

The Effective Use of Collaborative Shadowing Activities in Second Language Classrooms

第二言語教室における協働型シャドーイング活動の効果的利用に関する考察

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This paper first introduces sample collaborative shadowing activities used in university-level English courses, discusses concepts to support these activities, and then explores their benefits and drawbacks based on instructor observations and student responses from an end-of-the-semester questionnaire survey and reflection essays on course activities. In a collaborative shadowing activity, a student shares his or her written work orally and the partner repeats his or her words in the form of a dialogue. This activity, termed dialogue-formed shadowing, provides ample opportunities for students to expose themselves to input, to produce output, and to have interaction with each other and receive more feedback on their output, helping to create a cooperative and autonomous learning space. Such practice with nonnative speaker classmates allows students to become aware of the benefits of practicing with non-native speakers.

This study shows that a large number of students identified benefits of collaborative shadowing activities. Students found it fun to speak with classmates and to know more about their fellow classmates. They enjoyed communicating with classmates in English, sharing personal stories, and learning from each other. Collaborative shadowing was a new way of practicing the language for them; they reported that shadowing activities provided good listening and speaking practice.

However, a few problems were pointed out such as a) repetition of classmates' errors and mistakes, b) uncertainty of correct pronunciation, and c) negative emotions about their own writing. This paper will suggest a few teaching tools and techniques to deal with problems. In the end, this study has raised two issues to be explored in the future. One is whether collaborative shadowing works for a certain type of student group or not, and the other is how the teacher's instructions in shadowing activities change students' performances and their consequent effects upon language learning.

Key Words

collaborative shadowing, interaction and feedback, non-native speakers, cooperative and autonomous learning space, joy of communication, sharing stories

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I Introduction

Shadowing is a language learning tool for improving communicative competence. Shadowing activities can be categorized into two types: a) listening to spoken words or sentences (e.g., on tapes, CDs, or in movies) and uttering the exact words or sentences almost simultaneously with the spoken text or immediately after a group of words or sentences (sometimes called "overlapping") and b) repeating or expressing in one's own words what an interlocutor or speaker says in the form of dialogues. The former type of activities is done individually and will be labeled *individual shadowing*, while the latter is done in collaboration with other person(s) and will be labeled *collaborative shadowing* in this paper. In activities where the listener uses his or her own words as if he or she is responding, talking, or confirming out loud to the speaker when shadowing the speaker, the latter type may also be called *dialogue-formed shadowing*.

This paper focuses on collaborative shadowing activities. First, sample activities used in the author's university-level English courses will be introduced. Then concepts to support collaborative shadowing will be discussed, followed by an exploration of benefits and drawbacks of these activities based on the instructor's (the author's) observations and student responses from an end-of-the-semester questionnaire survey and reflection essays on course activities. The paper will also discuss how these activities can be used

more effectively in second language classrooms and will conclude by making suggestions for future studies.

II Collaborative Shadowing Activities

Murphey (1995) outlines three kinds of shadowing: *lecture* shadowing, *reading* shadowing, and *conversational* shadowing. He explains that "in lecture shadowing listeners shadow silently in their heads what a speaker says" (p. 42), "in reading shadowing, one student reads a passage while a partner shadows" (p. 42) and that "conversational shadowing is the selective (partial) or complete repeating of what a partner says during conversation" (p. 43).

Murphey (2001) further discusses different types of shadowing labeled *complete*, *selective*, and *interactive*. *Complete* shadowing means listeners shadow every word the speakers say, whereas *selective* shadowing refers to cases where listeners select only some words and phrases to shadow. *Interactive* shadowing includes selective shadowing and also involves questions and comments from the listener. Murphey (1998) also notes that shadowing and summarizing are effective language learning tools.

Shadowing activities used in the author's university-level English courses include "simple shadowing," "paraphrasing shadowing," "summarizing and shadowing," and "reading aloud with your paper folded into half and shadowing," all of which are what the author call *collaborative, dialogue-formed* shadowing and which shares certain features of what Murphey calls *reading* and *conversational* shadowing. In other words, these activities contained elements of *reading* shadowing in the sense that "one student reads a passage while a partner shadows" (Murphey, 1995, p. 42), but also contained some elements of *conversational* shadowing in the sense that they promoted freer styles of shadowing such as paraphrasing what the speaker says or interacting with the speaker. The students were engaged in these different types of shadowing, *completely* or *selectively*, and *interactively*.

Students used their own stories (i.e., journal entries or essays) in these activities and worked primarily in pairs. The instructor (the author) expected that shy students who were reluctant to speak spontaneously or who were not at the proficiency level for free production of spoken English would find their written work helpful in situations where oral production was required. Another objective of this activity was for students to share their written work and to receive more feedback not just from their teacher

but also from their peers.

In the "simple shadowing" activity, one student read aloud his or her story from a weekly journal and the partner simply repeated the words phrase-by-phrase or sentence-by-sentence. The "shadower" was to change only the personal pronouns in the sentence as necessary. For example, if student A (the speaker) said "I went shopping with my mother," student B (the listener/shadower) would say "You went shopping with your mother".

In "paraphrasing shadowing" the shadower was expected to paraphrase what he or she had heard, expressing the same or a similar meaning with different words. For example, in the case of the above sentence, student B might say "You and your mother went shopping together."

After students did "simple shadowing" and/or "paraphrasing shadowing," they tried to summarize each other's stories and shadowed one another once more in the author's class. This extended activity was called "summarizing and shadowing" because the student who was listening to the summary shadowed the speaker, who was actually summarizing the listener's own story. In other words, students summarized each other's stories that had been shared in previous shadowing activities, still using shadowing techniques.

"Reading aloud with your paper folded into half" and shadowing" was used as the next step. In "simple" and "paraphrasing shadowing" activities, students who shared the stories tended simply to read aloud their written work (i.e., journal entries and essays) rather than to practice their speaking skills. This activity, however, aimed to promote freer oral communication and to help students develop interactive speaking skills including varied story-telling strategies such as adding explanations, using simpler expressions when the listener do not understand, or putting emotions into the story. It permitted students to look at only half the page (only right half or left half) of their writing, as they folded the paper into half. They were instructed to complete the sentences without looking at the other half of their paper. They then had to depend on spontaneous sentence-producing ability since they often could not remember the exact words they had written.

There are additional techniques for promoting spontaneous speaking ability, which were not used in the classes discussed in this paper. For example, the activity of 'reading aloud with paper folded into half' could have been followed by the next step of preventing students from looking at their paper at all. Making an outline of the story

and using it instead of looking at the whole written work would have been effective, as well.

Collaborative shadowing was a new learning tool for most of the students. In order to familiarize the students with this tool, examples of collaborative shadowing were presented in the first class of the semester. Furthermore, the teacher emphasized that students should use their own words and paraphrase what the partner said by occasionally demonstrating a "paraphrasing shadowing" activity. Also, the teacher encouraged interaction by participating with the students to provide further interaction or by having students practice expressions to ask questions or clarify meanings before or during shadowing activities.

III Concepts to Support the Activity

Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis is well-known for emphasizing the importance of input in second language acquisition. Shadowing activities provide a significant amount of input for learners. In these activities, the listener is exposed to the language that the speaker produces. As the students take turns shadowing, they both benefit from this extensive amount of input.

Contrasting with the Input Hypothesis, Swain's Output Hypothesis suggests that output plays an essential role in language acquisition, for which input alone is not sufficient. Swain (1995) discussed three functions of output: the 'noticing/triggering' function, the hypothesis-testing function, and the metalinguistic function. She claimed that output can help learners to pay attention to some of their linguistic problems, to test their knowledge of how the target language should work, and to reflect on their use of the target language and thereby restructure their linguistic knowledge. Shadowing is a way of making learners produce output, and it has great potential to provide such opportunities. In fact, some students, while reading their written work out loud in shadowing activities, noticed their mistakes and self-corrected them. The instructor also observed that students gave suggestions to each other's use of language during these shadowing activities.

Interaction is another very important key in collaborative shadowing. Long (1983; also cited in Lightbown & Spada, 1999) argues that through interaction, difficult input can be modified to the level that the learner can understand. Comprehensible input promotes language acquisition, and therefore, the input made comprehensible by

modified interaction can promote language acquisition. When students are engaged in simple shadowing or complete shadowing, they may not be focusing on the meaning as much as they should be but they may merely be repeating what they hear mechanically. However, as they become able to repeat selectively and interactively with more focus on the meaning of what is said, more interaction can occur (Murphey, 1995). Thus, more negotiation of meaning can take place, which helps to promote language acquisition.

Deacon & Murphey (2001) also make an interesting point:

Tools such as shadowing, summarizing, retelling etc. increase student comprehension, negotiation of meaning, and feelings of community. These intensifying activities allow learners multiple opportunities to respond deeply to stories and experience shifts in their beliefs and attitudes. This then leads to more lively participation in and out of class. (p. 23)

Therefore, it seems that when students find meaning in sharing stories among themselves, a cooperative atmosphere can be promoted among classmates. In addition, students can feel the joy of communication and can be motivated by thoughts such as "I can learn from my classmates' writing," "I want to know more about my classmates," or "I enjoy speaking with my own words." These were students' opinions actually heard in the author's classes.

Thus, when students are involved with their learning processes actively through communication with classmates, producing output and negotiating meaning through interacting with each other in *dialogue-formed* (or *conversational*, as students tend to become used to applying freer communication strategies in the activity) shadowing, they are more likely to develop a cooperative atmosphere and to appreciate communication. The structure provided by collaborative shadowing can therefore become a kind of autonomous learning space, where learners themselves exercise control over their learning processes. Once they are convinced that the practice works for them, they can even practice it outside the classroom, though the teacher's guidance and encouragement are sometimes necessary for students to move from *complete* to *selective*, to stay *interactive*, and to make use of paraphrasing skills appropriately.

Finally, shadowing activities with non-native classmates can help students to alter their beliefs or create a new, positive belief about language learning. Students may come to appreciate the value of practicing with non-native speakers or to change previously-held beliefs that communication with non-native speakers is not effective practice. Of course, the instructor has to be careful because the opposite could also happen, but he

or she should emphasize the importance of being in touch with non-native speakers' English. The possibility of students having to be in contact with non-native speakers in the future is probably much higher than the possibility of them being in touch with native speakers, considering the fact that the number of non-native speakers of English is now three times that of native speakers (Crystal, 1997). Murphey (1998) also suggests several benefits of practicing with non-native speakers (e.g., learners sharing similar vocabularies, more opportunities available to find non-native speakers to practice with, less anxiety due to similar backgrounds shared, etc.). Collaborative shadowing activities with non-native speaker classmates should be an optimal opportunity for students to experience such benefits. Once again, when students find the activities meaningful and helpful, they may expand these learning opportunities beyond the classrooms.

IV Local Contexts

The shadowing activities described above were implemented in three writing classes (two freshman and one sophomore class) in the fall 2004 semester and two grammar-focused freshman classes in the spring 2005 semester at a four-year university in Western Japan. Student written reflections were collected through end-of-the-semester questionnaires. To reduce the number of research variables, only data from the freshman classes were analyzed for this paper.

The classes in this study were part of the required English course for freshman. The course consisted of three modules: reading, writing, and grammar-based. The general purpose of this three-module English course was for learners to develop comprehensive, balanced English language skills by a) improving reading skills through a communicative approach with extensive reading assignments, b) by learning vocabulary acquisition strategies, c) by improving writing ability through a process writing approach to composition, and d) by acquiring the grammar knowledge necessary for communicative contexts and developing the ability to apply it both in oral and written communication situations. In the grammar module, paragraph writing activities were implemented in order to make connections between "output" activities and proper grammar use and also to promote writing skills that students will need in their academic activities in the very near future.

Students' English proficiency levels were different between the 2004 and 2005 classes. In 2004, there were two levels, basic and advanced, and students self-selected their class

according to their interests and perceived level. The self-selection usually resulted in advanced level classes having more strongly motivated students and usually higher level students. But in 2005, a standardized placement test was given and students were placed in one of three levels: basic, intermediate, or advanced. The 2004 classes referred to in this paper are advanced-level (including a few students who had study-abroad experience before entering the university) while the 2005 classes were basic. (A few students of the basic class showed English proficiency levels lower than a junior high school graduation level.) The classes included in this study are described in Table 1.

Table 1. Classes in this study

	Module	Class level	Class size
Fall 2004	Writing module	Advanced (self-selected)	27 students in one class, 28 students in the other.
Spring 2005	Grammar module	Basic (placed by test)	20 students in one class, 31 students in the other.

V Student Reactions

In this section, the student reactions to collaborative shadowing activities will be reported. First, the benefits and drawbacks of the activities found through student reflection essays will be discussed. Second, a comparison between higher level and lower level students will be conducted based on the instructor's observation and the students' responses in the end-of-the-semester survey.

1 Benefits and drawbacks of collaborative shadowing

The students' reflection essays showed that many of the students enjoyed collaborative shadowing activities, where they used English as an oral communication tool, shared stories, and discovered more about each other. One student said, "I had never spoken English in English class, but this year I often spoke English in class." Another said, "We seldom have the chance to speak with other classmates in class, but we often do in this class." Complaints are often heard among the students that more speaking practice should be implemented in English classes. It is not necessarily the case that students' wants are always identical to their needs. However, the fact that many students are not used to speaking in English even after studying the language for six years through junior and senior high schools clearly indicates that they have not had enough speaking

practice before, and these students appreciated that they used English in orally communicating with their classmates.

The end-of-the-semester questionnaire results also indicate that students generally found collaborative shadowing activities beneficial for language learning. Thirty-nine out of 51 students found the activities beneficial in 2004 and 36 out of 48 did so in 2005. Students' reflection essays and comments in the questionnaire indicate the following benefits of the collaborative shadowing activities:

- 1) It is fun to speak with classmates.
- 2) It is interesting to know about classmates.
- 3) Shadowing activities provide good listening and speaking practice.
- 4) Collaborative shadowing is a new way of practicing the language.
- 5) Shadowing activities provide the chance to learn from classmates.

The following students' comments from the questionnaire are samples to show the above benefits [written in Japanese by the students, translated by the author]:

- I was able to know about my partner by shadowing his journal. The journal often contains his honest opinions, hobbies, etc.
相手のジャーナルをシャドーイングすることで、相手のことを知ることができた。ジャーナルはけっこうその人の本音や興味などが書かれているので。
- Though shadowing was difficult, it helped me know more about my partner and practice listening; I enjoyed it.
シャドーイングはむずかしかったが、相手のことを知るきっかけとなったり、聞きとりの練習になって楽しかった。
- This was the only chance where I listened to others' journals. It helped me learn by comparing mine with others'.
他の人のジャーナルを聞ける唯一の機会、他の人のものと自分のものを比べて勉強することができたのでよかったと思う。

Thus, students enjoyed sharing honest, personal stories and finding more about fellow classmates' experiences. By doing so, students were able to develop a deeper rapport among themselves. This rapport seemed to be motivational when the students were engaged in the task. It is also intriguing that students appreciated collaborative shadowing as a new learning tool and as being useful for improving oral communication skills. Such students' favorable attitudes towards this learning tool appeared to be a positive factor that helped the activities work effectively.

Students also appreciated the opportunities to learn from their classmates. The

output that individual students had to generate allowed them to gain more feedback for what they write or say. As mentioned before, it has also been observed that students self-corrected their mistakes when they were reading their essay or journal out loud.

On the other hand, a few students mentioned that they did not like shadowing activities. The main drawbacks pointed out were a) repetition of classmates' errors and mistakes, b) uncertainty of correct pronunciation, and c) negative emotions about their own writing.

One student said in his reflection essay [written in English by the student]:

I don't think that shadowing activity is good. ... important point is I cannot remember the meaning of sentences ... I do not think this is effective way to listen and speak at the same time. Doing this activity makes me confused. (sic)

Another pointed out [written in English by the student]:

I don't like to shadow my classmates. Because it is very tension for me. I like to shadow teacher. But I don't like to shadow my classmate. (sic)

For students who do not have much confidence in their language ability, collaborative shadowing may be daunting because they are afraid of making many mistakes. They are also worried that they can not understand the speaker well because of their low level of proficiency. When the language used is too difficult, students may have difficulty in concentrating on multiple tasks at one time: listening, processing the meaning, and producing the words.

It is also true that the instructor cannot monitor all processes of every student's shadowing activity. In other words, the instructor cannot check if the students are using all grammatical features correctly, or if the students are pronouncing words correctly. It is overwhelming for students to notice all their mistakes, nor will they necessarily learn all the correct forms. Research shows that it is unlikely that students will pick up each other's mistakes when they are allowed to interact freely (Lightbown & Spada, 1999), but students may not be interacting completely freely in collaborative shadowing activities because they may be repeating each other's words mechanically. Thus, the statement in Lightbown and Spada (1999) may not apply in collaborative shadowing activities. Special attention needs to be paid to student repeating each other's errors and mistakes. Although language forms and pronunciation are not the primary objectives of the activity, they should not be ignored in language classrooms.

These issues of student concern will be discussed further in the section of suggestions for improvement.

2 Comparison between higher level and lower level students

The author originally hypothesized that higher level or more strongly motivated students (e.g., students from the advanced level in 2004) would use more of their own words in shadowing their partner, while lower level students or less motivated students (e.g., students from the basic level in 2005) would simply repeat what they hear and tend to repeat errors and mistakes that their partner have made. The author also hypothesized that higher level students would perceive the activity more enjoyable and more beneficial than lower level students, as they are more highly motivated.

Deacon and Murphey (2001) make a similar statement: "Beginners often shadow completely, while intermediate and advanced learners tend to shadow selectively (p. 12)." The author's general observations suggest that higher level students use more paraphrasing skills when shadowing their partner, though more careful data collections such as recorded students' interactions may be needed to make a conclusion about students' language use. Interactions in shadowing activities may also depend on the instructions given by the teacher, i.e., upon how strongly paraphrasing is emphasized in the instructions.

On the other hand, surprisingly, the students' perceptions of the activities in this study turned out to be the opposite of the author's hypothesis. In other words, lower level students from the basic classes seem to have enjoyed the activities more and found them more beneficial than did higher level students.

Table 2 shows two items from the survey: a) perceived enjoyment and b) benefit levels of the shadowing activities. Likert questions on a scale from one (strongly disagree) to six (strongly agree) were given for each item. The results between the two groups were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) and show that the students from the basic level classes reported that they enjoyed collaborative shadowing activities more and found them more beneficial than those from the advanced level classes.

Table 2. Student perceptions of the shadowing activities

[Advanced (Fall 2004) $n=51$; Basic (Spring 2005) $n=48$]

		minimum	maximum	average	SD
I. Enjoyable? $p=0.045$	Advanced	1	6	4.12	1.227
	Basic	1	6	4.61	1.145
Beneficial? $p=0.013$	Advanced	1	6	4.27	1.185
	Basic	2	6	4.89	1.238

However, one important factor must be mentioned: Questions were formed differently between the end-of-the-semester surveys in 2004 and in 2005. The 2005 survey focused only on the shadowing activities, while the 2004 survey asked students' perceptions about all course activities including not only shadowing but also journal writing and portfolio creation. This situation may have led students to make comparisons between these activities resulting in lower response numbers. In 2005, the survey focusing on shadowing activities might also have sent the students an indirect, implicit message indicating that their teacher believed in the positive effects of shadowing activities. Students may have thought it impolite to mark lower than which the teacher was clearly interested in.

Therefore, no further examination of the comparison will be made in this paper but will be kept for the future research. For future exploration, a consistent survey format has to be designed. Also, reasons why the students respond in a certain way (i.e., favorably, unfavorably, or neutral) in each class should be investigated carefully.

VI Suggestions for Improvement

Despite benefits of collaborative shadowing activities used in the author's classrooms, a few problems were also evident: a) repetition of classmates' errors and mistakes, b) uncertainty of correct pronunciation, and c) negative emotions about their own writing.

As for the repetition of errors and mistakes, teachers can encourage paraphrasing the partner's words or summarizing his or her story instead of simply repeating the words. The teacher can make sure that each student is responsible for his or her own mistakes whether he or she is producing output or is shadowing partners or sharing stories out loud. "Mention" shadowing (Murphey, 1998) may be more helpful in preventing learners from repeating errors and mistakes: In this form of shadowing, listeners are encouraged to shadow selectively with an emphasis upon repeating important, meaningful words or the last few words of each sentence.

Another possible solution to these problems is to use corrected students' work for shadowing. It is unrealistic to expect language instructors to correct all the mistakes found in students' essays every week throughout the semester, especially considering that the average university instructor in Japan sees at least one hundred different students each week. Even if it were possible, the effect is not always positive and may be actually negative, because seeing many comments in their essays, especially if shown

all in red, can be extremely discouraging to students. The instructor can instead choose a few students' work and correct major "target" mistakes, which then become the focus of the lesson. Students can then use these corrected pieces of work in shadowing activities.

Other kinds of instruction and practice are necessary for pronunciation improvement. The rules of spelling and pronunciation should be reviewed, and electronic or on-line dictionaries with an audio function may also be helpful. Students can check pronunciation using such resources beforehand. Of course, they can always ask their teacher or classmates for help in class if necessary. At the same time, the author found that many students did not pay much attention to pronunciation in collaborative shadowing activities. One explanation may be that students were too busy concentrating on processing meaning. They also might have felt embarrassed to speak "like native speakers" with "exaggerating-sounding" intonation and accents (Shimo, 2001). Therefore, instructors may have to remind students to pay more attention to pronunciation and try to avoid "*katakana* English" in collaborative shadowing activities. Using other tools for pronunciation practice, such as individual shadowing activities, before or between collaborative shadowing activities may be helpful.

Regarding the third problem, negative emotions, it is important to create a collaborative atmosphere in class where students do not have to be ashamed of making mistakes. It is not easy to change learner beliefs, but Murphey and Arao (2001) report that students changed their attitudes after watching videos in which learners of similar backgrounds comment that they are not afraid of making mistakes. The students came to believe more strongly that they can take risks without being afraid.

It may be helpful to provide students with opportunities to talk about their beliefs, emotions, or general reactions to classroom activities, from time to time. It often helps students to overcome anxiety when they realize that their classmates experience similar negative feelings. One student in the author's class commented:

I felt ashamed to read my journal and I couldn't do shadowing activity. But ... I noticed not only I felt ashamed when I read my journal to everyone, but also everyone felt. So I decided to read with courage. (sic)

When students find similar reactions in classmates' work, they may feel more comfortable doing the activities. Over time, they may also come to enjoy the activities more as they grow more used to them.

VII Conclusion

In this paper, I have discussed the potential effects of collaborative shadowing activities in second language classrooms. I will conclude by raising two issues for further explorations.

- 1) Are the effects of the activities different among higher level and lower level students? If so, how are they different? Is this learning tool more effective for a certain group of learners?
- 2) How do the teacher's instructions change students' performances in collaborative shadowing activities and their consequent effects upon language learning?

Concerning the first question, it should be noted that this study was not designed to explore the different reactions of different groups. The teacher's observations and incomplete comparison of the data from the questionnaires indicate that different proficiency levels may react to these activities differently. Some groups may benefit from collaborative shadowing more than others, and this issue needs more careful examination.

The second question is related to Murphey's (2001) questions: "How can one effectively teach complete shadowing, and then selective and interactive shadowing? Moreover, what tells students it is time to switch from one to the other?" and "How can we train partners to shadow, correct, and recast in supportive ways to provide the *i+1* and still stay in rapport?" (p. 150).

The teacher has to give instructions about how students can perform collaborative shadowing. As a teacher, I found it useful to explicitly show students, by way of demonstration, to share a large "chunk" of information such as a longer phrase, one clause, or one sentence rather than a few words so that they could focus on communicating the meaning. Also, it is necessary to emphasize a focus on processing meaning rather than listening to and remembering the exact words spoken. Again, it is not easy to measure the influence of the teachers' instructions on students' performance and its effect upon the activities, but such explorations may nonetheless help lead us to a more effective usage of collaborative shadowing activities.

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