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# YOUGLISH AS A TOOL OF IMPROVING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION

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**Abstract:** *Currently, one can acquire English pronunciation skills by utilising a diverse range of video materials. Nevertheless, the majority of videos are currently utilised by learners in the role of knowledge recipients or as passive observers of video content (Fisher & Frey, 2015; Bakar et al., 2019). Seldom does research enable learners to actively and autonomously learn pronunciation. Hence, the present study investigated the use of YouGlish as a means to enhance students' English pronunciation. YouGlish is a website that utilises YouTube videos to enhance English pronunciation. It assists users in accurately and appropriately pronouncing words, phrases and sentences. The study was carried out on a sample of 30 first-year students majoring in English at the University of Economics – Technology for Industries (UNETI). The data were collected through two sources: a pretest and posttest, and a questionnaire. The findings demonstrated that YouGlish facilitated students' advancement and enhanced their engagement in acquiring English pronunciation.*

**Keywords:** *English pronunciation, YouTube videos, YouGlish, ELT.*

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, learners can learn English pronunciation with support of technology. YouGlish is one of the technical tools that will be utilized in this study to teach English pronunciation. Using YouTube videos featuring native English speakers, YouGlish is a program that helps students learn how to pronounce words in the language more easily. Students have the option to pronounce words in English, US, AUS, or any other way they desire. Students can read the available transcripts in addition to hearing the words they wish to learn. Given the foregoing reasoning, it is critical to ascertain how YouGlish is used to teach English pronunciation through this study. YouGlish has been the subject of some research (McCarthy, 2018). But the main goals of their study were to assess how well EFL learners spoke after using YouGlish as a learning aid, to encourage learners to use YouGlish when choosing words for lexicography, and to look into how long listening exercises-all of which YouGlish conducted-affect learners' ability to pronounce words correctly. The distinction with my research is that it was centered on investigating the process of using YouGlish to teach pronunciation in English. This survey also looks at how students feel about utilizing YouGlish to learn pronunciation. Because it will bridge the knowledge gap between what is known about YouGlish by the general population and the research that is currently available. YouGlish offers audio representation of authentic English pronunciation input, samples of different English styles, and allows learners to adjust video speeds to facilitate perceptual processing. This tool encourages active learning and exposure to authentic English speech, allowing learners to discover tacit

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usage rules of native speakers. This article aims to investigate how first-year English majors at University of Economics – Technology for Industries perceive the use of YouGlish for learning English pronunciation and how it helps EFL learners improve their English pronunciation.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Importance of Pronunciation**

When communicating in English, pronunciation is crucial for conveying our thoughts. People are likely to misinterpret someone if they don't pronounce words correctly. All people can pronounce words correctly if they learn how to pronounce them correctly. They will feel more comfortable speaking in English and communicating in general as a result. It also helps us communicate with people more effectively when we pronounce the language correctly. According to Pennington, M. C. (2021), there are various practical objectives for pronunciation training in order to enhance communicative competence in which pronunciation should be taught in specific communicative contexts; It implies that enhancing your pronunciation is a crucial objective for advancing your communication abilities as well as demonstrating your fluency in the language. We should accomplish a number of objectives when communicating with pronunciation taught in specific communicative contexts.

### **Importance of teaching Pronunciation**

Teaching pronunciation to English majors is the most challenging yet crucial component (Handayani, 2017). Instructors need to be mindful of their role in relation to their students when teaching pronunciation. Instructors need to talk about what is suitable and how to accommodate different learning styles in their students. According to Pourhossein Gilakjani (2016), students' development can be observed through the practice of pronunciation. Achievable objectives that suit each student's communication needs must be set by the teacher. In order to make studying pronunciation more enjoyable, teachers need to figure out the right approach to teach it. Teachers need to be proactive in identifying strategies and resources that may be used in the classroom to help students with their pronunciation. Media use, according to Rao (2014), will enhance the process of teaching and learning. At present, there are a number of websites designed to assist students in becoming more proficient with the pronunciation of English. Students can view and hear how English words are spoken correctly and clearly by native speakers using YouGlish. Students can enhance their pronunciation skills through a variety of methods and media like YouGlish.

### **The Role of YouGlish in improving English Pronunciation**

Launched on YouTube, YouGlish is an effort to enhance English pronunciation. There are a million tracks on YouGlish for students to practice. With YouGlish, users can see how native speakers of the target language say a word or phrase in real-life situations, which helps them learn how to pronounce it correctly and responsibly. All of the videos on YouGlish are direct YouTube downloads. That is why the website's name is derived from "YouTube" and "English" (Mccarthy, 2018). In YouGlish, you may choose from three different accents. There are three distinct accents: American, British, and Australian. Any accent you desire can be viewed or utilised. The subtitles make it easier to learn the word when we view videos that are relevant to what we're looking for. Because it is web-based and intuitive, YouGlish is accessible from any device with an internet

browser. It is also a video pronunciation dictionary that enables language learners to swiftly and simply access a wide range of pronunciation examples from YouTube. According to Barhen (2019), the website's main goal is to provide visitors with "quick, unbiased answers about how languages are spoken by real people and in context." With more than 30 million films in its database.

This study demonstrates how YouGlish helps students improve their pronunciation. Additionally, this tool has enough content in it to allow us to look into how uncommon terms are spoken. Learners can be turned into information generators instead of knowledge receivers by using YouGlish as an instructional resource, according to Fu and Yang (2019). This shows that passive learning is not required to acquire oral English skills through video usage. Use YouGlish if you're having trouble pronouncing words. English language learners will find this website particularly useful. For the simple reason that YouGlish is a very useful tool for learning English pronunciation thanks to its speed and accuracy. An excellent method for improving pronunciation is to use YouGlish. YouGlish is an excellent example of a programme that can help with pronunciation lessons. As a class, they can try to mimic the speaker's movements.

Using YouGlish requires a few steps. Go to <https://youglish.com/> to access YouGlish. Second, make a note of the term or phrase you wish to study. Finally, once you've found the word or phrase, a list of videos that are linked to it will show under the search bar. Each video has a title, a length, and the opportunity to share the title link to the original YouTube video. The subtitles that contain the exact word or phrase we are searching for, as well as some related terms, will be displayed below the video column. YouGlish also includes phonetics, which include the word's modern and traditional spellings as well as an international phonetic alphabet (IPA) and a list of words that are similar to the one we're searching for. Tips for perfecting your pronunciation are also available on YouGlish.



Figure 1. A snapshot of how to pronounce the word "demonstrate" on YouGlish.

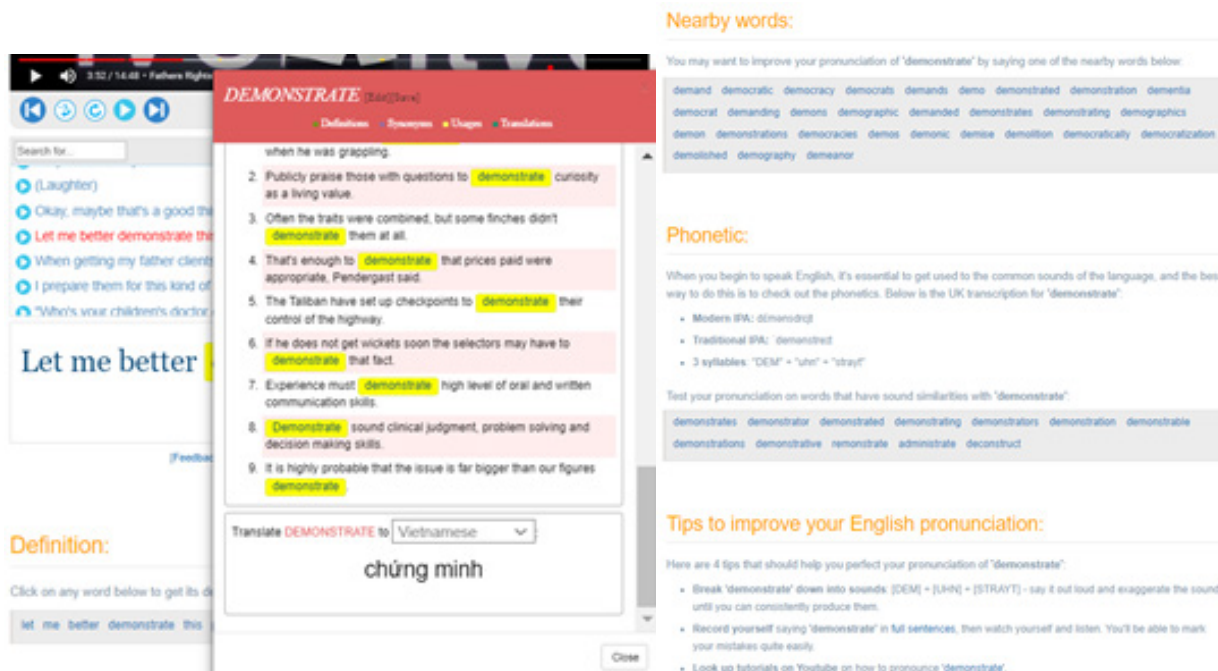


Figure 2. A snapshot of what you can exploit with “demonstrate” on YouGlish.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Setting**

Pronunciation in use is a compulsory subject for English-majored freshmen at University of Economics-Technology for Industries (UNETI). The research was carried out for English-majored freshmen while they were studying the subject. YouGlish was introduced to students right at the beginning of the first term.

To examine the impact of integrating the video-assisted dictionary YouGlish on the pronunciation abilities and attitudes of learners towards utilizing YouGlish, the following research questions (RQs) are addressed:

*(1) What are the impacts of YouGlish on students’ pronunciation abilities?*

*(2) How do students feel about the utilization of YouGlish as a tool to enhance their English pronunciation skills?*

**Participants**

The research involved 30 English-major freshmen including 5 males and 25 females in an English practical pronunciation course at UNETI. The participants were in the first semester of the first academic year when they started learning the Pronunciation subject. Before participating in the research, all the participants had passed the entrance exam to the university and their English scores ranged from 6.5 to 9.0 according to the National High School Examination Results. They all came from different cities in Vietnam and they had different learning styles and different backgrounds of learning English pronunciation.



## Research design

The action research was chosen to find out how YouGlish impacted on students' pronunciation after the intervention because of its advantages. Action research is a process in which participants examine their own educational practice systematically and carefully. Action research involves people working to improve their skills, techniques, and strategies which help us do things better.

The course under investigation was a mandatory, 15-week, two-credit pronunciation course designed for first-year English majors. An 8-week intervention was incorporated into the curriculum, which utilized the video-assisted dictionary YouGlish. The pronunciation exercises assigned to students each week and they were asked to practise with the support of YouGlish. In order to fulfill the requirements, the students were obligated to utilize YouGlish video clips. These clips presented genuine, frequently spoken lexical examples within the framework of specific situations or subjects. As a result, they established memorable underpinnings for practical pronunciation abilities and empowered learners to acquire spoken English effortlessly and with assurance (Ali & Celik, 2019). The purpose of this intervention was to enhance the pronunciation of EFL students concerning pronouncing sounds, stress and intonation.

## Procedure and data collection

The course in this study was an obligatory, 15-week, two-credit pronunciation course for English-major freshmen in which an 8-week intervention including the usage of a video-assisted lexicon, YouGlish, was deployed.

The students received a 20-minute lesson on YouGlish usage throughout the first and second weeks, which covered the following steps:

- (1) Got a quick rundown of YouGlish's goals and features;
- (2) Saw the instructor demonstrate how to use it;
- (3) Practiced utilizing it;
- (4) Showed proficiency with the search tool.

The third through seventh weeks of the intervention involved the students reading the list of 10 two-syllable words 10 longer words and 10 phrases and sentences as a pretest, followed by in-class exercises and homework assignments that required them to practice pronouncing words correctly using YouGlish. The words, phrases and sentences that the students learnt during these few weeks were used to develop these activities. Students also worked on applying search techniques. Regarding the students' search results, the instructor made recommendations or remarks. Together with the instructor's feedback, these assignments strengthened the students' understanding of how to utilize YouGlish and ruled out any potential influences on their performance, such as providing modifications to the search results.

To ascertain whether their pronunciation had changed since the pretest, the students reread the identical collection of words, phrases and sentences in the seventh and eighth weeks as a posttest. Students used YouGlish to check their pronunciation, word stress, and intonation before reading. Both the pretests and posttests were marked by the pronunciation instructor with a key and marking criteria that evaluate students in terms of pronouncing sounds, stress and intonation.

In order to deal with the research question 1 (RQ1), a pre-test and a post-test were delivered to the participants. The test consisted of 30 questions including 10 two-syllable words 10 longer words and 10 phrases and sentences chosen from different units in the course book. The participants were asked to pronounce them correctly in terms of correct sounds, stress and intonation. Each correct question was graded one point.

**Table 1. Data collection procedure**

Research stages	Weeks	Procedures and activities	Data collections
1. Preparation	1	Pretest of pronunciation skills Tutorial on YouGlish	30 pretests
2. Intervention	2-7	Participants used YouGlish to complete home assignments	30 Portfolios
3. Post-intervention reflection	8	Posttest of pronunciation skills Questionnaire	30 posttests 30 questionnaires

Finally, in order to address the second research question (RQ2), a survey which was adapted from Fu, J. S., & Yang, S. H. (2019) about the students’ opinions of YouGlish with the 5-point Likert scale scores were taken into consideration. The questionnaire consists of ten items that explored how the students thought of YouGlish after being guided to use it. They gave their opinions of using YouGlish by choosing five levels ranging from Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly agree (5) about YouGlish.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

**The impact of YouGlish on students’ English pronunciation**

The quantitative data was calculated through SPSS version 22. The statistical significance of a data collection is calculated as the chance of numerical data occurring at random. The p value is calculated using the data set. The results are statistically significant if the p-value is less than or equal to the generally accepted alpha threshold of .05 (Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007). The p-value for the data set was determined using a dependent or paired-sample t-test by the researcher (Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2007).

**Table 2. Reliability statistics**

Cronbach’s Alpha	N of Items
0.926	10

The surveyed data was also analyzed using the same version of SPSS. The Cronbach Alpha is used to confirm the questionnaire’s reliability. According to table 2, the Cronbach Alpha of the questionnaire of 0.926, which is in the range of 0.6 to 0.95 implies that all questions were reliable and trustworthy.

**Table 3. Item-Total statistics**

<b>Item-Total Statistics</b>					
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Q1	35.733	21.720	.704	.738	.920
Q2	35.600	22.938	.611	.800	.924
Q3	35.500	23.155	.702	.827	.919
Q4	35.267	22.961	.709	.862	.919
Q5	35.367	22.930	.824	.903	.914
Q6	35.700	21.872	.690	.789	.921
Q7	35.367	22.654	.711	.791	.919
Q8	35.433	22.737	.639	.707	.923
Q9	35.333	22.506	.864	.858	.912
Q10	35.300	22.148	.809	.919	.914

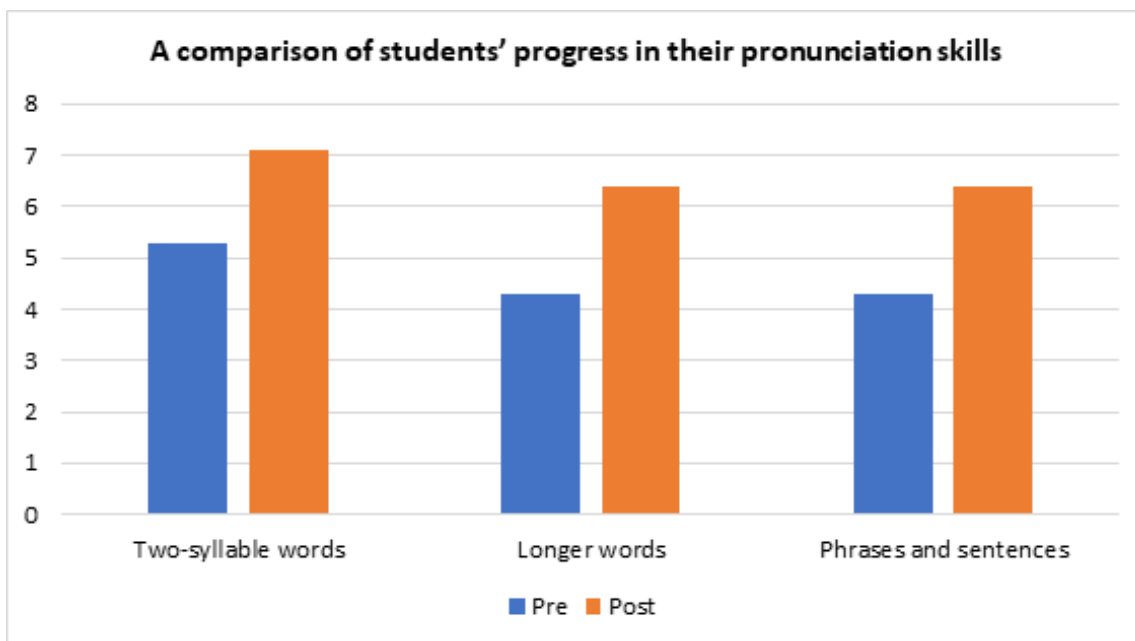
Table 3 also shows that the Cronbach Alpha of each item is lower than 0.926. Therefore, no item is deleted from the questionnaire.

**Table 4.1. Paired samples t-test for the differences between the pretest and post-test**

<b>Paired Samples Statistics</b>					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Two-syllable words	Pre	5.300	30	.8769	.1601
	Post	7.100	30	.9229	.1685
Longer words	Pre	4.333	30	.6609	.1207
	Post	6.400	30	.6747	.1232
Phrases and sentences	Pre	4.367	30	.7184	.1312
	Post	6.400	30	.5632	.1028

**Table 4.2. Paired samples t-test for the differences between the pretest and post-test**

<b>Paired Samples Test</b>									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Two-syllable words	Pre - Post	-1.8000	.7144	.1304	-2.0668	-1.5332	-13.801	29	.000
Longer words	Pre - Post	-2.0667	.6397	.1168	-2.3055	-1.8278	-17.696	29	.000
Phrases and sentences	Pre - Post	-2.0333	.7649	.1396	-2.3189	-1.7477	-14.560	29	.000



**Figure 3. A comparison of students' progress in their pronunciation skills**

The descriptive data for the pretest and posttest scores are shown in Table 4.1 The average score on each posttest is higher than the associated pretest. For example, the average two-syllable word pronunciation score for the pretest was 5.3 with a standard deviation of 0.8769, whereas the average score for the posttest was 7.1 with a standard deviation of 0.9229. The mean difference (M = 1.8, SD = 0.7144). The average longer word pronunciation score for the pretest was 4.3 with a standard deviation of 0.6609, whereas the average score for the posttest was 6.4 with a standard deviation of 0.6747. Overall, there was a significant difference in pronunciation of longer words between the pretest and posttest results,  $t(29) = 17.696$ .

Table 4.2 displays the results of paired difference tests, which indicates that the mean of the posttest scores was considerably higher than the pretest scores in all three target areas: longer words ( $t(29) = 17.696, p < .01$ ), phrases and sentences ( $t(29) = 14.560, p < .01$ ), and two-syllable words ( $t(29) = 13.801, p < .01$ ). Out of the three categories, there was the most significant improvement in the students' pronunciation of longer words (mean score difference between pre and posttests: 2.0667), followed by phrases and sentences (mean score difference: 2.0333) and two-syllable words (mean score difference: 1.8).

***The attitude of the students about the utilization of YouGlish as a tool to enhance their English pronunciation skills***

Table 5 shows the mean value and SD of the students' answers to the 10 5-point Likert scale items in the post-intervention survey. The table is arranged descending according to the mean value. In general, the respondents agree with all 10 items, in which item 4,10,9,5 and 7 account for the highest value, ranking above 4. The results indicate that YouGlish can improve pronunciation compared with other learning aids such as traditional dictionaries and build up self-confidence in English pronunciation. Specifically, most students thought YouGlish was more helpful than a conventional dictionary. The use of YouGlish also increases students' motivation

when learning English as in Q3. YouGlish is shown to be an active video dictionary with real people in different accents which is so useful for students to learn pronunciation. However, the item that receives the lowest mean value is Q1: YouGlish assists me in acquiring English pronunciation without my teacher's help indicates that students still need support from the teacher in learning pronunciation. Overall, most of the students concurred that YouGlish can increase their interest in learning English pronunciation.

**Table 5. Summary of questionnaire feedback**

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
4. YouGlish can improve my pronunciation compared with other learning aids such as traditional dictionaries.	30	3.0	5.0	4.133	.6288
10. YouGlish builds up my self-confidence in English pronunciation.	30	3.0	5.0	4.100	.6618
9. YouGlish increases my interest in learning English pronunciation.	30	3.0	5.0	4.067	.5833
5. YouGlish can improve my knowledge of pronunciation, compared with other learning aids such as traditional dictionaries.	30	3.0	5.0	4.033	.5561
7. YouGlish leads me to be an active knowledge generator instead of being a passive knowledge receiver.	30	3.0	5.0	4.033	.6687
8. The content of video clips provided by YouGlish meets my learning needs.	30	3.0	5.0	3.967	.7184
3. The use of YouGlish motivates me to learn English by myself	30	3.0	5.0	3.900	.6074
2. YouGlish is very easy to use and useful for language learning without my teacher's help.	30	2.0	5.0	3.800	.7144
6. YouGlish enhances my potential to learn English without teacher's assistance.	30	2.0	5.0	3.700	.7944
1. YouGlish assists me in acquiring English pronunciation without my teacher's help.	30	2.0	5.0	3.667	.8023
Valid N (listwise)	30				

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation; 1: Strongly Disagree; 2: Disagree; 3: Neutral; 4: Agree; 5: Strongly Agree.

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The present study's key finding was that learners significantly improved their pronunciation when utilizing YouGlish. YouGlish appears to have been a simple and helpful instrument for self-directed learning for a significant majority of students, indicating that it helped them become more active producers of English with good pronunciation.

In order to effectively use YouGlish, students must do more than just pronounce words and sounds correctly; they must also practice outside of the classroom and be integrated into communicative activities under the teacher's supervision. It is imperative that students practice this skill more to improve their pronunciation.

Additionally, YouGlish gives users the flexibility to alter pronunciation input according to their own needs and interests, providing affordances for the development of speech perception. This may promote learner autonomy. YouGlish is a valuable tool for language teachers to include

pronunciation practice in topical courses. It can also support data-driven learning techniques and ESP. In combination with sufficient teacher training for pronunciation pedagogy, YouGlish is a tool that can favourably enhance language learners' pronunciation development.

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