

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, research questions, research objectives, significance of the study, and the organization of the paper. It also highlights the focus of the study, which is the use of shadowing technique to improve students' speaking fluency.

A. Research Background

Speaking is one of the most important skills in English language learning for young learners. This skill helps students develop basic communication abilities in simple situations that are relevant to their daily lives. At this level, speaking instruction does not focus on the use of complex grammar or a high level of accuracy, but rather on students' ability to use English meaningfully (Pinter, 2017). The development of speaking skills occurs through active language use in a supportive learning environment, especially through communication activities that involve interaction among students. In this process, student engagement and participation are important factors in supporting the development of their speaking skills (Gonzaga, 2023).

In English language learning at the elementary school level, particularly among young learners in the fifth grade, various difficulties are still found in developing speaking skills, particularly in terms of fluency and the ability to produce continuous speech. During speaking activities in class, students often hesitate, make frequent pauses, and have difficulty continuing their ideas when speaking in English. In some situations, they even stop in the middle of a sentence or pause for a long time before continuing (Wang, 2021). These conditions indicate that students have not yet achieved sufficient speaking fluency, which makes it difficult for them to express their ideas clearly. These problems are not only about understanding the language, but also about using it fluently in communication (Richards, 2015). When students cannot keep speaking smoothly, their performance

becomes less effective, and this can make them less confident and less active in speaking activities. Therefore, the problem addressed in this study is limited to speaking fluency as one component of speaking skill, rather than speaking skill as a whole. Other components such as pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary are not the focus of this study.

Similar problems were also found during the researcher's preliminary teaching experience at the school. Many students hesitated when they were asked to speak in English, even though the topic was simple and familiar to them. When trying to respond, some of them stayed silent, while others could only produce a few words. Pauses were quite common, especially when students were trying to develop their ideas. In some cases, they even stopped in the middle of their sentences and were unsure about how to continue. Students often waited for the teacher's guidance before trying to speak, as if confirmation or support was needed. When unsure, some also turned to their friends and only spoke after receiving help. Because of this, they were not yet confident enough to express their ideas on their own. This situation shows that students still have difficulties in speaking fluently and need more support during the learning process. For this reason, speaking activities should not only be interesting, but also provide clear models and repeated practice, so that students can gradually build their fluency and confidence in using English.

In the Indonesian context, *the Capaian Pembelajaran dan Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (CP-ATP)* for English in fifth-grade elementary school focus on students' ability to communicate verbally in simple and familiar situations (Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi, 2022). At this stage of learning, students are not expected to reach a high level of accuracy or use complex language structures. Instead, they are expected to express meaning fluently and confidently through simple expressions. This emphasis shows that English learning at the elementary school level is directed toward the functional use of language in everyday life. Therefore, speaking fluency becomes an important aspect of students' speaking skills. This is also in line with the cognitive

development stage of elementary school students, who are generally at the level of understanding and applying knowledge. As a result, students' difficulties in producing fluent speech need to be given attention in the learning process.

To overcome these difficulties, teachers need to use teaching techniques that give students guided speaking practice, especially to improve their fluency. The techniques should not only give students chances to speak, but also help them continue their speech more smoothly. One technique that can be used is shadowing technique. Shadowing is an activity where students listen to spoken English and repeat it directly (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). Recent studies have shown that this activity allows students to be exposed to natural speech patterns and helps them produce more continuous speech. Through repeated practice, students can reduce hesitation and develop a smoother flow of speech (Hamada, 2016). However, studies on the use of shadowing technique are still mostly focused on intermediate and adult learners. Research that specifically examines the effect of this technique on improving speaking fluency among young learners, particularly fifth graders in the Indonesian context, is still limited. Further research is needed to fill this gap and to examine the effectiveness of this technique for young learners at the elementary school level.

In language teaching terminology, shadowing is classified as a teaching technique rather than a method. While a method represents a broad plan for language presentation, a technique is a specific classroom activity used to achieve an immediate learning objective (Anthony, 1963). The shadowing technique is chosen for this study because it specifically targets the physical mechanisms of speech production. Unlike traditional speaking activities that require students to wait until a sentence ends before repeating it, this technique demands immediate, real-time imitation (Hamada, 2019). This process forces the students' brain to connect listening input directly with spoken output (Kadota, 2019). Furthermore, this technique is most valuable for developing speaking fluency, particularly in terms of speech rate and pause management (Segalowitz, 2010). Therefore, the specific activity where the shadowing technique matters most is guided fluid

production, where young learners can practice maintaining a continuous flow of speech by following a stable audio-visual model (Hamada, 2016).

Based on the characteristics of young learners, they generally learn language through imitation and repetition. For this reason, shadowing technique is suitable for this age group. At this stage, students usually respond well to activities that are short, repetitive, and structured, as these help maintain their participation in the learning process (Pinter, 2017). In addition, activities that involve listening and direct imitation can help students understand rhythm, intonation, and speech patterns in English (Kusz, 2022). Shadowing meets these characteristics because it allows students to repeat utterances in a structured and continuous way. This technique has the potential to support the improvement of students' speaking fluency as an important part of overall speaking skills.

Shadowing may be particularly relevant to speaking fluency because the activity requires learners to produce spoken language while listening to the model continuously (Hamada, 2016). Unlike activities that require learners to wait until an utterance is completed before repeating it, shadowing encourages learners to maintain the flow of speech and respond to the input immediately. This characteristic may provide learners with repeated opportunities to practice producing language with fewer interruptions. In this sense, shadowing is not only a listening-based activity but also a form of oral practice that connects listening input with spoken output. Kadota (2019) explains shadowing as a practice that involves both input and output, allowing learners to process incoming speech while producing an oral response. This work specifically discusses shadowing's input, practice, output, and monitoring effects.

This relationship is also relevant to the development of fluency. Fluency involves the ability to produce speech with continuity and appropriate flow, while excessive pauses and hesitation may interrupt oral production (Brown, 2004). Repeated exposure to spoken models may provide learners with opportunities to become more familiar with the rhythm, timing, and flow of English speech (Hamada, 2016). Previous empirical research has also reported a positive

relationship between shadowing technique and oral fluency. For example, an investigation into EFL learners' oral performance revealed a strong relationship between shadowing technique and the fluency of learners' L2 production (Zakeri, 2014).

However, the findings from previous studies cannot be generalized to all groups of learners because learners' age, proficiency level, learning context, and treatment conditions may influence their responses to a particular learning technique. This consideration is particularly important for young learners, whose speaking activities need to provide sufficient structure, repetition, and support. Therefore, further investigation is needed to examine whether shadowing technique can support the development of speaking fluency among young learners in an elementary school context.

Based on this gap, this study aims to examine teaching techniques that are suitable for the characteristics of young learners and can improve their speaking fluency. If this issue is not addressed, students may continue to experience difficulties in expressing their ideas orally, which can eventually affect their self-confidence and participation in English learning. Consequently, this study aims to investigate the effect of shadowing technique on young learners' speaking fluency as a key aspect of their speaking skills.

B. Research Questions

Based on the background of the study, the following research questions are proposed:

1. What is the level of young learners' English speaking fluency before the implementation of shadowing technique?
2. What is the level of young learners' English speaking fluency after the implementation of shadowing technique?
3. What is the difference in young learners' English speaking fluency before and after the implementation of shadowing technique?

C. Research Purposes

Based on the background and research questions, this study aims to:

1. Examine the level of young learners' English speaking fluency before the implementation of shadowing technique.
2. Examine the level of young learners' English speaking fluency after the implementation of shadowing technique.
3. Investigate the effect of shadowing technique on young learners' speaking fluency by comparing their performance before and after the treatment.

D. Research Significances

The findings of this study are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of English language teaching, particularly in improving speaking skills among young learners.

1. Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of knowledge in teaching speaking skills for young learners by providing empirical evidence on the use of shadowing technique in improving speaking fluency. The findings of this study are expected to be significant for three theoretical perspectives. First, Skinner's (1957) Behaviorism Theory, which views language learning as a process of auditory stimulus, repetition, and imitation, is relevant to this study because shadowing requires learners to imitate spoken input directly. Second, the Shadowing Processing Framework (Hamada, 2016; Kadota, 2019), which explains shadowing as a practice that connects listening input with spoken output, is used to understand how simultaneous listening and repetition may support more continuous speech. Third, the Utterance Fluency Framework (Lennon, 1990; Segalowitz, 2010; Skehan, 2003) provides the basis for defining and measuring speaking fluency through speech flow, speech rate, pausing, and mean length of run. By examining students' fluency before and after the treatment, this study provides empirical evidence for the extent to which these theories are applicable to young learners in an EFL elementary

school context, where studies are still limited.

2. Practical Significance

Practically, the findings of this study are expected to benefit teachers, students, and curriculum developers.

a. For English teachers, the findings of this study can serve as a practical reference for designing more interactive speaking activities, especially for young learners in elementary schools. Teachers can use the combination of audiovisual materials and shadowing techniques to overcome the limitations of traditional, teacher-centered teaching methods. This technique offers an alternative solution to keep students motivated and focused during language lessons. Additionally, by understanding the challenges found in this research, teachers can better plan the duration and pace of their lessons, ensuring that introverted or anxious students get enough personal guidance and repetitions to develop their speaking fluency comfortably.

b. For the students, this study provides a new and engaging way to practice their English speaking skills. Instead of just memorizing vocabulary lists or reading text silently, shadowing technique allows them to actively imitate real English sounds through animated videos. This approach helps young learners get used to the natural rhythm and intonation of the language in a fun environment. Furthermore, practicing shadowing in class can help lower their foreign language anxiety over time. As they repeat the words together with the video characters, they can build more confidence to produce English phrases without feeling too much pressure or fear of making mistakes in front of their classmates.

c. For curriculum developers, the findings of this study can provide practical insights for curriculum developers to design better English learning programs for young learners. Since the current curriculum in Indonesia (*Kurikulum Merdeka*) focuses heavily on communicative competence and functional language use, these results show that video-based shadowing technique can be a useful alternative. Curriculum planners can use this research as a reference to

include creative imitation-based activities in the official guidelines or teaching modules. By understanding the students' performance in this study, developers can better arrange time allocations and create age-appropriate speaking activities that help elementary school students build their fluency comfortably.

Overall, this study highlights the importance of meaningful and age-appropriate speaking activities in supporting the development of students' speaking skills.

E. Research Scope

This study focuses on speaking fluency as a key aspect of young learners' English speaking skills. In this context, speaking skills refer to students' ability to express ideas in simple and familiar situations using English.

The participants of this study are fifth-grade elementary school students who learn English as a foreign language. Grade 5 students are selected because the *English Capaian Pembelajaran and Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (CP-ATP)* emphasize the use of simple spoken English in familiar contexts at this level (Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi, 2022).

In this study, speaking fluency is used as the main indicator to assess students' speaking skills. Speaking fluency includes the flow of speech, speech rate, pausing, mean length of run during speaking performance. Other aspects of speaking skills, such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and content, are not the main focus of this study. This limitation is applied to ensure that the assessment is appropriate for young learners and more measurable.

The data are collected through speaking tests conducted before and after the implementation of shadowing technique. The analysis focuses on comparing students' speaking fluency scores from the pre-test and post-test to examine changes in their speaking fluency. The findings of this study are limited to the participants and the research setting and are not intended to be generalized to all young learners.

F. Research Framework

In classroom contexts, many young learners experience difficulties in

developing their speaking skills because they are unable to speak smoothly and continuously. Students often hesitate and have difficulty continuing their ideas (Wang, 2021). These difficulties are commonly related to limited speaking fluency. When fluency is low, their speech becomes less smooth, which can affect their confidence and participation (Cameron, 2001).

In the Indonesian elementary school context, the English *Capaian Pembelajaran dan Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (CP-ATP)* for Grade 5 emphasize students' ability to communicate using simple spoken English in familiar situations (Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi, 2022).

Based on these ideas, speaking skills in this study are viewed as students' ability to express ideas in simple communication using English. In line with the learning characteristics of young learners and the objectives of English instruction at the elementary level, speaking fluency is used as the main and operational indicator of speaking skills. Grounded in the Utterance Fluency Framework (Lennon, 1990; Segalowitz, 2010; Skehan, 2003), speaking fluency in this study specifically refers to four physical pillars of speech production: flow of speech, speech rate, pausing, and mean length of run. Fluency is selected because it is more observable and appropriate for young learners compared to other aspects of speaking skills (Wang et al., 2024).

To support students' speaking skills, teachers need activities that provide clear language models and allow students to practice speaking repeatedly. One activity used for this purpose is shadowing technique. Shadowing is an activity in which learners listen to spoken language and directly repeat what they hear (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). Through this activity, students practice listening and speaking simultaneously while being exposed to natural speech patterns.

At a macro level, this framework is rooted in Behaviorism Theory (Skinner, 1957), which posits that language learning occurs through auditory stimulus, repetition, and imitation. At a micro level, it is guided by the

Shadowing Processing Framework (Hamada, 2016; Kadota, 2019) and the Utterance Fluency Theory (Lennon, 1990; Segalowitz, 2010; Skehan, 2003). These grand theories explain that simultaneous listening and oral imitation build automaticity and speech continuity by connecting auditory input directly to spoken output. Previous studies explain that repeated shadowing technique can help learners reduce hesitation and improve the flow of their speech (Hamada, 2016). For young learners, shadowing technique is suitable because children learn language effectively through imitation and repetition (Pinter, 2017). Therefore, shadowing technique is assumed to contribute directly to the improvement of speaking fluency.

Based on this framework, shadowing technique is considered the independent variable, while speaking fluency is the dependent variable and the main indicator of young learners' speaking skills. Shadowing technique, which involves repeated listening and immediate imitation, provides learners with continuous exposure to natural speech patterns, rhythm, and pronunciation. This process is expected to reduce hesitation, improve speech continuity, and enhance students' speaking fluency. It is assumed that the implementation of shadowing technique has a positive effect on young learners' speaking fluency. The effect of this technique is examined by comparing students' speaking fluency scores before and after the implementation of the treatment. The relationship between variables in this study is illustrated in Figure 1.1.

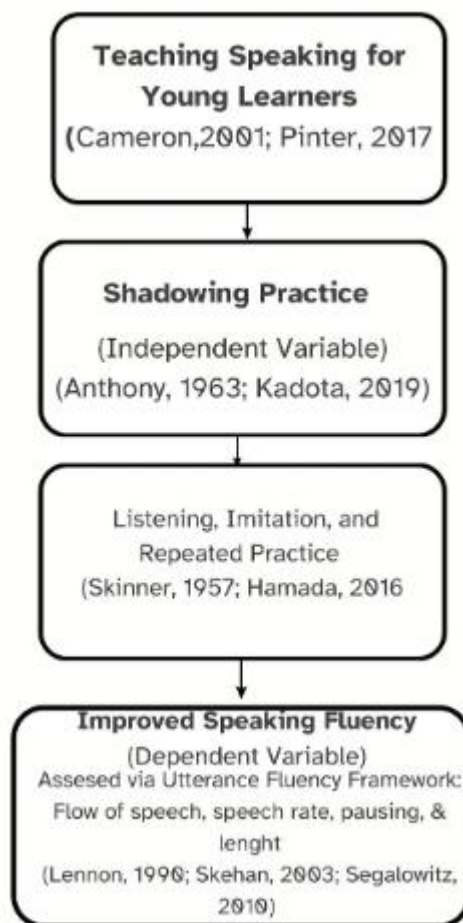


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

G. Research Hypothesis

This study proposes the following hypotheses:

- H_0 (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant difference in students' English speaking fluency before and after the implementation of shadowing technique.
- H_a (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant difference in students' English speaking fluency before and after the implementation of shadowing technique.

To test these hypotheses, statistical analysis is conducted at a significance level of 0.05. The difference in students' speaking fluency scores before and after the treatment is analyzed using a paired-sample t-test when the data are normally distributed. However, if the data do not meet the

assumption of normality, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test is used as a non-parametric alternative. The null hypothesis is rejected when the Sig. (2-tailed) value is less than 0.05 and accepted when the value is equal to or greater than 0.05.

H. Previous Study

A number of previous studies have investigated the use of shadowing as a technique to support learners' speaking skills. These studies indicate that shadowing allows learners to practice listening and speaking at the same time, helping them become familiar with natural speech patterns. Through repeated exposure to spoken English, learners can reduce hesitation and improve the continuity of their speech. For this reason, shadowing is considered an effective activity to support the development of learners' speaking skills (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). Recent studies have supported this view by showing the effectiveness of shadowing technique in improving learners' speaking fluency. Building on these findings, several empirical studies have further examined its effectiveness in different contexts. Overall, previous studies have reported similar findings regarding the use of shadowing in improving learners' speaking skills across different contexts and levels.

One of the studies conducted by Kartika Sari and Jaya (2025) aimed to investigate the effect of the shadowing technique on students' speaking fluency and pronunciation accuracy. A pre-experimental design with a one-group pre-test and post-test approach was used, involving 32 eleventh-grade students from a senior high school in Palembang. To collect the data, the researchers used speaking tests supported by a CEFR-based rubric, as well as observation and field notes. The results showed that students' speaking performance improved quite significantly. Their average score increased from 5.06 in the pre-test to 8.81 in the post-test. This suggests that shadowing can help students speak more fluently and pronounce words more accurately. However, since the study only involved secondary school students, it is still unclear whether the same results would be found in younger learners at the elementary level.

Similarly, Kieu et al. (2025) examined the use of the shadowing technique to improve EFL learners' speaking skills. The study involved university students and used a quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test. Data were collected through speaking tests focusing on fluency, pronunciation, and overall speaking ability. After the treatment, students' speaking became more fluent. The speech sounded more natural, with a better rhythm and fewer pauses than before. This finding shows that shadowing can support learners in producing more continuous speech. Since the participants were university students, it is still unclear how this technique would work with younger learners, especially at the elementary school level.

Another study supported this finding by examining the effect of the shadowing technique on EFL learners' speaking skills, including fluency, pronunciation, and speaking confidence (Nguyen & Vo, 2024). An experimental design with control and experimental groups was employed, involving young learners who were studying English as a foreign language. To collect the data, speaking tests and questionnaires were used to measure the participants' speaking ability and confidence. Following the treatment, students in the experimental group performed significantly better than those in the control group. Their speech became smoother, the rhythm sounded more natural, and while pauses were still present, they did not occur as frequently as before. Since this study successfully demonstrated positive outcomes among young learners, it provides a strong empirical foundation for implementing the shadowing technique in the elementary school context of the present research.

In addition to fluency-focused studies, Petalolo et al. (2024) explored the impact of shadowing on pronunciation. The study showed that shadowing, when combined with authentic listening materials, helps learners become more aware of English sounds and improve their pronunciation. For example, young learners who participated in shadowing activities demonstrated better pronunciation accuracy after the treatment. Although the main focus was on pronunciation, the findings suggest that shadowing also provides opportunities for meaningful speaking practice and contributes to students' overall speaking

skills. This also indicates that shadowing technique can indirectly contribute to the improvement of speaking fluency.

Although many studies have reported positive results regarding how the use of shadowing technique can help improve learners' speaking skills, especially in terms of fluency, pronunciation, and overall performance, most of the research has mainly been conducted with secondary school students and university learners. This indicates that studies focusing on young learners, particularly at the elementary school level, are still quite limited. However, young learners actually have different learning characteristics compared to older students. They tend to learn better through short, repetitive, and well-guided activities, which makes it important to explore teaching techniques that suit their needs.

Moreover, previous studies tend to discuss speaking skills in general, without focusing much on speaking fluency as a specific focus. There is still a need to explore how shadowing technique can specifically support the development of speaking fluency among young learners. Based on this gap, this study aims to investigate the effect of shadowing technique on speaking fluency in young learners, particularly fifth-grade elementary school students in the Indonesian context.