
RESEARCH ARTICLE

YouTube Videos as a Resource for Self-Regulated Pronunciation Practice in EFL Distance Learning Environments

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ABSTRACT

Many EFL students have limited opportunities to listen to native speakers, practice English out of class, have problems in listening comprehension, oral expression and lack oral fluency. This article proposes using YouTube videos to improve EFL students' pronunciation. It aims to show the following: (i) How YouTube videos can be integrated in EFL instruction to teach pronunciation; (ii) the advantages of integrating YouTube videos: They are free, provide variety of topics, speakers, difficulty level, can be easily downloaded to the laptop or mobile phone and can be viewed anywhere and anytime; (iii) show how examples YouTube videos that target a specific pronunciation skill can be located; (iv) criteria for selecting online videos such as the video length in minutes, topic familiarity, difficulty level, speed of the speakers, students' proficiency level, and students' interests; (v) pronunciation subskills that can be developed through supplementary YouTube videos; (vi) teaching and learning with YouTube videos before watching a video, while watching the video and after watching the video. Further recommendations for developing students' pronunciation are given.

KEYWORDS

YouTube pronunciation videos, pronunciation videos, pronunciation errors, pronunciation practice, pronunciation subskills, EFL students, self-regulated learning, self-regulated practice, distance learning

ARTICLE DOI: 10.32996/jeltal.2022.4.2.4

1. Introduction

YouTube is the most popular video-publishing and sharing platform in the world. It does not only offer millions of movie, music, talk shows, sport, news, travel, and personal videos, but also a multitude of educational videos. YouTube is used by people of all ages and for an unlimited number of purposes including language learning. It offers teachers and students learning resources for developing a variety of language skills and instant access to authentic language in a wide variety of contexts (Wang & Chen, 2020). It promotes second language acquisition in general and self-regulated learning of English (McNulty & Lazarevic, 2012; Wang & Chen, 2020). Using YouTube and audio tracks imitation YATI and the web channel "Myscene Tube" improved EFL learners' speaking skills (Hamad, Metwally & Alfuruque, 2019; Kooi Lian, Kathiyaiah, Hani, Chanderan, & Yunus, 2021). Both written and video feedback help students achieve greater linguistic accuracy when speaking in English (Tseng & Yeh, 2019). Listening and viewing activities affect Taiwanese EFL Learners' listening comprehension (Kuo, 2009; Chien, Huang & Huang, 2020). YouTube videos can be used in teaching English for specific purposes (Al-Jarf, 2017; Al-Jarf, 2012b; Al-Jarf, 2011). EFL-YouTube remix empowers multimodal and computational literacies for EFL purposes (Eisenlauer, 2020). YouTube video-making helps EFL learners develop language, intercultural and intracultural knowledge (Benson, 2015; Yang & Yeh, 2021). Output-focused video-based instruction helps in students' pragmatic development (Jernigan, 2012). Reflective YouTube videos developed students teamwork skills, ability to manage stress, technological ability and creativity, delivering information and enriching knowledge related to English learning and other types of knowledge (Sari, Dardjito & Azizah, 2020).

Regarding the teaching of pronunciation via video and YouTube, McNulty and Lazarevic (2012) reviewed current trends in using video-based language instruction in K-12 educational settings and concluded that the use of video, as an instructional tool,

provides a variety of learning activities. Video plays a significant role in improving students' pronunciation and presentation skills. Video-based ESL activities contribute to the overall learning, motivation, and the enhancement of pronunciation skills.

At King Khalid University in Saudi Arabia, YouTube videos and listening audio tracks imitation YATI promoted EFL learners' speaking skills, fluency, and pronunciation (Hamad, Metwally, & Alfuruque, 2019). Similarly, Iranian EFL Learners who used audio-visual recorded listening tasks showed different effects on students' pronunciation accuracy, compared to the control group that used audio recorded materials only (Drood & Asl, 2016).

In Purnamasari's (2018) study, EFL learners reported that YouTube improved their English pronunciation and found it interesting, motivating and fun. They added that YouTube is beneficial because it presents the instructional materials in letters, sounds, and pictures at the same time.

In the USA, Martinsen, Montgomery and Willardson (2017) investigated the effects of video-based shadowing and tracking pronunciation exercises on fourth-year high school students' French pronunciation. Results revealed statistically significant improvements in both tasks, with the highest improvements in the read-aloud task. Students appreciated the learning autonomy and authenticity of the self-directed exercises. Findings suggested that distributed practice, through culturally contextualized and video-based interventions, can offer an engaging way to incorporate explicit pronunciation instruction in the high school classroom.

In Taiwan, students enrolled in an undergraduate multimedia English course designed for practicing speaking and writing skills found written and video feedback useful for speaking skill development in English. Written feedback helped the students learn grammar rules and word usage and achieve greater linguistic accuracy in speaking English. Video feedback helped them improve their intonation but neither video, nor written feedback, helped the students improve their pronunciation and fluency. The students preferred written rather than video feedback because of its efficiency and clarity (Tseng & Yeh, 2019).

The extended exposure to captioned videos on adult learners' second language pronunciation were investigated by Wisniewska and Mora (2020). The subjects were tested on speech processing skills, i.e., speed of lexical access, segmentation, and sentence processing, and phonological accuracy in perception and production. The subjects benefited from captioned videos in speech segmentation and speech processing skills regardless of the viewing mode. However, there were no significant effects on phonological accuracy in perception. In production, focus on phonetic form improved pronunciation only in the absence of captions, whereas captioned viewing led to pronunciation benefits as long as there was no focus on the phonetic form. These findings suggested that pronunciation improvement can take place with the help of captions or, in the absence of captions, when learners' attention is directed to pronunciation.

The above literature review shows a limited number of studies that examined the benefits of YouTube in developing L2 learners' pronunciation. In some studies, such as Tseng and Yeh (2019) and Wisniewska and Mora (2020), some video-based activities did not lead to pronunciation improvement in L2. In addition, the prior studies reported above focused on a variety of video-based activities but one aspect of pronunciation. Many aspects of pronunciation were not covered.

Furthermore, before the COVID-19 Pandemic, Saudi students at the College of Languages and Translation (COLT), KSU, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, were taking 4 listening and 4 speaking courses in the first four semesters of the translation program. The students practiced listening to recordings in a multimedia language lab and practiced a variety of speaking activities in class (face to face). Despite that, many freshman students found English pronunciation difficult. They had difficulty with some English vowels and consonants, different pronunciations of the same vowel digraph, and different vowel digraphs with the same pronunciation, associating the spoken phonemes with written graphemes, assimilation, elision, geminates, pronunciation of the suffixes -s, -es- and -ed, homophones, homographs, word stress, intonation, pause and juncture and others (Al-Jarf, 2021c; Al-Jarf, 2019; Al-Jarf, 2018; Al-Jarf, 2008a; Al-Jarf, 2008b; Al-Jarf, 2005a; Al-Jarf, 2005b).

After the outbreak of the Pandemic in March 2020, there was a sudden transition from face to face to distance learning (DL) at Saudi schools and universities in all courses including listening and speaking which were held online using a variety of platforms such as Blackboard, Zoom and Microsoft Teams. Students and instructors' surveys showed that EFL students at COLT had difficulties with their online classes, understanding online lectures, practicing listening and speaking skills, correcting their pronunciation errors, lack of engagement, lack of motivation and interaction in online listening and speaking activities. They were frustrated and felt that online classes were boring (Al-Jarf, 2020a; Al-Jarf, 2021d; Al-Jarf, 2021e). Therefore, this study aims to fill a gap in the literature and motivate by proposing the use YouTube pronunciation videos (YTPV) to improve EFL college students' pronunciation in the distance learning (DL) environment; give the advantages of using YTPVs; criteria for selecting YTPVs; examples of YTPVs; pronunciation subskills that can be developed with YTPVs; instructional strategy with YTPVs, and how to engage students in YTPVs.

The integration of YTPVs in pronunciation instruction has several advantages. They are free. They provide a variety of pronunciation subskills, difficulty level, video instructors, and speeds, and video instructors accents, and video length in minutes. They can be easily downloaded to the laptop or mobile phone. They can be viewed anywhere, anytime and as many times as the students wish. They can be used as a supplementary material. They are interesting for students. The students consider them a new form of learning. YTPVs bring the instructional material alive and allow learners to use their visual and auditory senses in learning the video content because YTPVs combine audio, video, text, color, music, gestures, graphs, and illustrations that clarify the pronunciation point being addressed by the video. The use of digital video in ESL classrooms enhanced students' listening comprehension skills (Al-Jarf, 2012b; Al-Jarf, 2011).

2. Context

Listening and speaking are important skills that translation students at COLT need to acquire at an advanced level, as understanding and production of spoken discourse in a variety of subject fields is a pre-requisite for transferring the meaning of specialized texts orally from the source to the target language in the different types of interpreting courses that the students take during the translation program and after they graduate. Accurate pronunciation is also important for student-translators as faulty pronunciation can affect understanding and communication.

In addition, practicing listening, speaking and pronunciation from an assigned textbook is not enough to develop students' proficiency level in English listening, speaking and pronunciation because EFL instructors do not have enough time to devote to pronunciation practice in the listening and speaking classes based on the textbooks. Therefore, listening and speaking courses should be supplemented by extensive pronunciation activities that students need to practice on their own outside the classroom (Al-Jarf, 2021b; Al-Jarf, 2021d). YTPVs provide students with a good opportunity to practice different aspect of English pronunciation with which they have difficulties especially those that differ from the Arabic pronunciation system.

Moreover, numerous prior studies show that the use of YouTube videos can be an important pedagogical resource in language learning. YouTube has hundreds of pronunciation videos that are useful for EFL students at COLT such as mastering English vowels, consonants, minimal pairs, homographs, homophones, word stress, rhythm, pronunciation of plural endings (-s/-es), verbs ending in -ed, contractions, numbers, accent reduction, American accent training and a lot more.

3. Pronunciation Materials, Tasks, and Instructional Strategy

3.1 Searching for YTPVs

To search for YTPVs on YouTube, the students can enter search terms such as: *"English vowels", "English consonants", "English minimal pairs", "English homophones", "English homographs", "English stress", "pronunciation of -ed", "pronunciation of -es", "English intonation", "American accent training", "International Phonetic Alphabet"* in the search box. They can enclose the search terms in quotation marks and use Boolean operators (&, or, not) to narrow the search. It is important to add *"English"* in order to get more accurate results and to avoid getting YTPVs in other languages.

3.2 Types of YTPVs

YouTube features a multitude of English pronunciation videos that can be integrated in pronunciation instruction. In addition to videos that target specific pronunciation features or subskills listed in section 3.4, the following are some types of YTPVs that the students can use online or download and use offline:

Learning English pronunciation

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=n4NVPg2kHv4
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=l69vZ5xabbo

Conversation skills

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=NNamZZsggM4
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=bMo2Rg_wNTQ&t=10s
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=DPmtnb8NBog

Shadowing Technique in English

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljEP_ywBm7I
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdBuCzFmjWA
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCp4RYiezZc

Common pronunciation mistakes

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=tw25CM1MXIU&t=312s

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSUGRduFtIQ
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=TdtUjWb0O9w
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=SiTngO2U_f4

English Pronunciation lessons

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=USKrBTvgY_s
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=USKrBTvgY_s&t=16s

How to Improve your pronunciation

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=uNOnyMRdDTA
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=R2rNyPhxUA8
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=5l-fo-d0gt8

English Pronunciation of Common Vocabulary

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vl-ga67mcjQ
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=KWr3DxHdE_4

Pronunciation Training Techniques

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=VcONw2BBfb8

Pronunciation Tutorials

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=-e66ByetpDY

Pronunciation eBooks

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZeJM7QmufO8

The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-e66ByetpDY>
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=4cU9fqpCqBA
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=c97xwLdSsXU
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=zRFFvCrlf1w
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzsQkjX4fD8
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=JwTDPu2TE6k

3.3 Criteria for Selecting YTPVs

The YTPVs selected should be related to listening and speaking subskills assigned in the textbooks and taught in class and to the common pronunciation errors that students make. They should target a specific pronunciation subskill such as vowels or a specific vowel or a specific consonant. The instructor can try several YTPVs for the pronunciation subskill before deciding which ones are useful and appropriate for the students. To accommodate the students' different proficiency levels, interests, needs and learning styles, several YouTube videos for the same pronunciation subskill can be assigned. The instructor should take into consideration the difficulty level of video selected, its length in minutes, degree of familiarity, content complexity and speed of the speaker, his/her accent (American, British, or non-native) and whether it contains enough examples. It is better to choose a video with a native speaker. One pronunciation subskill with several videos can be selected and practiced at a time. Where possible, choose closed caption videos and videos that are interactive and allow students to repeat or pronounce words.

3.4 Pronunciation Sub-Skills Practiced with YTPVs

According to Al-Jarf (2021a); Al-Jarf (2019); Al-Jarf (2008a); Al-Jarf (2008b); Al-Jarf (2005a); Al-Jarf (2005b); Al-Jarf, 2003; Al-Jarf (1994); Al-Jarf (1993); Al-Jarf, (1992); Al-Jarf (1990); the following pronunciation subskills can be developed with YTPVs:

English Consonants

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=nI9BL4AB5YQ
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=5t_CACR3J3I

English Vowels

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=jORgKrANiMw
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-27eVle65A

English Diphthongs

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=KrfXMO_3lgo
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=vL1iGL11Jzg
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1HZPx8DuDw

Allophones

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=wA9--WJSPws
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=MTCx2hCvxHQ

Minimal pairs

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=AT5kR6uq0X8
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=pf9a0kaf_EA

Words with silent Letters

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=5svtIgYDIDI
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUccn2K0fjw
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=UN3Woj_WHro

How to Pronounce r in British English

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcQ1xcSljQo

Flap t, Vanishing t and Glottal Stop in American English

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=_3zbmyUu8-s
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=vipuRtt6Cw8
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=e7cceF-wcUI

Homophones & Homographs

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=yu9PJ6lBy1Q
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=RqPAeq3vA_s

Pronunciation of Contractions

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=MzhjD-XrYjg
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=EoCWYFHE-L8

Pronunciation of the Past Tense suffix -ed

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=vv7cBMCBUdk

Pronunciation of the Plural suffixes -s and -es

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=EMWmCb1Cldc

Pronunciation of Words Ending in Suffixes

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=fs5LSLs3tdw

Phoneme-graphemes correspondences:

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=FPu0dLABlF0
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=FPu0dLABlF0

Pronouncing -tion and -sion

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=YvCpgh9Am6U
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=x8eAfl-1mAI

Pronouncing -ure, -ture, -cher, and -sure

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=-i0qXDiG2fY
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=jl4-4RighSs

English Stress

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=efNSXTGkAsE

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=KU6iHojU3w
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=jmUDGyW9m6w
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=1rZWKjN9E8M
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=E8eEyzPexlY

Intonation in English

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6aE4nceJt8
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=i7lbDWHHa1w
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=FStyKn4V8cE

Gemination

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=41ZTuDiw89I
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=hbQ5kl6WUy4

Assimilation, Elision, Intrusion & linking

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=vFU5kqxD6s
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4aLDPrbEKU
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=mH2zUfAO-2Q
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=V1t1uPZCD8g
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=fAW1-bu5lW0
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=9V0_UxIkIDY
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=ky9dQC9-0vc
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=DNUFyj_Bpro
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_EVkARtnmY

Pause and Juncture

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=YyY63ivixOs
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1HFikdnByk
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=zqo773mjnsq
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=hKYtukHiTy4

Chunking in English

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5Qcc0Y1SK4

British and American Accent training

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNu3q5ODgqs
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYcaeDPLN8
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=DpplGqZ3OSY
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Q9ltoUF3zl
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=saTZ6TRS_HE
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=CrAYLCIXXJk

Accent reduction

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=nkQ7lwEWeGA
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=783Z67xzKXs
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=kXqD_B8qjM

Advanced students may use the interactive phonetic chart for English pronunciation and the International Phonetic alphabet (IPA).

3.5 What Is Self-Regulated Learning

In language pedagogy, self-regulated¹ learning is the way in which people regulate their cognitions, behaviors, emotions, and environmental aspects during a learning situation. It is important for students to be able to control their minds during the learning process. There are many self-regulation skills that students can acquire such as good time management, the

¹ Self-Regulated Learning: What Is it and Why Is it Important? (exploringyourmind.com)

ability to select the best problem-solving strategies, and the ability to actively control their emotional states such as frustration.

In addition, self-regulation² is the ability to monitor attention, thoughts, and emotions. Students who are capable of regulating their behavior and emotions are better able to engage with other students and respond to the varying activities of the classroom. Students need to regularly practice self-regulation habits. It is not enough for teachers to introduce strategies and trust that students will be able to act on them as needed. Each day students should be encouraged to use these strategies as they participate in activities, interact with teachers, and navigate their own responses and emotions. Self-regulated learning³ should be used during initial learning, when troubleshooting a problem encountered while learning and when the students are trying to teach others.

3.6 Instructional Strategy with YTPVs

Since there are many videos that focus on any single pronunciation subskill even at a single vowel or consonant level. Browse through them, watch a sample yourself and select 3-5 videos that are suitable for your group of students. Introduce the video by giving the title and summarizing its content. Tell the students what they need to focus on in the video. Give pre-questions to help the students follow and understand the pronunciation point explained and the examples given and to help them relate the examples to the point targeted by the video.

The students can set their own time schedule to watch their videos on their own at home. The students should avoid watching a pronunciation video passively. They should take notes, jot down rules, write examples, pay attention to specific pronunciation differences, and repeat after the speaker (instructor) in the video. Encourage the students to focus intentionally on the specific pronunciation point (rule) in the videos, the examples, repeating after the video instructor. The students may take a break in between videos targeting the same pronunciation point to allow them to re-focus and to give them time to process the material presented in the videos.

The students can watch the videos, discuss the rules and examples and answer questions individually, in pairs or in small groups. They may watch their videos on their smart phones, iPads, Tablets, or laptops. Discussions with the instructor can be held online via the DL platform used.

After watching the video, the students summarize or retell the video content orally. They may come up with additional examples that illustrate the pronunciation rule explained in the video. They can also identify mispronunciations and do supplementary error correction exercises. The instructor's guidance before, during and after watching a pronunciation video is necessary. To motivate the students to watch the YTPVs, give credit, and include the video content on the listening and speaking tests. Students can keep a log of the YTPVs they have watched throughout the semester.

The students can reflect on their and self-assess their pronunciation and each other's. The instructor provides guidance or helps the students engage in their own video watching. The teacher decides what the students should watch next and the sequence of the pronunciation videos to be watched.

Each student may choose to use a pronunciation video that best suits her needs, and the instructor should be flexible with that. They can also suggest pronunciation videos of their choice, which they find useful. As students move throughout a pronunciation video, the instructor can take advantage of teachable moments. This will normalize the habit of self-regulation and encouraging the students to watch the assigned video and practice on their own. The instructor should continue to support the students' development with important pronunciation videos to be used in and outside of the classroom.

The instructor should guide the students in the initial learning, i.e., when the students start watching pronunciation videos at the beginning of the semester; when a troubleshooting problem is encountered while learning from a pronunciation video; and while the students are interacting with, providing feedback on each other's performance after watching a pronunciation video.

4. Recommendations and Conclusion

YTPVs should be used in a pedagogically meaningful way during the self-regulated pronunciation practice by being active, constructive, individual, collaborative, conversational, contextual, guided, motivating, and engaging. Since students' pronunciation problems and weaknesses may be due to insufficient modelling in DL and lack of sufficient exposure to the target language as used by native speakers and lack of sufficient exposure to a variety of English accents, the present study recommends the following:

² [5 Self Regulation Skills to Improve Classroom Behavior | Kickboard \(kickboardforschools.com\)](#)

³ [Self-regulated learning - Wikipedia](#)

- Pronunciation problems of EFL learners should be dealt with in the early stages of second language acquisition in order to prevent fossilization (Keshavarz, 2017).
- Since some pronunciation errors are attributed to the influence of the students' native tongue, the instructor can compare and contrast the English and Arabic phonological systems (Al-Jarf, 2021a; Al-Jarf, 2003; Al-Jarf, 1994; Al-Jarf, 1993; Al-Jarf, 1990).
- The instructor can integrate task-based activities into speaking and pronunciation practice (Al-Jarf, 2007).
- TED Talks can be used as a listening resource in EFL college classrooms (Al-Jarf, 2021h; Al-Jarf, 2020b).
- Listening, speaking and pronunciation mobile app can be used for practice in the DL environment (Al-Jarf, 2020c; Al-Jarf, 2012a).
- The students may use mobile audiobooks for developing their listening comprehension and pronunciation skills in DL (Al-Jarf, 2021g).
- The students can listen to podcasts and can create their own podcast on topics of their choice (Al-Jarf, 2021b; Al-Jarf, 2021d).
- Using social media such as Facebook and Twitter for pronunciation instruction (Fouz-González, 2017; Al-Jarf, 2021f).

Finally, comparisons of students practicing English pronunciation using YouTube videos, and student-created podcasts are still open for further investigation by future research.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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