



ABOUT SHADOWING

One of the best places for student interpreters to start is with “shadowing.”

Shadowing means that the student simply repeats what was said in the same language in which it was spoken. This requires remembering and repeating the message, but it does not require transferring meaning from one language into another language.

When shadowing, it is not important for the student to render the message using exactly the same words that the speaker used. The goal is to get the message across without summarizing or leaving anything out. It is acceptable to paraphrase or substitute a word for another with the same meaning.

Shadowing allows students to focus on the behavioral skills

Interpreting requires in-depth knowledge of two languages and cultures and involves complex cognitive activity and intense concentration. This makes it very difficult for high school students to learn the necessary behavioral skills while they are also trying to transfer meaning from one language into another.

Shadowing allows students to learn the necessary behavioral skills without the added burden of rendering the message in another language. Once the behavioral skills are fully mastered and can be executed consistently, the student can add the difficult task of actually interpreting the message

Shadowing simplifies instruction and practice in a multilingual class

Shadowing is done entirely in English. You can give the same instructions to all students, regardless of their heritage languages. Students can practice together as a class or in groups even though they speak different heritage languages.

Shadowing deemphasizes heritage language skills

Students will have varying skill levels in their heritage language. Students with more limited heritage language skills are often reluctant to practice interpreting in front of a class. While shadowing, the differences in heritage language skills are irrelevant.

Shadowing provides an opportunity to improve English pronunciation

Shadowing may also be an opportunity for students to improve their English pronunciation. When shadowing native English speakers, students can mimic correct pronunciation while repeating what was said.

Excerpted from “Student Interpreters,” www.speakyourlanguages.com