'une échelle d'anxiété. Les résultats ont révélé que l'application de cette technique réduisait l'anxiété de parole des apprenants, renforçait leurs compétences en communication et leur permettait d'être plus à l'aise et détendus. En effet, l'utilisation de cette technique s'est principalement accentuée sur les compétences productives, même si la lecture de la transcription du matériel ombré est très courante. En conséquence, cela peut aboutir au développement de la maîtrise de la lecture. Il est recommandé d'étudier l'effet de la technique d'ombrage sur les compétences réceptives.

MOTS-CLÉS:

Compétences en communication; langue étrangère ; anxiété de parole des apprenants ; technique d'ombrage.

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1. Introduction

Shadowing is the action of instantly imitating out loud what is heard without making too many pauses. Throughout time, several specialists have indicated that the use of this technique in the process of foreign language speaking is effective. According to them, the utilization of this technique has only positive impact such as enriching learners' vocabulary, ameliorating their pronunciation, and even developing their listening and speaking skills. This research attempts to investigate the result of using the shadowing technique in order to deal with one of the most popular language learners' problems i.e. foreign language speaking anxiety.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Shadowing Technique

The concept of shadowing was first initiated in 1950s in the field of psychology. The American linguist Professor Alexander Arguelles, who is considered as a pioneer when it comes to the shadowing technique, was the first who introduced this technique into the domain of language learning. His main conducted research was based on developing this technique in order to make it a tool for foreign language learning. Professor Arguelles is now of the most famous polyglots in the world.

Shadowing is when one performs an immediate oral imitation of what he hears. It implicates two different skills at the same time, which are listening and speaking. Several scholars dealt with this technique like Rost and Wilson (2013), Hatasa et al. (2011), and Schweda Nicholson (1994), they all agreed on the fact that this technique focuses on the speaking skill since it based on learners' oral performance. The use of this technique is a successful manner to make learners fluently speaking the target language without making too many efforts since the speaking would not be spontaneous. However, the constant practice and the significant amount of time spent in repetition offers the ability to be accustomed with the target language rhythm, intonation, and stress.

Numerous scholars who have tackled the shadowing technique emphasize several benefits that this technique offers. According to Schewada Nicholson and Moser, the shadowing technique ameliorates

the listening and reading skills (Schewada Nicholson, cited in Safont & Compoy, 2002, p. x); (Moser, cited in Snell-Hornby et al. 1994, x). Another benefit of this technique is the improvement of concentration. Indeed, Takizawa indicated that "learners appear to improve prosody, gain more concentration, and become used to natural speed as well" (cited in Hamada, 2018, p. 4).One of the most significant advantages of the shadowing technique to this study is the development of the speaking skill and oral fluency. As it is explained by Wiltshier the shadowing technique represents an undeniable opportunity for students to actually practise speaking of the target language. (Wiltshier, 2007, p. 501).

2.2. Foreign language speaking Anxiety

This type of anxiety can be defined as the fear of the oral use of a language. It is a crucial concern that affects a great number of foreign language learners, and which can prevent them from accomplishing their objectives. Indeed, Villalobos indicated in his recent research that "...speaking anxiety constitutes a key issue that affects students and other actors in language learning settings, particularly in EFL contexts" (Villalobos, 2023, p. 116). Scholars, such as Chiu, stated that foreign language anxiety is strongly present in productive skills, for instance, speaking and writing compared to receptive skills. Indeed, in his research, Chiu indicated that a great number of learners became easily anxious when speaking in English (Chiu et al., 2010, p. 109).

There are several factors that can engender foreign language speaking anxiety, or even aggravate it if it was previously present. One of the most common factors is in fact learners' fear of making accuracy and grammar mistakes as it has been indicated by Wulandari Santoso and David Perrodin in their conducted study (Santoso & Perrodin, 2021, p. 65). Another factor is learners' competitiveness in the classroom. In the investigation of Yan and Horwitz, one learner explained that he compares himself to others in task performing or even oral participation. He even indicates that he feels that there is a significant difference between his oral performance and others' since he mumbles, because of nervousness, while his colleagues don't (Yan & Horwitz, 2008, p. 166).

Other investigations pointed out that teacher's behaviour can actually lead to speaking anxiety. Numerous investigations were conducted and scholars indicated that the teacher's constant interruption or even violent and brutal criticism or mistake correction can lead to learners' anxiety (Bekleyen, 2004, p. x; Aydın 2001, p. 103). Furthermore, and according to Cheng, a severe and intolerant teacher represents a main anxiety source compared to a friendly and patient teacher (Cheng, 2005, p. x). Not only their behaviour, but the teachers' methods can also lead to speaking anxiety. Indeed, foreign language teachers use several activities in this process such as oral presentation and role plays. These activities are very beneficial since they were created in order to help learners develop their speaking skills. However, and

according to Aydin (2001), Cheng (2005), Woodrow (2006), and Young (1991), these activities can lead to speaking anxiety. In other words, when doing an oral presentation or a role play, the learner is vulnerable in front of the class, he/she is terrified since it is very hard to take and support negative assessment at that moment.

Throughout time, specialists have always tried to find ways to reduce foreign language speaking anxiety. Young indicated that reducing anxiety is about creating the perfect atmosphere. That implicates reciprocated respect and acceptance between not only the teacher and students, but also between students themselves. This perfect atmosphere classroom would be based on appreciation from the teacher and students (Young, 1991, p. 5). A closely similar idea was suggested by Benaissa in his research as he states "...a friendly and safe environment...helps to reduce anxiety of students, because appreciating and taking care of feelings of students promote their willingness to participate in the speaking activities in classes" (Benaissa, 2022, p. 16).

From another side, Philips recommended using foreign language anxiety scales, such as (FLCAS), in order to keep track of learners' perceptions and psychological state in the classroom (Phillips, 1992). One of the numerous researchers who used this scale is Bai. He indicated that "the FLCAS scale has a high level of reliability and validity" (Bai, 2023, p. 2435).For other specialists such as Fross and Reitzel, or even Price, the best way to reduce learners' speaking anxiety is to make them speak about what causes their anxiety and all share together their worries (Foss & Reitzel, 1988; Price, 1991).

3. Methodology

The major objective of this research is to accentuate the significance of the integration of the shadowing technique and its impact on second year finance students at the University of Oran2. For this purpose, a quantitative approach was adopted to gather data from students under examination in order to see the effect of foreign language speaking anxiety on their improvement and progress before and after the inclusion of the stated technique.

3.1. Participants

This study was led at the University of Oran 2 - Mohamed BEN AHMED in the department of finance. The research was conducted on a total of 83 second year students: 51 females and 32 males, their ages varied between 19 and 24. The investigation also included 8 English teachers within the same department.

3.2. Materials

In the present research, an anxiety scale was used with the purpose of studying and analysing the effect of the shadowing technique on foreign language speaking anxiety.

- Anxiety scale: the used Foreign Language Anxiety Scale was designed in 1986 by Horwitz et al. It is used in order to measure anxiety in classrooms. However, for this research, another adjusted version was used. It is named the Public Speaking Class Anxiety Scale (PSCAS) which was presented by Yaikhong and Usaha in 2012. The purpose of using an anxiety scale before starting the study was to actually measure each student's degree of foreign language speaking anxiety. In addition, at the end of the study the same anxiety scale was used again in order to discover and reveal all the changes and effects of the study. This research instrument is indeed a questionnaire of 17 statements to which participants expressed their agreement or disagreement.

3.3. Procedure

This investigation was conducted on two different groups of students. However, the same steps were taken with the two groups. The first session was introductory of the full semester experiment. Students were informed about the coming research and were given all the necessary information. First of all, students were given some general ideas about foreign language speaking anxiety and the problems that this issue can cause in the learning process. Afterwards, they were introduced to the shadowing technique as well as its way of functioning. They were told that according to several researchers, shadowing is an effective technique that can help them improve their English level. Afterwards, the researcher informed students that a study was going to be conducted and were asked to give their permission and consent to participate in it. They were informed about not only the procedure in details, but also about their active role in the study. They were given information about all the research tools to be involved in as well as the tools that the teacher is going to use separately. After the full explanation, students were given a listening task to shadow just to familiarize them with the technique and to make sure that all students have understood how it works.

The investigation started officially the second session. First, the anxiety scale was distributed, and students were informed about how it works and what they were supposed to do. Students were also allowed to seek for the teacher's help if they had any difficulties understanding the statements of the anxiety scale. After completing their mission, the teaching program formally started. Starting from that session, students were given 15 minutes at the end of the course to shadow. The shadowing material varied throughout the investigation. During the first weeks, the shadowing material was based on general English. However, when students acquired a certain experience in the activity, the shadowing material started to be based on technical English, more specifically, English for finance, accounting, and economy.

On the final session, the anxiety scale was used for the second time on students. This tool was used twice in order to investigate the effect of the shadowing technique usage on learners. That is to say, the anxiety scale would indicate the before and after speaking anxiety state of each students. Thus, it would trace the initial state as well as the progress of students using the shadowing technique.

4. Findings and Discussion

The PSCAS was designed in order to investigate the extent and degree to which each student felt anxious while using English in the classroom. Not only that, this anxiety scale was also used in order to trace the impact of using the shadowing technique as well as detecting the development in reducing learners' speaking anxiety. In order to calculate the result of the scale, a five-point Likert scale was used. It varies for the majority of the statements from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Nevertheless, the value of the answers was reversed for statements 4, 8, 10, and 12, because they were indicating a positive attitude unlike to other statements. The total score of the scale is 85. As it is indicated by Yaikhong and Usaha, scores higher than 68 are considered as high speaking anxiety, scores ranging between 68 and 51 are considered as medium speaking anxiety, and scores lower than 51 are considered as low speaking anxiety. As it has been stated above, this means was used before and after the use of the shadowing technique in order to study its impact on learners' speaking anxiety. The findings are presented in the chart below.

Table 1. PSCAS Results before Using the Shadowing Technique:

	Statements	Response								
		Strongly Agree (5)		Agree (4)		Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)		Disagree (2)		Strongly Disagree (1)	
1.	I never feel quite sure of myself while I am speaking English.	71,08 %	59	13,25%	11	14,45%	12	1,20 %	1	0 %	0

No.	Statement									
2.	I start to panic when I have to speak English without a preparation in advance.	40,96 %	34	33,73 %	28	6,02 %	5	1,20 %	1	0 %	0
3.	When I speak English, I can get so nervous that I forget things I know.	13,25 %	11	67,46 %	56	67,46 %	10	12,04 %	6	0 %	0
4.	I feel confident while I am speaking English.	0 %	0	4,81 %	4	2,40 %	2	91,56 %	76	1, 20 %	1
5.	I get confused when I am speaking English.	13,25 %	11	16,86 %	14	65,06 %	54	2,40 %	2	2,40 %	2
6.	I am afraid that other students will laugh at me while I am speaking English.	46,98 %	39	15,66 %	13	3,61 %	3	22,89 %	19	10,84 %	9
7.	I get nervous when the English teacher asks me to speak English which I have prepared in advance.	13,25 %	11	50,60 %	42	14,45 %	12	21,68 %	18	0 %	0
8.	I have no fear of speaking English.	0 %	0	1,20 %	1	12,04 %	10	69,87 %	58	16,86	14

9.	I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on to speak English.	14,45 %	12	27,71 %	23	38,55 %	32	19,27 %	16	0 %	0
10.	I feel relaxed while I am speaking English.	0 %	0	2,40 %	2	7,22 %	6	62,65 %	52	27,71 %	23
11.	Anxiety embarrasses me to volunteer to go out first to speak English.	36,14 %	30	28,91 %	24	26,50 %	22	4,81 %	4	3,61 %	3
12.	I face the prospect of speaking English with confidence.	1,20 %	1	0 %	0	21,68 %	18	18,07 %	15	59,03 %	49
13.	Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while I am speaking English.	14,45 %	12	7,22 %	6	74,69 %	62	3,61 %	3	0 %	0
14.	I feel anxious while I am waiting to speak English.	59,03 %	49	25,30 %	21	12,04 %	10	3,61 %	3	0 %	0
15.	I dislike using my voice and body expressively while I am speaking English.	46,98 %	39	32,53 %	27	13,25 %	11	7,22 %	6	1,20 %	1
16.	I have trouble to coordinate my	62,65 %	52	26,50 %	22	8,43 %	7	2,40 %	2	0 %	0

	movements while I am speaking English.			%						
17.	Even if I am very well prepared, I feel anxious about speaking English.	60,24 %	50	26,50 %	22	10,84 %	9	2,40 %	2	0 %	0

As it is indicated in the above table, the results of the PSCAS showed that 59,03 % of learners suffered from foreign language speaking anxiety, 33,73 % of learners suffered from medium anxiety, and 7,22 % had low anxiety. 49 learners scored above 68, 28 learners scored between 68 and 51, and only 6 learners scored under 51. Consequently, it can be easily concluded that the first hypothesis of this research, which states that second year learners in the department of finance and accounting (The University of Oran 2) suffer from foreign language speaking anxiety during their English courses, is fully validated.

Table 2. PSCAS Results after Using the Shadowing Technique:

	Statements	Response									
		Strongly Agree (5)		Agree (4)		Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)		Disagree (2)		Strongly Disagree (1)	
1.	I never feel quite sure of mysdelf while I am speaking English.	65,06 %	54	10,84 %	9	14,45 %	12	9,63 %	8	0%	0
2.	I start to panic when I have to speak English without a preparation in advance.	34,93 %	29	25,30 %	21	6,02 %	5	22,89 %	19	10,84 %	9

3.	When I speak English, I can get so nervous that I forget things I know.	9,63 %	8	38,55 %	32	10;84 %	9	30,12 %	25	10,84 %	9
4.	I feel confident while I am speaking English.	21,68 %	18	10,84 %	9	6,02 %	5	56,62 %	47	4,81 %	4
5.	I get confused when I am speaking English.	9,63 %	8	7,22 %	6	56,62 %	47	24,09 %	20	2,40 %	2
6.	I am afraid that other students will laugh at me while I am speaking English.	20, 48 %	17	13,25 %	11	14,45 %	12	40,96 %	34	10,84 %	9
7.	I get nervous when the English teacher asks me to speak English which I have prepared in advance.	9,63 %	8	44,57 %	37	15,66 %	13	25,30 %	21	4,81 %	4
8.	I have no fear of speaking English.	7,43 %	7	44,57 %	37	13,25 %	11	22,89 %	19	10,84 %	9
9.	I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on to speak English.	12,04 %	10	21,68 %	18	36,14 %	30	19,27 %	16	10,84 %	9
10.	I feel relaxed while I am speaking English.	7,22 %	6	13,25 %	11	15,66 %	13	39,75 %	33	26,50 %	22
11.	Anxiety embarrasses me to volunteer to go	33,73 %	28	32,53 %	27	12,04 %	10	13,25 %	11	7,43 %	7

	out first to speak English.									
12.	I face the prospect of speaking English with confidence.	9,63 %	8	3,61 %	3	22,89 %	19	26,50 %	22	37,34 %	31
13.	Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while I am speaking English.	10,84 %	9	6,02 %	5	65,06 %	54	13,25 %	11	4,81 %	4
14.	I feel anxious while I am waiting to speak English.	49,39 %	41	19,27 %	16	9,63 %	8	12,04 %	10	9,63 %	8
15.	I dislike using my voice and body expressively while I am speaking English.	42,16 %	35	26,50 %	22	19,27 %	16	8,43 %	7	3,61 %	3
16.	I have trouble to coordinate my movements while I am speaking English.	46,98 %	39	16,86 %	14	4,81 %	4	8,43 %	7	22,89 %	19
17.	Even if I am very well prepared, I feel anxious about speaking English.	46,98 %	39	15,66 %	13	8, 43 %	7	9,63 %	8	19,27 %	16

Table 3. PSCAS before and after Results

Anxiety categories	High anxiety	Medium anxiety	Low anxiety

Categories	>68	68-51	<51
Total before	49	28	6
Percentage	59,03 %	33,73 %	7,22 %
Total after	32	23	28
Percentage	38,55 %	27,71 %	33,73 %

The results of the second PSCAS revealed that there was a significant lowering in the levels of anxiety of learners. 38,55 % had high anxiety, 27,71 % had medium anxiety, and 33,73 % had low anxiety. These results are directly linked with the use of the shadowing technique. Thus, it can be easily deduced that the second hypothesis, which states that the implementation of the shadowing technique in the English syllabus can reduce learners' foreign language speaking anxiety, is fully proved.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, this study has confirmed the significance of the shadowing technique, and its efficiency in decreasing foreign language speaking anxiety. Through the results of the used research instrument, it can be inferred that the inclusion of this technique in foreign language learning classrooms has a positive impact and does not negatively influence the process. It is important to mention the fact that the shadowing technique was used on beginners. Thus, utilizing it with intermediate or advanced learners should be as beneficial. Foreign language teachers should be encouraged to apply this technique because it plays a vital role not only in diminishing speaking anxiety, but also in helping learners improve their language skills.

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