

On the Use of Shadowing for Improving Listening Ability: Theory and Practice

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This paper discusses one language learning technique, shadowing, for improving listening ability of learners of English. In the first half of the paper the theoretical grounds of shadowing are discussed from six points of view: the Top-down approach to listening, attention to word recognition, ability to follow fast speech, concentration on learning, the amount of practice, and motivation for learning. In the second half a detailed report is given on a one-year intensive shadowing class the author conducted at a senior high school. Pointing out possible improvements in conducting the technique, the paper concludes that shadowing has sound theoretical grounds for improving listening ability of students and suggests that it should be introduced widely into classrooms.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to assess the validity of adopting ‘shadowing’ as a technique for improving listening ability and to give a report on how I implemented shadowing in the classroom. The paper is divided into two parts: the former is devoted to seeking for the validity of introducing shadowing into the teaching of listening ability; the latter is a report on a one-year intensive shadowing class which I conducted at a boys’ senior high school in the school year of 2003.

First of all, the technique should be defined as some researchers point out that there are various ways of conducting, what is called, shadowing. Shadowing in this paper will be defined as follows:

“Shadowing is an act or a task of listening in which the learner tracks the heard speech and repeats it as exactly as possible while listening attentively to the incoming information.” (Tamai, 2002: 181)

2. Reasons for Adopting “Shadowing” as a Technique of Teaching Listening Ability

2.1. Shadowing as a Top-Down Approach to the Teaching of Listening

The main reason why I adopted shadowing in order to improve students’ listening ability was that shadowing is a technique following a ‘Top-down approach’ to teaching pronunciation. It can be said that pronunciation is strongly linked to listening. Seidlhofer (2001: 56) defines pronuncia-

tion as ‘the production and perception of the significant sounds of a particular language in order to achieve meaning in contexts of language use.’ Gilbert (1995) also describes pronunciation and listening as correlated language skills. Therefore, it is entirely fair to say that the concept of teaching pronunciation is valid in teaching listening.

In shadowing activities learners are required from the beginning to cope with linguistic phenomena specific to connected speech, like rhythm, intonation, and reduced forms of phonemes. It is important to note that shadowing focuses learners’ attention not on precise distinctions between phonemes pronounced one by one, but on how they are actually articulated when pronounced in the flow of speech. This agrees with one pronunciation teaching approach: the Top-down approach.

In the field of teaching pronunciation, there are two approaches: the Bottom-up approach and the Top-down approach.

2.1.1. The Bottom-up Approach

In the Bottom-up approach, as Brown (1990) points out, the focus is on segmental features of language. The term, ‘segmental features’, is used here to refer to the smallest entities of speech sound, phonemes. It is assumed that single segments assemble to make an utterance (Pennington and Richards, 1986). To put it the other way round, one utterance is understood when listeners can split it into segments and recognise them as phonemes which exist in a certain language (Dirven and Oakeshott-Taylor, 1984). Therefore, as Pennington and Richards (1986) argue, whether or not learners can distinguish one phoneme from another has a direct effect on listening comprehension, which in turn influences mastery of their target language.

In classrooms adopting the Bottom-up approach, learners would, at first, be expected to perceive and produce single phonemes accurately (Dirven and Oakeshott-Taylor, 1984; Pennington and Richards, 1986). It is assumed that, if learners can recognize the segmental features one by one, they will comprehend larger units of speech sound; that is, words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. Therefore practice of pronunciation tends to be limited to single words or short sentences which are produced in a careful manner (Brown, 1990). There would be quite some time before learners move on to dealing with connected speech.

2.1.2. The Top-down Approach

On the other hand the Top-down approach, as the name implies, deals with pronunciation from larger units to smaller ones: rhythm, stress patterns, and intonations are taught before isolated phonemes (Jones and Evans, 1995). While the Bottom-up approach starts with segmental features, the Top-down approach makes learners attend such suprasegmental features from the beginning. They are also called ‘prosody’ by some researchers (Seidlhofer 2001). This paper will use the term ‘suprasegmental features’ to refer to broader units than isolated segments: ‘stress and intonation

within syllables, words, phrases, and longer stretches of speech'; 'coarticulatory phenomena of the blending and overlapping of sounds in fluent speech' (Pennington and Richards, 1986: 210): that is, assimilation, elision, and linking.

The Top-down approach is based on results of a recent study on discourse. It has brought a recognition that people produce sounds not only to mean words or sentences as they are, but also to build up interactional structures in communication (Pennington and Richards, 1986). It is argued that communicative intentions are strongly influenced by not the isolated sounds but the suprasegmental features (Brown and Yule, 1983).

For instance, the English language is known as a language with stress-timed rhythm. The rhythm can be made by means of contrast between stressed and unstressed syllables (Roach, 1991). It is likely that words are stressed because they are relatively important in an utterance (Scarcella and Oxford, 1994). It is also clear that the rhythm is related to grammatical structures. Right rhythm gives listeners sense groups of an utterance (Rogerson and Gilbert, 1990; Taylor, 1981; cited in McCarthy, 1991). The rhythm is also known as an aid of turn-taking (Scollon, 1982; cited in McCarthy, 1991). It is also agreed that changes in intonation can tell whether or not speakers have completed an utterance (Clennell, 1997), and it would contribute to the management of turn-taking. Intonation has also been found to build the new/given information structure (Brazil et al., 1980). In addition, the intonation, as Roach (1991) states, could reflect specific attitudes of speakers. It can be said that people do not just exchange lexical meanings of sounds, but get their communicative intentions across by means of the broader units of sound, the suprasegmental features.

Therefore the ability to recognize the suprasegmental features in utterances is crucial for listeners. Recognising stress patterns, for instance, would allow them to know what speakers want to emphasise. Familiarity with the rhythmic system would make it possible for them to distinguish sense groups in an utterance. Comprehending intonation would help them to know when to take turns and to judge their interlocutors' attitude toward their utterance.

Such suprasegmental features are not articulated with each of phonemes pronounced carefully. To make the rhythm, as Clark and Clark (1977; cited in Pennington and Richards, 1986) argue, English language tends to mix or delete single sounds. Roach (1991) points out several features of real utterances which cannot be articulated with isolated pronunciation of segments; assimilation, elision, and linking. The articulatory features of real utterances are presented as they are from the beginning in the Top-down approach. It reflects the approach's principle that accurate perception and production of phonemes will be in vain until suprasegmental features containing these phonemes can be recognized appropriately (Thornbury, 1993).

2.1.3. Why the Top-down Approach is Necessary for Improvement in Listening Ability

The learners who are always provided with accurate pronunciation of segments, following the

flow of real speech, could not recognise the segments which they expect to listen to, and would fail to attain comprehension. Gilbert (1995: 97) points out as follows:

'learners are unable to process important grammatical or discourse cohesion signals because of lack of training in the way spoken English systematically uses such mechanisms as reduction and intonational marking for emphasis and thought grouping.'

Torikai et al. (2003) argue that a great number of people, in spite of having a good knowledge of English vocabulary, fail to understand what native speakers say even at relatively slow speed. They attribute such failures in comprehension to insufficient knowledge of the suprasegmental features of spoken English.

Icho (2003) surveyed students at his senior high school about their difficulties in learning English and reasons. He found that they thought listening the most difficult of the four skills of English. The reasons which the students gave for this included difficulties in comprehending words in reduced forms, assimilation, elision, and linking, and in following fast speech. Duplicating Icho's survey, I asked students at my school about their difficulties in learning English and reasons. Students who found listening the most difficult also answered that they had difficulty in processing connected forms and in following fast speech. Nishimura (1998) argues that her university students have not been sufficiently exposed to spoken English and that their inability in listening is caused by their unfamiliarity with suprasegmental features, such as rhythm and stress patterns and reduced forms produced by speech. The problem of how to cope with fast speech is taken up later. It follows from what has been said that learners should be trained in the suprasegmental features in order to comprehend natural spoken English.

As Brown (1990) and Gilbert (1995) argue, the ability to interpret pronunciation which is produced at natural speed in real communication would be required from the beginning. The familiarity with the suprasegmental features in connected speech is recognised as facilitating listening comprehension in general (McCarthy, 1991). The exposure to input rich in the suprasegmental features would be valuable to novice learners of English as well as advanced learners (Brown, 1990). Therefore it can be said that the Top-down approach, which introduces the suprasegmental features first, should be adopted at as early a stage of instruction as possible.

2.1.4. Shadowing as a Top-down Approach

In shadowing activities, as has been mentioned above, learners are provided with connected speech as it is. It is therefore entirely fair to say that shadowing follows the Top-down approach. Chosen carefully, input which learners shadow can be rich in the features of natural speech, the

suprasegmental features. Learners can attend those linguistic phenomena from the beginning. Yanagihara (1995) suggests that learners shadowing are expected to subconsciously recognise such linguistic phenomena of spoken English as liaison and reduction and acquire rhythm and intonation system of English. Torikai (1997), Torikai et al. (2003) and Nishimura (1998) also share her view and argue that shadowing immensely helps learners to gain a command of the suprasegmental features. Viewed in this light, shadowing can be regarded as a promising technique for improving perception of the suprasegmental features of spoken English.

2.2. Shadowing as Facilitating Attention to Language in Input

The second reason why I chose shadowing as a technique for improving students' listening ability is that shadowing can direct their attention to word recognition.

2.2.1. Lack of Attention to Word Recognition

Having students listen to connected speech for improving listening ability is not exclusively limited to shadowing. It is easy to find advertisements in newspapers or magazines suggesting that one is able to improve his or her listening ability just by listening to, or 'hearing,' natural speech; some even claim that one does not have to pay attention to what he or she is hearing. When asked by students how to improve listening ability, I also found it tempting to tell them just to listen as often and as much as possible.

It is doubtful, however, that just listening to natural speech will improve listening ability as dramatically as those advertisements claim. As has been mentioned above, introducing learners to connected speech rich in suprasegmental features will be valuable. It is possible, however, that learners simply listening to spoken English fail to recognize such language forms in utterances.

From the viewpoint of cognitive psychology, VanPatten (1990) argues that learners cannot process both meaning and forms at the same time in real-time interaction because their capacity of processing information is limited. It is widely accepted that humans are endowed with limited information processing capacity. VanPatten argues that learners involved in real-time interaction will find it tremendously difficult to process meaning and forms simultaneously. He also argues that interaction whose primary goal is communication requires participants to comprehend meanings first and deprives them of processing messages for forms.

Although VanPatten's (1990) argument is derived from interaction studies, it can be applied to extensive listening activities as mentioned above. While learners are listening to given texts for comprehension, it is likely that they fail to pay enough attention to suprasegmental features which they are expected to acquire through the task. It is possible that learners cannot recognize words in connected speech no matter how much spoken English they listen to.

It can be said that the present listening instruction also tends to underestimate word recognition

in favour of extra-linguistic information. While the recent trend of communicative language teaching (CLT) emphasises listening for meaning (Rost, 2001), there is a danger of depending heavily on non-linguistic contexts.

Wilson (2003) argues that words can go without comprehension when listeners are able to grasp meanings from context. It is likely that learners get satisfied with general understanding of utterances with the aid of such non-linguistic clues and leave specific information in language data unanalysed. Seidlhofer (2001) also expresses her concern that CLT, which emphasises meanings interlocutors exchange, can cause their attention to wander from the language forms they use. As Wilson (2003) worries, the skill of recognising words in input would be neglected and learners would continue compensating for their lack of understanding by relying heavily on their previous knowledge.

2.2.2. Need for Learners to Attend Language in Connected Speech

Such neglect of language processing in listening has led to excessive attention being paid to making learners ready for the content of listening. Common listening comprehension activities only require of listeners general understanding of content and rarely tell them to catch the exact words in input. It is often the case that activities for, what is called, training listening ability simply ask learners a few questions concerning content of an utterance without telling them how to recognise words in connected forms or intonation and stress patterns for comprehension. It can be said that such word recognition and 'prosody sense' (Torikai et al., 2003) are left to students to acquire. As a result learners have to cope with language in spoken English by themselves. Without any help from teachers all they can do is to guess what is supposed to be heard from non-linguistic information. This would not help improve their ability to recognize the linguistic phenomena specific to connected speech: intonation, rhythm, assimilation, elision, and linking. It follows from what has been said that it is necessary to direct listeners' attention to the suprasegmental features in speech.

2.2.3. Special Attention to Language

Shadowing prevents learners from leaving word recognition ambiguous. Since shadowing requires learners to produce what they think they heard, it does not allow them to pass by linguistic data unprocessed. In addition shadowing tasks almost always entail recording learners' performances as conducted by me, which makes learners even more sensitive to sound distinctions.

The importance of production as an aid for attending language is claimed by Swain (1995). She presents a suggestion in her output hypothesis that pushed to make utterances learners should be involved in the following three mental activities essential for language acquisition: firstly they will notice differences between what they want to say and what they can say, which in turn will let them notice what is totally missing from their knowledge or what is partially integrated into it; secondly

they will test hypotheses they made about target forms, which in turn will bring about feedback to those hypotheses for them to analyse; thirdly they will reflect on their own use of target forms, which in turn will activate their metalinguistic knowledge and help them integrate the linguistic information into their own interlanguage.

Considering the process in terms of shadowing, it may be safely assumed that shadowing allows learners to compare sounds of words which they think they should hear, which are often sounds articulated carefully within isolated words, with those actually articulated in connected speech. This comparison would lead them to realise how segments in their phonological knowledge actually sound in real utterances, which would help them to comprehend connected speech and improve their listening ability.

2.3. Other Advantages of Shadowing

It is possible to claim another four advantages of shadowing in improving listening ability.

2.3.1. Shadowing Helps Follow Fast Speech

Firstly, it can be said that shadowing enhances learners' ability to follow fast speech. Difficulty in following the fast speed of spoken English, as mentioned above, has been identified as one of the problems learners are faced with. Offering a theoretical explanation of shadowing, Torikai et al. (2003) suggest that shadowing would improve learners' 'subvocalisation': that is, they learn to maintain in their head what they have heard. She claims that the ability allows them to analyse what they heard and at the same time to keep track of fast speech.

Based on his research, Tamai (2002) argues that shadowing has an effect on phonological processing in working memory. He refers to Alan Baddeley's (1986) working memory and tries building a theoretical model of the mechanism of shadowing. He claims that when spoken utterances are processed syntactically and semantically in working memory, their phonological information must be maintained in the phonological processing device: phonological loop. He argues that the phonological loop is related to 'articulation rate,' 'repetition rate,' and 'memory span.' He found that shadowing brought out an improvement in the first two and concluded that learners are able to speed up the articulation and the repetition rate by shadowing. From this viewpoint one may say that learners learn to process faster and faster speech with the phonological loop enhanced by shadowing.

2.3.2. Shadowing Helps Concentrate on Listening

Secondly, shadowing makes learners concentrate on listening. It is likely that listeners' attentions drift off in the course of conventional listening comprehension activities, where they do not have to attend every detail of given utterances as long as they grasp the general meaning of them.

Especially just listening to recorded texts without any particular purpose, learners would easily lose track of what they are listening to and sometimes even fall asleep in the middle of the task. On the other hand, shadowing tasks force learners to attend every single word of spoken utterances and prevent them from 'hearing' without paying attention to incoming information. Torikai (1997) argues that shadowing can change 'passive' listening into 'active' listening.

2.3.3. Shadowing Creates More Practice Opportunities

Thirdly, shadowing can create far more opportunities to practice listening in a limited time. By comparison, take for example dictation, another type of listening activity which focuses on word recognition. When learners are doing the task, it is likely that they stop cassette players too often, rewind, and play again. Not only does it cut the flow of speech into pieces and deprive connected speech of suprasegmental features, but also it takes a long time to reach the end of the task. As for shadowing, once learners play tapes, it is possible for them to continue to the end without stopping.

It can be said that the difference in mode of production benefits shadowing: speaking for shadowing and writing for dictation. Uttering words takes much less time than writing them. From her experience Nishimura (1997) argues that shadowing would give learners from five to ten times the amount of practice that dictation does. Although it is not clear how much more practice shadowing can give learners than dictation, it can be safely assumed that one cycle of shadowing takes much less time. The amount of time saved can be spent on more cycles of shadowing. It is of great importance to teaching listening in class, where the problem is that learners are always not given enough time for learning listening skill.

2.3.4. Shadowing Motivates Learners

Fourthly, learners seem to find shadowing interesting. I found that my students were highly motivated toward shadowing activities whether their proficiency of English was high or low. It was even a delightful surprise that it was poor learners in terms of academic achievement that were eager to tackle shadowing tasks. Nishimura (1997) also found that her students showed similarly favourable reactions to shadowing. She reported that they did shadowing for themselves both in and after class.

This strong motivation for shadowing is worth taking into account. Language learning involves painstaking tasks and it takes learners a long time to acquire listening skill as well as the other three. The fact that learners are highly motivated for learning by means of shadowing will bring out a beneficial effect on learning listening skill.

3. The Report on a One-Year Intensive Shadowing Class

The following will illustrate an intensive listening class utilising shadowing which I conducted at my senior high school in the school year of 2003.

3.1. Class and Students

The intensive class was conducted as an optional subject. The optional subject had two units of 50-minute period and the first half was devoted to the shadowing course and the latter half to vocabulary building, reading training, and so on.

11 students in the second year took this subject. Students were able to choose one class among English, math, arts, and so on. Since those who had to take one of the optional subjects chose this English option, it can be assumed that they were relatively motivated to learn English. As for those who could cancel the class, it can be said that they were highly motivated to learn English, for even after the content and schedule of the class was explained in the very first class, they still chose to take this class.

3.2. Class Schedule

The class lasted over the three terms of the school year and was held every week except in the exam weeks. The schedule of the whole academic year will be presented below.

The number of classes	
1st Term	10 (including one term exam)
2nd Term	9 (including one term exam)
3rd Term	5 (including one term exam)

3.3. Materials

Texts for shadowing were extracted from a well-known vocabulary building book, *Sokudoku Eitango Nyumon-hen* (Kazahaya, 1998). This was chosen because the level of vocabulary and grammar and the length of each entry were thought to be suitable for the students. Each text had approximately 180 words on average and was read by a native speaker of English at what is called natural speed: about 150 words per minute.

A 3-second pause on average, however, was inserted between sentences or, sometimes within a sentence which I thought was too long for the students to follow. Such pauses were made in order to lessen the task difficulty of shadowing. It seemed impractical to expect the students to shadow the natural speed of speech from the beginning, for they were still unable to articulate and repeat fast enough. On the other hand, it can be said that the paused speech maintained the linguistic phenomena characteristic of connected speech. Although pauses interrupted the flow of speech, each

sentence retained intonation, stress and rhythm, assimilation, elision, and linking.

This manipulation turned out to be beneficial for such novice learners as my students because all of them managed to handle the task without giving up. It also worked well as a motivating introduction to shadowing. Since the students were able to shadow the paused speech, they seemed to find it challenging to move on to the more difficult stage of shadowing: to shadow non-paused speech. At first I encouraged a few successful students to try shadowing non-paused speech after shadowing paused speech. As the class proceeded, however, more students began to try shadowing non-paused speech and in the end all of them came to shadow non-paused speech every week. I shall have more to say about the non-paused speech shadowing later on.

3.4. Procedure

This class was held in a language laboratory. Each student was assigned a booth with a cassette recorder/player and a headphone mic. This recorder/player system made it possible for users to record and delete their own voices without deleting original recordings, which allowed the students to repeat their shadowing as many times as they liked. The headphone mic prevented the students' own voices from interrupting incoming speech.

At the beginning of each class, the students were given a handout which had an English text on the left and its Japanese translation on the right (Appendix 1). English texts were expected to facilitate comparison between what the students thought they were going to hear and what words actually are articulated in connected speech, as has been discussed above.

The purpose of giving them Japanese translations was to avoid their shadowing without comprehension. It may happen, as Tamai et al. (2002) argue, that learners are able to shadow a speech without processing it syntactically: that is, without comprehending it. Tamai (2002) also differentiates phonological processing with which shadowing may be concerned from syntactical processing responsible for comprehension. From this viewpoint one may say that shadowing entails a danger of making learners parrots: they may repeat what they hear without understanding it. I believe this can be harmful for learners for two reasons: one is that, since shadowing is adopted for improving listening comprehension, comprehension should not be ignored for the sake of mastering the technique; the other is that, since shadowing is regarded as a Top-down approach as discussed above, neglecting comprehension would contradict the origin of the approach: discourse analysis of utterances. These are the reasons why I emphasised comprehension of given speeches when conducting this intensive shadowing class.

The Japanese translation had been divided by slashes in sense group, which were intended to help the students to process the meaning of the English text from the beginning to the end, without going back and forth.

The students were allowed to practice shadowing the given text for about 20 minutes. During the

practice period they were prohibited from recording their performances. When the time was over, the handout was collected and another handout with only the Japanese translation was given to them. Referring to the Japanese text, the students recorded their shadowing. At that time, they were prohibited from recording their shadowing bit by bit: that is to say, when they made mistakes, they had to start again from the beginning. The purpose of this is to avoid their stopping in the middle of a sentence and spoiling suprasegmental features there. In addition, forcing them to shadow continuously from the beginning to the end was expected to enhance their ability to follow the fast speech rate even though there were still pauses between sentences.

The recording period lasted about 20 minutes. The students were allowed to record their shadowing until they got satisfied with their performances. When they finished earlier, they were even allowed to leave then. This was because there should be differences in ability between the students. It is not likely that all students can reach certain level of listening ability by spending the same amount of time in practicing. It would be more practical to let students spend as much time in practicing as they want in order to achieve certain level of performance than to force them to spend the same amount of time.

It is true that there is a concern that some students may leave without trying hard. As far as my students were concerned, however, they did not finish the task at hand until they got satisfied with their performance and sometimes they remained in their booth during the break. As long as performance is assessed properly, it is possible that learners can remain motivated.

3.5. Evaluation

Each performance of the students was evaluated immediately after each class and the evaluation was told to them in the next class. As Ohzeki (2002) argues, it is necessary to provide students with feedback on their shadowing performance in order to keep them motivated. When I conducted a similar shadowing class the previous year, I did not give students feedback at first for fear that assessment should daunt them. My fear, however, turned out to be unfounded. They were eager to receive feedback on their performances. It was true of the students in this shadowing class. Every time they were given feedback, they looked excited. It seemed that the evaluation of one shadowing performance encouraged them in improving their performance in the next class.

The criteria of evaluation were showed to the students at the very beginning of the class. It will be presented below. Following the criteria below, a native teacher of English and I evaluated each performance of the students and gave them an averaged grade.

- A: Great (=almost Native-like)
- B: Good (without any mistakes)
- C: Fair (with some mistakes but managed to follow the model)
- D: So-so (making mistakes, missing some words, and having a difficulty keeping up with the model.)
- E: Not passed (missing a lot of words and couldn't keep up with the model)

3.6. From Paused-Shadowing to Non-Paused Shadowing

As the class proceeded, some of the students came to feel confident in shadowing a paused speech. Therefore, I also prepared a text without pauses as mentioned above. In order to encourage them to try shadowing a non-paused speech, I announced that both paused and non-paused performances of shadowing were to be assessed. At first only those successful students dealt with non-paused speeches. As the class proceeded, however, even less successful students started to try shadowing them and at the end of the year all of the students shadowed both a paused and a non-paused speech in one session. As a result non-paused shadowing was included in the term exam in the third term.

3.7. Term Exam

At the end of each term, the term exam was given to the students. In the exam the students were required to shadow all the paused speeches they had shadowed in the usual classes and one or more paused speeches they had not shadowed yet. The procedure of the exam is as follows: one week before the exam the students were given a cassette tape on which all of the speeches they had shadowed in the term were recorded and a handout with the English texts and their Japanese translations; on the exam day the students were not allowed to refer to the English texts and were instead provided with the Japanese translations: one speech was divided into several sections and the students were allowed to stop between the sections. To see the difference in shadowing between the usual class and the exam, compare the text used in the usual class (Appendix 1) and the one in the exam (Appendix 2); performance of shadowing in the exam was assessed according to different criteria from in the usual class: no mistakes, a few mistakes, or not passed. At the end of the exam the students were given a 100-word paused speech to shadow that they had not shadowed in the usual class. In this last task they were not allowed to stop in the middle of the speech as they were not allowed to do this in the usual class. Performance on the last task was assessed according to how many mistakes they made. Besides non-paused shadowing was included in the exam of the third term as mentioned above.

The students were given a maximum of 110 minutes to spend on the exam (two 50-minute periods and a 10-minute break between them).

3.8. What Should be Improved in Implementing Shadowing

After conducting shadowing as has been mentioned above, I found three points to improve for better implementation of shadowing.

Firstly the criteria of evaluation of shadowing performance in the usual class should be reformed. As presented above, native-like pronunciation was regarded as A level, which unnecessarily made the students conscious about precise production.

Production would need careful consideration. There is fairly general agreement that pronunciation of learners is intelligible enough when each phoneme is pronounced one by one accurately. Therefore, careful pronunciation of each phoneme should not be abandoned just because it is not pronounced as a separated sound by native speakers. Accurate pronunciation of phonemes does not harm the intelligibility of learners' pronunciation. It is also known that not all learners want to sound like native speakers (Jenkins, 1996). Therefore when shadowing is adopted for improving listening ability, native-like pronunciation would not be a suitable criterion.

Besides what I used for assessment required me to listen to the whole of the students' performance. It was possible to check all the recordings since there were only 11 students. When shadowing is introduced to more students, however, it is necessary to prepare another criteria for assessments that are less demanding for teachers.

It would be useful to take Ohzeki's (2002: 204) suggestions into account. He suggests a 5-grade holistic assessment for shadowing: 5 for those who reproduce speech almost precisely despite a few words missing (over 80% achievement); 4 for those who reproduce English-like speech (60 to 80% achievement); 3 for those who reproduce imperfect utterances, whose meanings can be guessed (40 to 60% achievement); 2 for those who cannot reproduce the whole utterance but can repeat what they divided into sense groups (20 to 40% achievement); 1 for those who cannot reproduce at all or can only utter a few words (less than 20% achievement).

Secondly I should have given feedback more specific to each of the students. Although I gave them the general evaluation on their performance, there were few opportunities to diagnose problems specific to their shadowing performance. As Nishimura (1998) argues, it is possible that mistakes learners make become fossilised. Some of my students could not find how to improve their performance of shadowing. It was a highly regrettable that I failed to give them enough pieces of advice. It will be necessary to find difficulties learners are facing and help them to overcome them by giving them appropriate feedback.

Thirdly it would be necessary to define a clear goal for learners. For this intensive shadowing class I prepared one about-10-minute public speech recorded by a native speaker of English as a gold. In the very first class the students were required to shadow the speech only once without stopping and to record the performance on tape. At the end of the year they were also given a chance to shadow the same speech and recorded the performance again. After recording the second performance, they were told to compare the first with the second performance. This was intended to let the students realise how far they had improved after shadowing for a year. However the difference between the two performances was not so clear to the students as expected and it was difficult for them to appreciate the effect of the one-year training in listening skill by means of shadowing. One alternative means to make the effect clearer to learners would be to give them a pre-test and a post-test such as TOFLE and TOEIC and provide them with concrete scores of their listening

ability.

4. Conclusion

In this paper a technique of improving listening ability, shadowing, has been discussed from two points of view: the theoretical foundation for introducing the technique into the classroom and how I conducted an intensive listening training class using shadowing.

In the second chapter, the adoption of shadowing has been justified on six grounds. Firstly it has been argued that shadowing is one application of the Top-down approach to teaching listening ability. It has been pointed out that learners are usually provided with isolated words pronounced carefully and they fail to identify those words in connected speech because they are rarely articulated in such a careful way. It has also been argued that intonation and stress and rhythmic system of English play a significant role in conveying speakers' intentions and that learners are not given enough opportunities to listen to such linguistic phenomena in natural speech. Since learners doing shadowing are given connected speech as input, on the other hand, what they are listening to is rich in suprasegmental features: assimilation, elision, and linking of words, intonation, and stress and rhythm system. It has been argued that by doing shadowing learners will learn to comprehend the suprasegmental features, which will lead to improvement in their listening ability.

Secondly it has been argued that shadowing will direct learners' attention to word recognition. It has been pointed out that learners tend to miss out language in input in favour of meaning and that the conventional listening activities, whose primary goal is general understanding of the content, can direct learners' attention away from language. Since shadowing forces learners to utter what they are listening to, it is possible that they will pay extra attention to language. Production will encourage learners to compare their knowledge of pronunciation of words, where phonemes tend to be carefully pronounced, and what they are actually listening to in connected speech. It has been argued that such comparison will have a great effect on improving learners' listening comprehension of natural speech.

Thirdly it has been stated that shadowing will enhance learners' ability to follow the fast speed of natural speech. By doing shadowing learners will learn to articulate phonemes faster and faster, and to repeat faster and faster what they are listening to. The improvement in the articulation rate and the repetition rate will make it possible for learners to keep more and more phonological information in their memory, which in turn will benefit syntactic processing of input, comprehension.

Fourthly it has been argued that shadowing will have learners concentrate on a task at hand. Since shadowing forces learners to attend every detail of the phonological phenomena in the input, it is unlikely that they will be hearing input without noticing the important linguistic phenomena in connected speech, the suprasegmental features.

Fifthly it has been mentioned that shadowing will give learners more practice in a limited time. Compared with dictation, shadowing can give learners many more opportunities to listen to the given input, which can solve the chronic problem of language learning: learners always suffer from far less opportunities for learning than necessary.

Sixthly it has been argued that shadowing can motivate learners in language learning. It was found that my students were highly motivated to do shadowing. It is important to note that not only successful learners but also unsuccessful learners in terms of academic achievement were actively engaged in shadowing. This benefit of motivation should be fairly acknowledged.

In the third chapter this paper reported an intensive shadowing class I conducted at my school. After illustrating the details of the class, three possible improvements in implementing shadowing in a classroom have been discussed.

Firstly it has been suggested that the criteria of evaluating students' shadowing performances should be reformed. The criteria I adopted regarded the native-like pronunciation as a gold. It has been widely accepted, however, that learners' pronunciation is comfortably tolerated if it is intelligible enough. It is necessary to set another criteria valid for shadowing as a technique of improving not productive but perceptive skill of language. In addition the necessity of criteria less demanding for teachers has been recognised. While I was able to check the whole performances of 11 students of mine, it would be highly demanding for teachers to impose shadowing on more students or even impossible to do so on a whole class of 40 or 50 students. For introducing shadowing to a large number of students, it is necessary to come up with another assessment criteria satisfying for students as well as economical for teachers.

Secondly it has been pointed out that more concrete feedback on students' performances is necessary. Teachers should point out problems specific to individual students and give them appropriate feedback in order to prevent students' mistakes from becoming rooted in their minds and at the same time to help them to advance to the next stage of development.

Thirdly it has been argued that students should be provided with a clear goal so that they will see how far they have improved their listening ability. In order to fulfil this purpose I have suggested giving students a pre-test and a post-test, which will make the result of shadowing clearer to see.

It seems reasonable to conclude, from what has been said above, that shadowing is a theoretically well grounded technique for improving listening ability and that it can be effectively and efficiently implemented in a real classroom with carefully planned procedures.

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Appendix 1.

<p>One of my most interesting experiences was swimming in the Great Salt Lake. The lake covers an area larger than the state of Rhode Island. The surprising fact is that, although the lake is far from any ocean, and although it gets its water from rivers which have so little salt as to taste sweet, the lake is about six times as salty as the ocean.</p>	<p>これまでの私の経験のなかで最もおもしろかったものの一つは、泳いだことである/グレート・ソルト・レイクで。//その湖はある面積を占めている/(米国の)ロードアイランド州よりも広い面積を。//驚くべき事実は、湖はどの海からも遠いにもかかわらず、/そしてそれは川から水を引いているにもかかわらず、/その川はあまりにも塩分が少ないので/甘い味がするほどなのに、/湖はおよそ海の6倍と同じくらいの塩気があるということである。//</p>
<p>For a while I floated around, but soon I wanted to stand. Then I was surprised. I couldn't stand on the ground! The brine was very heavy and holding me up.</p>	<p>しばらくの間、/私はあちこちと浮かんでみた、/が、すぐに立ちたくなった。//そして私は驚いた。//私は地面に立つことができなかったのだ!//塩水は非常に重く、/それが私(の体)を持ち上げていたのである。//</p>
<p>After swimming for a few minutes, I made my next mistake. I opened my eyes under water. I expected that I would feel a little pain when the water got into my eyes, but I was not prepared to have that kind of terrible pain. It was so painful that I couldn't keep my eyes open. Of course, that was the last time I tried to swim in the Great Salt Lake. After that experience, I understand why there are no fish in the Great Salt Lake. Fish can't close their eyes!</p>	<p>数分泳いだ後、/私は二つ目の過ちを犯した。//水中で目を開けてしまったのだ。//私は予期していた/少し痛みを感じる/水が目に入ったときに、/しかし心の準備はできていなかった/こんなひどい痛みを感じるであろうとは。//あまりにも痛かったので、/私は目を開けていることができなかった。//もちろん、これが最後だった/私がグレート・ソルト・レイクで泳ごうなどと考えたのは。//この経験の後、/私には理解できる/なぜグレート・ソルト・レイクに魚がないのか。//魚は目を閉じることができないのだ!!</p>

Appendix 2.

<p>One of my most interesting experiences was swimming in the Great Salt Lake. The lake covers an area larger than the state of Rhode Island.</p>	<p>これまでの私の経験のなかで最もおもしろかったものの一つは、泳いだことである/グレート・ソルト・レイクで。//その湖はある面積を占めている/(米国の)ロードアイランド州よりも広い面積を。//</p>
<p>The surprising fact is that, although the lake is far from any ocean, and although it gets its water from rivers which have so little salt as to taste sweet, the lake is about six times as salty as the ocean.</p>	<p>驚くべき事実は、湖はどの海からも遠いにもかかわらず、/そしてそれは川から水を引いているにもかかわらず、/その川はあまりにも塩分が少ないので/甘い味がするほどなのに、/湖はおよそ海の6倍と同じくらいの塩気があるということである。//</p>
<p>For a while I floated around, but soon I wanted to stand. Then I was surprised. I couldn't stand on the ground! The brine was very heavy and holding me up.</p>	<p>しばらくの間、/私はあちこちと浮かんでみた、/が、すぐに立ちたくなった。//そして私は驚いた。//私は地面に立つことができなかったのだ!//塩水は非常に重く、/それが私(の体)を持ち上げていたのである。//</p>

<p>After swimming for a few minutes, I made my next mistake. I opened my eyes under water. I expected that I would feel a little pain when the water got into my eyes, but I was not prepared to have that kind of terrible pain. It was so painful that I couldn't keep my eyes open.</p>	<p>数分泳いだ後、私は二つ目の過ちを犯した。//水中で目を開けてしまったのだ。//私は予期していた/少し痛みを感じる/水が目に入ったときに、/しかし心の準備はできていなかった/こんなひどい痛みを感じるであろうとは。//あまりにも痛かったので、私は目を開けていることができなかった。//</p>
<p>Of course, that was the last time I tried to swim in the Great Salt Lake. After that experience, I understand why there are no fish in the Great Salt Lake. Fish can't close their eyes!</p>	<p>もちろん、これが最後だった/私がグレート・ソルト・レイクで泳ごうなどと考えたのは。//この経験の後、私には理解できる/なぜグレート・ソルト・レイクに魚がないのか。//魚は目を閉じることができないのだ!!</p>