



Exploring EFL Students' Perspectives on the Effectiveness of Internet-Based Tools in Learning Features of Pronunciation. The Case of 2nd year students of English in Ziane Achour University of Djelfa

Barboura Oussama*

Djillali Liabés University of Sidi Bel Abbés
(Algeria)

barbouraoussama@gmail.com

Prof. GRAZIB Mohamed

Dr. Moulay Tahar University of Saida
, (Algeria)

mfgrazib@hotmail.com

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to explore the students' perspectives on the effectiveness of Internet-based tools such as (Video platforms, mobile applications, online dictionaries, social media, and AI chatbots) in improving their pronunciation. The study also aims to explore what tools the students use the most, the difficulties they face while using these tools, and their suggestions to improve them. A questionnaire is used to collect the data. It combines both qualitative and quantitative questions. The participants of the research are 30 second year students of English at Ziane Achour University of Djelfa. The findings show that students positively perceive internet-based tools and that the majority value the benefits of these tools in their pronunciation learning. Youtube and language learning applications are the most used tools, students acknowledge that internet-based tools are flexible, easy, interactive, and offer authentic English content that help them learn the challenging features of pronunciation.

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* Corresponding author

1. Introduction

Over the last couple of decades, the focus on pronunciation teaching has been rising and falling. Teaching Pronunciation was irrelevant and considered unimportant in the grammar translation method, then it grew up in prominence and gained attention in the direct and the audio-lingual methods, only to be ignored again with the rise of communicative language teaching (CLT) and the natural approach. (Jones, 2002). Some researchers, such as Nation and Newton (2009) emphasized the importance of teaching pronunciation, while others like Krashen (2013) questioned the effectiveness of a direct instruction of pronunciation. The scholars who emphasized the importance of EFL pronunciation teaching believe that a good pronunciation can help in communication, especially in intelligibility (Derwing & Munro, 2005). The aim of teaching pronunciation is to enable language learners to understand and to be understood, to build their self-confidence to enter communicative situations, and to enable them “to monitor their speech based on input from their environment” (Goodwin, 2001, p. 117).

In today's world, foreign language teaching and learning has improved thanks to technology. The widespread access to internet, mobile devices and laptops has made learning foreign languages easier and more efficient. Teachers and learners have

started integrating these technologies into their everyday practices with efforts to invent “exciting new scenarios of use” (Kukulska-Hulme, 2005, p. 119). The role of technology as a supportive tool in second and foreign language learning outside the classroom is believed to be important but often neglected. However, technology has become ubiquitous and inevitable for many learners who want to study a foreign language beyond the classroom context (Reinders & Benson, 2017). The rapid advancement in technology gives new visions that empower both language teachers and learners to facilitate the process of teaching and learning pronunciation.

2. Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to explore the existing research on two main points. The first point is pronunciation. This review defines pronunciation, then it explores its importance in addition to the main challenges and difficulties faced by EFL teachers and learners. The second point that is discussed in this review is the nature and the use of internet-based tools, and how they can help teachers and learners overcome the difficulties of the English pronunciation instruction.

2.1 Teaching Pronunciation

Pronunciation, /prəˌnʌnsiˈeɪʃn/, is defined according to the English language dictionaries as “a person's way to

pronounce words. Oxford dictionary defines it as the way a particular word or sound is pronounced.

A lot of linguists discussed the topic of pronunciation and tackled it in a more technical way. Hornby (1995) defined pronunciation as the way a person speaks the words of a language or the manner in which “someone utters words”. Thus, it is the way of “uttering a word in an accepted manner (Otłowski, 1998). Richards and Schmidt (2002) defined pronunciation as the method of producing certain sounds. Yates (2002) stated that pronunciation is the production of sounds that we use to make meanings. These particular sounds of a language are often referred to as “segments”. Pronunciation does not focus only on the segmental level of a language (vowels and consonants). It also extends to study the aspects of speech beyond this level of individual sounds to reach the supra-segmental level where it covers aspects like intonation, stress, timing, and rhythm.

2.2 The Importance of Teaching Pronunciation

A correct pronunciation is very important for effective spoken communication. According to Darcy (2018) pronunciation is related to both speaking and listening. On one hand, when learners receive a good pronunciation instruction, their speaking skills will be improved and clear. This clarity of speaking will definitely be

reflected on their intelligibility and reduce the effort for interlocutors. On the other hand, pronunciation training can help enhance the learners' listening and perception which, in turn, develops their ability to understand a “naturally fluent, connected speech.” Also called “speech stream” (Brown, 2011).

In the EFL context, learning the spoken form of the language is mainly based on pronunciation. A good pronunciation enables learners to convey their messages accurately and facilitates communication. Celce-Murcia, Briton, and Goodwin (2010) emphasize the importance of learning pronunciation in achieving overall speaking proficiency. They argue that learning correct pronunciation improves learners' ability to express and delivers their messages effectively. Celce-Murcia states that learners who prioritize pronunciation accuracy are more likely to develop better fluency and communicative competence in the target language. Munro and Derwing (1995) emphasize the critical role of pronunciation in intelligibility, they believe that it is essential for learners to produce sounds, stress patterns, and intonation that are easily understood by the native speakers of the target language.

2.3 The Difficulties of Teaching Pronunciation

The difficulties and the challenges of teaching EFL pronunciation have been among the interests of researchers in the

field of foreign language teaching for a long time. These challenges can be internal or external. The factors that lead to the difficulties of teaching and learning EFL pronunciation can be internal, i.e. related to the learners themselves. There are some internal factors that makes teaching pronunciation difficult, these factors are related to the EFL learners themselves such as motivation, attitude, and anxiety, etc. According to Elliott (1995) the most important internal factor that affects pronunciation is attitude. In his research to explore the effects of field independence, hemispheric specialization and attitude, Elliott found that the more learners are aware and concerned about acquiring proper pronunciation in Spanish, the more accurate is their pronunciation. (p. 365). The lack of learners' motivation is also believed to be an important challenge and a difficult problem that has to be solved. EFL teachers can face learners with low motivation who are not willing to join the pronunciation course, these learners seem uninterested in practicing English sounds and they tend to be passive preferring not to be involved in the classroom activities (Monika, Winarti, & Yundayani, 2019). Pennington and Richards (1986) discussed the effect of integrative motivation. They stated that some learners who have are willing to integrate in the target language culture and to be identified with its speakers are more motivated to try to master the native accent of the target

foreign language. On the other hand, learners who do not have such integrative motivation tend to maintain a distinctive accent (Consciously or unconsciously) (p. 215). Age can also be an internal factor that makes teaching EFL pronunciation a challenging task. The age issue is a controversial issue. Some scholars believe in the biological advantage of young learners over adults. Their assumption is based on the Critical period Hypothesis, i.e. a critical age for language learning that is the age before puberty. According to their view, learners who start learning the foreign language after that age are believed to be unable to obtain a better pronunciation compared to learners who learn a foreign language at a proper age. (Nation & Newton, 2009) (Loewenthal & Bull, 1984). On the other hand, some other scholars argue that there is no significant age advantage (Scovel, 1969), and that there are cases when older learners have better chances of having near native pronunciation accents. Loewenthal and Bull (1984) explained this contradicting results by the fact that there are other varying "psychosocial conditions" of the testing situations when gathering data. (p. 216).

There are numerous external challenges that affect teaching EFL pronunciation. One of the biggest difficulties that teachers face is the lack of a clear guidelines on how to teach pronunciation. Most teachers often think that they are not competent and

qualified enough to teach pronunciation. This happens due to the lack of knowledge and the lack of pedagogical focus in phonology courses of their study (Priya & Kumar, 2020). In addition to that, many teachers become hesitant to teach pronunciation because they have not received enough formal training. Furthermore, some of the texts offered little explanation in the pronunciation instruction and guidelines. (Derwing, Diepenbroek, & Foote, 2012).

Another external factor that causes difficulty in teaching and learning pronunciation is the assumption that pronunciation is not very important in the language teaching program. Phonetics tends to be ignored or “side-lined” by the teachers and replaced by other skills that are seen more important for the final exams preparations. (Pillai, 2008). The influence of the mother tongue MT is factor that influences teaching and learning pronunciation. The negative transfer of phonological structures from the MT or any other prior linguistic interference is believed to make learning pronunciation difficult. (Schmidt, 1996).

Another challenge that EFL learners encounter in the process of learning pronunciation is the lack of the active role of English outside the classroom. In other words, there is a very limited environment that allows students to be exposed to the natural use of the English language. This

exposure is related to the amount of time you spend in the target language environment, and it depends on how much we use it in our daily lives. So the more we spend our time listening and speaking English, the better our pronunciation will be (Zhang, 2009). Krashen (2009) claimed that learners acquire an L2 primarily from a “comprehensible input” that learners receive will being exposed to the language before being able to speak. (p. 7).

3. Internet-based Tools and Learning EFL Pronunciation

It is commonly believed that internet is a very effective and beneficial tool for education purposes, especially for foreign language teaching and learning. Using internet provides learners with the opportunity to develop their linguistic skills and supports a “student-centred” way of learning in all levels. (Ozel & Arikan, 2015). Internet is an effective means that enables its users to open new horizons in foreign language learning and teaching (Lee, 2005). Consequently, Internet has gained a role in shifting the educational systems to modernism where new approaches and methods of learning are used (Ghouraf, 2022). This vital role has been gained with the advancements in “network-based communication” (NBC) that has a great potential in second and foreign language learning, because it now connects a wide range of speakers all over the world. This opportunity has not been

believed to be possible (Pellettieri, 2018, p. 59). Many of NBC tools offer real-time synchronous communication. This means that speakers can talk to each other instantaneously. This makes these tools more promising to EFL learners because they make communication more dynamic and more like real life oral communication which is a very important aspect of EFL learning.

Unlike the traditional ways of teaching EFL setting, that many learners find “Teacher-driven”, the use of internet allows learners to better improve their communicative abilities. They engage many skills to interact with others (Warschauer & Kern, 2000). Online learning can also create a comfortable, friendly learning environment where learners feel less anxious. It allows “all” learners to participate and encourages the “affective support” among peers of learners that eventually boosts their motivation towards FL teaching (Lee, 2005) (Weasenforth & Meloni, 2002). With the aforementioned benefits of the Internet technology in learning foreign language, many instructional materials and guidelines have been founded to support the use of the Internet-based tools and online language teaching and learning in general. However, there was a little focus on the learners’ perspectives (Lee, 2005). Systematic studies on the way learners perceive the use, and the condition of online language learning is necessary.

Furthermore, more researches should be done on “how the learners’ own language learning experiences and backgrounds can affect the way they see language network-based learning. By listening to learners, foreign language educators can remake their pedagogical efforts and modify their strategies of teaching to meet the needs of their learners. (p. 140) . Internet can deliver many online multimedia resources for EFL learners to improve their pronunciation. Through its dynamic strategies, Internet can help reinforce the learners’ cognitive skills, it can develop their skills, and it can help a lot of difficulties and ambiguities in the strategies used in traditional methods of teaching. (Macancela, 2019). During the process of learning spoken skills, learners can utilize the internet online media. This can be done in many different ways such as voice chatting, videos calling, podcasting, speech recognition software, videos conferencing, etc. (Kuning, 2020). Despite the vast researches in the use of internet in foreign language learning, few studies have been done on the benefits of improving learners’ pronunciation skills through internet-based tools. (Anisimova, Bobodzhanova, Kolobova, & Makarova, 2020). We now have a vast number of technological tools to assist in pronunciation teaching and learning.

4. Method

This section presents the research method, the tool used to collect data, and the data

analysis procedures and process. This study aimed at exploring EFL students' perspectives on the effectiveness of using Internet-based tools in learning pronunciation.

4.1. Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- 1- How do EFL students perceive the effectiveness of internet-based tools in improving their English pronunciation?
- 2- What kind of internet tools do Algerian EFL students prefer for learning pronunciation, and why?
- 3- What challenges do they usually face when using internet-based pronunciation for pronunciation practice?

4.2. Research Approach and Instrument

To explore this, this research adopts a mixed (quantitative and qualitative) research approach. According to Kumar (2011) qualitative design is beneficial in discovering, exploring, and describing specific situations using the participants' "perceptions and experiences" towards the phenomenon being studied in a flexible way. The quantitative design, on the other hand, aims to rate the frequencies after converting the explored data into statistics.

This research is also descriptive because the collected data will help giving an

evidence about the use of the students' attitudes on the use of internet-based tools to improve EFL pronunciation as well as their preferences, challenges, and difficulties.

To answer the aforementioned research questions the present research uses structured questionnaire which has both close-ended and open-ended questions about the students' perspectives on the use of internet-based tools. In the close-ended questions the participants have specific number of questions (answers) to choose from. Open-ended questions are the questions where the participants do not have to choose a specific responses, whereas in open ended questions, students write long detailed answers. (Taherdoost, 2019). The questionnaire was designed in "Google Forms" and sent to the students via an online group that they created on telegram. Murray and Zoul (2015) stated that Google forms is great tool where teachers can gather information in a simple and a fast way. It helps to make online surveys. It allows educators and researchers to gather the respondents' information in the real time. It also allows to invite the participants though emails or though sharing the form' link. It is flexible, participants can use a variety of browsers to answer the questions in their PCs or Phones. When getting the responses, the researcher can see the responses separately, or summarized together in charts.

4.3. Participants

The participants of this study are second year students in the department of English in Ziane Achour, University of Djelfa. The sampling method used in this research is “convenience sampling” which is a method of collecting the samples that are convenient, available and accessible when conducting the research. The participants in our sample are second year students who studied phonetics for a year and who have a prior knowledge about the different aspects and features of pronunciation as a part of their university courses. The total number of second year students enrolled in the department of English in Ziane Achour University is 94 students. The number of students who responded is 30. Therefore, the response rate is 31.91%.

4.4 Description of the Questionnaire

To explore the students’ perspective on the effectiveness of internet-based tools in learning English pronunciation a structured questionnaire was administered. It is divided into three sections that contain quantitative and qualitative questions. This division is done to provide a more systematic view of the students’ perspectives, experiences, attitudes, and their recommendations. In the first section the main focus was put in the students’ personal information and background. Questions about age, gender, the number of years that students spent studying English in addition to the students’ self-assessment

of their English language proficiency. The attempt in this section was to provide a context for the collected data and examine the relationship between the students’ background and their perception of internet-based tools. The second section gives more detailed information about the students’ use of internet tools to learn pronunciation. It examines their specific experiences with the topic with questions about the frequency and the types of tools they use such as (youtube, language learning tools, online dictionaries, social media, etc.) In addition to the specific features of pronunciation they are learning (vowels, consonants, stress, intonation, rhythm) and lastly this part attempts to examine their general perception about the effectiveness of the internet-based tools. The last section of the questionnaire is meant to explore the students’ opinions and suggestions. It focuses on the challenges faced by the participants when using internet-based tools, their personal preferences, between traditional ways of learning and internet-based learning, their recommendations for other learners of pronunciation, and their suggestions on the way to improve the tools. The last question in this sections invited students for further comments about the specific tools they personally use and that they recommend.

4.5 Data Analysis Procedure

After obtaining the results of the questionnaire using Google Forms, a data

analysis was carried out. The analysis involved both quantitative and qualitative methods that aimed at shedding the light on the students' perspectives on using Internet-based tools in learning pronunciation. The use of Google forms alongside with Microsoft Excel facilitates visualizing the results in graphs and charts. This helped in having a good idea about the students' opinions' and perspectives. In this study, the close-ended questions were analysed quantitatively using a set of statistics to get frequencies, numerical results, and percentages. Open-ended questions, on the other hand, were analysed using a thematic analysis. A thematic analysis was utilized to examine the different themes and patterns. The use of this analysis and the combination of the different methods ensures an in-depth analysis of the collected data.

5. Data Analysis and Discussion

In this section, the collected responses are analysed to have a deeper, more detailed understanding of the students' perspectives on the effectiveness of Internet-based tools in learning pronunciation. As mentioned before, the analysis will utilize both qualitative and quantitative approaches to give an inclusive view of the data.

5.1 Analyzing Students' Questionnaire

5.1.1 Section One: Demographics

5.1.1.1 Gender

Gender	Participants	Percentage
Male	4	13.3%
Female	26	86.7%
Total	30	100%

Table 01 Gender distribution

Gender was added to the questionnaire to identify the composition of the correspondents and to provide context before interpreting the results. It was also meant to see if there are any different preferences regarding the use of Internet-based tools between males and females. It is noticed that the distribution of genders in the respondents is imbalanced. The vast majority of respondents shown in table 1 above are females (26) that represent 86.7% with a very small number of male students (4) with a low percentage of 13.3%. From the total sample. The gender imbalance was expected, because the majority of second year students in the department of English are females (more than 70% are females). Although it is expected, the imbalanced gender distribution might limit the generalizability of the results in other contexts where the population distribution is different.

5.1.1.2 Age

Age	Participants	Percentages
18-21	28	93.3%
22-25	2	6.7%
+25	0	0%

Table 02 Age

Another important element in demographics that adds context and helps

create a “demographic profile” for the participants is age. The age element is also important because it can affect students’ ability to perceive and learn the English. It can also be important in pronunciation and their views and perceptions on using internet-based tools. Our sample consists of second year students who are “early-stage” undergraduate students in the university. Accordingly, the table above (table 02) reveals that most of the students are between the ages of 18 -25 years old (28 students) whereas there are a few in the 22-25 age group (2 students) with no older students. This was also expected as our department of English accepts only new students with a new baccalaureate diploma.

5.1.1.3 The years of exposure to EFL

Years of Exposure to EFL	Participants	Percentages
1-2 year(s)	16	53.3%
3-4 years	5	16.7%
+4 years	9	30%

Table 03 Years of Exposure to EFL

This element was included in the questionnaire to understand the relationship between the levels of the English language exposure and the students’ attitudes towards the use digital tools for language learning. As indicated by table 03 above, the majority of students (53.3%) reported that they studied English for (1-2 years). This reveals that more than a half of the respondents are still on relatively early stage of learning. As they

are developing basic language skills. In this stage of learning, students are in need for pronunciation instruction both inside the classroom with their teachers or outside using internet-based tools to improve their pronunciation. However, for this category of learners, internet-based tools may better serve as an additional aid rather than a main source of instruction. The results also show that nearly a third of the students (30%) have been studying English for more than 4 years. This suggests that they have a relatively better level of proficiency. This group of students may also have better experience in choosing the materials and the contents offered by the internet-based application to refine and improve their English pronunciation. The third category of students reported that they have been studying English for (3-4 years) 16.7%. They may have an intermediate level of English, but they are still improving their skills. Exploring internet-based content can also help to this category by providing them with a variety of materials that may enrich their learning resources and improve their pronunciation.

5.1.1.4 English Proficiency

English Proficiency	Participants	Percentages
Below average	0	0
Average	13	43.3%
Good	16	53.3%
Excellent	1	3.3%

Table 04 English Proficiency

This question is about the students' self-assessment of their proficiency in English. It was included in the questionnaire to provide insight into the students' confidence. The results reveal that more than half of the students (16 students) consider themselves good with a percentage of 53.3% while 13 students rate themselves average, that is 43.3% of the sample. There is only one student who rates herself excellent. It is important to examine students' self-confidence to know whether they are willing to engage and explore additional online resources while studying pronunciation or not. Those who consider themselves proficient in the English language are likely to be more engaged and open to using internet-based tools and resources effectively and freely, while the ones who rate themselves as average or below average might need some help while using these tools.

5.1.2 Section Two: The Use of Internet-based Tools

5.1.2.1 How often do you use Internet-based Tools in Learning Pronunciation?

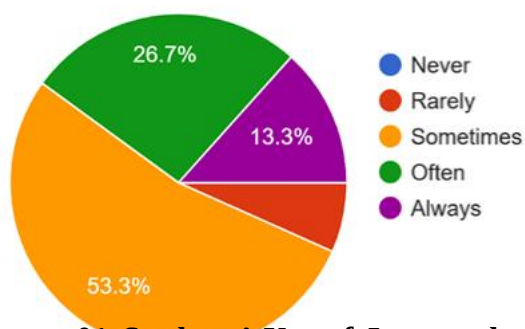


Figure 01 Students' Use of Internet-based Tools for learning Pronunciation

The main aim of this questions is to determine students' familiarity with using internet-based tools. It can help us know whether students have any prior experience in using internet to learn or practice their pronunciation. This will give us insights about the state of technology acceptance in general.

More than half of the students (53.3%) said that they sometimes use internet-based tool for learning pronunciation. This means that, although these students know the importance of using internet, they may not integrate it regularly in their everyday learning. About (26.7%) reported that they often use internet-based tools in their pronunciation learning. The fact that these students are implementing these tools more often means that they are likely to be more motivated, active, and engaging towards the use of internet materials in learning pronunciation and that they are more consistent in doing that as a part of their study routine. A smaller portion of the students (13.3%) answered the question with "always". This reflects that this group of students is fully aware of the effectiveness of using such tools in pronunciation learning. This group may have a more advanced use of a wide variety of internet-based tools, and they are much more comfortable with technology and might be focusing on achieving high levels of pronunciation mastery. Eventually, a small minority of (6.7%) of the students mentioned that they rarely use internet

tools when learning pronunciation. This small group of students may be uncertain and reluctant to use internet tools. The fact that these students are rarely using internet-based tools to learn and practice pronunciation may happen due to some obstacle and difficulties they are facing. They might be unaware or sceptical about the effectiveness of these tools, unfamiliar with their use, they might have some technological difficulties accessing or using these tools, or perhaps they just prefer traditional methods of learning.

5.1.2.2 Internet-based Tools

Tools	Number	%
Youtube	25	83.3%
English Learning Apps	14	46.7%
Online dictionaries with Pronunciation	13	43.3%
Social Media Websites	12	40%
Ai Chatbots	12	40%
Voice Assistants	5	16.7%
Pronunciation Websites	5	16.7%
Other	3	9.9%

Table 5 Internet-based Tools Used by the Students

The question that we asked here was “What internet tools do you use to practice your English pronunciation? More than one choice can be selected.” The students in our sample were given six of the most widely used internet-based tools for learning pronunciation and they were allowed to mention other tools. This question provides help in understanding

some important things about the use of the internet tools. Firstly, to comprehend their preferences. This can give us a good idea about the tools with which students are most comfortable. Secondly, to have an update about the trending learning methods so we can understand the contemporary tools and technologies. Lastly, it makes us aware about the less used tools. This can reflect problems or difficulties the students’ are facing using these tools. The results revealed are summarized in table 5 above. It is obvious that most of the students (83.8%) utilize youtube as a main reference for learning pronunciation, this means that they really value this tool and find it as a rich source of audio visual content. The channels on this video streaming platform are a great source for learning, not only pronunciation, but also all the skills of English. A considerable number of the respondents (46.7%) stated that they use English learning applications such as Duolingo and Babbel. Language learning application offer lesson that teach pronunciation with practice. The content in these apps is personalized and interactive. Students are given the opportunity to interact by answering questions, quizzes, and completing challenged to earning token that allow them unlock new levels and features and win in-app gifts. Online dictionaries are also reported to be used by 43.3% of the students. Online dictionaries give students quick and easy access to the accurate pronunciation of words which is

essential while they are learning pronunciation. Most online dictionaries, that students use offer transcription of words in addition to clickable buttons with a recorded vocal pronunciation in both British and American accents. Social Media websites and Ai chatbots have the same percentage of 40% each. Social Media platforms such as Tiktok, Instagram, and Facebook are probably the most used platforms nowadays. The English learning content in these platform is rapidly growing and students are using these platforms as a tool for learning due to their benefits. They offer access to authentic content, they allows learners to listen to native speakers of English, and they are full of interactive features such as audio-visual calling, social interaction, feedback, and support. Chatbots also are highly beneficial. They offer a personalized and dynamic learning features. They can stimulate a real life conversation where students are more at ease if they lack social skill, because they put the learner in a low-pressure setting where they are not afraid of being judged by others. The results also reveal that voice assistants as Siri, Google assistant, Alexa, and Cortana as well as pronunciation websites are the least used tools with the percentage of 16.7% each. Although voice assistants can offer pronunciation feedback, they might have limited effectiveness of the students' pronunciation due to the fact that they have limited feedback (they offer a limited set of

commands). Students' use of websites that provide specialized instruction in the English language pronunciation like BBC learning English is very limited. A minority of 9.9% included other tools that they adopt when learning English pronunciation. They reported that they are using films and series from streaming platforms. Online movies and series platforms can be very effective tools for learning pronunciation as they offer authentic content in a contextual setting where students can learn from native actors and actresses using English in real world setting. Using English subtitles while watching these series can also improve the students' comprehension skills.

5.1.2.3 Aspects of Pronunciation that Students Focus on the most.

Pronunciation Aspects	Participants	%
Vowels	17	56.7%
Consonants	8	26.7%
Word Stress	12	40%
Sentence Stress	10	33.3%
Rhythm	16	53.3%

Table 6 Pronunciation aspects students prioritize with online tools

This question aims at identifying the aspects of pronunciation that students focus on the most when using online tools. Students will focus on the aspect they feel it needs more attention. Therefore, by understanding the students' main focus in using internet tools we can help both teachers and tools' designers. We can help

teachers put more emphasis on the aspect that students find the most challenging, and we can help content designers to adjust their tools to better meet the learners' needs. Understanding the students' focus can also guide us to the gaps in the existing methods and tools. If an aspect of pronunciation are less focused on, this may indicate the need for more resources, tools, and teaching strategies in that aspect. The results indicate that vowels and rhythm are the top focus area for most students (56.7% and 53.3% respectively) followed by word stress with a percentage of (40%) and sentence stress (33.3%) and finally consonants are the least focused aspect with a percentage of 26.7%. The high focus on vowels can be justified by the difference between Arabic language and English in the vowel system. The vowel system in Arabic is much easier than English that students find particularly challenging. Rhythm involves both timing and the flow of language. It is very importance to achieve natural speech. Internet tools that integrate rhythmic practice in their content are likely to be considered as beneficial. Word stress is also among the features that are in the focus on the students while using online application. Word stress involves emphasizing specific syllables in a word (strong syllables that sound longer, stronger, higher in pitch and different in quality.) These are called stressed syllables. We also have stressed words in sentences (sentence stress). The

focus on stress means that the students are aware of its importance as a main suprasegmental feature to make their speech more natural and comprehensible. Finally, the less focused, less challenging aspect of pronunciation involves the pronunciation of consonants as a part of the segmental features. The lower focus on consonants in the use of internet-based application might suggest that students find them easy to perceive i.e. they do not need the help of any additional online tools.

5.1.3 Section Three: Students' Perspectives

4.1.3.1 The Effectiveness of Using Internet Tools in Learning Pronunciation

Effectiveness	Participants	%
Extremely effective	2	6.7%
Very effective	23	76.7%
Effective	3	10%
Slightly effective	2	6.7%
Not effective at all	0	0%

Table 7 The Effectiveness of Internet-based tools

This question is directly related to the title and the theme of this article. It enables us to measure students' views on the efficacy and the contribution of internet-based tools in improving their pronunciation skills. It is important to explore the students' views so that we can understand their perception regarding the use of internet-tools. The answers of this questions correlate the use of these tools with the teaching outcomes

and provide feedback to decide whether to keep using them, change them, or find other alternative that students perceive better. Table 7 indicates that the majority of students find the internet-based tools either very effective or extremely effective this means that most of the students have had a positive experience with these tools and that they felt an improvement and that they value the role of these tools in their learning. Only 10% of our sample reported that the use of internet-based tools is moderately effective, this indicates that some students may feel that the tools can be improved or backed up with other learning resources. They might have some difficulties using them. This will be explored and analysed in the next questions of the questionnaire. Another group of student that represents 6.7% of the total respondents find that the use of internet tools is only “slightly effective”. This means that this group of students have special needs in pronunciation learning that the current internet tool may have failed to fulfil. This can be explained by the fact that students might have individual different preferences, or they have some technical issues regarding the use of internet tools, or it can be related to their choice of the content in the internet. Finally, no students reported that the tools are completely ineffective. This is a positive indicator. This indicates that all the respondents have found some benefits in the use of internet-based tools while learning pronunciation.

5.1.3.2 What difficulties do the students usually face when using internet tools for pronunciation practice? (More than one option can be selected)

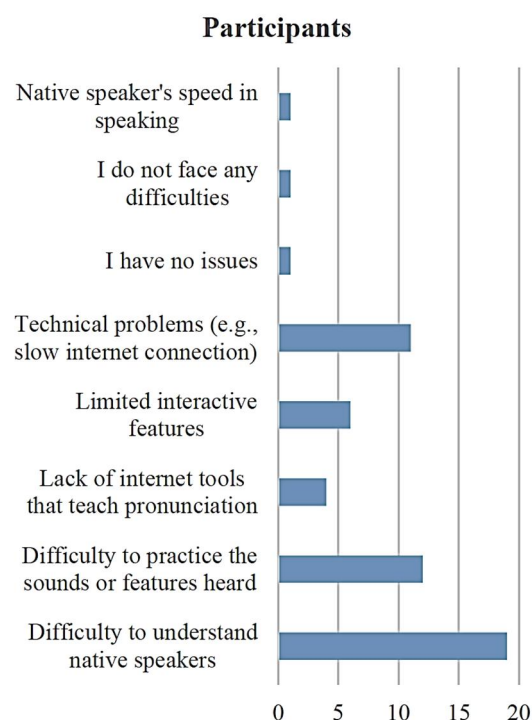


Figure 02 The Main Difficulties Students face while Using Internet-based Tools

The aim of the question is to explore the difficulties that students face with internet tools when learning pronunciation. This question is important to understand the barriers that hinder the learning process. By identifying the difficulties we can help developers improve the internet tools to be more effective, user-friendly, and comprehensive. The identification of difficulties and challenges can also help teachers of pronunciation to change their teaching strategies, help and support students to overcome the difficulties and implements new teaching materials.

Students reported that their main difficulty is to understand native speakers, this was the answer of 63.3% of the respondents. Native English speakers usually talk in their natural pace. EFL learners find this difficult and they struggle to understand and find speed and intonation in the authentic speech difficult. A significant group of students reported that the thing they find challenging is practicing the sound and features they hear. A good practice of the segmental (vowels, and consonants) and the supra-segmental features (stress, intonation and rhythm) is necessary for an effective pronunciation learning, and if students fail to replicate these features correctly, there pronunciation practice will be limited. More than third of the students (36.7%) have a problem using internet-based tools due to technical problems and difficulties. Slow internet is among the most frequent problems that can hinder their learning experience. Another problem that (20%) of the students reported is the limited interactive features. Students in this group find that the available tools still lack interaction and engagement that keep them motivated. A small group of (13.3% of the population feel that there is still a lack in the internet-based tools that are specialized in teaching pronunciation. The content that focuses on teaching the English language is vast. But according to this group, there is a very limited specific tools specifically target English pronunciation. Only (3.3%)

of the respondents in the questionnaire reported that they have no issues. This indicates that while the majorities have certain challenges, a very tiny minority is able to adapt or find the existing tools easy to use and understand.

5.1.3.3 What improvements would you suggest in the internet tools for pronunciation learning? (You can suggest more than one improvement)

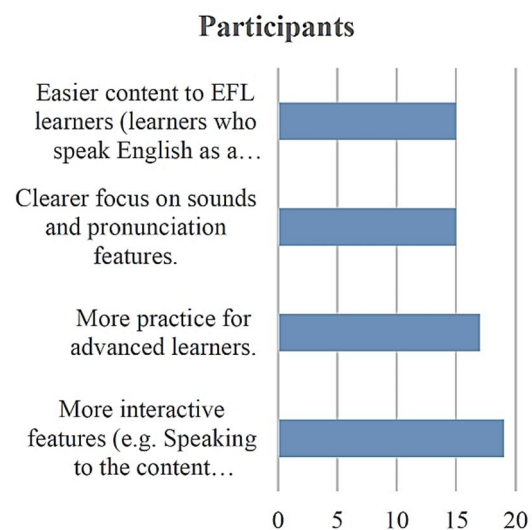


Figure 03 Suggestions for Improvement

This question aims at highlighting the elements that internet-based tools may be lacking. Exploring and understanding the students' perspectives and feedback in this regard is important to understand how these tools can be improve to align with the expectations of the students. The questions also allows us to understand the students' learning needs and their learning styles. The results show that the majority of the students 63.6% expressed their need for more interactive features, such as a real-time feedback, error correction, and the ability to communicate with the content

creators in the internet tools. The students' answers indicate that they perceive the current internet tools as being passive or limited in their engagement and that they find interactivity essential for effective learning. The second suggestion that was highlighted by 56.7% of the learners was practice for more advanced learners. They reported that there is a lack of materials for more advanced learners. The current materials, according to the students, might be too basic and do not challenge them in their proficiency levels. Clearer focus on sounds and pronunciation features is also one of the improvements that are suggested by students. Half of the students thought that internet-based tools highlighted the need for a more explicit focus on the pronunciation of individual sounds of English (vowels and consonants), intonation and stress patterns, and rhythm. Such focus can be achieved by the implementation of some detailed phonetic exercises, visual aids, and audio recordings to teach learners the accurate pronunciation. That last improvement that students want to see in the internet tools is easier pronunciation for non-native speakers of English. This is reported by 50% of the students. Easier pronunciation means that native speakers of English should take into consideration that a large portion of their audience are EFL learners' who may not keep up with their pace while speaking. Therefore, native speakers

should be slower, clearer when in their content creation.

5.1.3.3 Which of these tools do you prefer in learning pronunciation?

The choices were (using internet tools and traditional classroom setting with the teacher)

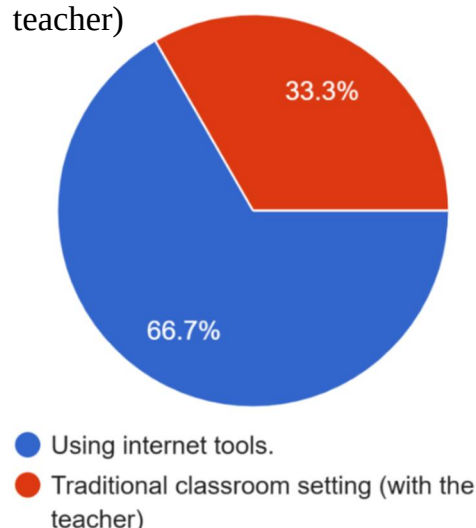


Figure 04 Learning Preference

Exploring the students' preferences is essential for both teachers and researchers. It allows researchers to evaluate the overall learning methods to know which method is more engaging and motivating for the EFL students in learning pronunciation.

The results of this question demonstrate that the majority of the EFL students (66.7%) prefer using internet tools over traditional learning. This clear preference is a result of many reasons like the internet tools flexibility where students can learn the way they want at the time they want, the variety of audio-visual resources available for the students for learning pronunciation, the ability to explore the content that

matches the students' interest, in addition to the difficulties in the classroom learning like the limited time for pronunciation instruction, over-crowdedness, and the lack of individualized learning.

The second part of this question "Why?" is an open-ended question that aims to explore the reasons and the factors that students chose to justify their choice of using either internet tools or Traditional classroom setting with the teacher.

After the quantitative analysis of the first part of the question "Which of these tools do you prefer in learning pronunciation?" in which students chose between "Internet tools and traditional classroom setting", the second part of the question "why?" was qualitative. To analyse this part of the question, a thematic analysis was followed. Thematic analysis is a qualitative analysis used to analyse classifications and present themes or patterns that relate to the data (Alhojailan, 2012). It refers to pattern recognition that identifies the main themes "core themes" via a "careful reading and rereading the material" then extracting the meaning from the data being analysed finally we evaluate the frequent themes. (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The thematic analysis of the question "why?" showed different themes:

6.1- Flexibility, ease, and availability

Students value the use of internet-based tools due to its flexibility, ease of use, in

addition to the ability to continuously access to its resources without any time or place limitations. Students appreciate the fact that internet tools can be used whenever and wherever they want. This can be seen in response 3 where the respondent favoured internet tools and described them as "faster, smoother, and available at all times." And in response 1 where the students said: "Mora flexible and comfort for tha student ". Another student wrote: "Because they are functional, you can use them anytime, anywhere and in any way you want." This response shows that internet tools enable every student to learn the way they want to learn according to their time, and learning styles. The availability of internet-tools makes them a great way of learning pronunciation this is shown in response 6 where the student says "...he may be absent or late for class, which hinders the student's progress in the language due to boredom. But if he is studying at home, he is completely comfortable and learns his lessons on time without having to worry about being late to the program That's why internet tools are better." Unlike traditional classroom setting that may restrict learners into a tight time and place, internet-based tools are easier, always available and more flexible.

6.2- Comfort

Many students agreed on the fact that the use of internet tools makes them much comfortable, especially for the students

who have anxiety or the fear of making mistakes in front of their classmates. Pronunciation learning requires the students to talk out loud in front of others. In response 11 the student said that internet tools are “more helpful for people who are afraid of making mistakes in front of their colleagues...” this aligns with response 14 of a student who said: “Because i am an introvert and have social anxiety”. This shows that privacy is among the things that students like about the use internet-tools for learning. In the 18th response the student simply stated: “I think it’s more effective and comfortable...” Therefore, psychological comfort is an essential factor in learning pronunciation and internet tools can be comfortable for the students to learn without stress and anxiety.

6.3- The exposure to authentic content

Among the frequent themes that students discussed while talking about the advantages of using internet-based tools is the exposure to native, authentic content. Internet allows its users to access to a wide range native audio-visual contents. Algerian classrooms do not have such an advantage. Most of teachers in Algeria are not native speakers of English. According to many students this will limit their ability to learn pronunciation. This argument can be seen in response 2, 4, and 13. The student in response 2 stated that teachers are usually not native and that she is using AI tools that can produce native content.

She said :” the teacher at the class room is not a native speaker unlike Ai tools which can creat sounds like native speaker”. In response 4, the student preferred online tools over teachers. He said that “Hearing a foreigner online is much more effective than listening to a teacher who probably can't even pronounce properly”. The diversity of the authentic native English content is also among the features that internet-tools offer and that students appreciate. The students in response 13 highlighted the fact the internet offers “different ways of pronunciation with different accents...” “...Unlike university” she said “which only give the pronunciation of the RP english which is the used one” She criticized the the traditional classroom learning by being limited to RP English, then she added “if someone wants to learn a specific accent, for instance American accent, university will not be helpful.”

6.4- Interactive feedback and the teacher’s support.

Students discussed an important factor in teaching pronunciation which is feedback. Some of these students supported the use of internet-tools in this regard. Respondents 24 and 30 believed the internet tools are better because “they give imidiate feedback”. On the other hand, there are many responses in favour of traditional classroom teaching with the teacher who believe that the interactive feedback is

better in the classroom with the teachers' support. Response 26 emphasizes that "speaking with someone is more effective cuz H/she can detect mistakes more than E-tools" suggesting that teachers can understand their students questions and correct their mistakes better than digital internet tools. The student in response 29 noted that a teacher will always understand his students' needs and correct their mistakes better. He said "He will understand me better and knowing my mistakes and focusing on them". Thus, in this theme, students believe that there are benefits for both traditional classroom learning and internet tools.

6.5- The limitation in the classroom environment

One of the drawbacks of traditional classroom setting (with the teacher) is that it is seen as restrictive, and limited. The lack of practice and the large class sizes negatively affect the students' focused learning. This view is found in three responses. In response 2 the respondent believed that "student at the class room often don't have the chance to practice their speaking skills and pronunciation, instead they can use internet tools." Also in response 6, where the student believed that large class sizes is a serious problem in teaching pronunciation. The respondent pointed out that "... teachers may focus with only a small number of students, which hinders student's progress in the

language due to boredom..." The student in response 27 raised the problem of large class sizes more. She said: "Traditional classroom setting can be beneficial sometimes, but back to the conditions we face such as high number of learners, noises or lack of tools can make it a bit challenging." In response 21, the student believed that internet is much easier and enjoyable because students "...won't be restricted by the rules that teachers impose."

Students see internet-tools are an alternative solution to avoid all of the aforementioned classroom limitations because the tools offer uninterrupted learning experience where students have less boundaries and more chance to practice their pronunciation.

6.6- Motivation and interests

Internet tools offer personalized learning that gives students freedom to choose the content they are interested in. The findings of the questionnaire shows that students are more motivated when they are free to choose their learning resources according to their interests. Responses 10 and 23 highlight this matter. In response 10 the student said, referring to internet "It's more fun because I'm the one who going to choose the youtube video based on what I'm interested in ..." Response 23 highlights the importance of the personalized learning when the students said: "the pronunciation of any language is

more effective when you learn it on your own using the internet tools.”

6.7- Social Interaction

Although most students believe that the use of internet-based tools is more effective than traditional learning setting, some students can still see that traditional learning has its advantages. Among the frequent themes related to the pros of traditional learning is social interaction. The student in response 12 believed that “...nothing can be close to interactive learning and interacting with people.” This response emphasizes the important of social interaction and face to face interaction. Response 17 mentioned the idea of group learning that makes “the student comfortable to learn”. This response focuses on the concept of social learning and the interaction with classmates that plays a positive role in learning. This is also highlighted in response 26 where the student say “I think speaking with someone is more effective cuz H/she can detect mistakes more than E-tools.” This students shows the importance of interacting with other people (the teacher and her classmates) who can correct their mistakes more effectively.

The thematic analysis shows that most of the students prefer using internet-based tools because they are more flexible, more accessible, easier, and more psychologically comfortable. They also prefer them because they expose us to

authentic native content. Students value the fact that internet-tools provide them with instant feedback and motivate them by offering personalized content that meets their needs and interest.

7. Discussion of Findings

This study was done to explore the students’ perspectives on the effectiveness of internet-based tools in improving their pronunciation skills, the case of second year students of English at Ziane Achour University of Djelfa. The show that students have a positive perception towards the effectiveness of internet tools for learning pronunciation. The majority of students (83.4%) reported that they find these tools very effective. This aligns with Reinders and Benson (2017) who emphasized the role of technology as a supportive tool in second and foreign language learning outside the classroom. Algerian EFL students use Internet tools because they view them as beneficial tools that offer availability, flexibility, exposure to native authentic content. Both the quantitative and the qualitative analyses show that the most used tools for pronunciation learning and practice are youtube (83.3%). Students see youtube as a great source of a variety of learning and educational material where they are exposed to native content that meets their interests. English learning applications like Duolingo, Babbel come second as the most used tools for a structured pronunciation

learning, followed by online dictionaries (43%) that students reported that they are using them on a daily basis as self-references. Other tools like advanced AI chatbots, voice assistants in addition to pronunciation specialised websites are less used. These internet-based tools provide a diverse, free and interactive content that satisfies the students learning needs and accompanies them in their pronunciation learning experience. The mentioned tools were used to learn the pronunciation of the different sounds of English, like vowels (56.7%) and supra-segmental features such as rhythm (53.3%). The focus on these two specific aspects is justified. Students consider them challenging and they require extra effort and materials to learn, since the English vowel system is difficult compared to the students native language (Dialectal Arabic).

Despite the students' positive perspective towards internet-based tools, there are a couple of difficulties and challenges the students reported that can hinder their pronunciation learning. The most common difficulty was understanding the native speakers' fast speech and intonation patterns with a percentage of (63.3%). The fast-paced pronunciation of native speakers can be difficult for EFL learners to understand. (Fuangkarn & Rimkeeratikul, 2020) (Darcy, 2018). Additionally, technical problems like the access to the internet network and the bandwidth speed are also mentioned as one of the main

factors of difficulties (36.7%), this indicates that governments should invest on the internet infrastructure for a better implementation of internet in the educational systems. Students also reported that there are very few internet tools that are specifically designed for teaching pronunciation they wanted more structured, pronunciation specific exercises and feedback to improve and evaluate their pronunciation. Finally, the results suggest that while internet tools effectiveness is positively valued and perceived by the students, they still need some improvement regarding their interactivity, feedback, and its content, that is to be designed for different learning levels. The preference of internet tools over traditional classroom learning shows that teachers should implement these tools alongside with their structured teaching, and that they should combine the two methods in flexible way that gives students more control upon their learning.

8. Conclusion

This study explored second year students' perspectives of second-year EFL students at Ziane Achour, University of Djelfa on the effectiveness of internet-based tools in improving English pronunciation. The study aimed at improving teaching pronunciation by analysing and exploring the existent modern internet tools that students use in addition to the difficulties that they have when the tools are used to

learning English pronunciation. The findings revealed that the students positively perceive internet-based tools, and that the majority value the benefits of these tools in their pronunciation learning. Online tools such as youtube, language learning applications, in additions to online dictionaries are the most commonly used tools. Students acknowledge that internet tools are easy to use, flexible, comfortable, interactive, and that they expose them to authentic native content that helps them learn difficult features of pronunciation like vowels, rhythm, and stress effectively. However, the study explored some difficulties and challenges that face the students while using these tools, including technical issues, the fast pace the natives use that EFL students cannot understand. Finally, the study investigated the students' suggestions for improving internet-based tools which are interaction, feedback and multi-level content that covers the different levels of students. Hence, combining internet-based tools with traditional methods will definitely create a comprehensive teaching experience. The researches in the future can focus on the integration of internet-based tools within the pronunciation classes in the Algerian universities to achieve better pronunciation.

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