

# Integration of Peer Assessment and Shadowing Strategies for Improving the Oral Performance of EFL Learners

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**Abstract:** This study integrated the peer assessment and shadowing strategies in an English course. English is a mandatory subject throughout the education system in Taiwan. In this study, the average age of the participants was 17. For the experimental group, the teachers provided native-like English audio input from the Internet. The students linked to and listened to the audio content. They then made their own recordings and uploaded them to the cloud drive so that their peers could listen to them and evaluate their speaking performance based on the rubrics the teacher provided. For the control group, the same process was followed as with the experimental group but the students did not access the audio materials for shadowing. After four weeks, we compared the speaking performance of the two groups and found that the students in the experimental group outperformed those in the control group.

**Keywords:** peer assessment, oral speaking, English as a foreign language, shadowing

## 1. Introduction

English is a lingua franca in this globalized world and is an important means of gaining access to and information about the online world. English plays a prominent role in students' academic achievement and their future careers. Because Taiwan is not an English-speaking country, learning the language poses a greater challenge for students. Students generally view English as a subject to study rather than as a language for communication, and they do not have the opportunity to hear or use the language in their daily lives. Thus, their exposure to and input of the language is insufficient.

Since students are in a mono-linguistic environment, their exposure to the language is limited. Most English courses focus on reading and writing. The source of the listening input is limited and the opportunity to speak the language is also scarce. Hence, English teachers need to provide sufficient input and design various activities to improve students' language proficiency. In this present study, the researchers conducted a study which integrated peer-review in the oral practice with a shadowing strategy. The researchers attempted to investigate the effect of the shadowing strategy to see if it could aid in the development of the English language.

## 2. Literature Review

Language is a system that encompasses listening, speaking, reading, and writing. For non-native speakers of English, speaking is an important skill that students have to work on (Boonkit, 2010). Creating opportunities for students to practice speaking is one of the key components in English teaching. Although many English courses and course books separate speaking and listening skills in instruction, according to Tavil (2010), the two skills are as important as each other. Tavil also stressed the importance of the integration of listening and speaking in teaching. The more practice students have in listening and speaking, the more comfortable and confident they will become.

## *2.1 Shadowing*

When it comes to speaking in a foreign language, it is perceived to be better to be close to the pronunciation of native speakers of the target language. Teachers usually utilize speaking tasks to let students imitate native speakers. One speaking strategy that is often used to practice speaking is called “shadowing” (Takeuchi, 2003). Shadowing is the action of following the speech one hears and of vocalizing the information as one listens (Tamai, 2001). Murphey (2001) identified different forms of shadowing tasks including complete, selective, and interactive. Complete shadowing refers to learners repeating everything they hear, whereas in selective shadowing, learners only select certain words or parts of the speech to repeat. In interactive shadowing, learners use selective shadowing but add questions or comments afterwards. Shadowing enhances the students’ listening and communication skills. The speaking source that the learners listen to scaffolds their knowledge of the target language form (Apple, 2006).

## *2.2 Peer Review*

Working with others is important for developing social and cooperative skills which students are likely to need in their school lives and their future careers. Some students may find it difficult because they do not think they can find things to say or they believe that their language proficiency is insufficient (Singh, M.S, 2007). The interaction among their peers can increase students’ English ability and provide them with more opportunities for learning, in particular for less proficient learners (Genesee et al., 2005).

# **3. Methods**

## *3.1 Participants*

A total of 57 17-year old English major students were recruited to participate in this oral audio study. They were divided into the control group with 30 students and the experimental group with 27 students. The students each had a smartphone with wireless Internet access so that they could access the audio on the Internet, record their own speaking, and upload their recorded files to the cloud drive.

## *3.2 Measuring Tools & Procedure*

Oral questions from the simulated General English Proficiency test were used in the study. The questions were selected and reviewed by three English teachers to ensure that they were suitable for testing the students’ English ability. The students’ oral skills were tested prior to the study. The results from the independent t-test of the pretest showed no statistically significant difference ( $t=0.10, p>0.05$ ) in the oral skills of the students from the control group and the experimental group. The students’ speaking ability was therefore at a similar level.

The two groups of students were given two different oral assignments in which they had to respond to the oral questions and record their answers. After the answers were recorded, they had to upload them to the Internet platform for their peers to evaluate. The students from both groups followed the same procedure, except that the students from the experimental group had to listen to the sample videos and shadow the recording prior to giving their own responses to the questions. The students from the control group did not listen to the sample recording before they gave their responses.

# **4. Results & Conclusion**

In order to compare the effect of the shadowing strategy on the peer-review speaking project, the *t*-test technique was used to analyze the speaking scores from the students’ two speaking assignments. The results of oral assignments 1 and 2 showed statistically significant differences between the control

group and the experimental group. The results from the two oral assignments can be found in Tables 1 & 2.

Table 1: The score comparison of oral assignment 1

English test (Oral 1)	N	Means	SD	<i>t</i>	DF	P
Experimental	n=27	86.59	3.82	2.11*	55	0.03
Control	n=30	82.47	9.48			

\* $p < 0.05$

Table 2: The score comparison of oral assignment 2

English test (Oral 2)	N	Means	SD	<i>t</i>	DF	P
Experimental	n=27	85.96	2.57	2.04*	55	0.04
Control	n=30	84.67	2.21			

\* $p < 0.05$

The results from the two oral assignments showed that the students from the experimental group performed better in terms of their speaking proficiency. The mean scores of the experimental group and the control group for the first oral assignment were 86.59 and 82.47, respectively, and for the second assignment their scores were 85.96 and 84.67 respectively. The experimental group, with the integration of shadowing strategies, scored higher on the two speaking assignments. As can be seen in Tables 1 and 2, the mean values of the experimental group with the shadowing strategy are higher than those of the control group without the strategy.

The results of this study indicate that the speaking practice in the integration of the shadowing strategy improved the students' oral ability. With regular speaking practice, students can improve their language. However, the use of the shadowing strategy allows learners to imitate the language that has a native-like quality and enables them to articulate better in their oral production.

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