

A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF RESEARCH ON THE USE OF SHADOWING FOR SECOND LANGUAGE PRONUNCIATION TEACHING



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Journal

Research Synthesis
in Applied
Linguistics

Year

2025

KEY TERMS

Shadowing

A listening and pronunciation training technique in which learners repeat an audio text as simultaneously as possible, repeating one part of the audio whilst also listening to incoming audio.

WHAT EVIDENCE IS SUMMARISED?

44 studies

WHAT DOES IT FIND?

- Most studies found that shadowing improved measures of global pronunciation control, such as comprehensibility, intelligibility, and accentedness, as well as measures of suprasegmental control, such as fluency and prosody.
- Results related to gains in segmental accuracy (i.e., individual phonemes) were inconclusive due to a small sample of studies in this area with several methodological weaknesses.
- Learners across age groups generally enjoyed shadowing and found it effective, though some reported boredom and frustration with fast or repetitive materials.
- Research relied heavily on controlled tasks, rarely measured long-term effects of the intervention, and often failed to combine listener ratings with acoustic data.
- Many studies focused on measures of “nativeness”, rather than intelligibility.
- Some studies inaccurately used the term “shadowing” for delayed repetition.

CONTEXT

Second language
learning

WHAT CAN I LEARN FROM THIS SECONDARY RESEARCH?

- What aspects of pronunciation does shadowing appear to improve?
- What are students' perceptions of the technique?

HOW CAN I USE THE FINDINGS IN MY TEACHING?

- Use regular shadowing in class or as homework to help build global pronunciation control (comprehensibility, intelligibility, accentedness) and control of suprasegmental features like fluency and prosody.
- Start with slower audio materials to avoid overwhelming students.
- Select audio materials sensitively, with attention what is most appropriate for learners' age and proficiency. Learners can also be asked to select some of their own audio materials and models, to encourage autonomy and boost engagement and interest.

