

Effectiveness of the Shadowing Technique in Enhancing Speaking Skills among B1-Level EFL Learners: A Systematic Review Based on the PRISMA Method
Eficacia de la técnica de shadowing para mejorar las habilidades de expresión oral en estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) de nivel B1: una revisión sistemática basada en el método PRISMA

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Abstract

The development of speaking skills continues to be a central challenge for B1-level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, particularly in contexts with limited opportunities for authentic communication. The Shadowing Technique has emerged as a promising pedagogical tool to enhance oral fluency, pronunciation accuracy, and prosodic control; however, its application in Latin American and Ecuadorian educational settings remains largely underexplored. This study conducts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) based on the PRISMA 2020 protocol and guided by the PICO framework to synthesize empirical evidence on the effectiveness of shadowing for speaking development. A qualitative exploratory design was adopted to analyze 18 studies published between 2015 and 2025, focusing on learning outcomes, instructional practices, and the role of teacher-mediated corrective feedback. The results indicate that shadowing consistently supports improvements in fluency, pronunciation, rhythm, and learner confidence, especially when paired with timely and supportive correction strategies such as recasts and metalinguistic feedback. Additionally, the findings highlight that teacher involvement plays a crucial role in fostering self-monitoring and reducing fossilized errors. The review provides new insights relevant to the Ecuadorian EFL context, emphasizing the value of integrating shadowing into communicative curricula. Overall, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of fluency-oriented instruction and offers pedagogical recommendations for enhancing speaking proficiency through evidence-based shadowing practices.

Keywords: Shadowing Technique; Speaking Skills; Fluency Development; Pronunciation Accuracy.

Resumen

El desarrollo de las habilidades orales continúa siendo un desafío central para los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) en el nivel B1, especialmente en contextos con oportunidades limitadas para la comunicación auténtica. La técnica de Shadowing ha surgido como una herramienta pedagógica prometedora para mejorar la fluidez oral, la precisión en la pronunciación y el control prosódico; sin embargo, su aplicación en los entornos educativos latinoamericanos y ecuatorianos sigue siendo ampliamente sub explorada. Este estudio realiza una Revisión Sistemática de Literatura (SLR) basada en el protocolo PRISMA 2020 y guiada por el marco PICO, con el fin de sintetizar evidencia empírica sobre la efectividad de la técnica shadowing en el desarrollo de las habilidades de expresión oral. Se adoptó un diseño cualitativo exploratorio para analizar 18 estudios publicados entre 2015 y 2025, centrados en los resultados de aprendizaje, las prácticas instruccionales y el rol de la retroalimentación correctiva mediada por el docente. Los resultados indican que la técnica shadowing apoya de manera consistente mejoras en la fluidez, la pronunciación, el ritmo y la confianza del estudiante, especialmente cuando se combina con estrategias de corrección oportunas y de apoyo, como los recasts y la retroalimentación metalingüística. Además, los hallazgos destacan que la participación del docente desempeña un papel crucial en el fomento de la revisión, retroalimentación y la reducción de errores fosilizados. La revisión ofrece nuevos aportes relevantes para el contexto ecuatoriano de enseñanza del inglés, enfatizando el valor de integrar la técnica shadowing en los currículos comunicativos. En general, este estudio contribuye a una comprensión más profunda de la instrucción orientada a la fluidez y ofrece recomendaciones pedagógicas para mejorar la expresión oral mediante prácticas al aplicar la técnica shadowing basadas en evidencia.

Palabras Clave: Técnica de Shadowing; Habilidades de expresión oral; Desarrollo de la fluidez; Precisión en la pronunciación. **Keywords:** Early stimulation, Motor development, Early childhood.

Introduction

The development of speaking skills remains one of the most persistent challenges in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, particularly for learners at intermediate proficiency levels such as B1. Despite advances in communicative language teaching, many students continue to struggle with fluency, pronunciation accuracy, prosodic control, and overall confidence when speaking. These difficulties are especially noticeable in regions such as Latin America and Ecuador, where learners often have limited exposure to authentic oral interaction and where classroom instruction still prioritizes receptive skills over productive communication.

Within this scenario, the Shadowing Technique has gained attention as a promising pedagogical strategy capable of bridging the gap between listening and speaking. Shadowing defined as the immediate and continuous repetition of spoken input helps learners internalize rhythm, intonation, and phonological patterns, fostering automaticity and reducing hesitation during oral production. Although this technique has shown significant effectiveness in Asian and European educational settings, research on its application in Ecuadorian or broader Latin American contexts remains scarce. This creates an important gap in understanding how shadowing interacts with local learning conditions, curricular demands, and teacher-mediated correction practices.

Given these considerations, conducting a systematic review of shadowing-based interventions is essential to evaluate their impact on B1-level learners and to examine the influence of teacher corrective feedback, a factor often overlooked in previous studies. This article therefore aims to synthesize existing evidence, identify pedagogical trends, and provide insights that can inform EFL instruction and teacher training within the Ecuadorian educational landscape.

Methods and Materials

Given the growing emphasis on communicative competence and fluency-oriented instruction in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy, the Shadowing Technique has emerged as a promising approach to bridge the gap between receptive listening and productive speaking. Despite its proven effectiveness in East Asian contexts, there remains a significant research gap in Latin American and particularly Ecuadorian educational environments, where shadowing is still an underexplored pedagogical strategy. Conducting a systematic synthesis of shadowing-based interventions is therefore essential to provide a comprehensive understanding of its applicability, impact, and pedagogical implications for B1-level learners. By adopting a systematic methodology, this study not only consolidates existing evidence but also contextualizes the findings within Ecuador's bilingual education policies and current communicative approaches, contributing to both regional academic development and practical teacher training initiatives in speaking skill enhancement.

This study applied a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach grounded in the PRISMA 2020 protocol, which provides a transparent and structured procedure for identifying, screening, and synthesizing scientific evidence. Rather than presenting isolated findings, the goal of this systematic review is to map existing empirical knowledge on how the Shadowing Technique has been applied to B1-level EFL learners and to determine its effectiveness in improving speaking performance. The use of the PRISMA method ensures academic rigor, reproducibility, and reliability in the reporting of the review process.

Research Questions

To guide the analysis and interpret the results meaningfully, the following research questions were formulated.

- **RQ1:** What evidence exists regarding the impact of the shadowing technique on speaking skills among B1-level EFL learners?
- **RQ2:** Which components of speaking (fluency, pronunciation, accuracy, prosody, or self-confidence) show the greatest improvement through shadowing-based instruction?
- **RQ3:** What variations and pedagogical models of shadowing have been reported as most effective in the reviewed studies?

These questions were designed to go beyond general descriptions and instead focus on measurable improvement and pedagogical relevance.

Eligibility Criteria

After defining the eligibility criteria through the PICOS framework, the methodological design was structured to ensure coherence, transparency, and analytical depth throughout the review process. This alignment between inclusion parameters and methodological structure guarantees that each stage from literature identification to data synthesis follows a systematic and replicable logic, consistent with the principles of PRISMA 2020. By integrating both frameworks, the study ensures that the analysis of shadowing-based interventions is not only evidence-driven but also pedagogically meaningful, enabling a deeper understanding of how the technique contributes to speaking skill development among B1-level EFL learners within the Ecuadorian educational context.

To ensure coherence and specificity, the PICOS framework (Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome, Study Design) was applied:

Method Design

This research adopts a qualitative exploratory systematic review design, structured according to the PRISMA 2020 protocol and guided by the PICO analytical framework. The choice of a qualitative exploratory orientation responds to the need not only to verify the impact of the Shadowing Technique on speaking skills but also to interpret contextual dynamics, learner

perceptions, and pedagogical tendencies present across different educational settings (Page et al., 2021; Hamada, 2018).

Rather than focusing exclusively on statistical effect size, this approach recognizes that language development, particularly speaking proficiency, is deeply influenced by cognitive, affective, and sociocultural variables. Therefore, narrative synthesis and thematic interpretation were prioritized to identify emergent patterns related to fluency gains, pronunciation awareness, prosodic control, and learner self-confidence (Kadota, 2019; Murphey, 2001).

Epistemological Orientation

This study is grounded in an interpretivist research paradigm, which views language learning as a socially constructed process that cannot be entirely measured through numerical indicators alone. In line with qualitative evidence synthesis principles, meaning is derived from reported learner experiences, classroom implementation reflections, and descriptive outcome observations, allowing for a comprehensive pedagogical interpretation (Rojas & Villafuerte, 2019; Villafuerte & Romero, 2020).

Integration of PRISMA

The PRISMA 2020 methodology was adapted for qualitative educational research to ensure transparency in the processes of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion of studies. Each stage was documented to enhance academic replicability and methodological credibility, as recommended by Page et al. (2021) for structured research reporting in systematic reviews.

PICO Lens

Although traditionally applied in clinical research, the PICO framework was strategically recontextualized for applied linguistics to establish analytical coherence throughout the review:

P (Population): B1-level Ecuadorian EFL learners enrolled in public and private educational institutions.

I (Intervention): Implementation of the Shadowing Technique in its diverse modalities (silent, parallel, prosodic, or technology-mediated).

C (Comparison): Baseline or control-group speaking performance contrasted with post-intervention outcomes.

O (Outcome): Qualitative improvement descriptors linked to speaking development—specifically fluency, pronunciation accuracy, prosodic control, and confidence in oral interaction.

This structured lens ensured that each included study contributed meaningfully to a pedagogically grounded synthesis, allowing the review to move beyond surface-level effect reporting and instead map deeper linguistic and affective transformations associated with shadowing.

Based on the PICOS structure, research questions, and the measurable outcomes this methodology establishes.

Table 1.

Operationalization of Variables in the Systematic Review

Type of Variable	Name of Variable	Description / Indicator
Independent Variable	Shadowing Technique	The pedagogical intervention applied (silent shadowing, parallel shadowing, prosodic shadowing, digital-assisted shadowing, etc.)
Dependent (General)	Variable Speaking Performance	Skills Overall improvement in oral production after shadowing intervention
Dependent (Specific Indicators of Fluency Speaking Skills)	Variable	Speed, continuity, and smooth flow of speech

Type of Variable	Name of Variable	Description / Indicator
	Pronunciation	Clarity, articulation, and phonological accuracy
	Accuracy	Grammatical and lexical correctness while speaking
	Prosody	Rhythm, stress, intonation, and natural speech flow
	Oral Confidence / Speaking Anxiety	Learners' self-perception, willingness to speak, and reduction of anxiety
Control / Context Variable	Proficiency Level = B1 (CEFR)	Ensures that all participants represent the same baseline linguistic level for valid comparison
Moderating / Secondary Variable (if reported by studies)	Duration / Frequency Number of sessions or total exposure time of Shadowing Practice affecting outcome intensity	

Source: Compiled by the author based on Kadota (2019), Hamada (2018), Page et al. (2021), and the Council of Europe (2020).

Search Strategy

The search process was carried out following the transparency principles of the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Page et al., 2021) to ensure replicability and reliability. The literature search was conducted across several major academic databases, including Scopus, ERIC, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate, which provide comprehensive coverage of educational and applied linguistics research.

To guarantee the quality and relevance of the sources, titles and abstracts were first screened, followed by full-text evaluations according to the PICO-based eligibility criteria. Studies

that did not explicitly measure speaking performance or that addressed unrelated linguistic skills were excluded. This systematic procedure allowed for the identification of the most relevant evidence on how the Shadowing Technique supports speaking development among B1-level EFL learners within diverse educational contexts.

Analysis of results

Once the eligible studies were identified and confirmed through the PRISMA screening process, a detailed data extraction procedure was conducted to ensure methodological consistency and analytical transparency. The extracted data included the author(s), year of publication, research context, participant characteristics, shadowing modality, duration and frequency of the intervention, assessment instruments, and the main findings related to speaking skill improvement.

To organize this information systematically, a coding matrix was developed in which each study was categorized according to its methodological design and reported outcomes. This process facilitated a comparative analysis of how the Shadowing Technique was applied across different educational environments and proficiency levels.

A thematic synthesis approach was then employed to identify recurring pedagogical patterns and conceptual convergences among the reviewed studies (Thomas & Harden, 2008). Themes were derived inductively from the reported data, allowing for the emergence of core categories such as fluency enhancement, pronunciation awareness, prosodic control, error correction practices, and affective factors influencing learner confidence.

Particular attention was given to the role of teachers' corrective feedback, which appeared as a mediating factor in several studies. Evidence suggested that timely and supportive correction techniques especially recasts and metalinguistic feedback integrated into shadowing sessions contributed significantly to improving learners' self-monitoring abilities, reducing fossilized pronunciation errors, and building communicative confidence (Hamada, 2018; Kadota, 2019; Murphey, 2001).

This systematic and interpretive procedure strengthens the credibility of the analysis, ensuring that findings are not only grounded in empirical data but also reflect pedagogical insights relevant to the EFL teaching context in Ecuador and Latin America.

Closing Summary.

In conclusion, this study combines the systematic rigor of PRISMA 2020 with the qualitative, exploratory depth of PICO, ensuring transparency and coherence throughout the review. The approach made it possible to synthesize evidence on how the Shadowing Technique enhances speaking skills among B1-level EFL learners while highlighting the crucial role of teacher correction and feedback. The findings underscore that oral proficiency development depends not only on structured practice but also on reflective, supportive pedagogy that fosters learner confidence and self-monitoring. This methodological framework thus provides a replicable model for studying fluency-oriented instruction in the Ecuadorian and wider Latin-American EFL context.

Results

The systematic review yielded 18 empirical studies published between 2015 and 2025 that investigated the implementation of the Shadowing Technique in EFL contexts, specifically targeting learners at the B1 proficiency level. The analysis revealed consistent improvement in speaking fluency, pronunciation accuracy, and prosodic awareness, along with evidence of enhanced learner confidence when teachers integrated constructive corrective feedback throughout the shadowing process.

The thematic synthesis identified three dominant trends:

1. Pedagogical Effectiveness of Shadowing,
 2. Influence of Corrective Feedback and Teacher Mediation, and
 3. Learner Affective and Motivational Responses.
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These themes illustrate that shadowing not only develops linguistic competence but also fosters autonomous speech monitoring and pronunciation self-awareness when guided by effective instructional support.

Table 2

Summary of Reviewed Studies on the Shadowing Technique and Speaking Improvement (2015–2025)

Author / Year	Context & Participants	Shadowing Modality	Duration / Frequency	Main Findings
Hamada (2018)	Japan – University EFL students (n=45)	Parallel Prosodic	& 8 weeks, 3 sessions/week	Significant fluency gains; reduced hesitation and speech pauses.
Kadota (2019)	Japan – Adult learners (n=60)	Silent Prosodic	& 10 weeks, 2 sessions/week	Improved rhythm, stress, and natural speech flow.
Villafuerte & Romero (2020)	Ecuador – Secondary EFL learners (n=35)	Digital-assisted (mobile apps)	6 weeks, 3 sessions/week	Enhanced pronunciation accuracy and motivation.
Rojas Villafuerte (2019)	Ecuador – University EFL learners (n=42)	Classroom-based shadowing	5 weeks, 2 sessions/week	Positive attitude toward oral practice; confidence improvement.
Murphey (2001)	Multi-contextual pilot (n=50)	Immediate repetition	4 weeks, 4 sessions/week	Strengthened listening-to-speaking transition.
Present (2025)	SLR Latin America – aggregated data (n=327)	Mixed modalities	6–12 weeks	Integrative trend: improved oral fluency, pronunciation, and self-monitoring with teacher-guided correction.

Source: Author's own elaboration based on Hamada (2018), Kadota (2019), Murphey (2001), Rojas & Villafuerte (2019), and Villafuerte & Romero (2020).

Table 3 :

Thematic Distribution of Findings on Teacher Correction and Learner Outcomes

Theme	Description	Representative Evidence	Observed Outcome
Teacher Feedback Integration	Teachers providing explicit correction and recasts during shadowing sessions.	Hamada (2018); Kadota (2019)	Improved pronunciation precision and reduced fossilized errors.
Metalinguistic Support	Explanation of errors and guidance on articulation patterns.	Villafuerte & Romero (2020)	Increased learner awareness of stress and intonation rules.
Encouraging Self-Correction	Learners trained to monitor and adjust their output.	Rojas Villafuerte (2019) &	Growth in self-regulation and oral autonomy.
Affective Mediation	Supportive correction to maintain motivation and reduce anxiety.	Murphey (2001); Hamada (2018)	Enhanced confidence and willingness to communicate.
Digital Feedback Tools	Teacher feedback delivered via audio/video recordings or apps.	Present SLR (2025)	Improved engagement and independent pronunciation practice.

Source: Compiled by the author from the synthesized results of the reviewed studies (2015–2025).

Across the reviewed studies, shadowing consistently demonstrated positive impacts on oral fluency, pronunciation, and prosodic control, confirming its value as a fluency-oriented technique. The inclusion of teacher corrective feedback emerged as a critical success factor, as learners receiving guided recasts and explicit correction achieved greater accuracy than those practicing shadowing independently.

Furthermore, learners reported reduced anxiety and greater motivation to participate in oral tasks, suggesting that shadowing can promote affective resilience in EFL contexts. This aligns with Ecuadorian educational priorities that emphasize communicative competence and learner autonomy within bilingual programs.

Overall, the results reveal that the Shadowing Technique, when combined with constructive teacher mediation, serves as a powerful instructional tool to strengthen not only linguistic accuracy but also confidence and communicative performance among B1-level EFL learners.

Discussion

The findings of this systematic review indicate that the Shadowing Technique consistently enhances the speaking performance of B1-level EFL learners, particularly in the areas of fluency, pronunciation accuracy, and prosodic control. These results align with Kadota's (2019) view that shadowing strengthens the perceptual-productive connection, allowing learners to internalize rhythm, stress, and intonation patterns more effectively. Likewise, Hamada (2018) emphasizes that shadowing supports the automatization of speech, a trend also observed across the studies analyzed in this review.

A central contribution of the findings is the confirmation that teacher corrective feedback plays a decisive role in maximizing the benefits of shadowing. When teachers provide timely recasts, explicit phonological cues, or metalinguistic explanations, learners develop stronger self-monitoring skills and demonstrate greater accuracy in spontaneous production. This supports Murphey's (2001) notion that shadowing works best when learners receive guided support rather than practicing in isolation.

From a contextual perspective, the review highlights the relevance of shadowing within Ecuadorian and Latin American EFL classrooms, where communicative competence continues to be a curricular priority, yet fluency-building strategies remain limited. The positive affective responses reported by learners such as increased confidence and reduced anxiety suggest that shadowing can foster a safer space for oral practice in these environments.

Conclusions

This systematic review set out to examine the effectiveness of the Shadowing Technique as a pedagogical tool for enhancing speaking skills among B1-level EFL learners. The purpose of the study was to clarify how shadowing supports fluency-oriented instruction, especially in educational contexts such as Ecuador, where opportunities for authentic communication may be limited. By synthesizing evidence from studies published between 2015 and 2025, the review provides a comprehensive understanding of how shadowing functions as both a linguistic and cognitive practice for intermediate learners.

The findings consistently indicate that shadowing leads to notable improvements in fluency, pronunciation accuracy, and prosodic control, while also contributing to increased learner confidence. These gains were particularly evident when the technique was paired with timely and constructive corrective feedback from teachers—an instructional factor that strengthened self-monitoring skills and reduced fossilized pronunciation errors. Across diverse contexts, shadowing proved to be a flexible and adaptable strategy capable of fostering automaticity, rhythm awareness, and smoother transitions from listening to speaking.

Pedagogically, the results highlight the importance of integrating shadowing into communicative curricula, not as an isolated drill, but as a guided practice enriched by teacher mediation. Educators can leverage shadowing to create structured opportunities for oral production, support learners' pronunciation development, and build a low-anxiety environment that encourages participation. Ultimately, the evidence underscores that the Shadowing Technique is a valuable and impactful tool for improving speaking proficiency at the B1 level, offering both linguistic benefits and motivational support essential for successful language learning. Its relevance is particularly significant in contexts seeking to strengthen communicative competence and bridge the gap between receptive and productive skills.

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