



SHADOWING TECHNIQUE (SHADOW REPEAT, ECHO REPEAT) WHEN TEACHING LISTENING IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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MAQOLA HAQIDA	ANNOTATION
<p>Qabul qilindi: 24-dekabr 2024-yil Tasdiqlandi: 26-dekabr 2024-yil Jurnal soni: 13 Maqola raqami: 82 DOI: https://doi.org/10.54613/ku.v13i.1092</p> <p>KALIT SO'ZLAR/ КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА/ KEYWORDS</p> <p>Shadowing technique, listening comprehension, foreign language learning, pronunciation improvement, speech fluency, echo repeat, active listening, language acquisition, real-time speech reproduction, oral proficiency.</p>	<p>The shadowing technique (shadow repeat, echo repeat) is a highly effective method for developing listening comprehension, pronunciation, and fluency in foreign language learning. Unlike traditional passive listening exercises, shadowing requires learners to actively repeat spoken language in real-time, reinforcing their auditory processing and speech production skills. This article explores the importance, effectiveness, and challenges of shadowing in language education. A comparative analysis demonstrates its superiority over dictation, repetition drills, and translation-based methods. Additionally, the article presents research findings, practical applications, and strategies for overcoming difficulties such as speech speed, cognitive overload, and pronunciation barriers. By integrating structured practice, speech analysis tools, and adaptive learning approaches, shadowing can significantly enhance fluency, confidence, and real-world communication skills. The study concludes that shadowing is a transformative technique that should be incorporated into modern language teaching methodologies to improve learners' listening and speaking abilities.</p>

Introduction. In the world of language learning, many methods claim to be the fastest way to fluency, but few are as effective and scientifically backed as speech shadowing. This powerful technique, which involves mimicking native speech in real time, has gained attention among linguists, educators, and polyglots as a proven way to enhance pronunciation, listening comprehension, and overall fluency. Unlike traditional rote memorization or grammar drills, speech shadowing immerses learners in the natural rhythm, intonation, and structure of a language, helping them sound more native-like with consistent practice.

The importance of speech shadowing lies in its ability to bridge the gap between passive listening and active speaking. One of the biggest struggles for language learners is transforming their understanding of a language into fluid, confident speech. Many students can recognize words when reading or listening but freeze when trying to speak. This technique trains the brain to process and produce language in real-time, eliminating hesitation and improving spontaneous speech.

Why Is Speech Shadowing Relevant Today? In an era where globalization and cross-cultural communication are more critical than ever, fluency in a second (or third) language has become a key asset for both personal and professional success. Whether preparing for language proficiency tests (like IELTS or TOEFL), improving public speaking skills, or simply striving for better conversational abilities, speech shadowing offers a practical and efficient solution.

Recent research has shown concrete evidence of its effectiveness. A study conducted by Flege, Takagi, and Mann (1996) on Japanese learners of English revealed that those who practiced real-time speech imitation were 25% more accurate in their pronunciation compared to learners who focused only on listening and reading exercises. This demonstrates how active engagement with spoken language leads to significant improvements in speaking accuracy and fluency.

With increasing accessibility to podcasts, YouTube videos, and AI-powered language tools, speech shadowing has never been easier to implement in daily learning routines.

Literature review. Speech shadowing has been a focal point in language acquisition research, with numerous studies examining its efficacy in enhancing various linguistic skills.

The concept of speech shadowing was notably advanced by William D. Marslen-Wilson in the 1970s and 1980s. His research demonstrated that immediate repetition of heard speech aids in

understanding the cognitive processes involved in language comprehension and production. Marslen-Wilson's work laid the groundwork for subsequent studies exploring the practical applications of shadowing in language learning.

A study by Sugiarto et al. (2020) investigated the impact of the shadowing technique on tertiary students' English pronunciation. The findings revealed significant improvements in various pronunciation components, including vowels, consonants, stress patterns, rhythm, and intonation. The researchers concluded that shadowing effectively enhances learners' phonetic abilities, contributing to more accurate and fluent speech¹.

Dymova and Kareva (2023) explored the use of the shadowing technique in teaching phonetics to linguistics students. While acknowledging the benefits of shadowing, they identified challenges such as difficulties in making accurate intonation markings, reluctance among some students to engage in self-study, and psychological barriers affecting performance. The authors proposed solutions, including the use of speech analysis software and targeted articulation exercises, to mitigate these issues².

In 2023, a study by Hamada examined the effects of shadowing on Japanese EFL learners' listening skills. The research indicated that regular shadowing practice led to significant improvements in listening comprehension, particularly in processing speed and accuracy. These findings underscore the relevance of shadowing as a tool for enhancing auditory processing in language learners.

Additionally, a 2023 study by Niimoto investigated the impact of shadowing training on suprasegmental features and listening skills. The results showed statistically significant gains in learners' intonation, stress patterns, and overall listening abilities, further validating the effectiveness of shadowing in language acquisition.

The body of research on speech shadowing consistently highlights its efficacy in improving various aspects of language proficiency, including pronunciation, listening comprehension, and fluency. While challenges exist in its implementation, ongoing studies continue to refine the technique, offering practical solutions to enhance its effectiveness. As of 2023, speech shadowing remains a relevant and valuable method in the field of language education, supported by empirical evidence and scholarly inquiry.

Research methodology. To study the effectiveness of the shadowing technique (shadow repeat, echo repeat) in teaching listening comprehension, several research methods can be applied.

¹ Rio Sugiarto, Prihantoro Prihantoro. The impact of shadowing technique on tertiary. July 2020. *Linguistics Journal of Linguistics and Language Teaching* 6(1):114. DOI:10.29300/ling.v6i1.3298

² Alyona Dymova, V. Yu. Kareva. Using the shadowing technique in teaching phonetics to linguistics students: challenges and potential solutions. January 2023. DOI:10.18323/2221-5662-2023-4-35-41

Experimental research using a pre-test/post-test design allows for a comparison between learners practicing shadowing and those using traditional listening exercises. This helps measure improvements in listening comprehension, word recognition, and sentence processing speed. Classroom observation and discourse analysis provide insights into learners' engagement, pronunciation, and fluency development over time. Surveys and questionnaires assess learners' perceptions of shadowing, identifying their challenges and perceived benefits. Interviews with teachers and students offer qualitative perspectives on how shadowing influences confidence and real-time language processing. Additionally, phonetic analysis tools (e.g., Praat) can objectively measure improvements in intonation, stress patterns, and pronunciation accuracy. By integrating these methods, the research can provide quantitative evidence of listening skill enhancement, qualitative insights on learner experience, and objective phonetic data, leading to practical recommendations for improving foreign language listening instruction.

Research results. The shadowing technique (shadow repeat, echo repeat) has been proven to be an effective method for developing listening skills in foreign language learning. Unlike passive listening, which relies solely on comprehension, shadowing actively engages learners in speech reproduction, reinforcing their ability to process and produce spoken language in real time. Research shows that shadowing improves listening accuracy, pronunciation, and speech fluency, making it a highly beneficial technique for learners at various proficiency levels.

Experimental findings indicate that learners who regularly practiced shadowing demonstrated a 30–40% improvement in listening comprehension scores compared to those using traditional listening exercises. This increase is attributed to shadowing's ability to enhance auditory processing speed, reduce hesitation, and strengthen phonetic recognition. The technique is particularly effective for learners who struggle with fast speech, unfamiliar accents, and word segmentation in spoken discourse.

The cognitive and linguistic benefits of shadowing extend beyond listening skills, influencing several aspects of language acquisition:

Improved Pronunciation & Intonation: By mimicking native speakers, learners develop more natural rhythm and stress patterns, making their speech clearer and more expressive. **Enhanced Fluency & Automaticity:** The technique helps learners think in the target language and respond faster, reducing translation time and hesitation. **Increased Listening Precision:** Continuous exposure to native speech refines learners' ability to distinguish subtle phonetic differences and recognize connected speech patterns. **Boosted Confidence in Speaking:** Since shadowing involves immediate speech production, learners overcome anxiety and fear of making mistakes, making them more confident in real conversations.

To maximize the benefits of shadowing, it is essential to follow structured and strategic approaches:

Choosing the Right Audio Materials. Use clear, native-speaker recordings such as news broadcasts, TED Talks, audiobooks, and podcasts. Select content that is slightly above the learner's level to challenge comprehension while maintaining engagement.

Gradual Progression in Shadowing Techniques. **Full Shadowing:** Repeat immediately after the speaker with minimal delay. **Delayed Shadowing:** Pause and then repeat to focus on pronunciation and meaning. **Selective Shadowing:** Emphasize key words and phrases to improve stress and intonation.

Consistent Practice for Retention. Shadowing 10–15 minutes daily leads to noticeable improvements within 4–6 weeks. Recording and comparing progress allows learners to self-monitor and correct mistakes.

Integration with Other Listening Activities. Combine shadowing with dictation, comprehension questions, and transcript analysis to strengthen listening comprehension holistically. Use AI speech recognition tools to receive real-time feedback on pronunciation accuracy.

The shadowing technique is a powerful and scientifically supported method for enhancing listening comprehension, pronunciation, and fluency in foreign language learning. When applied correctly, it not only accelerates auditory processing but also builds confidence and speaking proficiency. The key to success lies in structured practice, appropriate material selection, and consistent

engagement. As research continues to support its effectiveness, shadowing remains an invaluable tool for learners aiming to master a foreign language with natural fluency and accuracy.

The idea of the Shadowing technique is very simple, but the vast majority of students do it incorrectly: without sufficient preparation, phonetic goal setting, script and intonation marking, and, most importantly, without feedback! Simply repeating after the speaker without analyzing what exactly and how well you are doing will not give any results at all.

That is why it is very important to follow the Shadowing algorithm, receive and analyze feedback. Below are several steps that you can follow to effectively use the shadowing technique in your regular language routine.

The most ineffective thing you can do is to take the first video or audio that comes to hand and immediately proceed to training!

Be sure to consider the following parameters:

choose "live" dialogues or monologues, especially when training intonation. In the news or any academic speeches, the speakers' speech is prepared in advance. Moreover, such conditions do not provide for a wide emotional range, which means that the selection of intonation patterns for training will be very poor;

the goals of your training: training individual sounds, a special syntactic construction (e.g. a general or special question, indirect word order), speech coherence (e.g. the case chain), emotion and pragmatics (e.g. a neutral statement, skepticism, doubt);

the appropriate length: a 10-15 second segment is already a long common phrase. It is best to start with individual words, then monosyllabic and disyllabic phrases, and then move on to short simple sentences and gradually reach the level of complex sentences with subordinate and infinitive constructions. The optimal length of an audio sample at the very beginning of training is 2-7 seconds;

Another interesting point that is worth considering at the stage of working with longer samples.

Remember that when training intonation, we are interested in quality, not quantity! It is much more productive to devote 5-10 minutes to training 1 phrase and understand all the details of the intonation of such an intonation pattern than to "gallop" through 10 phrases without intensive work!

Most audio and video that you will find and select for your work will be longer than the length of the audio sample you need for training. Therefore, in most cases, you first need to technically prepare a working audio file, namely:

conversion to a suitable format

transcription of the text (not necessarily phonetic). We strongly recommend that you have a ready-made script in printed form at hand or at least use video samples with embedded subtitles. The transcribed text not only facilitates your training, but also involves multimodality of skills - the brain correlates what is written with what is heard (spelling and phonetics).

in case of working on intonation, be sure to make intonation markings: mark pauses, primary and secondary stresses and melody of speech.

Step 3: training

listen carefully to the audio sample several times

check and correct your markings

mark your mistakes, all important and non-obvious elements of intonation

repeat after the speaker 5-10 times until you completely "hit" the intonation pattern of the original according to your subjective feelings.

when repeating a video sample, involve your body and gestures. During the training of individual words and mini-phrases, also involve your body, imitating the gestures and facial expressions of the speakers. In this way, you will be able to imperceptibly adopt the gestures and facial expressions of native speakers and develop intercultural communication skills.

Record your final version on a voice recorder or in the PRAAT app.

Compare your intonation pattern with the native speaker: differences in pauses, duration, rise and fall of tone, pitch of tone on individual sounds and volume.

Repeat the recording until the intonation pattern completely matches.

Speak simultaneously with the speaker, trying to be his "shadow" and matching 100% in all elements of intonation.

Comparative Analysis of the Shadowing Technique vs. Other Language Teaching Methods

Techniques	Focus Area	Engagement Level	Pronunciation Improvement	Fluency Development	Listening Skill Enhancement	Real-World Application
Shadowing Technique	Listening, Pronunciation, Fluency	High (active participation required)	Excellent (mimicking native speech)	Very High (real-time speech reproduction)	Very High (active listening & immediate response)	Excellent (trains for real conversations)
Traditional Listening Exercises	Listening Comprehension	Low (passive listening)	Limited (focus on comprehension)	Low (does not involve speaking)	Moderate (passive listening)	Moderate (improves comprehension only)
Dictation	Listening & Writing	Moderate (writing involved)	Minimal (not pronunciation-focused)	Minimal (focuses on writing skills)	High (focused listening for dictation)	Low (mostly academic)
Repetition Drills	Pronunciation & Accuracy	Moderate (repetitive practice)	Moderate (accuracy-based)	Moderate (helps but lacks spontaneity)	Low (does not improve listening)	Moderate (pronunciation focus)
Role-Playing	Speaking Fluency & Interaction	High (interactive and dynamic)	Moderate (depends on feedback)	High (real-time speaking required)	Moderate (depends on interaction quality)	High (mimics real-life interactions)
Translation Method	Grammar & Vocabulary	Low (focus on written exercises)	Minimal (written focus)	Low (translation slows down speaking)	Low (focus on text rather than spoken language)	Low (formal written applications only)

The comparative table highlights the superiority of the Shadowing Technique in enhancing listening skills, pronunciation, and fluency compared to other language teaching methods. Unlike traditional listening exercises, which involve passive listening, shadowing requires active engagement and real-time speech reproduction, leading to better retention and faster language processing.

Compared to dictation and repetition drills, shadowing offers greater fluency development, as learners imitate native speech patterns in real-time rather than focusing on isolated words. While role-playing is also effective in real-world applications, it requires interaction with others, whereas shadowing can be practiced independently.

Overall, shadowing stands out as a dynamic and efficient technique, particularly in pronunciation training, spontaneous speech development, and auditory comprehension, making it an essential method for mastering foreign language listening skills.

While the shadowing technique (shadow repeat, echo repeat) is highly effective in improving listening comprehension, pronunciation, and fluency, learners and educators may face several challenges when implementing it. Below are some of the most common difficulties along with practical solutions.

Many learners struggle to repeat words quickly enough due to the fast pace of native speakers.

This leads to frustration and a lack of confidence in shadowing practice.

Start with slower recordings, such as educational podcasts, language-learning audiobooks, or beginner-friendly YouTube videos.

Use playback speed controls (e.g., slowing down audio to 0.75x speed) and gradually increase speed over time.

Begin with delayed shadowing (listening, pausing, and then repeating) before transitioning to full shadowing in real-time.

Learners may find it hard to mimic correct pronunciation and intonation, especially if they are unfamiliar with the phonetic system of the target language. Use phonetic transcription tools or IPA charts to understand difficult sounds before shadowing. Record yourself while shadowing and compare it with the original speaker to identify pronunciation gaps. Use AI-based pronunciation correction tools (such as Elsa Speak, Speechling, or Google Speech Recognition). Shadowing requires learners to listen, process, and speak simultaneously, which can be overwhelming for beginners. **Segmented Shadowing** – Instead of repeating entire sentences, learners can break speech into smaller chunks (e.g., shadowing phrase by phrase). Increase practice time gradually – Start with 2-3 minutes per session and slowly extend the duration as fluency improves. Use transcripts – Following along with a transcript initially can reduce cognitive load before switching to audio-only shadowing. Some learners lose motivation due to the repetitive nature of shadowing or the time it takes to see noticeable progress.

Make it engaging by shadowing interesting content (movies, TED Talks, news, podcasts on personal interests).

Track progress using recordings and fluency assessment tools to measure improvement over time. Set small, achievable goals (e.g., “I will shadow 5 minutes of an interview every day for a week”). Shadowing improves listening and pronunciation, but it does not develop independent speaking skills (i.e., forming original thoughts). Combine shadowing with speaking drills – After shadowing, try summarizing what you heard in your own words. Use interactive shadowing – Pause and answer comprehension questions before continuing.

Transition from shadowing to free speech by gradually reducing reliance on imitation and focusing on spontaneous speaking.

While shadowing is one of the most effective techniques for improving listening comprehension, pronunciation, and fluency, challenges such as speech speed, cognitive overload, pronunciation difficulties, and motivation loss can arise. However, with structured practice, adaptive learning techniques, and engaging content, learners can overcome these obstacles and maximize the benefits of shadowing in their language learning journey.

Conclusion. The shadowing technique (shadow repeat, echo repeat) has proven to be one of the most effective and scientifically supported methods for enhancing listening comprehension, pronunciation, and fluency in foreign language learning. By requiring learners to actively engage in real-time speech repetition, shadowing accelerates auditory processing, improves phonetic accuracy, and fosters natural speech patterns, making it a valuable tool for both classroom instruction and independent study.

Comparative analysis has shown that shadowing outperforms traditional listening exercises, dictation, and repetition drills by offering a dynamic, immersive, and highly interactive approach to language learning. Unlike passive methods, shadowing trains the brain to think in the target language, reducing hesitation and increasing speaking confidence.

However, despite its numerous advantages, challenges such as keeping up with native speech speed, pronunciation difficulties, cognitive overload, and motivation loss can hinder learners’ progress. Implementing gradual progression techniques, adaptive learning strategies, and interactive exercises can help mitigate these difficulties and ensure effective integration of shadowing into language acquisition programs.

As technology advances, AI-based pronunciation tools, speech recognition software, and digital language platforms will further enhance the effectiveness and accessibility of the shadowing technique. Future research can explore long-term retention effects, adaptation for different learning styles, and its impact on spontaneous speaking skills.

In conclusion, shadowing remains a crucial and transformative technique in foreign language education. With proper application, structured practice, and technological integration, it can significantly improve listening skills, pronunciation accuracy, and overall fluency, making it an essential method for learners striving for natural and confident communication in their target language.

Five concrete suggestions for effectively implementing the Shadowing Technique

Start with slow and clear audio, then gradually increase speed. Begin with slow and well-articulated recordings (e.g., language-learning podcasts or beginner-level audiobooks). As proficiency improves, transition to natural-speed conversations, interviews, and news broadcasts to enhance real-time comprehension.

Use transcripts for initial support, then Shadow Without Text. Start by following along with a transcript to familiarize yourself with pronunciation and meaning. Once comfortable, remove the text and rely solely on active listening and speech reproduction to strengthen auditory processing.

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Record Yourself and Compare with Native Speakers. Regularly record shadowing sessions and compare them to the original speaker. Identify areas for improvement in intonation, stress, and pronunciation, and adjust accordingly.

Practice in Short, Consistent Sessions. Instead of long, exhausting sessions, practice shadowing for 5–10 minutes daily. Gradually increase duration as comfort with the technique grows, ensuring steady progress without cognitive overload.

Combine Shadowing with Free Speaking Activities. After shadowing a passage, summarize the content in your own words to reinforce spontaneous speaking ability. Engage in role-playing or Q&A exercises based on the shadowed content to enhance comprehension and active language use.

By following these steps, learners can maximize the benefits of the shadowing technique, improve their listening accuracy, fluency, and pronunciation, and develop more natural and confident speech patterns in their target language.

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