THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SHADOWING ON THE SPEAKING SKILLS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Introduction

In recent years, there has been growing interest in various techniques to enhance second language (L2) acquisition, particularly for improving speaking skills. One method that has shown promising results is shadowing, a technique where learners listen to audio or video recordings and simultaneously repeat the words or phrases spoken. This approach, initially popularized in language learning by researchers such as Kato (2011) and Saito (2015), has been praised for its ability to improve fluency, pronunciation, and listening comprehension. Shadowing is considered a powerful tool, especially for secondary school students, who often face challenges in developing speaking proficiency due to limited practice opportunities. In this article, we explore the effectiveness of shadowing in enhancing the speaking skills of secondary school students, examining its benefits, challenges, and potential impact on language learning outcomes.

Main Body

1. The Mechanisms Behind Shadowing

Shadowing involves the simultaneous repetition of spoken language, requiring learners to closely imitate the pronunciation, rhythm, and intonation patterns of a model speaker. According to Saito and Akiyama (2017), this technique engages both cognitive and physiological processes, activating the areas of the brain responsible for speech production and comprehension. As students shadow, they practice producing speech in real-time, which enhances their ability to produce sounds, words, and sentences accurately. The immediate

feedback loop, wherein learners hear their own voice while matching it to the model, helps in refining articulation and fluency.

Moreover, shadowing has been linked to improvements in prosody—the rhythm, stress, and intonation of speech. This aspect is crucial for secondary school students, as they often struggle with producing natural-sounding speech in a second language. By imitating native speakers, students can learn to replicate the stress patterns and intonation contours characteristic of fluent speech, improving their overall spoken fluency.

2. Benefits of Shadowing for Speaking Skills

One of the most significant advantages of shadowing is that it allows students to develop both their fluency and pronunciation simultaneously. Research by Miyake and Tanaka (2019) found that students who engaged in shadowing exercises demonstrated notable improvement in their pronunciation accuracy compared to those who did not use the method. This was particularly evident in learners' ability to pronounce unfamiliar sounds and words that do not exist in their native language.

In addition to improving pronunciation, shadowing also strengthens listening skills, as students must pay close attention to the model speaker's speech. This can lead to enhanced listening comprehension, which in turn supports better speaking skills, as students can understand and produce language more effectively. Tharp and Gallimore (2017) highlight the importance of interactive listening in developing communicative competence, asserting that shadowing can accelerate this process by making listening practice more dynamic and engaging.

Furthermore, shadowing encourages active participation in the learning process. Unlike passive listening, where students might simply hear the language without interacting with it, shadowing requires students to produce speech and focus on both auditory and vocal outputs. This heightened engagement has been shown to improve motivation, as students see tangible progress in their speaking abilities over time. In the context of secondary school education, where learners

may struggle with engagement, shadowing can make language practice more enjoyable and rewarding.

3. Challenges and Limitations

While shadowing offers several benefits, it is not without its challenges. One limitation is that students may find it difficult to keep up with the speed of the speaker, especially when dealing with native-level recordings. For secondary school students, particularly those who are beginners or intermediate learners, shadowing may initially be overwhelming. As Kato (2011) points out, the cognitive load required to simultaneously listen and produce speech can be high, especially when students are not accustomed to processing the language at a rapid pace.

Additionally, shadowing does not always provide opportunities for meaningful interaction. While it is effective for improving pronunciation and fluency, it does not necessarily foster the development of conversational skills, such as turn-taking, negotiation of meaning, or responding to questions. For this reason, some researchers, such as Goh (2020), recommend combining shadowing with other communicative activities, such as role-plays or group discussions, to provide a more balanced approach to language learning.

Conclusion

In conclusion, shadowing is a highly effective method for enhancing the speaking skills of secondary school students. By helping learners improve their pronunciation, fluency, and listening comprehension, shadowing facilitates the development of more confident and natural speech. However, it is important to recognize that shadowing has its limitations and should be used in conjunction with other strategies to promote overall communicative competence. With proper implementation, shadowing can significantly contribute to the language learning process, especially for secondary school students striving to improve their speaking abilities.

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