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University Students' Experiences of Using Netflix-Based Shadowing for Practicing Pronunciation

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ABSTRACT

English proficiency has become an essential competency for university students, particularly in pronunciation. However, many EFL learners still experience difficulties in producing accurate pronunciation. Shadowing, which involves imitating a speaker's utterances simultaneously or with a short delay, can provide opportunities for learners to practice pronunciation in a more natural way. This study aims to explore university students' experiences of using shadowing through Netflix as a medium for English language learning, particularly their experiences This study employed a qualitative approach using narrative inquiry to explore the students' personal experiences and stories. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews via WhatsApp with seven university students who had experience practicing shadowing using English-language content on Netflix. The findings indicate that the students generally had positive experiences with shadowing, describing the practice as enjoyable, relaxing, and less anxiety-inducing than direct speaking practice. They reported improvements in pronunciation, intonation, stress, listening, speaking, and vocabulary. Netflix was preferred because of its diverse content, subtitles, and exposure to authentic English. However, students also encountered negative experience also challenges, including fast speech, unfamiliar vocabulary, slang, idioms, and linking words. To overcome these challenges, they used slow playback, repeated scenes, subtitles, online dictionaries, and repeated listening. In conclusion, Netflix-based shadowing can provide a flexible, enjoyable, and authentic learning experience and can support students' English pronunciation development.

Keywords: *Shadowing, Netflix, Pronunciation*

ABSTRAK

Kemahiran berbahasa Inggris telah menjadi kompetensi penting bagi mahasiswa, khususnya dalam kemampuan pronunciation. Namun, banyak pembelajar bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL) masih mengalami kesulitan dalam menghasilkan pelafalan yang akurat. Shadowing, yang melibatkan peniruan ujaran penutur secara bersamaan atau dengan jeda singkat, dapat memberikan

kesempatan bagi pembelajar untuk berlatih pronunciation dengan cara yang lebih alami. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pengalaman mahasiswa dalam menggunakan shadowing melalui Netflix sebagai media pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, khususnya pengalaman mereka selama melakukan praktik tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode narrative inquiry untuk mengeksplorasi pengalaman dan cerita pribadi mahasiswa. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam semi-terstruktur melalui WhatsApp terhadap tujuh mahasiswa yang memiliki pengalaman melakukan shadowing menggunakan konten berbahasa Inggris di Netflix. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa secara umum memiliki pengalaman positif dalam melakukan shadowing. Mereka menggambarkan praktik tersebut sebagai kegiatan yang menyenangkan, santai, dan menimbulkan kecemasan yang lebih rendah dibandingkan praktik berbicara secara langsung. Mereka juga merasakan peningkatan dalam pronunciation, intonasi, stress, listening, speaking, dan kosakata. Netflix dipilih karena memiliki beragam konten, menyediakan subtitle, dan memberikan paparan terhadap bahasa Inggris autentik. Namun, mahasiswa juga mengalami pengalaman negatif berupa beberapa tantangan, seperti kecepatan berbicara yang tinggi, kosakata yang tidak familiar, slang, idiom, dan linking words. Untuk mengatasi tantangan tersebut, mereka menggunakan slow playback, mengulang adegan, menggunakan subtitle, mencari kata yang tidak familiar melalui kamus daring, dan mendengarkan ulang ujaran. Kesimpulannya, shadowing berbasis Netflix dapat memberikan pengalaman belajar yang fleksibel, menyenangkan, dan autentik serta mendukung perkembangan pronunciation mahasiswa dalam bahasa Inggris.

Kata Kunci: Shadowing, Netflix, Pronunciation

A. INTRODUCTION

English proficiency has become increasingly important for university students because English is widely used in academic communication, access to information, and interaction in international contexts. For EFL learners, however, developing oral English skills is not always easy. Pronunciation is one of the aspects that can create difficulties because learners need to produce English sounds while also paying attention to stress, rhythm, intonation, and connected speech. Jahara and Abdelrady (2021), for example, found that pronunciation remains a significant challenge among undergraduate EFL learners, particularly when learners have limited exposure to English as a foreign language. These difficulties indicate

the need for learning activities that provide learners with sufficient exposure to spoken English and opportunities to practice pronunciation in meaningful contexts.

One technique that can provide such opportunities is shadowing. Shadowing is a language-learning activity in which learners listen to spoken language and repeat or imitate the speaker's utterances with little or no delay. Because learners listen to and produce speech almost simultaneously, the activity requires them to pay close attention to the pronunciation, rhythm, stress, and intonation of the language they hear. Research has shown that shadowing can support the development of L2 pronunciation and speaking. Foote and McDonough (2017), for instance, examined university-level learners who practiced shadowing short English dialogues using mobile technology for eight weeks. Their findings showed improvements in several speaking measures, while participants also expressed generally positive views toward the activity. Similarly, Martinsen et al. (2017) investigated video-based shadowing and pronunciation exercises and found significant improvements in learners' pronunciation performance. The participants also appreciated the authenticity and autonomy provided by the video-based activities.

Besides pronunciation development, shadowing may also provide learners with a particular learning experience. Since learners repeatedly listen to and imitate spoken language, they can become more aware of how English is actually pronounced and used in connected speech. Hamada (2016) investigated shadowing among Japanese university EFL learners and examined its relationship with phoneme perception and listening comprehension. In addition, Sumiyoshi and Svetanant (2017) specifically examined learners' motivation and attitudes toward shadowing. Their study is important because it shows that research on shadowing should not only consider learning outcomes but also learners' psychological experiences, including their positive and negative perceptions and factors that encourage them to continue practicing. Therefore, exploring students' experiences can provide a broader understanding of how shadowing is actually perceived and practiced by learners.

The development of digital technology has also created more opportunities to conduct shadowing through audiovisual materials. Videos provide learners with both spoken and visual information, allowing them to hear pronunciation while observing the context, facial expressions, and actions of the speakers. In particular, captions or subtitles can support learners when they have difficulty identifying spoken words. A meta-analysis by Montero Perez et al. (2013), which synthesized 18 studies, found that captioned videos had a large positive effect on L2 listening comprehension and vocabulary learning. These findings suggest that audiovisual materials with captions can provide useful support for learners who are exposed to spoken English, especially when they need to connect what they hear with the written form of the language.

One digital platform that provides extensive audiovisual materials is Netflix. Netflix offers films and series containing English dialogue in a variety of communicative contexts, which can expose learners to language used in relatively natural situations. Dizon (2018) investigated EFL students' views and use of Netflix for second-language learning and found that students used the platform for language-learning purposes in addition to entertainment. Netflix also provides subtitles that can help learners follow spoken dialogue and connect the sounds they hear with written language. More recently, Topal (2025) reviewed peer-reviewed empirical research on Netflix for language learning. The review found evidence that Netflix can support vocabulary learning, listening, learner motivation, authentic linguistic and cultural input, and learner autonomy. However, the review also noted that the existing research remains limited and context-specific, with challenges such as cognitive overload and limited pedagogical guidance.

Although research has examined shadowing and Netflix as tools for language learning, these two areas have not always been studied together. Previous shadowing research has commonly used audio recordings, mobile technology, or video-based materials to investigate pronunciation, listening, and speaking development (Foote & McDonough, 2017; Martinsen et al., 2017). Meanwhile, Netflix-related research

has generally focused on learners' perceptions, vocabulary learning, listening comprehension, motivation, and the use of subtitles (Dizon, 2018; Montero Perez et al., 2013; Topal, 2025). Thus, there is still a need to understand how university students actually experience the combination of Netflix and shadowing, particularly when the activity is used to practice pronunciation.

For this reason, the present study focuses on university students' experiences of using Netflix-based shadowing for pronunciation skills. Rather than focusing only on whether shadowing produces measurable improvement, this study explores how students experience the practice, including their feelings during shadowing, the benefits they perceive, the reasons they choose Netflix, the difficulties they encounter, and the strategies they use to deal with those difficulties. Understanding these experiences may provide useful insights into how Netflix-based shadowing can be implemented as a technology-enhanced language-learning activity in a university EFL context. The study therefore aims to explore how university students experience using Netflix-based shadowing to practice their English pronunciation.

B. METHODS

This study used a qualitative approach with a narrative inquiry design to explore how university students experienced shadowing practice through English-language films and series on Netflix. Narrative inquiry focuses on human experiences that are lived and told through stories. These stories can provide important knowledge about learning and personal experiences (Clandinin, 2022). In applied linguistics, narrative inquiry is often used to explore learners' and teachers' personal experiences in learning and using a language. Participants' stories can be used as data, as a way to understand their experiences, and as a way to present the research findings (Barkhuizen & Consoli, 2021; Ghanbar et al., 2024). This design was suitable for this study because the research focused on how students experienced shadowing in their daily lives, including their feelings, benefits, difficulties, and ways of dealing with those difficulties.

The participants' experiences were explored through three

dimensions of narrative inquiry: temporality, sociality, and place. Temporality refers to how an experience develops and changes over time. Sociality refers to participants' feelings, personal experiences, and social situations that may influence their experiences, such as speaking English in front of a teacher or other people. Place refers to the physical or digital settings where the experiences happen, including the online environment used for watching Netflix and practicing shadowing (Clandinin, 2022). These three dimensions were used to help develop the interview questions and understand the participants' stories.

The participants were seven university students who had experience practicing shadowing through English-language films or series on Netflix. They were selected purposively based on their direct experience with the technique. In other words, the participants had to have used shadowing themselves as part of their English learning. This criterion was important because the study aimed to explore real experiences rather than general opinions about shadowing or Netflix. Seven participants were considered appropriate because narrative inquiry focuses on detailed and meaningful personal stories rather than a large number of participants. A smaller group also allowed the researchers to explore each participant's experience more deeply, including their feelings, learning benefits, difficulties, and ways of responding to challenges. At the same time, the seven participants provided different individual experiences that could be compared to identify shared and different meanings across their stories. This focus on detailed individual stories is consistent with the narrative inquiry tradition, which gives importance to the depth and richness of participants' experiences (Barkhuizen et al., 2024). The participants were identified using coded initials to protect their privacy and anonymity.

The field texts were collected through narrative-oriented semi-structured interviews conducted on 28–29 May 2026. Most interviews were conducted online through WhatsApp, while some were conducted face-to-face. A semi-structured interview uses prepared questions but also allows the researcher to ask additional questions based on the participant's answers

(Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). The interview questions were designed to encourage participants to tell their own stories. They were asked to describe how they practiced shadowing, how they felt during the practice, what they learned from it, why they chose Netflix, what difficulties they experienced, and how they dealt with those difficulties. Follow-up questions were also asked when the researchers needed more information about a particular experience or event.

WhatsApp was used because it is a communication platform that the participants were already familiar with. Using a familiar platform could make the interview process more comfortable and give participants more freedom to express their experiences. WhatsApp can also support research activities because it allows researchers and participants to communicate easily across different places and times (Gibson, 2022; Manji et al., 2021). The interviews were conducted in Indonesian to help participants explain their experiences naturally and in detail. Both spoken and written responses were collected and organized into transcripts. The selected excerpts used in the article were then translated from Indonesian into English by the researchers.

The field texts were analyzed using a narrative approach that developed the participants' stories from field texts into research texts (Clandinin, 2022). First, the researchers read each transcript several times to understand the participant's story as a whole. Second, each participant's experience was organized into a narrative account. The researchers tried to keep the participant's original meaning, the order of events, and the important details of the story. Third, the narratives were compared with one another to identify meanings and experiences that appeared across the participants. The researchers used thematic analysis to help identify these recurring meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This combination of narrative reading and thematic analysis has also been used in recent narrative inquiry research in the Indonesian EFL context (Ali & Alimah, 2023).

The analysis produced two main narrative themes: positive experiences and negative experiences. These two themes were also used to organize the Results and Discussion sections. The positive

experiences included participants' feelings during shadowing practice, the benefits they experienced, and their reasons for choosing Netflix as a learning medium. The negative experiences included the difficulties they faced during shadowing and the strategies they used to deal with those difficulties. The final research texts combined participants' stories and selected quotations with the researchers' interpretations and connections to previous studies.

The trustworthiness of the study was considered through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Ahmed, 2024). Credibility was supported by reading the transcripts several times and using direct quotations from participants to show the connection between their stories and the researchers' interpretations. The participants were also given an opportunity to check whether the narrative accounts represented their experiences appropriately. This member-checking process was used as a discussion about the meaning of their experiences rather than as a guarantee that one interpretation was completely correct (Motulsky, 2021). Transferability was supported by providing detailed descriptions of the participants' experiences and the learning context, allowing readers to consider whether the findings may be relevant to similar contexts. Dependability and confirmability were supported through discussions among the researchers about the interpretation process and the decisions made during data analysis.

Participation in the study was voluntary. All participants gave informed consent after receiving information about the purpose and process of the study. They were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Their identities were protected by using coded initials instead of their real names. The researchers also considered the relational nature of narrative inquiry by treating participants as contributors to the development of the stories, rather than only as sources of research information (Clandinin, 2022).

C.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' Positive Experiences with Shadowing for Pronunciation Development:

Based on interviews with seven university students, the majority of

participants reported positive experiences with the use of the shadowing method for practicing pronunciation, particularly in terms of pronunciation accuracy, stress, and producing speech that sounds similar to native speakers.

Student AI stated that shadowing "trains our pronunciation, increases our vocabulary, and helps us understand stress better so that our intonation sounds similar to native speakers" (Student AI, Offline Interview, May 29, 2026). A similar statement was expressed by Student NR, who felt that shadowing helped her better understand correct pronunciation, accent, and stress after practicing it regularly. As a result, she became less likely to use an Indonesian accent when speaking English (Student NR, Online Interview, May 29, 2026). Student UM also stated that shadowing helped her understand pronunciation and stress more effectively (Student UM, Online Interview, May 28, 2026). These findings are consistent with previous studies showing that shadowing can improve pronunciation and intonation among foreign language learners (Astuti, 2020; Hamada, 2018; Hamada, 2024; Utami & Morganna, 2022; Yavari & Shafiee, 2019). Theoretically, this effectiveness occurs because shadowing encourages learners to pay close attention to the sound features of the target language, such as phonemes, word stress, and intonation, while also developing articulatory muscle memory through repetition that occurs almost simultaneously with the speech input they hear (Hamada, 2018, as cited in Whitworth & Rose, 2025). Sugiarto, Prihantoro, and Edy (2020) also found that the implementation of the shadowing technique had a significant impact on students' English pronunciation improvement. This finding is consistent with Sari (2024), who reported a significant increase in pronunciation accuracy, from an average pre-test score of 5.06 to 8.81 in the post-test after the implementation of shadowing.

In terms of confidence in pronouncing English words, Student AW emphasized that shadowing made it easier for her to improve her speaking skills compared to practicing alone in front of a mirror. Through shadowing, she did not have to worry as much about mispronouncing words because she could immediately hear the correct pronunciation from the

original source, particularly when using films or videos featuring native speakers as practice materials (Student AW, Online Interview, May 28, 2026). Student BL mentioned a similar benefit in improving English pronunciation (Student BL, Online Interview, May 28, 2026), while Students NS and AF both emphasized that shadowing helped them practice pronunciation so that their speech became clearer and closer to the pronunciation of native speakers (Student NS, Online Interview, May 28, 2026; Student AF, Offline Interview, May 29, 2026).

These experiences are in line with the findings of a qualitative study involving prospective EFL teachers, which showed that shadowing provides learners with a unique opportunity to develop pronunciation and intonation in the target language and supports the internalization of sound patterns in a more natural and automatic way (Santos & Ramírez-Ávila, 2023). Aziz (2022) also found that students who practiced shadowing regularly for six weeks experienced significant improvements in pronunciation and spontaneous speech production, supported by oral proficiency interviews and acoustic analysis. In addition, Foote and McDonough (as cited in Whitworth & Rose, 2025) found that video-based shadowing and tracking practices were effective in improving foreign language learners' pronunciation. Hamada (2016) further explained that, unlike ordinary repetition techniques, which provide learners with time for cognitive processing, shadowing does not allow much time to process meaning. Instead, it strengthens the phonological aspects of speech, making it particularly relevant for pronunciation training.

Overall, the interview findings indicate that students' positive experiences with shadowing in terms of pronunciation include improvements in word pronunciation, mastery of stress and intonation, reduced influence of their native Indonesian accent, and increased confidence in pronouncing English. These findings strengthen previous empirical evidence that shadowing is an effective technique for improving the pronunciation of learners of English as a foreign language (Hamada, 2016; Hamada, 2018; Sugiarto et al., 2020; Aziz, 2022; Whitworth & Rose, 2025).

Students' Negative Experiences in Practicing Shadowing for Pronunciation:

In addition to the positive experiences, the interview findings also revealed several challenges faced by students when practicing the shadowing method to improve their pronunciation. These challenges were mainly related to the speed of native speakers' speech, the use of slang, idioms, and linking words, limited vocabulary, physical fatigue, the prerequisite of adequate listening ability, and limited access to learning resources.

The most frequently reported challenge was the speed of native speakers' speech, which was difficult for students to follow. Student AI stated that "the pronunciation is fast, but it can still be managed by slowing down the video speed. There are also some words whose pronunciation is still unclear to me because native speakers tend to stretch their speech" (Student AI, Offline Interview, May 29, 2026). She addressed this difficulty by checking the pronunciation of words using DeepL or Google Translate and applying the Pomodoro technique, with 10 minutes of practice followed by 5 minutes of rest, because her mouth became tired from continuous imitation. A similar difficulty was reported by Student AW, who identified the speed of dialogue as the main challenge, along with the use of slang or idioms that sometimes did not correspond to the available subtitles. As a solution, she suggested using a browser extension specifically designed for language learning, which could automatically replay dialogue sentence by sentence along with subtitles and word definitions (Student AW, Online Interview, May 28, 2026). Student NS also reported difficulty following the speed of native speakers and addressed this problem by repeating short scenes and using the pause or slow-playback features (Student NS, Online Interview, May 28, 2026). Student NR added that the speed of the actors' speech and the occurrence of linking words often caused her to misinterpret the utterances when subtitles were not available (Student NR, Online Interview, May 29, 2026).

These findings are consistent with the literature indicating that EFL learners often experience difficulties in adjusting to the rhythm and intonation of native speakers' speech when practicing shadowing, making it one of

the major challenges commonly encountered during the practice (Nissak & Dzulfikri, 2026). Another study also reported that high speech speed and unfamiliar vocabulary are common challenges experienced by learners, although their overall attitudes toward the technique remained positive (Elitation Journal, Unissula, 2025). These difficulties are also related to the characteristics of shadowing itself, which requires learners to respond to speech almost simultaneously without sufficient pauses to process its meaning. Therefore, speech rate becomes an inherent challenge in this method (Hamada, 2015). The strategies used by the students in this study, such as slowing down the playback speed and repeating short segments, are also recommended by several studies as adaptive strategies for optimizing the benefits of shadowing. These strategies include simplifying the input and slowing down the speech rate of learning materials for learners at different proficiency levels (Elitation Journal, Unissula, 2025).

Limited vocabulary knowledge also presented a challenge. Student US explained that when his vocabulary knowledge was insufficient, he sometimes could not understand the meaning of a sentence. Therefore, he had to find out the meaning first before he could match it with the pronunciation. However, this process eventually helped him acquire new vocabulary each time he watched and practiced shadowing (Student US, Online Interview, May 28, 2026). This finding indicates that limited vocabulary and unfamiliar accents can become common obstacles for learners, particularly during the early stages of applying shadowing, as also explained in discussions of Bandura's social learning theory, which underlies the imitation principle in this technique (Bandura, 1977, as discussed in contemporary shadowing research).

Another challenge related to the prerequisite skills was reported by Student AF, who stated that successful shadowing highly depends on having adequate listening skills beforehand. According to him, insufficient listening ability can affect speaking performance. To overcome this difficulty, he repeatedly listened to the native speaker's utterances until he was confident enough before imitating the pronunciation (Student AF, Online Interview, May 29, 2026).

This experience supports the view that shadowing requires cognitive multitasking between rapidly reproducing speech and carefully analyzing auditory input. Therefore, inadequate listening ability may become an initial obstacle to the effective implementation of this technique (Le, 2017, as discussed in contemporary shadowing research).

In addition to linguistic and cognitive challenges, Student BL reported difficulties related to access to learning resources. He explained that the unavailability of subscriptions to services that provide suitable shadowing materials made it difficult to practice regularly. Therefore, subscribing to such services was considered necessary to maintain consistent access to practice materials (Student BL, Online Interview, May 28, 2026). This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that limited access to learning resources and feedback is an important challenge in independent shadowing practice, which can affect the continuity and effectiveness of learners' practice (Nissak & Dzulfikri, 2026).

Overall, the interview findings show that students' challenges in using shadowing for pronunciation include the speed of native speakers' speech, the use of slang, idioms, and linking words that are difficult to understand, limited vocabulary, physical fatigue caused by repeated articulation, the need for adequate listening skills, and limited access to learning resources. Nevertheless, the students actively developed adaptive strategies, such as slowing down playback speed, repeating short segments, using subtitles and online dictionaries, applying the Pomodoro technique, and repeatedly listening to the utterances until they felt confident. These strategies indicate that the challenges did not diminish their positive perceptions of the benefits of shadowing for improving pronunciation (Nissak & Dzulfikri, 2026; Elitation Journal, Unissula, 2025).

E. CONCLUSIONS

This study explored how seven university students experienced using Netflix-based shadowing to practice English pronunciation. The findings show that the students' experiences were mostly positive. They felt that shadowing helped them improve their pronunciation, understand word stress

and intonation, and sound closer to native speakers, with less influence from their Indonesian accent. Practicing with real speakers also made some of them feel more confident because they could immediately hear the correct pronunciation.

However, the students also faced several difficulties, including the fast speech of native speakers, slang, idioms, and linking words, limited vocabulary, tired articulation after repeated imitation, the need for adequate listening skills, and limited access to learning resources such as subscriptions. These difficulties did not discourage them. They used strategies such as slowing down playback speed, repeating short scenes, relying on subtitles and online dictionaries, taking short breaks, and re-listening before imitating. This suggests that students actively adapt Netflix-based shadowing to their own needs.

These findings suggest that English teachers and lecturers can recommend shadowing with films and series as a supplementary pronunciation activity, with guidance on choosing suitable materials, adjusting speech speed, and using subtitles. This study is limited by its small number of participants, its reliance on self-reported interview data, and its short data collection period. It also did not measure actual pronunciation improvement. Future research could use pre-test and post-test measures, longer observation periods, and larger or more varied groups of learners to examine both the experiences and the learning outcomes of Netflix based shadowing.

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