



SELF-LEARNING ACTIVITY 2

SPEECH IMITATION (“SHADOWING”)

OBJECTIVES

Improve English (or other foreign language) pronunciation.

TIME REQUIRED

20-40 minutes depending on the level of proficiency in the foreign language and the length of the speech sample chosen for this imitation exercise.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE

Individual, although if the auditory (oral imitation) and audio-visual (oral and gestural imitation at the same time) material consists of dialogues, it is a task that could be adapted to a paired exercise that could be done in the classroom.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

A device to reproduce audio or audio-visual material, depending on the type of shadowing to be done. You need audio material (if it is an oral imitation) or audio-visual material (if it is both an oral and a gestural imitation).

INSTRUCTIONS

The auditory and audio-visual material for this imitation task can be the spoken production of a single native speaker (monologic spoken production) or it could also consist of short dialogues (dialogic spoken production). The task consists of simultaneously repeating an audio-visual input with the voice (audio), or also with body movement (visual), which is what we do when we communicate. In other words, the learner reproduces the sounds and gestures of a native speaker while listening to him/her. It is therefore a question of imitating another speaker in action on video. This imitation should be done as simultaneously as possible so that, in doing so, the learner cannot think about the content of what is being imitated. The samples to be imitated are usually of short duration (1 minute, for example, but could be shorter or much longer). In this way, we focus attention on the form of the speech and not so much on the content. It is advisable to do this "shadowing" practice regularly in order to automatize the imitation mechanisms.

The procedure may vary depending on the type of shadowing. There may be purely simultaneous oral imitation from audio material, or simultaneous oral and visual imitation from audio-visual (video) material. There are usually several iterations (4-6 repetitions of the same audio or audio-visual material). Each iteration consists of watching the video alongside which the learner does (1), imitation in a low voice (2), simultaneous reading with the video activating subtitling (3), revision of the text to check comprehension (4), imitation of the audio focusing attention on the sounds three times (5), revision focused on solving pronunciation problems (6), imitation of the video thinking about the content (7), imitation of the final video as accurately as possible.

SELF-EVALUATION AND REFLECTION GUIDE

After doing this activity it is important to reflect on two aspects of the task:

1. What difficulties the learner has had and has had to overcome in order to achieve a high degree of simultaneity in imitation. Those aspects which are more difficult to master indicate weaknesses or difficulties in oral production which may need to be worked on specifically.
2. The quality of imitation achieved in terms of both phonetic and prosodic (accentuation, rhythm and intonation) correctness.

Points 1 and 2 can be reflected upon in each shadowing session.