



## SHADOWING WITH THE ENHANCED SCRIPT FOR LEARNING CONSONANT-VOWEL LINKING: A CASE STUDY OF VIETNAMESE LEARNERS

Huynh Truong Sang<sup>i</sup>

Can Tho University,

Vietnam

### Abstract:

The role of connected speech as part of pronunciation is seen as important for second language acquisition, yet there are intractable difficulties in acquiring it, especially consonant-vowel linking. As a result, the purpose of the study is to explore the effects of shadowing with the enhanced script on consonant-vowel linking by reporting some cases which were further observed by the researcher throughout the research time. The main instrument administered to collect qualitative data was a semi-structured interview in order to gain more insights into the participants' attitudes about shadowing with the enhanced script. The observation was used to supplement the data. All of the research procedures were conducted online due to the complexities of Covid. The results highlight the importance of shadowing with the enhanced script, which is useful for the learning of pronunciation skills, especially consonant-vowel learning; besides, it points out some problems and solutions to deal with shadowing.

**Keywords:** shadowing, input enhancement, consonant-vowel linking

### 1. Introduction

Because pronunciation is essential for English conversations which include listening and speaking skills (Derwing & Munro, 2005; Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2010), pronunciation is seen as a top priority in foreign language learning (Ketabi & Saeb, 2015). Intelligibility was reported to be helpful in communication, which involves a two-way process with the participation of the listener and speaker (Zielinski, 2008). As a result, there should be effective training for L2 learning to uphold pronunciation skills (Pennington, 2021). Considered as part of pronunciation, suprasegmental features are guided with effective ways as a long-term trend in language learning (Pennington, 1989, 2019) to make it acquired productively among English learners because these features were confirmed by several researchers (i.e. Pennington & Richards, 1986; Kendrick, 1997;

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<sup>i</sup> Correspondence: email [huynhsangedward0906@gmail.com](mailto:huynhsangedward0906@gmail.com)

Gilbert, 2001) as a significant contributor to the enhancement of second language acquisition and ESL/EFL pedagogy (Kang, 2010).

Suprasegmental features were proved more dominant than segmental features in foreign and second language learning because they are all contributors to the success of spontaneous production (Derwing, Munro, & Wiebe, 1998). Connected speech is taken into consideration for the development of listening skills (Field, 2008). In this regard, many studies have indicated the effectiveness of teaching connected speech on phonological awareness and listening comprehension, for example, reduced forms such as contraction, elision, liaison, assimilation, and reduction (Brown & Hilferty, 1986a, 1986b; Yang, Lin & Chung, 2009; Lee & Kuo, 2010). Nevertheless, there remain a few problems with the learning and teaching of pronunciation. First and foremost, teachers find it challenging to teach pronunciation because of their insufficient training (Burri, 2015; Huensch, 2019), especially in dealing with suprasegmental features (Tench, 1996). As Derwing and Munro (2005) reported, there is still a lack of the current pedagogy of pronunciation, and teachers are not offered the appropriate training or phonological knowledge for teaching effective pronunciation.

Due to the significant importance of connected speech for listening skills as well as some general challenges regarding teaching and learning pronunciation, there is a need for research on the effective technique to help learners out with improving their pronunciation. In this respect, shadowing has proved to positively affect learners' oral-aural skills such as general listening comprehension (Tamai, 1997; Onaha, 2004; Lin, 2009; Chung, 2010; Kato, 2009; Ginting, 2019), bottom-up processing and recognizing words (Hamada, 2016a), different aspects of pronunciation namely unfamiliar accents, intonation, production fluency (Astuti, 2020; Hamada & Suzuki, 2021), rhythm (Okada, 2002; Omar & Umehara, 2010), prosody (Kusumoto, 2015), which accounts for up to 40 % in communication meaning. However, no research has focused on the effects of shadowing on consonant-vowel linking although acquiring this skill is an essential part of foreign language learning and teaching. In the present study, as part of the upcoming MA thesis, shadowing married with input enhancement to draw language learners' attention to specific lexical or grammatical forms (White, 1998) was examined to explore whether this combination of shadowing technique and input enhancement has any positive effects on the consonant-vowel linking as part of pronunciation. However, this study just reports learners' attitudes towards shadowing with the enhanced script after ten online meetings for training.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Shadowing in ELF learning and teaching

Shadowing has gained much popularity in the field of language education, compared to the past in which it was just considered useful for spontaneous interpretation. According to Hamada (2016), shadowing is an act of repeating what one hears accurately and simultaneously. Manseur (2015, p.18) stated "*shadowing can be defined as the imitation of a*

*particular input as it is heard in a short period of time as possible*". Goldinger (1998) also mentioned imitation in the shadowing task, and according to Meltzoff and Moore (1997), imitation is a perceptually guided action. This ability is innately possessed by humans and is assumed to be important for foreign language learning (Kusumoto, 2015) and beneficial for language acquisition (Meltzoff & Moore, 1977). Shadowing is a highly active task (Tamai, 1997). This leads to Kadota's (2007) conclusion that shadowing, which is an online task requiring learners to be involved in listening and uttering out what they hear only, is completely different from repetition which is an offline task allowing time to repeat and embark on other activities (i.e. semantic negotiation).

Murphey (2001) stated that there are three main types of shadowing techniques: complete shadowing, selective shadowing, and interactive shadowing. The first type of shadowing technique – complete shadowing – bears a resemblance to phrase shadowing (Norman, 1976); that is, *"listeners shadowed everything speakers said"* (Murphey, 1995, p.43). The second type of shadowing is selective shadowing which requires learners to select only certain words after hearing to repeat them. The third type of shadowing is *interactive shadowing*. It means that while shadowing, learners have to interact with the speakers (audios) by putting certain questions and opinions associated with the content in the audios. Besides, Kadota (2012) suggested two typical models for shadowing namely *"bottom-up"* and *"top-down"*. While the bottom-up shadowing requires learners to be engaged in shadowing without any exposure to the shadowing content before, the top-down shadowing asks learners to practice shadowing after learning lessons.

Based on what has been discussed about types, models, and steps of shadowing, an adaptation was made to ensure the quality of shadowing corresponds to the context. More specifically, the present study is a practice of complete shadowing in which listeners shadow everything the speaker says following bottom-up shadowing and adapted steps as follows.

**Table 1:** Summary of model and procedure for shadowing training adapted from (Kadota & Tamai, 2004)

No.	Steps	Tasks	Focuses
1	Listening	Listening to the audio without script	Content and speech style
2	Mumbling	Shadowing without the script	Heard sound rather than pronunciation
3	Synchronized reading (content understanding)	Shadowing with the script (enhanced consonant-vowel linking)	Known words
4	Synchronized reading (content understanding)	Shadowing with the script (enhanced consonant-vowel linking)	Known words

Several researchers conducted studies about the effects of shadowing on different aspects such as language skills with the confirmation of positive effects of shadowing on listening comprehension, and bottom-up, listening skills benefiting word perception (i.e.

Mochizuki, 2006; Kato, 2009; Chung, 2010; Hamada, 2012); and other merits of shadowing are different aspects of pronunciation namely unfamiliar accents, intonation, production fluency (Astuti, 2020; Hamada, & Suzuki, 2021), rhythm (Okada, 2002; Omar & Umehara, 2010), prosody (Kusumoto, 2015). However, little research has been conducted to examine the effect of enhanced input in shadowing.

## **2.2 Integration of input enhancement into shadowing**

The different requirements of tasks promote different types of cognitive processing. Text-presented shadowing engages learners in processing different aspects such as sound information, meaning, and letters, causing split attention (Kuramoto, Shiki, Nishida, Ito, 2007). Kadota (2007) argues that because of this shift in cognitive processes, shadowing with a script can improve reading and possibly pronunciation skills, similar to the results gained by Shafiei and Rahmany (2017). Shadowing with a script can make learners familiar with words, and prepared for pronunciation and text length. Nevertheless, the present study aimed to employ an enhanced script to assist the process of shadowing.

Input enhancement plays a crucial role in second language acquisition. Smith (1991) defined input enhancement as the process of making the input more salient to learners. Because of making the target input more appealing to learners, input enhancement is preferred for language teaching and learning. Depending on the purpose of teaching, two types of input enhancement namely oral and textual enhancement are applied properly. More specifically, with oral input enhancement, the adjustment of things like stress, tone, or pauses is made by the teacher meanwhile the enhancement of texts, according to Lee (2006), can be considered bold facing, italicization, underlining, or color coding. Regardless of those types, the main focus of input enhancement is to attract the attention of learners to specific lexical or grammatical forms (Yang, 2004). In this regard, the enhancement of consonant-vowel linking in shadowing script belongs to textual input enhancement and the specific grammatical form is consonant-vowel linking.

## **2.3 Consonant-vowel linking**

The term linking which bears resemblance to attraction, juncture, and transition has been used in different ways. Linking takes place commonly because there is no room for any hiatus, i.e., the avoidance of leaving sounds at word boundaries without a transition between them (Allerton, 2000; Anderson-Hsieh et al., 1994; Hieke, 1984). Linking belongs to the connected speech and involves consonant-consonant linking (five views) and consonant-vowel (e.g. some of) linking. Consonant-vowel linking, to Alameen (2014), occurs in word boundaries where the ending consonant of one word is linked to the beginning vowel of a consecutive word in the same thought group. As supported by (Hieke, 1984). To make consonant-vowel linking, speakers are supposed to speak at a fast and natural speed and automatically link them together. It means that slow speech cannot make this linking occur. This is also supported by Suenaga (2022, p.66) who concluded

*“in fluent English, when one word ends in a consonant sound and the next words begins with a vowel sound, the two sounds are linked together without a pause in between them”.*

The aforementioned studies have pinpointed the effectiveness of shadowing on pronunciation skills; however, little is known about the impact of shadowing the enhanced script on the consonant-vowel linking skill, which is the gap that this current study aims to fill.

### **3. Materials and Method**

The present study is part of a Master’s thesis which aimed to examine the effects of shadowing with the enhanced script on consonant-vowel linking acquisition. In order to obtain some general information about English consonant-vowel linking training among three cases after 10 online meetings, classroom observations and interviews were chosen as the main instruments. The data were collected in April 2020. The interviews were conducted to stimulate the participants to talk about their understanding of shadowing with the enhanced script on consonant-vowel linking learning with respect to benefits, challenges, as well as recommendations. Observation notes were also made by the researcher to supplement the data.

#### **3.1 Context and participants**

Several problems regarding teaching English in general and pronunciation as a foreign language in the Vietnamese context. First and foremost, teaching pronunciation deals with some problems as mentioned by Ha (2005), who specifically pointed out pronunciation problems faced by Vietnamese learners of English due to the difference between the Vietnamese and English sound systems; the utterance of ending sounds. These challenges lead to learners’ unsuccessful understanding of spoken English. The second problem is about the teaching practices, as said by Nguyen and Newton (2020), Vietnamese teachers just focused on error correction when teaching pronunciation and even got into trouble with other factors such as limited classroom hours, large classes (i.e. 30-40 students) and a demanding curriculum. In terms of academic curricula, lessons are designed to serve the purpose of taking the examinations; hence, there is no room for more practical needs such as job application, creativity, and learners’ needs (Ministry of Education and Training, 2006). As stated by Van Loi and Franken (2010), English language teaching in many Vietnamese universities still has a concentration of linguistic knowledge.

The Vietnamese learners in this study were final-year students and fresh graduates in a university, whose ages ranged from 22 to 23. Therefore, they are supposed to have finished ten credits for basic English programs for non-English-majored students as required in the university. They studied different majors such as Computer Science, International Business, and Education. Despite their difference in demographics, there was little difference in their English background. All of them have been learning English

as a foreign language and none spent time studying overseas in an English-speaking country. Information about the participants (with pseudonyms) is given in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Demographics of participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Years of learning English	Qualification	Level of English
Khuong	23	Male	12 years	Fresh graduate, BA in Computer Science	Basic
Nhu	23	Female	12 years	Fresh graduate, BA in Education	Basic
Nguyen	22	Female	14 years	BA in International Business	Basic

### 3.2 Materials for shadowing

There is not any fixed requirement for the shadowing content which can be either authentic (i.e. films, songs, and speeches) or textbook-based as long as the audios or spoken stimuli are standardized enough in terms of sound quality and native accents to ensure the quality of shadowing content. Some shadowing materials used by researchers include VOA special English with an American accent (Kuramoto, Shiki, Nishida, Ito, 2007), Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) (Miyake, 2009), and CNN with an American accent (Onaha, 2004). It can be said that the choice of shadowing material should be skillful to ensure learners' interest and quality of the content for shadowing purposes. Therefore, it is highly recommended that the searcher delivers a survey to target participants and combines his professional knowledge by referring to other studies to make a decision on the best-suited material for shadowing content. Based on this ground, the researcher selected the content from Basic Tactics for Listening, 3rd edition, written by Jack C. Richards and published by Oxford University Press. All participants received three 15-minute shadowing pieces of training per week.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Showing interest in shadowing

Three cases were observed by the researcher for 15-minute training of shadowing with enhanced script in ten online meetings. All of them were guided with the step-by-step shadowing procedures as well as requirements to ensure the quality of shadowing performance.

Khuong was reported to be the most interested in learning English; therefore, he found it excited about shadowing with the enhanced script although he had some issues with it. He said could not deal with shadowing in a group of four because the inconsistency of different voices and speeds blocked him from following his partners, causing his split attention. Then, he clarified that because of his first-time encounter with shadowing, he could not get acquainted with it until a few more meetings for practice. Besides, after the first meeting, the researcher guided him on how to improve his speed

to catch up with partners. More specifically, he was encouraged to do the in-class shadowing again at home by following some steps as practiced in class. Gradually, there was an improvement in his shadowing performance. He got blended into this technique better until the tenth meeting except for some minor problems like exposure to new words.

Nhu was just a bit excited about this technique because she was present in class whispering herself before the official shadowing. However, it seemed like she was not quite good at pronunciation skills because she often made some minor mistakes with simple words. That is why she sometimes got stuck in shadowing. She kept asking for support for some problems such as listening comprehension or pronunciation of new words after class. This helped her gradually improve those aspects. She gradually gained more interest in shadowing because she witnessed her improvement.

Nguyen was into this technique too. She was always the first comer asking the researcher for some explanations for new words in the shadowing content or how to enunciate some unknown consonant-vowel linking. She seemed to be more fluent in shadowing technique; that's why she was sometimes faster than her partners. It was assumed that she had difficulty shadowing in a group, so she tried to have control over it to make the shadowing process with partners more unanimous. Although shadowing took place three times every week, she expected to be offered more assignments to enhance her shadowing performance and she could practice something new apart from what she shadowed in class.

#### 4.2 Insights into shadowing with the enhanced script

To gain more insights about learners' attitudes towards shadowing with the enhanced script after ten online meetings for practice, the semi-structured interview with questions focused on three domains namely benefits of shadowing with the enhanced script, drawbacks and challenges of shadowing with the enhanced script, and recommendations and solutions to improve shadowing with the enhanced script.

Table 3 below illustrates the benefits gained from shadowing with the enhanced script from the initial interviews. The data showed that attention to target consonant-vowel linking, and motivation for learning English are the most dominant benefits among learners although some still had broad opinions. Khuong gained more benefits (with four benefits) from shadowing with the enhanced script than Nhu and Nguyen did.

**Table 3: Benefits of shadowing with the enhanced script**

Participant	Features enhanced through shadowing with the enhanced script				
	Attention to target consonant-vowel linking	Working memory	Listening comprehension	Word recognition	Motivation for learning English
Khuong	√		√	√	√
Nhu	√		√		√
Nguyen	√	√			√

The most dominant features as two benefits of shadowing with the enhanced script are attention to target consonant-vowel linking, and motivation for learning English, which are illustrated as follows.

*“It’s useful to improve consonant-vowel linking by practicing shadowing with the enhanced script because with the highlighted consonant-vowel linking, I am able to focus more on it while shadowing.” (Nguyen)*

*“...I find it more exciting when recognizing improvement.” (Khuong)*

**Table 4:** Drawbacks and challenges of shadowing with the enhanced script

Participant	Factors negatively affecting shadowing the enhanced script				
	Different voices and speeds	Boredom because of repetition	Many tasks	Low English proficiency	New words
Khuong	√	√			
Nhu	√		√	√	
Nguyen	√				√

With respect to drawbacks and challenges faced by learners while shadowing, Table 4 shows five factors negatively affecting shadowing with the enhanced script. While Nhu coped with three factors (different voices and speeds, many tasks, and low English proficiency), Khuong and Nguyen just had problems with two factors. They all had the most common problem known as different voices and speeds in a group. As mentioned by one of the learners, she found it hard to gain much concentration on the shadowing content due to different voices in a group of four.

*“... Plus, I got distracted from doing shadowing with the enhanced script in a group of four students with different voices, sometimes stumbled and found it hard to follow.” (Nhu)*

**Table 5:** Recommendations and solutions to enhance shadowing with the enhanced script

Participant	Suggestions to improve shadowing the enhanced script				
	Shorter shadowing content	Combination of more interesting activities	More homework for practice	Provision of meaning and pronunciation for new words	Individual practice
Khuong	√	√		√	
Nhu			√		
Nguyen			√		√

Despite some above-mentioned difficulties in shadowing with the enhanced script, there are five recommendations offered by three participants to practice this technique more productively. Nhu and Nguyen had the same ideas for improvement of shadowing with the enhanced script, as more homework for practice. Both of them expected the instructor



to provide more homework and assignments apart from in-class practice so that they could enhance their performance in this technique. Khuong is considered as the one offering many more suggestions, up to three, than the others. One of his useful suggestions is the combination of more interesting activities which made this technique less boring.

*“...the teacher should combine the shadowing task with other activities such as translation or peer feedback to increase more interest for students.” (Khuong).*

## 5. Discussion

The data of semi-structured interviews led to some important results about learners' attitudes toward shadowing with the enhanced script. Most of the participants admitted the advantageous aspects of shadowing with the enhanced script with two most salient benefits known as the enhancement of attention to consonant-vowel linking and motivation for learning English. Regarding the enhancement of attention to consonant-vowel linking, it can be explained because the input (consonant-vowel linking) was made salient to learners by highlighting with green markers. It is in line with Lee's (2006) opinion about input enhancement by which target forms or words are bold-faced, italicized, underlined, or color-coded; thereby enhancing learners' comprehension and uptake (Ellis, 2003; Harley, 1998). Further explanations can be found because shadowing itself involves repetition supported by substantial literature (Lambert, 1988; Murphy, 2001; Hamada, 2016), and exact repetition as input enhancement can be significantly beneficial for intake, and hence acquisition (Jensen & Vinther, 2003). The second dominant benefit as the enhancement of learners' motivation for learning English can be referred to as Chung's (2010) finding indicated that increased motivation for speaking skills was recognized through shadowing.

Some drawbacks and challenges were also reported from the analysis of semi-structured interviews. One featured difficulty found by three learners was a distraction because of inhomogeneity in terms of voices and speeds from a group of four while shadowing. To add more, shadowing involves learners in many tasks such as sound information, meaning processing, and letter recognition, causing split attention (Kuramoto, Shiki, Nishida, Ito, 2007). However, he explained different requirements of tasks promote different types of cognitive processing, as confirmed by Bird and Williams (2002) the act of shadowing and looking at the script at the same time as bimodal input is beneficial in language learning, supported by substantial literature.

One recommendation chosen by two learners outweighed the others, known as the request for more homework for practice. This can contribute to their extensive exposure to this technique so that they can follow their partners while shadowing in class to reduce inhomogeneity in terms of voices and speeds from a group of four. One of them said as follows:

*“It is highly recommended that more practice, as well as homework, is needed. For example, students can record their voice of the shadowing content practiced in class, then send it back to the teacher for feedback, which helps me out with much improvement for later practice.” (Nhu)*

Homework plus teachers’ comments are proved to be meaningful for the learning process and are favored by many students as in the study conducted by Paschal, Weinstein, and Walberg (1984).

## 6. Conclusion

Shadowing with the enhanced script is helpful for pronunciation training, especially consonant-vowel linking with proven benefits particularly discovered through the initial interviews within the researched context. Moreover, in the future, when the application of this technique in the classroom takes place, instructors should care much more about possible drawbacks and challenges as pointed out to improve the quality of shadowing leading to expected results. Different contexts may lead to arising problems in the application of this technique; therefore, apart from solutions suggested in this study, teachers are expected to be more flexible in their context when taking this technique in their classroom teaching.

## Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

## About the Author

Huynh Truong Sang is currently completing a Master in TESOL program at Can Tho University, Vietnam. His research interest involves language skills, especially pronunciation. He has extensive experience in tutoring students, and in shadowing practice.

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