Shadowing Procedures in Teaching and Their Future

Yo Hamada

Akita University

Shadowing has become popular in the Japanese EFL teaching context over the past two decades. Accumulated research data indicates that shadowing is effective for listening skill development and teaching pronunciation. This article first summarizes how to use shadowing to teach listening through an example of a lesson procedure based on previous research. Subsequently, it proposes a procedure for teaching pronunciation. Finally, it proposes research areas that can be explored for the development of shadowing as a teaching technique.

シャドーイングは最近の二十年間、日本の英語教育において、広く認識されるようになった。これまでの研究によると、シャドーイングはリスニング力の向上および発音指導への可能性も提唱されている。本稿では、初めに過去の研究に基づいたリスニング指導法としてのシャドーイング活用法を、1つの授業を例として概観する。その後、発音指導の手順も提唱する。最後に、指導法として、シャドーイングの今後の発展に寄与するであろう研究分野についても議論を深める。

Background

Shadowing is "repeating all or part of what the speaker has said" (Rost & Wilson, 2013, p.114); more specifically, it is simultaneously repeating what one hears. It was originally used for interpreter training (Lambert, 1992), and the function and details have been researched with English native speaker participants in an L1 context (e.g., Honorof, Weihing, & Fowler, 2011; Nye & Fowler, 2003). It was introduced to the Japanese EFL context in the 1990s (e.g., Tamai, 1997), after borrowing the idea from a training technique for simultaneous interpreters. Since the work of Kadota and Tamai (2004) and Kadota (2007), shadowing has rapidly become popular in Japan as a technique for listening skill development and has recently attracted the attention of global researchers and practitioners as a pronunciation technique. Studies have reported the various positive effects on pronunciation such as comprehensibility and fluency development (e.g., Foote & McDonough, 2017), and have shown how shadowing can be incorporated for pronunciation development in language classrooms (e.g., Martinsen, Montgomery, & Willardson, 2017).

Despite its rapid increase in popularity, there has been some resistance to its use, as well as some confusion about how it should be used in class. Shadowing has been criticized for being reminiscent of an audio-lingual repetitive practice that targets only bottom-up listening skills, and it is also optimistically misinterpreted as a speaking activity (Hamada, 2017). In fact, shadowing is used for bottom-up listening skill development. The repetitive and psychologically demanding nature of shadowing is likely why shadowing has not been practiced widely in Western teaching contexts, which favor communicative language teaching approaches.

Shadowing needs to be used with a clear purpose and follow proper procedures. This article thus proposes a practical shadowing procedure for listening and pronunciation teaching based on previous studies. It then offers insights regarding future research on the development of shadowing as a useful EFL teaching technique.

Shadowing for Listening

Research on the effectiveness of shadowing on listening skills has found that shadowing helps sharpen EFL learners' speech perception skills (i.e., perceiving the speech input: the lower-level process that precedes comprehension of the input), which leads to listening comprehension skill development (Kadota, 2019; see empirical studies for Hamada, 2016; Kato, 2009; Mochizuki, 2006; Tamai, 1997). Theoretically, learners' attention is exclusively focused on incoming phonological information when shadowing. While learners attempt to replicate what they are listening to, the primary focus is not on how well they copy. Rather, exclusive attention is given to the phonological information. By practicing shadowing, learners' bottom-up skills, especially for identifying the sounds they are listening to, improve. Therefore, they are also better able to recognize more words and spare extra attention for other processing (Hamada, 2017; Kadota, 2019).

Shadowing should not be mistaken for a similar technique called *listen and repeat*, where the learners listen to some text and repeat chunk by chunk. In listen and repeat, learners' cognitive resources are spent not only on speech perception, but also on

lexical and semantic processing, or off-line processing. However, in shadowing, their cognitive resources are exclusively spent on speech perception or on-line processing (Kadota, 2007; 2019, Shiki, et al., 2010). Due to the on-line nature of shadowing, learners try to focus exclusively on the sounds they are listening to and do not have cognitive resources to consider their meaning. In *listen and repeat*, multiple cognitive tasks are involved during the provided time until they repeat each phrase due to the off-line nature of the task (Kadota, 2007, 2019). If shadowing is mistaken for *listen and repeat*, the purpose of shadowing will be lost because learners' speech perception skills will not be directly trained.

An example of shadowing:

Audio: Shadowing is an effective technique for learning English.

Student: Shadowing is an effective technique for learning English.

An example of listen and repeat by chunk:

Audio: Shadowing is   an effective technique   for

Student: Shadowing is   an effective technique   for

Based on this theoretical explanation and together with previous works (Hamada, 2017; Kadota & Tamai, 2004), I would like to propose a standard procedure for shadowing for listening development as shown in Table 1. When using shadowing for listening, instructors should consider five points. First, in principle, learners should practice shadowing after first learning the content of the text (Hamada, 2017) or by using a relatively easy text (Kadota & Tamai, 2004). If they start with a difficult text, or one they have not learned, they are incapable of concentrating on its phonological features. Second, learners should shadow without the written script. The use of the written script divides their attention between sounds and letters, which deters them from the chance to focus exclusively on incoming sounds. However, in some cases, they can shadow with scripts (step 2) if they need to keep up with the pace of speech or are preparing for the next challenging shadowing practice (steps 4, 6, and 7). Additionally, because learners might not shadow perfectly and often struggle with some phrases, they should be given a few opportunities to review the script (steps 3 and 5). Third, the total amount of practice using the same script should be around five times (Shiki et al., 2010), or a plateau in their learning will appear. Fourth, learners should sense

improvement in each session, so the review step (step 7) is important, where instructors review the purpose of the task with the learners, and how well they can listen and understand after the practice. Fifth, shadowing is a psychologically demanding and seemingly repetitive practice that can trigger learners' psychological resistance to its use. Teachers should keep encouraging learners and repeatedly confirm with the learners about the purpose of the activity in each step and not expect learners to shadow with full accuracy.

Table 1

A proposal for shadowing in class for listening (based on Hamada, 2017; Kadota & Tamai, 2004)

Step	Task	Notes for teachers
1	Shadowing in a small voice once or twice	Learners shadow quietly as if mumbling. Explain that the purpose is to focus only on phonemics
2	*Shadowing with scripts*	Learners shadow using the script
3	Check understanding for a couple of minutes	Learners review what they could not shadow
4	Shadowing twice	Learners concentrate hard, focusing on phonological features
5	Review written scripts	Learners check on what they are not confident about
6	Record *Shadowing performance*	Learners record their performance with an IC-recorder
7	Review individually	Learners review their shadowing performance recorded in step 6

Shadowing for Pronunciation

Recently, the effectiveness of shadowing on pronunciation has gradually attracted the attention of researchers (e.g., Mori, 2011; Foote & McDonough, 2017; Hamada, 2018; Martinsen, Montgomery, & Willardson, 2017). To use shadowing for pronunciation awareness, learners need to pay attention not only to speech perception, but also to prosody, or prosody shadowing (Kadota & Tamai, 2004; for a case study, see Foote & McDonough, 2017). Mori (2011) and Hamada (2018) have found positive effects on pronunciation by combining

shadowing with other activities; Mori combined shadowing and oral-reading and Hamada (2018) combined shadowing with gestures. To use shadowing effectively for pronunciation development, it is recommended that students use shadowing for pronunciation once they reach a certain proficiency in their bottom–up listening skills (Hamada, 2019a); otherwise, it will overload their cognitive capacity. In fact, in Foote and McDonough (2017), advanced learners chose authentic material (e.g., TV shows) and practiced shadowing using the material outside of the classroom for eight weeks. As a result, they improved their imitation skills, comprehensibility, and speech fluency.

Adapting an idea from Foote and McDonough (2017), I developed a procedure for pronunciation (Hamada, 2019b). Based on this previous procedure, I propose a new shadowing procedure for pronunciation development (Table 2). Unlike shadowing for listening, students aim to imitate and copy the target speech as accurately as possible. This point should be clearly explained to them before and during the practice. Also, it requires extensive hours of practice, so they need to practice outside class, and check on their progress in class.

In this new procedure, the instructor or student chooses a target model of approximately 250 words (e.g., a one-minute excerpt from a famous person's speech). Subsequently, students will transcribe the speech using the Roman alphabet and the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) in parallel (Class 1). Students should focus on learning the symbols for the selected important segmental features for Japanese English learners (e.g., /l, ɹ/ /f, v/ /θ, ð/ /æ// ʌ //ə/ / sɪ // ʃɪ // tɪ /, based on Saito, 2014). Next, they will start shadowing the model. Up until Class 2, students practice shadowing using the English language script and do a pair-check in class. Based on the pair feedback, they practice again until Class 3. Then in class, they check in groups, where one student shadows with the script while the other members check the script and provide feedback. Before Class 4, they practice using the IPA script and do a pair-check in the class where one speaker shadows using the IPA script while the listener checks and provides feedback. Class 5 is a group check using the IPA script. Before Class 6, students submit their shadowing performance by recording it and saving it to a USB or submitting it online. The instructor then provides corrective feedback using the IPA script. The instructor checks the major segmentals (e.g., /l, ɹ/ /f, v/ /θ, ð/ /æ// ʌ //ə/ / sɪ // ʃɪ // tɪ /) beforehand and marks the IPA if they are mispronounced. For advanced students, instructors can provide more feedback, including suprasegmental features (e.g., stress, intonation, and rhythm). By Class 7, based on the feedback, individuals practice without the script at home. In class, they will engage in pair-checking. In Class 8 students will perform a group check. By Class 9, students submit their recording again and the instructor checks it using the same IPA transcript, ensuring that their pronunciation features have improved. Finally, in Class 10, each student will present their performance in front of the class. Each student will come forward one at a time and put on their headphones. Once the model video starts, it will be on the screen, appearing as if the students are actually speaking by shadowing. These steps are possible even under remote teaching situations by using an online tool such as Zoom. In the final presentation, the presenter shares the video with everyone on screen, listening to the original speech through headphones, and shadows the dialogue, so that the others watch the speech with the presenter's voice.

Although different, shadowing for listening and pronunciation may seem to be similar to learners. It is therefore advisable that teachers clarify the purpose and the procedure, emphasizing each effect.

Table 2

A proposal for shadowing for pronunciation (Based on Hamada, 2019b)

Class#	Task	Notes
1	Transcript check	Learners make and bring roman and IPA-transcripts
2	Shadowing with script	Pair-check
3	Shadowing with script	Group-check
4	IPA-Shadowing	Pair-check
5	IPA-Shadowing	Group-check
6	Feedback	Instructor gives feedback
7	Shadowing	Pair-check
8	Shadowing	Group-check
9	Feedback	Check what they missed in the previous feedback
10	Presentation	Present in front of class

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Future advancement of shadowing

Having presented a sample of the basic procedures of shadowing for listening and pronunciation development, I would now like to propose four areas for future research to make more use of shadowing practice in English learning.

First, more research on shadowing for pronunciation development should be conducted. Shadowing has the potential to improve pronunciation but only Foote and McDonough (2017) have focused on it. There is a chance to improve both segmental and suprasegmental features (Hamada, 2018). Combined with oral reading, research with acoustic analysis has shown that learners' pronunciation improves (Mori, 2011). Therefore, further research is recommended to understand the specific features of pronunciation that would improve.

Second, other aspects of shadowing should also be explored. Kadota (2019) claims that shadowing is effective in multiple ways: input, practice, output, and monitoring effects. So far, an inclusive technique called shadow-reading (Babapour, Ahangari & Ahour, 2018; De Guerrero & Commander, 2013) has been developed, which involves an integrated practice of shadowing activities, summarizing, and retelling. Shadowing for other languages is also an interesting topic for consideration (Martinsen et al., 2017, for French; Sumiyoshi & Svetanant, 2017, for Japanese).

Third, shadowing has variations such as phrase shadowing (Miyake, 2009), conversational shadowing (Murphey, 2001), and content shadowing (Kadota & Tamai, 2004). Therefore, there is much room to explore the effectiveness of each variation. Learners' motivation and attitudes toward shadowing practice are also worth investigating (e.g., Sumiyoshi & Svetanant, 2017).

Fourth, all research should discuss the theoretical framework and position of shadowing in language acquisition. While previous research has often focused on the effectiveness of shadowing (e.g., Hamada, 2016, 2017 for listening skill development), it did not fully argue its broader merits. In other words, the conclusion that shadowing is effective for bottom-up listening skills might not appeal to an international audience. Questions regarding how the positive effects of shadowing contribute to English learners' language acquisition theory, and where shadowing belongs (e.g., English as a lingua franca, communicative language teaching, focus on form), need to be explored. If these areas are explored, more specific and effective shadowing variations will be found, which will contribute to classroom teaching, and learners' efficient improvement

Conclusion

In this article, I summarized shadowing research in relation to listening and pronunciation development. I proposed how and what to further explore for the advancement of this technique. Although shadowing has often been used in classes, the number of shadowing studies is insufficient. Further, as has been mentioned, in certain cases, some teachers or students will show resistance to shadowing. I sincerely hope that this article will motivate those who have not used shadowing to try it out in their classes and provide guidance for further research towards shadowing advancement.

Acknowledgement

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Yo Hamada is an Associate Professor at Akita University. He holds a Master's Degree in TESOL from Temple University and a Doctoral Degree in Education from Hiroshima University. He has published a book and a number of papers about shadowing.
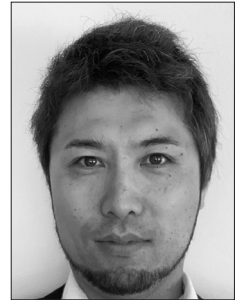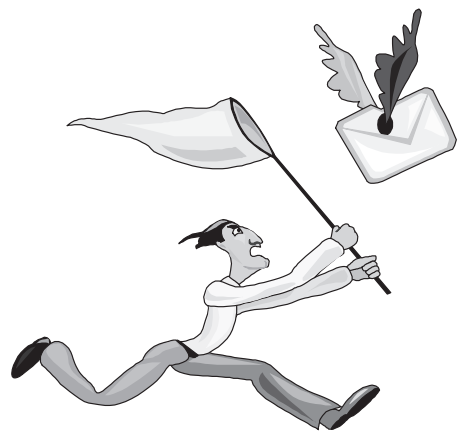
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