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The Impact of Shadow Techniques on Learning English as a Foreign Language

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ABSTRACT

This action research examines the impact of Shadow techniques on learning English as a second language. The research utilizes pre-post tests for 70 Grade Seven students who were divided into two groups: a control group and an experimental group, to evaluate the benefit of using Shadow techniques on learning English. The findings show a clear improvement in the marks of the experimental group, which emphasizes the effective impact of Shadow techniques on teaching and learning English. In spite of the positive results of using Shadow techniques on teaching and learning English, there are some challenges, like the time and effort that teachers should put into designing these techniques, besides all the overload the teacher has in the field. The research ends up with a highlight on the sufficient role of Shadow techniques on enhancing the quality of learning English, a recognition of the limitations of using Shadow techniques and some suggestions for future research.

1. Introduction

Since the English language is an international language, children from all over the world learn it. To be engaged in International interaction, people have to learn English. However, to be a master in the language, a person has to learn and practice its four skills: reading, speaking, listening and writing. These skills are integrated; thus, they cannot be apart.

Nowadays, English has to be taught to young learners as well as adults so they can be familiar with the language. Therefore, the government makes huge efforts to establish human resources to teach the language so everyone can master it. Because a young learner has different attributes and ways of motivation, people cannot follow the same approach in teaching adults as they do with young learners. The method of teaching

should be differ when dealing with young learners than adults; as mentioned by Scoot (1990), children have basic characteristics which are (a) they use the mother tongue with an expert way, (b) they differentiate between fiction and fact, (c) they learn by doing, (d) they can be passionate and well thinkers of what they do, (e) they depend on the physical and spoken words to understand the meaning, (f) they enjoy working with fellow and they can be easy to learn from the surroundings, (g) they have to see, touch and hear to learn better, (h) they can be easily distracted.

Appropriate methods should be used by teachers to teach English to learners. The type of materials used in teaching young learners differs from those used with adults. The same applies to the way of teaching, which should be

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different than the ones used with adults, because what suits adults might not work with young learners, because young learners do not have the same characteristics and motivation as adults. For example, a teacher has to motivate young learners because they can learn better when they are motivated and their desire to learn will be the same as their desire to play. Therefore, a teacher should diversify the strategies and techniques used in teaching young learners.

In general, there are many techniques regarding teaching the English language. Therefore, English teachers should keep in mind some things if they have a desire to teach a new item to their students. Before applying any technique, teachers should look at the time, availability, content and the value of that technique on students. This leads teachers to determine which techniques are useful and which are not. Besides, the teacher might be forced to join many techniques together instead of only one. Means that if teachers want the students to master the language, they should present the materials with a clear explanation, practice and revision so students will not forget it.

There are many techniques to help teachers transfer the information to students and to make sure that they get it easily. Students will be involved in the process of learning and teaching with the use of different teaching techniques. There are many types of materials that will help the teacher in the teaching process, like using pictures, rhyme, songs, puppets, models, etc. These materials are important to achieve the teaching goals of the process of learning and teaching; besides, they are available in daily life. Because young learners cannot concentrate for a long time without feeling bored, there is a need to provide them with joyful materials.

The rationale behind using the shadow as a technique in teaching English to students is that the shadow is a good alternative teaching technique. It can cheer students and give them an opportunity to learn through playing. Moreover, it helps students to practice the language and enhance their ability in the language's four skills. Shadow helps teachers to model the language for students in a fun way.

1.1 Objectives and research questions

- 1- To study the impact of using the shadow techniques in teaching the English language.
- 2- To end up with conclusions and recommendations that will benefit the teachers in teaching the English language and raise the students' level in the language.
- 3- To share the findings with the academic community to benefit from them.

The main question of this research is:

- What are the results of applying the shadow techniques within the strategies of teaching English?

Besides, the research would answer these sub-questions:

- 1- Do Shadow techniques enhance the students' English four skills?
- 2- To what extent will the shadow techniques enhance the language of the experimental group compared to the general group?

1.2 Hypotheses:

To answer these questions, the following hypotheses were stated:

- 1- The Shadow techniques have a good impact on students' English language.
- 2- The experimental group will get higher mean scores on the post-test than the control group.

2.0 Literature review

Theoretical explanations about the benefits of using Shadow techniques as a part of teaching strategies have been provided by research. First, the benefit of shadowing in the cognitive process of the students. With the usage of Shadow techniques, the student receives an aural input and tries to reproduce it again, which enhances the cognitive processes. Shiki et al. (2010) state that using the shadow techniques draws the students' attention to the phonological parts of the words they hear. Hence, there is a short time between what they hear and what they reproduce; this process is called "an on-line task" which contributes to the development of their cognitive and attention concepts. While if the student says again exactly the talk "sentence by sentence" or "chunk by chunk", this process is called "an off-line task" (Shiki et al., 2010). In this stage, students repeat the language without an absolute understanding of the meaning.

Moreover, cognitive resources, which means how much cognitive capacity the student has to produce information, support the previous point of view because when students can see the picture of a word, they can connect it to their L1, which allows them to understand the meaning easily (Duong, 2025). That is all because students have a large amount of cognitive resource of L1, in contrast to their L2. Thus, they perceive the sounds without a necessary meaning (Kadota, 2007). Although students get the phonological aspects of language they receive, they can improve and move to the meaning stage if they keep practicing the language.

According to Vandergrift and Goh (2012), bottom-up and top-down processing are both used when people listen. Shadow techniques in teaching enhance the bottom-up processing because it enhances students' ability to recognize and perceive words (Amila, 2023). Rost (2011) states that low proficiency learners in listening use top-down processing to recoup with their weak ability in bottom-up processing. When learners depend on their ability for top-down processing, their ability for bottom-up processing decreases. However, when using the Shadow techniques in teaching, students try to perceive the things they hear using their bottom-up processing, which leads to improving their ability in bottom-up processing and in advance to their skills in phoneme perception, word recognition and language comprehension.

Many researchers conducted studies to search for the impact of using Shadow techniques as a part of teaching strategies. Research conducted by Kato (2009), where he gave "shadowing-based lessons" to forty university students in Japan; Tamai (1997) conducted Shadowing-based lessons to twenty-five university students; Lin (2009) conducted these lessons to twenty-five high school students in Taiwan. The results of all these studies improved the positive impact of Shadow techniques on students' language comprehension. Moreover, Hamada (2016) gave Shadowing-based lessons to forty-four university students in Japan to study whether learners would enhance their skills in phoneme perception, and the findings showed that

students improved according to their results in the pre-post-tests.

There are fewer studies regarding the benefit of Shadow techniques in enhancing students' speaking. However, when applying the same theory of cognitive and attention resources, it is theorized that since students' listening skills in the bottom-up process are improved, their skills in speaking will improve with the usage of shadow techniques in teaching strategies, as stated by Hamada (2018). In a study conducted by Foote and McDonough (2017), the participants showed improvement in the comprehensibility, imitation skills and fluency. Which indicates that using Shadow techniques can help students to improve their speaking.

Moreover, another finding by Domínguez Suarez, and Tumbaco Chalén, (2026) is that the ability to understand the extemporaneous speech of the participants has been improved, which means that participants were able to practice what they heard through the shadow techniques and transfer it to their daily lives, which enhances their speaking skills. Since comprehension is a must to develop pronunciation (Barreto, & Saltos, (2024), integrating Shadow techniques into teaching strategies is something valuable because students develop comprehension and then practice what they learned, which leads to improving their speaking skills.

3.0 Research methodology

3.1 Research design

This action research was conducted following an experimental study design (McKay, 2006; Nunan, 1992), which means the research that investigates the variables' relationships (Cohen et al., 2007). A quantitative method, a method that uses statistical analysis and quantitative data are used to provide inferential conclusions to understand a social phenomenon (McKay, 2006; Nunan, 1992; Cohen et al., 2007), was used to answer these research questions.

3.2 Participants

This action research used a sample of 70 female grade seven students at Um Eyes School (5-9) in Al Batinah South Governorate in the Sultanate of Oman as participants. The researcher chose

this school for the research because she is a teacher at this school. The participants' age is 12-13 years, and they have the same background knowledge, but their English proficiency levels are different. All participants use the Arabic language as L1. The participants were divided into two groups: experimental and control groups. The experimental group (EG) had 35 students who were taught using the Shadow techniques, while the control group (CG) had the other 35 students who were taught using the traditional way of teaching English. Grade 7 students are exposed to five lessons of the English language each week. These participants were chosen due to their low marks in English in the previous year, which helps in studying the effectiveness of Shadow techniques, and whether there is any improvement in their marks the following year.

3.3 Instruments

A Vocabulary-Grammar test was conducted on the Experimental and Control groups. The same test was used as a pre and post-test to measure the impact of using the Shadow techniques in improving the level of students in the English language. The test was designed following the Ministry of Education's specifications.

3.4 Description of variables

The variables of this action research are the dependent variable, which is the students' performance in the Vocabulary-Grammar test and the independent variable, which is teaching English using the Shadow techniques.

3.5 Procedures

A pre-test was conducted for all students in both groups to examine their general level in English. Then, the Experimental group was taught using the Shadow techniques while the Control group was taught using the traditional way of teaching English. After that, a post-test was conducted for both groups to measure if students made any improvements in their level of English after using the Shadow techniques. The researcher recorded the scores for analysis.

3.6 Data Analysis

For data analysis, the "one-way ANOVA procedure" was used to find out the statistical importance of English level for both groups (Perry, 2005; Zar, 1999). The Microsoft Office Excel program was used to analyze the students' scores. One mark was given for each question of the test, which makes the highest score for each student no more than ten marks. The students' marks were entered in the Excel program to analyze the means. Four perspectives were used to conduct the analyses, which are the statistical significance between (1) EG on the pre and post-tests, (2) between CG on the pre and post-tests, (3) between EG and CG on the pre-test and (4) between EG and CG on the post-test.

4.0 Results

4.1 Research Question 1: Do Shadow techniques enhance the students' English four skills?

The first question attempts to investigate the impact of using the Shadow techniques on students' level of English. The tables below present the performance of students on the pre/post tests.

As shown in Table 1, on the post-test, 7.76 is the mean mark of the Experimental Group, which is higher than the mean mark on the pre-test (5.03). This means that students make some improvement in their level of English after the use of the Shadow techniques in teaching English.

Moreover, the data in Table 2 shows that the mean mark of the post-test of the Control Group is 6.26, which is approximately the same as the mean mark of the pre-test, which is 5.14. This shows that students who were taught English using the traditional way did not make any significant improvement.

Unlike the Control Group, the Experimental Group shows a grand difference in marks of the pre and post-test, which gives a good answer to the first research question, which is that using the Shadow techniques in teaching English enhances students' language.

Table 1: Experimental group pre and post-test results.

EG	Pre-test	Post-test
sum	181	279.5
count	36	36
Mean	5.03	7.76
Variance	50.28	77.64
Highest score	10	10
Lower score	2	5

Table 2: Control group pre and post-test results.

CG	Pre-test	Post-test
sum	180	219
count	36	36
Mean	5.14	6.26
Variance	51.43	62.57
Highest score	10	10
Lower score	0	1

Table 3: Control and Experimental group pre-test results.

<i>Pre-test scores</i>		
	EG	CG
sum	176	180
count	36	36
Mean	5.03	5.14
Variance	50.28	51.43
Highest score	10	10
Lower score	2	0

4.2 Research Question 2: To what extent will the shadow techniques enhance the language of the experimental group compared to the general group?

The goal of the second question is to provide a comparison of the two groups' performance on the pre-post tests and to show to what extent they are different. The pre-post tests' results of both groups are represented by the ANOVA statistical characterizations as shown in the tables below.

As shown in Table 3, the control group's mean score on the pre-test (5.14) is approximately higher than the Experimental group (5.03). According to ANOVA statistics, this diversity is not serious. This shows that both groups have approximately the same knowledge of the English language before the experiment took place.

However, the Experimental Group's mean score on the post-test (7.76) is higher than the mean score of the Control Group (6.26). Moreover, according to the statistics of the ANOVA, the difference between the mean scores of the two

groups is statistically significant. This shows that the Experimental Group shows a development in their English Language level after using the Shadow techniques, compared to the Control Group, which was exposed to the traditional way of teaching English. Thus, the answer to the second question is that the results show that the Experimental Group's English level is different than the English level of the Control Group to a huge degree. As a result, using the Shadow techniques obviously encourages the learning of the English language and its skills.

Table 4: Control and Experimental group post-test results.

<i>Post-test scores</i>		
	EG	CG
sum	271.5	219
count	36	36
Mean	7.76	6.26
Variance	77.57	62.57
Highest score	10	10
Lower score	5	1

4.3 Discussion

The results above show that using the Shadow techniques in teaching English language obviously encourages learning the language and its skills between the groups of the experiment, i.e., using the Shadow techniques affects the English level of the participants and their vocabulary acquisition. Specifically, the results show that the difference in the English level between the two groups is greatly different. A large number of studies go in line with these results and support the view that Shadow techniques can improve the level of the English language. For example, Foote and McDonough (2017) examine how the Shadow techniques affect the speaking performance. They divide the students into those who are taught the language using the Shadow techniques and those who are taught without these techniques. Their results show that students who were taught with the Shadow techniques developed their English skills and

learned new vocabulary. Grant, et al (2014) conclude that using Shadow techniques has a huge impact on the imposing vocabulary. In another research, Hamada (2014) claims in his

study that using the Shadow techniques affects the students in Japan. He argues that his experimental group achieved better results regarding vocabulary acquisition. Lin (2009) studied the impacts of Shadow techniques on a group of students from Taiwan, and he concluded that students developed their vocabulary by learning English with the use of Shadow techniques.

An extensive scale of learner variables can be investigated by future studies. Learners' first language could be an important variable, as learners might face suprasegmental and specific segmental troubles that L1 can strongly affect. Another variable is the context. Although this research has been conducted in an ESL context, the learners rarely have access to English feedback and input outside the classroom. Lastly, the learners' proficiency level could affect the effectiveness of the shadowing techniques. Another variable is using repetition in line with the shadow techniques. Repetition of the same materials is not a requirement of the Shadowing. Which indicates that repetition might play a role in facilitating the learners' improvement. Finally, the time that learners spent training on the materials is another variable. If learners take more time in practicing materials, this will make more improvement.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

This research examines how using the Shadow techniques enhances the English language level of a group of ESL students in Oman. The results show that using the Shadow techniques clearly improves the English level of the Experimental Group in comparison to the Control Group. The study's conclusions can be summed up as follows:

- The use of the Shadow techniques in the ESL classroom can develop the learners' learning and acquisition of a foreign language. This is because using this technique can help students to experience the authentic materials and maximize the input and output of a language.
- The Shadow techniques, in particular, could have a significant impact on L2 acquisition as they help students learn new words.

According to the research findings, some recommendations are made. Overall, Omani

English language teachers have to be motivated to use the Shadow techniques in their classrooms. This means that teachers should encourage the use of the Shadow techniques to enhance their learners' vocabulary acquisition. To make this real, the researcher suggests conducting a professional development training for the teachers to direct them on how to integrate the Shadow techniques within their classroom. The Ministry will be given the findings of this research and its recommendations for consideration.

Moreover, to study the validity of the findings of this research, the researcher suggests that future research can be conducted in different Omani schools. Furthermore, the researcher intends to contact different schools from all around Oman to share the results of the study and work on building a network of studies in this field. This aims to establish a working relationship with different researchers to create an accurate theoretical framework and encourage them to conduct further research in the area.

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تأثير استخدام أدوات الظل في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية

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يقوم البحث الإجرائي بدراسة مدى تأثير استخدام أدوات الظل في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية. نفذ الباحث اختبار قبلي وبعدي لسبعين طالبة من طالبات الصف السابع حيث تم تقسيم الطالبات إلى مجموعتين (مجموعة بحثية و مجموعة ضابطة). تم تدريس منهج اللغة الإنجليزية بطريقة تقليدية للمجموعة الضابطة و تم تدريس المنهج باستخدام أدوات الظل للمجموعة البحثية و تم قياس أثر أدوات الظل في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية باستخدام تحليل نتائج الطالبات في الاختبار القبلي و البعدي. حيث أظهرت النتائج تطور في المستوى التحصيلي لطالبات المجموعة البحثية مما يؤكد الأثر الإيجابي لأدوات الظل في تعلم اللغة الانجليزية كلغة ثانية.

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