

The Importance of the Shadowing Technique in Foreign Language Teaching

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ABSTRACT

Ushbu maqolada xorijiy tillarni o'qitishda "shadowing" texnikasining ahamiyati borasida so'z boradi. Maqolada turli tadqiqotlar tomonidan "shadowing" texnikasining qaysi ko'nikmalar bo'yicha samarador ekanligi muhokama qilinadi va aynan, og'zaki ko'nikmani rivojlantirishda ushbu texnikaning ahamiyati borasida fikrlar bildiriladi. Maqolada, shuningdek, bu mashqning turli shakllari sanab o'tiladi hamda ularning bir-biridan farqi berilgan.

This article discusses the significance of the "shadowing" technique in foreign language teaching. The article examines which skills the "shadowing" technique has been proven effective for according to various studies, with particular emphasis on its role in developing oral skills. Additionally, different forms of this exercise are described, and their distinctions are highlighted.

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Аннотация: В данной статье рассматривается значимость техники «shadowing» в обучении иностранным языкам. Обсуждается, по каким навыкам техника «shadowing» оказывается эффективной согласно различным исследованиям, с особым акцентом на её роль в развитии устных навыков. Кроме того, приводятся различные формы этого упражнения и их различия.

Ключевые слова: shadowing, повторение, синхронный перевод, компетенции, коммуникативная лингвистика, LMS

Introduction. A wide range of methods and exercises have been developed for foreign language teaching. However, as approaches within communicative linguistics continue to evolve, there is an increasing demand for language teaching methods and exercises to reflect real-life situations and authentic language use. This approach enables learners to prepare more effectively for the communicative situations they may encounter in everyday life. Taking this factor into account, many language teaching activities and techniques increasingly prioritize natural language environments and the authentic speech of native speakers. In today's globalized world, particularly as English continues to establish itself as a global language, it is essential for learners to become familiar with the diverse ways in which speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds use English.

In this article, we discuss the "shadowing technique", which addresses these contemporary requirements. The term "shadowing" refers to following someone closely, much like a shadow. Accordingly,

the primary purpose of this technique is to enable language learners to reproduce authentic spoken language as accurately and rapidly as possible while listening to speech in real time. Although behaviourists in the 1950s regarded imitation and repetition as fundamental factors in language learning, subsequent developments in linguistics led to criticism of this perspective. Researchers argued that imitation alone could not adequately explain the creative nature of language learning or account for the complexity of the language acquisition process. Nevertheless, despite these criticisms, a number of researchers continue to investigate the potential benefits and effectiveness of the shadowing technique in foreign language learning.

This technique was developed by American professor Alexander Arguelles and has gradually been adopted in educational practice in various countries. In particular, it has been used in the Chinese education system since the 1980s. Chinese linguist Ye Guigang emphasizes that this exercise requires learners to listen and speak simultaneously. This process demands a high level of concentration, as well as the ability to respond to and imitate the sounds being heard. It can therefore be concluded that the shadowing technique activates both input (language reception) and output (language production) mechanisms. In its conventional application, shadowing should follow the original audio with a time lag of approximately two seconds. According to linguist Lambert, shadowing is a rhythmic acoustic activity that requires the rapid production of speech in response to an auditory signal.

Recent studies have indicated that this exercise can enhance learners' cognitive processing, memory, sensitivity to a foreign language, and imitation skills. This is largely because the technique exposes learners to language as it is used in authentic communicative contexts. Nevertheless, further research is needed to establish more conclusively its effectiveness in developing oral proficiency. According to the model developed by conference interpreter Daniel Gile, the shadowing process involves several cognitive and linguistic operations that contribute to spoken language production. This relationship can be illustrated through the following formula:

"Shadowing = L (Listening) + M (Memory) + S (Speaking)"

From this perspective, reproducing and pronouncing unfamiliar sounds need not be an intimidating experience for multilingual speakers. Similarly, it is suggested that regular practice of this exercise should not cause undue anxiety among foreign language learners. Indeed, deliberate pronunciation practice can be beneficial in its own right. This is particularly relevant for learners whose opportunities to speak a foreign language are limited, as shadowing provides them with opportunities to become familiar with authentic pronunciation patterns and imitate them.

Beyond the acquisition of pronunciation norms, shadowing can also contribute to the development of intonation and stress patterns. Changes in word stress may alter meaning, making the accurate perception and production of stress an important aspect of communicative competence. Through shadowing, learners can practise these features in the context of authentic speech, thereby developing a more natural command of the target language. Fluency, intonation, and stress all play significant roles in effective oral communication. Consequently, this technique can help learners acquire language as it is naturally used rather than solely as it is presented in textbooks. However, as with other language-learning methods, the effectiveness of shadowing may vary depending on individual learners and their specific learning needs.

Learning English as a foreign language requires the development of all four language skills, as real-life communication may involve the simultaneous use of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In language learning, speaking and writing are classified as productive skills, whereas listening and reading are considered receptive skills. The shadowing technique specifically integrates listening and speaking, requiring learners to engage in complex cognitive processes while processing and producing spoken language simultaneously.

For foreign language learners, independently acquiring accurate stress and intonation patterns can be challenging. Japanese researchers Hamada and Kadota suggest that shadowing improves speech perception and enhances working memory, which can be further strengthened through repeated practice. Studies conducted in Japan have also demonstrated that shadowing exercises can significantly improve learners' listening comprehension skills.

According to researchers, shadowing enables learners to produce speech that may initially exceed their existing performance levels, thereby helping them extend their linguistic capabilities. The technique

can be regarded as a bridging strategy that facilitates the transition between conscious and automatic language processing. Furthermore, during shadowing, learners listen to and reproduce spoken language simultaneously, allowing them to process the incoming speech while articulating it. This repeated exposure and production may contribute to a more natural perception and processing of spoken language.

In his research, Kadota distinguishes between two main stages of shadowing. The first is pre-shadowing, which involves preparatory activities designed to familiarise learners with the materials to be used during the lesson. The second is post-shadowing, which refers to follow-up activities conducted after learners have practised and become familiar with the material.

In addition, several other types of shadowing have been identified by various researchers:

- ✓ Complete shadowing: Learners reproduce the speaker's speech in real time, either aloud or silently, while attempting to maintain synchronisation with the original speech.
- ✓ Slash shadowing: Learners repeat words or groups of words with pauses inserted between them, allowing them to process the speech in manageable segments.
- ✓ Selective shadowing: Learners focus on identifying and repeating specific words, phrases, or expressions selected from the original speech.
- ✓ Prosodic shadowing: This type focuses on reproducing intonation, rhythm, stress, and other prosodic features, without relying on the written transcript.
- ✓ Content shadowing: Learners identify and reproduce the main ideas of the spoken text. Translation or explanation may also be incorporated to facilitate comprehension.
- ✓ Delayed shadowing: Learners repeat words or phrases after a short delay, rather than immediately following the speaker.
- ✓ Conversational shadowing: Learners take the role of a particular participant in a dialogue and reproduce or reconstruct that participant's speech. The activity may also involve summarising or retelling the conversation.

In conclusion, shadowing is a language-learning technique that is increasingly used in foreign language teaching. However, further empirical evidence is needed to establish its effectiveness in developing oral proficiency comprehensively. According to Foote, shadowing is a flexible exercise that can be adapted to learners at different proficiency levels and incorporated into language instruction in various ways.

Nevertheless, it is important to distinguish between ordinary repetition and shadowing. In conventional repetition activities, listeners are generally given time to pause, process the information, and reproduce it after the original speech has been completed. In contrast, shadowing requires learners to begin repeating the incoming speech almost immediately while continuing to listen to the subsequent utterances. This simultaneous processing and production distinguish shadowing from ordinary repetition and explain why it is increasingly being incorporated into foreign language teaching as a distinct instructional technique.

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