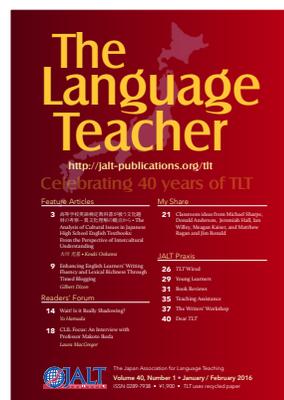


The Language Teacher

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Wait! Is it Really Shadowing?

Yo Hamada
Akita University

In this paper, I am going to discuss the fundamental function of two seemingly-similar activities, shadowing and repetition. To examine this, I made a small classroom study in which a total of 44 university students engaged. Along with the obtained data, I will discuss the primary function of each activity.

本稿では、一見類似している二つの活動（シャドーイングとリピートイング）の基本的機能について論じる。44名の大学生を対象に教室内実験を行った。そのデータをもとに、それぞれの活動の主要な機能について議論する。

“What is the difference between shadowing and repetition?” “Are they really that different?”

These are the questions I am frequently asked. Moreover, I often see *repetition* called and used as *shadowing*. The answers are simply yes, they are different. Thus, in this paper, I am going to discuss the fundamental function of each for the sake of effective teaching and learning by providing the data I obtained from a case study.

Definition of Shadowing and Repetition

From a macro perspective, shadowing is an umbrella term, defined as “repeating all or part of what the speaker has said” (Rost & Wilson, 2013, p.114), without reading a script. In a micro perspective, however, shadowing and repetition need to be distinguished as *reproducing what one hears simultaneously* for shadowing and *repeating what one hears chunk by chunk* for repetition. In other words, there is little time lag between when one hears and reproduces the sounds in shadowing, but some time lag in repetition. Therefore, shadowing is called an on-line task, while repetition is called an off-line task

(Shiki, Mori, Kadota, & Yoshida, 2010). This time lag makes a great difference in the effectiveness of each task on listening and reading skill improvement. Examples of shadowing and repetition are shown with audio CD input (D) and learner output (Ls) below in Table 1.

Shadowing Versus Repetition

Shadowing has been reported to be effective for listening skill improvement, especially phoneme perception processing improvement (e.g., Kadota, 2007, 2012; Hamada, 2014, 2015), although it is often considered to be a speaking task. When learners shadow, the initial task for learners is to perceive incoming sounds; then, reproduce the heard sounds. When shadowing, EFL learners focus on the incoming sounds themselves rather than accessing the meanings of the heard sounds due to limited cognitive resource. Therefore, their phoneme perception process improves through consecutive shadowing training (Hamada, 2015). With the enhanced phoneme perception process, learners can rehearse and process more information in their working memory, especially the phonological loop, a subsystem that stores phonological information temporarily. This consequently leads to more efficient listening (Kadota, 2007). Although shadowing seems to be a speaking activity, because of its on-line nature, learners cannot think about the meanings of what they are shadowing simultaneously. Thus, in summary, shadowing is mainly an activity for listening, enhancing learners' phoneme function and listening comprehension skills.

Repetition is considered to be effective for reading skill improvement as well as listening. The effectiveness of repetition is summarized briefly as follows, based on Kadota's (2007, pp. 29-31) theory.

Table 1. Examples of Shadowing and Repetition

(1) Shadowing			
CD: Akita is located in the Tohoku region. It is famous for rice.			
Ls: Akita is located in the Tohoku region. It is famous for rice.			
(2) Repetition			
CD: Akita is located	in the Tohoku region.	It is	famous...
Ls:	Akita is located	In the Tohoku region.	It is...

Because of the nature of the off-line task, learners' cognitive resource is split into sounds and meaning. When learners hear sounds, they try to perceive the sounds, store the information in the phonological loop, and simultaneously interpret the retained information. During this process, learners attempt to recognize the words by accessing mental lexicon in long-term memory, accessing lemma information (semantics) and lexeme information (pronunciation and spelling) afterward. In other words, through repetition, learners' cognitive aspects of semantic and syntactic contextual processing, and schema processing will be trained. Therefore, retention of information will be strengthened. Taken together, repetition will help speed learners' information processing and promote retention expansion because of its off-line nature.

Despite these theoretical concepts, teachers may still be skeptical about the assumptions that shadowing mainly contributes to listening skill improvement but repetition mainly contributes to reading skill improvement. Research (e.g., Miyasako, 2007) reports the effectiveness of oral reading (repetition by looking at a textbook) on reading skill, but little research has examined the effectiveness of repetition on listening and reading skills. To answer these simple questions, I conducted small experiments.

Description of the Experiments

To clarify the effectiveness of shadowing and repetition, I set two research questions: (1) Does shadowing improve listening comprehension skills and reading comprehension skills? (2) Does repetition improve listening comprehension skills and reading comprehension skills?

Participants

Twenty-one Japanese engineering freshmen (16 males, 5 females) engaged in repetition-based lessons; 23 Japanese education and nursing freshmen (11 males, 12 females) engaged in shadowing-based lessons. They were all taking a compulsory English class and their TOEIC scores were considered around 500, based on the placement test they took in April (ELPA). Thus, their English level was assumed to be intermediate and they appeared to be ordinary university students.

Materials

The participants used an EFL textbook, *Reading Explorer 2* (CEFR B1-B2) (MacIntyre, 2009). Three stories were selected from the textbook and divided into eight passages for the study. Learners at the

CEFR B1-B2 level were categorized as intermediate independent learners (Cambridge, 2014). Three lessons were spent for the first two stories (6 lessons in total), and two lessons for the third one. The average word count of the eight passages was 153. Taken all together, the materials used in this study should have been at their comfort level.

As a listening comprehension test, 10 items from an Eiken test were used and, as a reading comprehension test, 15 items from another Eiken test (4 passages each containing several items) were used. The listening tests were selected from the Eiken pre-second grade Part II (2012 winter version), in which learners select the best answer from the four written choices after listening to a short dialog for 30–40 seconds. These items test the ability to understand the short speech with less difficult expressions, so they were considered satisfactory to test for an improvement in listening comprehension, especially phoneme perception skills. The reading tests were selected from the pre-1st and 2nd grades (2012 winter version), in which each passage has multiple questions and learners chose the best answer by reading the passages. Because pre-1 grade targets university level content and 2nd grade targets high school level content, (Eiken, 2015a, 2015b), these questions were also considered satisfactory, considering the participants' level. Thus, expansion of memory span and enhanced retention skill through shadowing or repetition practice should be reflected in the test results.

Procedure

A total of eight lessons were conducted. During the first half of each 90-minute lesson, students engaged in learning the target content including vocabulary and grammar (see Hamada, 2014). Then, they practiced a set of shadowing/repetition procedures for approximately 20 minutes. Prior to the lessons, the participants took the listening and reading pre-tests, and after the lessons, they took the same tests.

Results and Discussion

To compare the pre-test and post-test data of listening and reading skills, two-tailed t-tests were performed respectively for the shadowing group and repeating group. As shown in Table 2, SD of the listening test score for the shadowing group is smaller and the average score improved statistically ($t(22) = 2.98, p < .01, r = .54$), while the SD for the reading test score changed little and the average score did not improve statistically ($t(22) = 0.38, n.s., r = .08$). The SD of the listening test score of the repetition group

changed little and the average score did not improve statistically ($t(20) = 1.95$, n.s., $r = .40$), but the SD of the reading test score becomes much smaller and the average score improved statistically ($t(20) = 2.34$, $p < .05$, $r = .46$).

In brief, the results support the theoretical assumptions that shadowing improves listening comprehension but does not improve reading comprehension skills; repetition does not improve listening comprehension skills but improves reading comprehension skills. Therefore, the primary functions of shadowing and repetition are different and the two activities should not be treated as the same and each needs to be used in the most appropriate situation. I will further discuss this result as follows.

First, as previously explained, shadowing improves learners' phoneme perception, and presumably leads to their listening comprehension skill improvement similarly in Hamada. On the other hand, reading comprehension skills did not improve because their focus when shadowing was exclusively on the incoming sounds, which contributed to only listening skill improvement. This supports the assumption that learners exclusively focus on sounds when shadowing, leading to listening skill improvement (Kadota, 2007).

Second, repetition did not contribute much to listening skill improvement but did show reading skill improvement. As a side note, though statistically not significant, students' listening skill test's effect size was medium ($r = .40$); so some possibility still remains that it was effective for listening skill improvement to some degree. These results support the assumption that learners' cognitive resource is split not only to sounds but also its semantics and others because of its off-line process. During the time they listen to the incoming chunks and the time they repeat them, they have to retain the heard information, simultaneously accessing the meaning. Their attention was also on the incoming sounds but more on retaining the incoming information so as to reproduce it. To sum up, when repeating, the

learners' focus is more on information retention; so even when taking the reading test, they were better able to retain what they were reading. Whether there are several models for L2 reading such as top-down, bottom-up, and interactive ones, this process contributed to the improvement of reading comprehension skills, also consequently did not strengthen their phoneme perception process as was desired, so their listening comprehension skills did not change statistically.

For classroom implementation, as the model (Figure 1) shows, because the primary function of shadowing is phoneme perception process improvement, those who lack the phoneme perception skill should engage in shadowing first for an intensive period. As Rost (2011) mentions, when learners' bottom-up listening is weak, they try to use top-down skills to compensate for the weakness, which in turn prevents them from training their bottom-up skills. Once they acquire phoneme perception skill and basic listening skills, they should shift to repeating, aiming to maintain the phoneme perception skills and further enhance information processing skills. While shadowing targets bottom-up skills, repeating not only targets bottom-up skills, but top-down skills too.

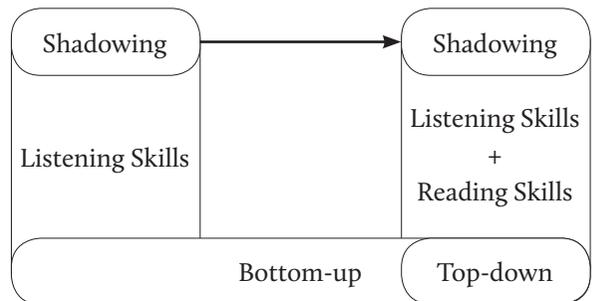


Figure 1. Learning model of shadowing and repetition.

Table 2. Test Score Results for the Shadowing and Repeating Groups

Group	Test	Pre		Post		<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	Effect size (<i>r</i>)
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Shadowing	Listening	6.87	1.96	8.00	1.45	2.98	.007**	.54 (L)
	Reading	7.48	2.57	7.13	2.53	0.38	.71	.08 (S)
Repetition	Listening	7.67	1.39	8.33	1.43	1.95	.06	.40 (M)
	Reading	8.24	2.91	9.57	1.99	2.34	.03*	.46 (M)

Note. For effect size, L= large, M= medium, S= small (Mizumoto & Takeuchi, 2008). ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Limitations

Three shortcomings of this study were found. First, in terms of a strict research design, no control group was set, and thus concluding that the improvement found in this study is directly attributable to the shadowing and repetition could be too early at this stage. Another problematic aspect is a possible test-practice effect. Though efforts to minimize the risk were made, the influence of using the same test for pre- and post- cannot be denied. The last possible limitation is that the repetition group's listening skill was relatively higher at the pre-test, so there may have been a ceiling effect.

Conclusion

I have argued the primary functions of shadowing and repetition in this paper. Shadowing is mainly for listening, while repetition is mainly for reading, so shadowing should not be confused with repetition.

It is incumbent on teachers to choose an appropriate activity for the students. In general, shadowing benefits most Japanese students because they lack phoneme perception skills. In fact, I have been a learner as well as a teacher and still use shadowing to brush up my phoneme perception process occasionally. Moreover, recently I have been shadowing various kinds of English (e.g., British English, Irish, Indian English, and so forth) on my way to school to enhance my phoneme perception skills toward these variations.

Admittedly, shadowing and repetition may look similar if we try both in our first language. I have tried both in my first language, Japanese, and also felt the two were similar because my phoneme perception for Japanese language is completely automatized. Thus, as the finding of this case study suggests, we teachers should not put overreliance on our intuition but separate the two and use them with a clear purpose.

Using repetition with the aim of improving both listening skills and reading skills may end up improving neither of them because there is too much cognitive burden for learner language processing. For non-advanced learners in listening, I encourage them to use shadowing to focus on their phoneme perception process improvement first, then to use repetition to maintain their phoneme perception skills and improve their retention capacity, and to speed their information processing.

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Yo Hamada is an assistant professor at Akita University. He holds a Master's degree in TESOL from Temple University and a doctoral degree in Education from Hiroshima University. His research involves examining effective teaching and learning techniques in the classroom, specifically listening with a focus on shadowing as well as demotivation. Yo can be reached at <yhamada@gipc.akita-u.ac.jp>.

