

## Applying Shadowing Technique to Improve Iraqi EFL Forth preparatory students' Listening Skills

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### ABSTRACT:

This study aims at finding out the effect of applying the shadowing technique on EFL students' listening skills. Therefore, the researcher used the experimental design and pre-posttest as a data collection tools. Two groups of fourth preparatory school students, experimental and control, were selected to be the sample of this study, which consists of (41) students in each group during the academic year 2017/2018. The two groups were equalized in terms of many several variables that may effect on the independent variable (shadowing technique). Then, suitable statistical tools were applied on analyzing the data and to achieve the aim of this study. The results of this study showed that shadowing technique has effectively improved the students' listening skills since that there is a statistically difference in EFL students' listening comprehension in favor of the post-test scores of the experimental group. Based on the results obtained, a set of conclusions are put forward.

### Keywords:

Shadowing Technique, Listening Skills, EFL Students.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Listening is the main key to understand the content of the message of the spoken language. During listening, we have to focus on the main elements of the message (pronunciation, the use of language and voice, and the use of body language, etc), this demands the using of listening skills. Developing listening comprehension is one of the main codes of the English language learning to understand the spoken language since the acquisition of any language begins with the listening skill. In the recent years, many experts in teaching foreign language and researcher investigated methods and strategies to pave the way for the EFL students to master listening skills. In addition, many studies assured that listening comprehension is essential and involves more efforts to comprehend what English speakers say in the conversation and to be active listener.

From the other hand, learning English has become one of the most important goals for many students for many reasons: jobs, to communicate, to increase their knowledge in field of study, travel, .etc. Listening is a complex skill in which many aspects and skills of language can be covered and developed such as speaking, pronunciation, note-taking, summarizing, learning skills, and vocabularies.

The ability to listen is not enough, the EFL students should learn how to listen to be able to interact with what they hear or answer a question and this involves more efforts and time. Iraqi EFL students still difficulty understanding the meaning of the spoken language (Abdul-Majeed, 2015, p. 93). Moreover, many studies show that Iraqi EFL students face difficulties in practicing listening or in answering a question about a topic or dialogues. From the other hand, the problem of EFL teacher to involve students actively in the learning process has been closely

associated with an ability of the students to engage in continuity of acquisition of knowledge and understanding. (Al-Robaiy, 2005, p.1) Therefore, there is a need to new methods in teaching listening. The present study is an attempt to investigate the effect of using one of these new methods known shadowing technique.

Thus, the aim of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of applying shadowing technique on Iraqi EFL preparatory school students' listening skills. For this aim, the following questions were sought:

- 1- Is there a statistically significance difference between the posttest scores of the experimental group students who were taught the listening skills by the shadowing technique and control group students who were taught by the conventional method?
- 2- Is there a statistically significance improvement between the listening comprehension pre-test and posttest scores of the experimental and the control group students?

The present study hypothesized that there is no statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group students who are taught listening by shadowing technique and those taught listening skills by the conventional method in the post test.

## 2-Theoretical Background

### 2-1 Listening skills

Listening is one of the basic skills of learning a foreign language since it is the first step in acquiring language. Moreover, the other skills of learning English language can be improved and covered during the implementation of this skill. Cook (2008, p. 131) states that " Logically, L2 learners cannot learn a language if they never hear it, the sound, the words, the structure, have to come from somewhere." From other hand, listening is considered as "a process of decoding speech-working out the

'message' from the sentence you hear,... recent discussions of teaching methodology have focused on listening as a way of learning rather than as a way of processing language"(Ibid, p.131). There are two main types of Listening processes, "top-down" and "bottom-up". In this respect, Hedge (2008, p. 230) clarifies that the bottom-up processes mean "we use information in the speech itself to try to comprehend the meaning. We segment speech into identifiable sounds and impose a structure on these in terms of words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and intonation patterns. While top-down processes "infers meaning from contextual clues and from making links between the spoken message and various types of prior knowledge which listeners hold inside their heads." (Ibid, p.232) Additionally, Harmer (2007, p. 134) states that "the students need to be able to recognise paralinguistic clues such as intonation in order to understand mood and meaning. They also need to be able to listen for specific information such as times, platform numbers, etc.....or for general understanding".

Listening comprehension is relevant to the idea that the students need to be active listeners not passive ones. In other words, when the students know how to listen to get what they hear, they will be able to interact and communicate effectively. Since, comprehension is one of the main goals of a good listening, students need to success in listening for general understanding or for specific information. McDonough & Shaw (2003), in this respect, state that " listening comprehension is not only a function of the interplay between language on the one hand and what the brain does with it on the other it also requires the activation of contextual information and previous knowledge" p.123.

From the other hand, good pronunciation is essential to comprehend what we hear because when the students focus on the main aspects of pronunciation such as (stress, intonation, syllables, sounds ...etc) this will lead to a good listening and help the students to understand the message the speaker wants to convey. Harmer (2007, p.133) states "the more they hear and understand English

being spoken the more they absorb appropriate pitch and intonation, stress and sounds of both individual words and those which blend together in connected speech".

Kelly (2007, p. 66) clarifies that "the word stress a change in the pitch, or the level of the speaker's voice and the vowel sound in that syllable is lengthened. Stress can fall on the first, middle or last syllables of words". While the term "intonation" is defined as "the way the voice goes up and down in pitch when we are speaking". (Ibid:86)

The importance of teaching listening is coupled with teaching pronunciation. Pronunciation plays an important role in improving the students' listening comprehension since the recognition of each single word is the key to understand the content of the spoken language. Gillert(1987, p. 33) as cited in Lane (2010, p.1) describes the relationship between pronunciation and listening comprehension as "speech loop between speaker and listeners". Moreover, listening comprehension depends on the students ability to recognize (consonant, vowel, stress and intonation) when they listen to the spoken language.

Therefore, the students need to practice their listening skills not just doing exercises and to be engaged with their classmates in an interesting learning environment. Shadowing technique is one of the effective techniques that may support and help EFL teachers to provide a motivated learning environment and to apply the main principles of listening during their lessons. Hammer (2000, P. 135) mentions the main principles of listening skills, which should be taken in consideration in order to make the students effectively comprehend the coming sounds as follows:

- 1- Encourage students to listen as often and as possible.
- 2- Help students prepare to listen.
- 3- Once may not be enough.
- 4- Encourage students to respond to the content of a listening, not just to the language.

- 5- Different listening stages demand different listening tasks.
- 6- Good teachers exploits listening tasks to full.

## 2-2 Shadowing Technique

Shadow technique is considered a good listening and pronunciation exercise in which the students will try to repeat what they hear at the same time as much as they can do and try to mimic and imitate the same sounds and the stressed words they hear. This will increase the students' awareness for improving their listening skill. In addition, it is a good practice can be used to improve more than one skill of learning English at the same time such as speaking, reading, and listening. Hamada (2014) defined shadowing "as an active and highly cognitive activity in which learners track speech they hear and vocalize it as clearly as possible while simultaneously listening" as cited in (Isasa, 2016, p. 13). At the beginning, shadowing technique used to train interpreters in Europe, while in Japan it used as a teaching practice to enhance listening skills.(Ibid:13)

Moreover, Hamada (2014, p. 3) assured that "shadowing is becoming one of effective techniques for formal listening practice in Japanese classroom. Starting with a report by Tami (1992), increasing research has been conducted in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts (e.g, Kuato,2009; Kuramoto, shiki, Nishida & 2007; Mochizuki 2005)".

From the other hand, shadowing as a teaching technique is considered an effective flexible teaching because it can be used with other teaching activities such as, reading activities, vocabulary learning activities,..etc. this combination will increase its effectiveness.(Ibid:4)

There are more than one type of shadowing technique were proposed and implemented by kadato(2007), Tami(1997) and Arguelles (2011), as cited in Isaza,2016, p.15) see table (1).

**Table (1) types of shadowing technique**

Full shadowing	Students have to listen to the input and then try to repeat the auditory input as soon as it is heard.
Slash shadowing	The speaker purposefully delivers their speech with pauses between phrases to give to the shadower more time to recognize words.
Silent shadowing	Full shadowing done in the head, sub-vocalization.
Part shadowing	The shadower picks up the last word or the stressed ones and just shadows them.
Shadowing+ comment	The shadower adds his/her own comments.
Part shadowing+ question	The shadower adds a question about his/her job.

While Murphey in Adachi (1997) as cited in Hamazar (2014, p. 138-139) mentioned other types of shadowing. "“Lecture shadowing” is when listeners shadow a speaker silently in their mind when hearing a lecture. In “reading shadowing”, one person reads a passage when his/her partner shadows. “Conversational shadowing” is conversation where listeners shadow each other out loud. “Complete/listening shadowing,” indicates shadowing every word a speaker utters. Finally, “interactive shadowing” includes selected information and adds questions or comments, like a natural conversation."

This technique has a great importance as a teaching technique in EFL/ESL classes and many studies have confirmed that it is an effective teaching technique to improve language skills, such as (e.g. Kato(2009), Kuramoto, Nishida, Isobe, & Shiki (2010), Isasa (2016) and Hamada (2014,2011a, 2010)). In brief, the results of these studies showed that:

- 1- Shadowing technique helps the learners to " automatize their speech perceptions."
- 2- It helps them to improve their vocabulary of the target language and to get fluency.
- 3- As a pronunciation exercise, it allows the students to practice many "features of pronunciation at the same time". In addition,

it can be used to practice more than one skill of language.

- 4- It can be used as "a home work activity".
- 5- It helps the teachers to improve their students' listening and reading comprehension, since it stimulates and reinforced prior knowledge learners have already acquired.
- 6- It provides effective and communicative environment for EFL/ESL learners.

**3-Methodology**

The researcher has adopted a number of procedures used to achieve the aim of this study. Test hypothesis concern cause and effect relationship regarding the sample, test, and the teaching materials. In addition, it deals with the description of the pilot administration of the test, the discussion of the test in terms of reliability and validity and the statistical means used to analyze the data obtained in this study.

**3-1 The sample of the study**

The sample of the current study is the forth preparatory female students, Al-Zahraa secondary school during the academic year 2017/2018. The total number is (123) students, and they are divided into three classes, there are (41) students in each class. The sample of this study was randomly

chosen and consists of (82) students. Thus, group (A- 41 students) was chosen to represent the experimental group, while group (B -41 students) is set as the control group.

The equalization of these two groups is checked in terms of participants' intelligent, pre-test, age, and the academic achievement of the first semester in English language material. See table (2)

**Table 2**

**The equalization of the experimental and control groups in Intelligence, first semester achievement, pre test and Age.**

Variable	groups	No.	M	SD	t-value		d.f	Level Of Sig.	Sig.
					computed	critical			
Intelligence	Exp.	41	22.800	3.170 *	0.989	1.990	80	0.05	No
	Cont.	41	21.990	3.750 *					
Achievement	Exp.	41	54.800	4.869	0.862				
	Cont.	41	53.962	4.010					
Age	Exp.	41	194.105	7.880	0.983				
	Cont.	41	19.985	8.900					
Pre-test	Exp.	41	29.909	4.993	1.745				
	Cont.	41	17.995	5.975					

\*the variance value.

In addition, the researcher used pre-test to be compared with the posttest score to answer the second question of the study.

**3-2 Teaching material**

- 1- Textbook from the specified textbook entitled (English for Iraq/ students' book) in 2017/2018 by caroline de Messiere, published by Granet for the forth preparatory class.
- 2- A recorder of listening dialogues.

**3-3 Procedures**

There were five weekly lessons for each group. To accomplish the aim of this study, the researcher as mentioned earlier, taught the experimental group according to the procedures of the shadowing technique which the researcher adopted from ( Hamada ,2014), these procedures are followed in teaching the experimental group. She tries to facilitate the implementation of this technique.

Therefore, she makes two introductory lessons about the shadowing technique and its procedures to

pave the way for the students of the experimental group to understand how to implement these procedures during listening. In addition, what they should do to improve their listening skills through shadowing. Moreover, she tries to give them an explanation about the main aspects of pronunciation such as intonation, stressed and unstressed words) to help them to understand what they listen to and to recognize each single word. The shadowing procedures used in this study are the following:

1- Listening to audio:

In this step, the researcher asks the students to listen to the record without reading the written dialogue. This will make the students concentrate on the pronunciation and the incoming sounds.

2- Shadow while reading

In this second step, the learners read the transcript of the dialogue by slashing, comprehending the written dialogue by chunks, and checking the unknown (meaning) words in the text. They should listen and silently check understanding with the transcript for 3 minutes. This will pave the way for the students to

improve their ability to comprehend the spoken language because shadowing unknown words is difficult.

3- Shadowing 3 times ( without pausing):

In this step, the researcher asks the students (using their listening skills) to repeat and imitate what they hear and concentrate on shadowing pronunciation. This step helps the students to improve their listening skills and to become familiar with the pronunciation.

4- Revision:

In this step, the researcher reviews the transcript for 3-4 minutes to review the difficult sounds and the new words.

5- Contents shadowing once:

In this step, the students focus on shadowing and think about the meaning.

While the control group is taught listening according the conventional method in which the teacher makes the students listen to the audio of the dialogues from the prescribed textbook. Then, she clarifies the new expressions; explain the difficult expression and words. Sometimes, he asks the students to make a similar conversation with their classmate. The last step, the teacher did the exercises of the textbook. The experiment of this study started on Wednesday 14/3/2018 and ended on Thursday 24/5/2018, the post-test has been

applied. This means the experiment of this study lasted for (10 weeks).

**3-4 Instruments of the study**

The researcher used **post** listening skills achievement test to collect data.

**3-4-1 Post-test**

This test consists of 40 subjective items (multiple-choice) with four alternatives for answers, one correct answer and three incorrect answers for each item ) to test different levels of students' listening skills and comprehension. Moreover, the test items have been constructed in the light of the behavioral objectives of the materials (see table 4). The total score of the test is (40).

For scoring purpose, one score for each correct answer and zero for each incorrect answer and when two answers are provided or when no answer is provided. At the end of the experiment, the posttest was applied to the students of the control and experimental groups in order to test the hypothesis of this study. In addition, to be compared with results of the pre-test to see whether there is an improvement in the students' listening skills or not after the experiment. More details will be given below.

**Table 4: Table of Specifications**

Objectives	No. Of lessons	Weight Of Units	No. Of behavioral Objectives				Total	% Weight Of content	No. Of Items				Total
			Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis			Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	
Unit 5	8	33.33	9	7	4	3	23	%35	6	4	2	2	14
Unit 6	8	33.33	9	6	4	1	20	%31	5	4	2	1	12
Unit 7	8	33.33	7	8	3	4	22	%34	4	5	2	3	14
Total	24	%100	25	21	11	8	65	%100	15	13	6	6	40

### 3-4-2 The test Validity and Reliability

To achieve the face and the content validity of the posttest, its scoring scheme and its appropriateness to the level of the students, table of specifications and its appropriateness to the content

of the units are displayed to a jury of instructors specialized in TEFL. According to their judgments, they are found valid. Some of the test items are reformulated according to their suggestions.

The test reliability is founded (0.86) which is considered good. The researcher used (Richardson-20) to estimate the test reliability of the present study. The test is considered a good test if its reliability is more than (0.70). (Van Esetal, 1984, p. 317).

### 3-4-3 Pilot Administration of the post-test

For the purpose of conducting a pilot study, (42) students are drawn from the forth in Al-Batool secondary school on Wednesday 3/3/2018. The aims of conducting the pilot study are:

- 1- Estimate the time required for the examinees to answer the test,
- 2- To check the test instructions, and
- 3- To analyze the test items, to determine the difficulty level and discrimination power of this items.

It has been found that all the students are able to answer the test items without difficulty, and the test instructions are clear enough. The time is (45) minutes, were sufficient and appropriate to answer all the items. A sample of (42) students are intentionally chosen from the population because they have finished the same units and given a test in order to evaluate the test effectiveness, and to determine the difficulty level and discriminating power of the test items. After scoring the paper of the test, the researcher arranged the scores from the highest to the lowest. Then, the scores were divided

into two groups (upper and lower) at the rate 50%. The upper group scores are (36-28) and the lower group scores are (18-12). At the end, the researcher estimates the following:

### 3-4-4 Discriminating Power and Difficulty level

Madsen (1983, p. 181) states that " an item analysis tells as basically three things: how difficult each item is, whether or not the question "discriminates" or tells the difference between high and low students". The difficulty level is founded to range between (0.60-0.30). In this respect, Baker states that the advantage of items difficulty level is that "it permits the identification of items which are too difficult or too easy, i.e. outside the range of 0.25-0.75".

While the discriminating power of the test items is founded to range between (0.48-0.26). Anastasi (1976, p. 114) states that " if the discriminating power of an item is 0.30 and above, the item is acceptable and if it is less than 0.30 then it is weak and should changed". Therefore, they are considered acceptable.

### 3-4-5 Data Analysis

The data obtained from the pre-posttest are analyzed by applying the (SPSS) and T-Test for two independent samples, which is also, used for the equality of the experimental and control groups in age, intelligence, pre-test and the academic achievement of the first semester variables and to analyze the results and discussion. Kuder-Richardson 20 is used to find out the reliability of the pre-posttests. In addition to the using of discriminating power and difficulty level formula for test items' analysis. Finally, ETA-Square formula is used to find out the effect size.

## 4-Results and discussion

The students listening answers' papers were scored. Then, the data obtained were analyzed in order to test the study hypothesis and answers the questions of the study. See table (5).

**Table (5)**

**The mean, standard deviation, and T-value of the experimental and control groups' scores in the post-test**

Group	No of subjects	Mean	S.D	D.f	Level of significance	T – value	
						Computed	tabulated
Experimental	41	32.806	5.663	80	0.05	3.924	1.99
Control	41	18.624	6.890				

To achieve the aim and answer the first question of the study, the researcher compared the mean score of the experimental and control groups in the posttest. In table (4), it is clear that the means score of the experimental group is higher than the mean score of the control group since the computed t-value which is (3.924) is higher than the tabulated t-value (1.990), this means that there is a statistical difference in favor of the experimental group.

This may relate to the practice of listening skills in each lesson in which the students practice shadowing the same intonation, stress, expression as much as they can do, and think about the meaning to comprehend the content of what they shadow. In addition, the implementation of this technique assists the students' comprehension since they should understand each single word and recognize pronunciation to answer the listening and pronunciation test at the end of each lesson. From the other hand, the students, during shadowing, focus on their mistakes and get feedback. Moreover, it motivates them to learn how to improve their skills to recognize the correct pronunciation of each single word, and to shadow and comprehend the content of what they hear at the same time.

To answer the second question of the study, the researcher compared between the mean scores of the pre-posttests of the experimental and control groups to see if there is a statistical difference (a significant improvement) between the students' scores in pre test and post test. The mean score of the experimental group is (29.909) in the pretest, while the mean score in the posttest is (32.806). From the

other hand, the mean score of the control group is (17.995) in the pretest, while the mean score is (18.624) in the posttest. The computed t-value in the posttest is more than the tabulated value in favor of the experimental group while in the pre-test; the computed t-value is less than the tabulated t-value. This comparison indicates that there is a significant improvement in favor of the experimental group in the posttest. Then, the researcher used the percentage to show the extent of the improvement of the students of the experimental group between the pre and posttest scores and compare it with percentage of the control group (see table 6). The percentage of experimental group between the pre-posttest is (10.354) while the control group percentage is (3.845). This comparison showed that the improvement of the experimental group students is higher than the control group. This improvement and the statistical difference between the two tests can be constructed in terms of the applying of the procedures of shadowing technique in teaching listening skills.

From other hand, the researcher constructed the value of effect size to show the effectiveness of using this technique on the listening skills. It is found (0.827) which indicates a large effect size value. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, which assumed that there are no significant statistical difference between the mean score of the experimental who taught listening skills by the shadowing technique and the control group who taught listening skills by the conventional method.

These results may relate to justifications concerning the effectiveness of applying the

shadowing technique on students' listening skills. The students of the experimental group seemed to succeed in the post-test due to the fact that the applying the procedures of shadowing technique helped the students to be aware of how they should listen and how to comprehend what they hear. In addition, how to focus and use pronunciation to improve their listening skills. Moreover, the procedures of shadowing technique give the students the opportunity to review, imitate, repeat, and think about the meaning of the new vocabularies that help them to comprehend the spoken language and use their listening skills. Consequently, these results confirm that the students under the experimental group seemed to succeed because of being engaged and practice group work to apply the procedures of the shadowing technique; this may increase their comprehension of each assignment. From other hand, the results of this study are in agreement with the results of previous studies [6], [7], [8], and [12] that show the effectiveness of using this technique in improving the students' listening comprehension skills and oral accuracy.

The researcher hoped that the results of this study be helpful to the researchers to repeat the using of this technique for developing other skills of language or use it with other activities or techniques. In addition, they can use it to examine its effect on the students' motivation, oral proficiency, reading skills, and other aspects of teaching and learning. Moreover, the results hoped to encourage the EFL/ESL teachers to use the shadowing technique in their classrooms to help their students to improve their learning skills. It helps teachers to provide an interesting and interactive learning environment.

Furthermore, the EFL teachers can use it to encourage the students to do more practice (e.g. pronunciation or listening exercises) outside the class, in other words as an effective homework activity. Moreover, the results of this study hope to be beneficial to the curriculum designers to determine the suitable techniques and practice to be included in the Iraqi EFL textbooks, which makes the content of the materials meets the EFL learners' needs and students' workbook should contain tasks or activities for employing such effective technique.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results obtained, the researcher concludes that the using of this technique had a positive impact on the students' listening comprehension achievement and pronunciation since there was a significant difference between the mean score of the control and experimental group in the posttest in favor of the experimental group. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. The improvement of the mean scores of the experimental groups, in the post test in comparison with pre-test scores, relates to the fact that shadowing technique gives opportunities for the students to practice repetition, imitation during listening, and think about the meaning of what they listen to; these opportunities pave the for them to comprehend the recorded conversation. Consequently, it can be concluded that an improvement in the students' listening comprehension is accomplished by the use of shadow technique, which influenced positively the students' listening comprehension achievement. Finally, this technique has proved its efficiency in improving Iraqi EFL preparatory students listening comprehension and suggested to be used in Iraqi EFL classrooms for better learning outcomes.

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