
Online Resources for Learners and Teachers of English Language Pronunciation

by Lynn Henrichsen, Katie Devenport Blanco, Sofía Carreño, Steven Carter, Laura Decker, Leanna Fry, Judy James, Mariah Krauel, Yuting Ruby Li, Vadym Malyshkevich, Rachel Messenger, Alhyaba Moore, Ana-Lisa Mullen, Jeff Peterson, Jared Sell, Chirstin Stephens, Kaitlyn Van Wagoner, Alison Young, Ksenia Zhao

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Introduction and Rationale

While the prominence of computer assisted pronunciation teaching (CAPT) is increasing in the field of L2 pronunciation teaching and learning (Chun, 2013; Fouz-González, 2015; Gómez Lacabex & Gallardo del Puerto, 2014; O'Brien & Levis, 2017), CAPT is not new. Over a decade ago, Levis (2007) noted,

The use of computers is almost ideally suited to learning pronunciation skills. Computers can provide individualized instruction, frequent practice through listening discrimination and focused repetition exercises, and automatic visual support that demonstrates to learners how closely their own pronunciation approximates model utterances. (p. 184)

After reviewing research studies in this area, Levis (2007, p. 185) concluded “that CAPT, when constructed wisely, can be both effective and flexible in addressing pronunciation instruction.” Expressing a similar sentiment, Neri, Cucchiarini, Strik, and Boves (2002, p. 441) stated that CAPT “can be beneficial to second language learning as it provides a private, stress-free environment in which students can access virtually unlimited input, practice at their own pace and, through the integration of Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR), receive individualized, instantaneous feedback.” Fouz-González (2015, p. 316) extended the listing of “ways in which pronunciation training can be advanced” through the use of computers to include perceptual enhancement (via increased input availability, auditory enhancement, and visuals). He praised CAPT features that provide visual enhancement of speech via displays showing pitch contours, waveforms, spectrographic displays, formant data, and animated mouth movements, as well as automatic speech recognition (ASR) software. Likewise, Chun (2013) described promising CAPT tools,

such as visual acoustic displays (i.e., waveforms and spectrograms), visual articulatory displays (i.e., sagittal section diagrams and still and video pictures of a speaker's mouth and lip movements), and ASR. Likewise, Fouz-González (2015) praised CAPT features that provide visual enhancement of speech via displays showing pitch contours, waveforms, spectrographic displays, formant data, and animated mouth movements, as well as ASR software.

A decade or more ago, the computer assistance for pronunciation teaching and learning came mostly in the form of software mounted on desktop computers (Healey, 2002). Since then, however, “technological advances have provided a range of tools to assist learners in the development of pronunciation skills in a variety of target languages” (Hardison, 2009, p. 2). Researchers have investigated and advocated CAPT instructional procedures such as podcasting (Ducate & Lomicka, 2009), cued pronunciation readings (Tanner & Landon, 2009), and shadowing (Foote & McDonough, 2017), and computer technology options have expanded to include online resources and mobile applications.

In fact, “the market penetration of smartphones and tablets has been very fast and widespread” (Rosell-Aguilar, 2017, p. 243), and more and more language learners and teachers are coming to rely on online resources and mobile apps to help them develop their English language knowledge and skills. The reasons are many. “Web-based programs and mobile apps that claim to improve learners’ pronunciation are readily accessible and most are relatively inexpensive” (O’Brien & Levis, 2017, p. 1). “Because of their game-like appearance and their high accessibility, they represent a great asset for the average FL learner, allowing students to practice autonomously on different mobile devices (smart-phones, tablets) and receive immediate feedback based on the choices they make” (Fouz-González, 2015, p. 332).

Quite a few helpful websites and mobile applications have been developed to help ESL/EFL learners (and their teachers) with different aspects of English—including pronunciation. Unfortunately, some less helpful websites and apps also exist. For this reason, as CAPT experts have long insisted...

Teachers and learners should not be seduced by the strong appeal of the marketing done by publishers. Instead, it is necessary to analyze English as a Foreign Language and/or Second Language (EFL/ESL) pronunciation teaching software programs as to their potential for developing English pronunciation. There is an unquestionable need to

analyze these programs from a critical perspective using pedagogically coherent and technically elaborated criteria. (Navarro, 1999, as cited in Martins, Levis, & Borges, 2016, p. 142)

Addressing the shortcomings of much CAPT software, Levis (2007) noted that...

Some of the difficulties that CAPT has faced are pedagogical, some are technological, and some are related to teacher preparedness. Pedagogically, a significant gap often exists between CAPT applications and goals advocated by current pronunciation theory and pedagogy, such that CAPT applications look suspiciously like traditional, drill-oriented pedagogy in new clothing.... Technologically, CAPT systems often suffer from difficulties in giving learners adequate, accurate feedback and an inability to provide accurate and automatic diagnosis of pronunciation errors. Both of these areas relate to the use of automatic speech recognition (ASR) for accented speech. (p. 185)

Ten years later, O'Brien and Levis repeated this warning: "Many of the commercially available products are often neither pedagogically sound nor informed by research" (2017, p. 1).

Along the same lines, Neri, Cucchiari, Strik, and Boves (2002, p. 441) praised the "wealth of CAPT systems" on the market but added...

When examined carefully...the display of products may not look entirely satisfactory. Many authors describe commercially available programs as fancy-looking systems that may at first impress student and teacher alike, but eventually fail to meet sound pedagogical requirements.... These systems, which do not fully exploit the potentialities of CAPT, look more like the result of a technology push, rather than of a demand pull. (p. 442)

Noting the same weakness of CAPT programs, Wang and Munro (2004) urged,

If CALL is to reach its full potential in L2 pronunciation instruction, it must make use of the knowledge about L2 speech learning that has been derived from empirical research. At present, there is a significant gap between some of the key research findings of laboratory studies

from the past two decades and techniques that have actually been put into practice. (p. 540)

Even the technology behind CAPT software can be found lacking when it is examined carefully. Kim (2006), for instance, examined the reliability of automatic speech recognition (ASR) software designed to teach English pronunciation and found that it was only “mediocre” ($r=0.56$) (p. 327). Kim concluded, “that the present state of technological development falls far below the desired level of accuracy” (p. 330), and added, rather pessimistically but realistically, “ASR pronunciation software is not perfect nor will it be in the immediate future” (p. 331).

Looking at both pedagogical and technological aspects of CAPT software, Neri, Cucchiarini, Strik, and Boves outlined “some basic recommendations for the ideal design of effective pronunciation teaching and learning” materials:

Learning must take place in a stress-free environment in which students can be exposed to considerable and meaningful input, are stimulated to actively practice oral skills and can receive immediate feedback on individual errors. Input should pertain to real-world language situations, it should include multiple-speaker models and it should allow the learner to get a sense of the articulatory movements involved in the production of L2 speech. Oral production should be elicited with realistic material and exercises catering for different learning styles, and should include pronunciation of full sentences. Pertinent and comprehensible feedback should be provided individually and with minimum delay and should focus on those segmental and suprasegmental aspects that affect intelligibility most. (2002, p. 449)

Chun (2013, p. 9) noted that “given the technological capabilities that exist, an ideal CAPT program would combine auditory and visualization features, automatic speech recognition (ASR), and appropriate and accurate feedback.” Fouz-González (2015, p. 324) further specified, “An ideal ASR system would recognize everything the user says, point out those areas that are most problematic (depending on the user’s priorities, be it intelligibility, comprehensibility or accuracy), and then offer explicit feedback indicating how to improve.” He went on to explain, “ASR can be used in CAPT for various purposes: (a) to convert speech into text, which allows users to get an idea of what the machine understands and what it does not..., (b) to react to what users say in a simulated conversation and continue

the conversational path depending on the users' answers..., or (c) as a means of pronunciation scoring, ideally offering learners feedback on 'how well' they pronounce the foreign language."

Over 25 years ago, Yule, Hoffman, and Damico (1987) and Morley (1991) argued for greater learner responsibility, autonomy, and self-monitoring in L2 pronunciation learning. More recently and in the context of using ASR in CAPT, McCrocklin (2016) made a similar case, that "students need skills and strategies that will empower them to practice their pronunciation on their own, so that they will not be as reliant on a teacher or school for pronunciation training. In effect, students need to learn to become autonomous learners of pronunciation" (p. 25). "Online resources and software are tools that can promote autonomy by enabling experimentation through self-access work outside of class while also providing immediate feedback to learners" (p. 27). Elsewhere McCrocklin (2015, p. 127) reasoned that ASR held great potential in this regard: "Feedback is vital to the success of autonomous learning outside of the classroom... One technology that can help provide feedback in Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR), which allows students to experiment with the [target] language in a safe, private setting [and]... to practice at their own speed, getting feedback from the words recognized."

Unfortunately, few CAPT programs measure up to all these criteria and expectations—especially those that are offered online or as mobile apps. Recently, Kaiser (2017) reported on his analysis of 30 L2 pronunciation teaching/learning apps. He found that 22 of the 30 apps (73.3%) relied heavily on an outdated listen-and-repeat instructional approach and provided no feedback to learners. Some apps provided visual feedback in the form of spectrograms. Others, using automatic-speech-recognition software, provided simplistic "right" or "wrong" feedback that was not always accurate. ASR software has apparently still not reached the point where it provides reliable feedback to L2 learners and "has a way to go before meeting [the above noted] goals" (Chun, 2013, p. 9).

"One limitation of ASR is that this technology still cannot reliably recognize spontaneous, natural speech from different speakers" (Cox & Davies, 2012, p. 602). Despite the "great potential for the provision of automatic feedback on learners' pronunciation" that ASR holds, it "needs to improve substantially before learners can use these systems autonomously and rely entirely on their judgments. The effectiveness of these systems decreases significantly when dealing with non-na-

tive speech...and ASR ratings do not always correlate with those by human raters....In spite of advances in the field, an acceptable level of reliability is only guaranteed when the tasks are simple and utterances are kept to a restricted set from which students select a response...something that limits the usability of this technology for spontaneous practice.” Foreign-accented speech produces “numerous false alarms and low rates of correct detection.... The experience may be quite frustrating for users if mistakes are not detected or are detected incorrectly...as the machine is supposed to be an ‘expert’ they can rely on. Once learners suspect the system is not reliable, they will lose confidence in it” (Fouz-González, 2015, p. 328). In fact, inadequate CAPT-ASR software can “lead to frustrating and counter-productive experiences if learners waste time trying to match a model when their pronunciation is already acceptable” (Fouz-González, 2015, p. 327).

For all these reasons—pedagogical and technological—finding the most helpful, top quality, pronunciation-related websites and apps is not easy, despite its importance. Determining which websites and apps are most appropriate for developing which pronunciation skills is even more challenging. A simple Google® search on the term *English pronunciation* produces an overabundance of hits (30,800,000). A narrower search on *English pronunciation exercises* produces 9,100,000 results. Sorting through so many websites is a daunting task. Simply starting with the first ones listed in the search results takes viewers to the most popular sites, but that is no guarantee of those sites’ quality or relevance to a learner’s particular pronunciation problems or pronunciation-improvement goals.

Even when a searcher narrows things down, a wide variety of ESL pronunciation-improvement website *types* will be found, and “there might be pronunciation software programs whose interface may look attractive but fail at reflecting solid grounded principles for teaching pronunciation” (Martins, Levis, & Borges, 2016, p. 143). For instance, some sites and apps provide articulatory explanations but no practice. Others seem intended to be used in conjunction with a teacher or textbook as they provide practice but no explanation or guidance.

Other variables exist in the many online resources for English pronunciation teaching and learning. In terms of monetary cost, some are free, while others require users to pay a membership or subscription fee. Within the domain of pronunciation, some sites focus only on segmentals, others on suprasegmentals, and a rare few provide instruction and practice with both segmentals and supraseg-

mentals. Some provide helpful graphics, others contain only text, and a few even provide video clips to help learners see and hear how to pronounce English sounds correctly. Some pronunciation-related websites and apps expect everyone to follow the same curricular path, while others allow for a more flexible, individualized approach, in which different learners may choose different learning paths. The variety in purposes, instructional approaches, quality, and cost is indeed great—even daunting!

The purpose of this review article is to provide information that will guide teachers and learners of English language pronunciation in selecting the most appropriate and helpful online resources for their learning/teaching needs. Using the above-mentioned variables as well as criteria developed by pronunciation and CALL experts (Derwing & Rossiter, 2002; Martins, Levis, & Borges, 2016; Morley, 1991; Munro & Derwing, 2006; Neri, Cucchiarini, Strik, & Boves, 2002; Rosell-Aguilar, 2017), it provides a collection of 21 brief reviews of pronunciation-oriented websites and apps for English language learners and teachers.

In each review, the author focused on those characteristics that seemed most important and most pertinent to the particular app or website being reviewed. For every review to consider all the many criterion variables described above would have been unwieldy. Further, because many apps or websites cover a variety of proficiency and age levels and can be used for different purposes (e.g., either whole-class instruction or individual self-study), organizing the reviews according to any one of the above-mentioned variables was unworkable. Rather, the simplest approach (i.e., organizing the reviews in alphabetical order according to the products' titles) seemed best.

Finally, the process by which the 21 websites and mobile apps reviewed in this article were selected should be mentioned. They were not selected on the basis of a website/app's popularity or innovativeness; nor were they selected randomly from among the hundreds of CAPT websites and apps that exist. Rather, the reviewers simply made their own selections based on what they found interesting (i.e., innovative, popular, useful, relevant to their own teaching interests, etc.). In some cases, the site/app's prominence or the reviewer's previous contact with it also played a role. This *laissez-faire* process driven by reviewers' varied interests and contacts was admittedly rather haphazard (rather than scientifically random

or systematic). Nevertheless, it naturally resulted in a wide range of different types of online resources being reviewed.

Listing of Websites/Apps Reviewed

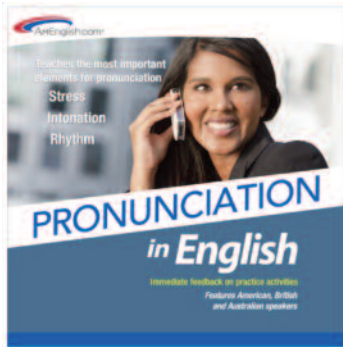
The websites and/or mobile applications reviewed in this article are the following (if you wish, click on the title to go directly to that particular review; click on the <URL> following the title to go directly to the corresponding website):

1. AmEnglish, Pronunciation in English
<http://amenglish.com/products/pronunciation_in_english/pronunciation.html>
2. American English Pronunciation Card and American English Pronunciation Tutor <<http://www.languageartspress.com/pronunciationcard.html>>
3. BBC Learning English <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish>>
4. English Accent Coach <<http://www.englishaccentcoach.com/index.aspx>>
5. English Central <<http://www.EnglishCentral.com>>
6. Fun Easy English: Pronunciation <<http://funeasyenglish.com/new-american-english-pronunciation-introduction.htm>>
7. Juna: Your American Accent Coach <AmericanAccentOnTheGo.com>
8. Mango Languages. <<https://www.mangolanguages.com>>
9. Many Things.org <<http://www.manythings.org/e/pronunciation.html>>
10. One Stop English < <http://www.onestopenglish.com/skills/pronunciation/>>
11. Perception of Spoken English (POSE) Test <<https://posetest.com/>>
12. Pronuncian: American English Pronunciation <<https://pronuncian.com>>
13. Pronunciation Doctor <<https://www.youtube.com/user/Pronunciation-Doctor>>
14. Pronunciation for Teachers <pronunciationforteachers.com>
15. Pronunciation Matters <<http://www.pronunciationmatters.com>>
16. Pronunciator <<http://www.pronunciator.com>>
17. Rachel's English <<http://www.rachelsenglish.com>>
18. Reading Horizons English Sounds and Letters <<http://www.readinghorizons.com/esl-reading-instruction/product-overview>> <<https://www.readinghorizons.com/reading-intervention-program/mobile-applications/pronunciation-tool>>

19. Ship or Sheep <www.shiporsheep.com>
20. Sounds of Speech <<http://soundsofspeech.uiowa.edu/index.html> - english>
21. Train Your Accent <<http://www.trainyouraccent.com/>>

Each review gives information on the software's sponsor/author, type, source, cost, instructional type, intended audience, objectives, major features, pros, and cons. It ends with a "verdict" (general conclusion) regarding the app or website's overall value. (N.B. Unless otherwise cited, all quoted material within each review comes from the website or app being reviewed.)

AmEnglish.com, Pronunciation in English



Pronunciation in English

Learn to use the important elements of stress, intonation, and rhythm like a native speaker.

Available in two levels

- High Beginning+
- Intermediate+

User Feedback

Buy

Medical

Product Name: *Pronunciation in English*

Reviewer: Alison Young

Author and/or Sponsor: *Pronunciation in English* was created by Kathy L. Hans, founder of AmEnglish.com in collaboration with The Chauncey Group International®, a subsidiary of Educational Testing Service® (ETS).

Software Type and Source: AmEnglish.com products are cloud based, compatible with all browsers, plus suitable for any mobile device. Users purchase an online access package for desired products at http://amenglish.com/products/pronunciation_in_english/pronunciation.html AmEnglish.com acts as its own online store.

Cost: Several options exist for an online subscription to the High Beginning+ and/or Intermediate+ level of *Pronunciation in English*. Users may purchase a one-

level 90-day subscription for \$29.95. Schools or colleges can obtain a one-year 30-workstation license for \$3,000. This option includes access to 17 programs plus step-by-step lesson plans and a User Management System (UMS). A classroom license that includes three programs that can be accessed by up to 30 students in or out of class is also available for only \$650 per year.

Instructional Type: *Pronunciation in English* is an interactive tool designed to improve non-native speakers' stress, rhythm, and intonation skills. Each lesson provides state-of-the-art training, interactive practice, and audio feedback, plus it also assesses learners' progress. Two levels are available (High Beginning+ and Intermediate+) and both are excellent teacher resources, as well as self-paced tutorials for students. Each level also provides in-depth training and practice for students to develop their pronunciation in these three target areas—with or without teacher instruction. In addition, the interactive methodology includes essential audio and visual interfaces for an in-the-classroom feel to instruction.

Intended Users: The target audience for this product includes students at the high-school level and above, teachers of English language learners at any level, distance educators, and individuals who already have, or desire to obtain, employment in the global workplace. Students and/or employees will need a minimum English proficiency level of advanced beginner. More proficient users will likely still benefit from the in-depth training and practice included in the interactive lessons.

Instructional Purpose/Objectives: As noted above, *Pronunciation in English* is intended for individuals seeking to improve their English stress, intonation, and rhythm skills.

General description: Each level of *Pronunciation in English* provides over 300 interactive lessons. Users can access cloud-based video presentations to introduce pronunciation concepts and audio clips featuring American, British, and Australian speakers. A recording interface encourages self-monitoring and self-correction. Instructional materials are translated into more than ten languages to facilitate understandability.

Strengths: Students and teachers alike will find the instructional approach very user friendly. Video clips and audio tracks offer media-rich instruction. Scored chapter reviews, hands-on practice, and comprehension checks provide essential feedback. In addition, teachers with site licenses have access to step-by-step lesson

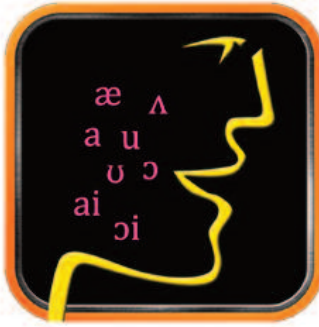
plans and can track student activity with the User Management System (UMS). This system provides information on students' session durations, assessment scores, and more. Corporate (i.e., individual one year) licenses include narrated videos from the developer, Kathy L. Hans, which are distributed weekly via email. Roll over menus make navigation easy.

Weaknesses: Although pricing is reasonable in light of the quantity and quality of the products, potential new users will find it hard to make informed decisions about the products based on the limited information and samples available on the AmEnglish.com website. The one sample lesson plan available for each level of *Pronunciation in English* does clearly indicate the scope and sequence of the methodology, however. There is also an overview slide show accessible online, but I was unable to access it via a mobile device. It is reassuring that both levels of AmEnglish.com's *Pronunciation in English* have been reviewed and recommended by ETS, but it would greatly benefit both teachers and future students to actually experience a sample interactive lesson module and/or the UMS prior to purchase.

Overall Conclusion: Despite my reservations above, I would still highly recommend *Pronunciation in English* as both a student and a teacher resource. The interactive lessons and teacher support make the products a full-service software program ideal for individual as well as classroom use. The User Management System is a definite plus.

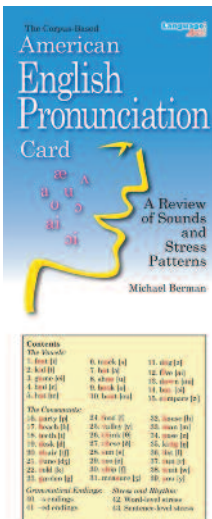
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American English Pronunciation Tutor and American English Pronunciation Card



American English Pronunciation Tutor

Mobile App



Contents		
The Vowels		
1. foot [i]	6. truck [ʌ]	11. dog [ɔ]
2. kid [i]	7. hot [ɒ]	12. five [aɪ]
3. give [ɪ]	8. shoe [u]	13. some [ʊ]
4. hot [ɒ]	9. truck [ʌ]	14. hot [ɒ]
5. hot [ɒ]	10. hot [ɒ]	15. compare [ɛ]
The Consonants		
16. care [ɛ]	24. seat [i]	33. base [ɪ]
17. back [ɪ]	25. soldier [ɪ]	34. man [ɪ]
18. teeth [θ]	26. times [θ]	34. man [ɪ]
19. think [ŋ]	27. three [θ]	35. long [ŋ]
20. share [ʃ]	28. sun [s]	36. hot [ɒ]
21. sure [ɛ]	29. see [i]	37. sea [i]
22. add [ɒ]	30. ship [ɪ]	38. work [ɒ]
23. quiet [j]	31. measure [j]	39. see [i]
Grammatical Features: Stress and Rhythm		
40. contractions	42. Wh-movement	
41. red syllables	43. sentence-level stress	

Vowels

The Front Vowels

foot [i] • kid [i] • gameley [e]

bat [æ] • hat [æ]

These vowel sounds are produced with the tongue forward in the mouth. For each vowel, the tongue is placed at a different height.

1. foot [i]

Practice

1. us
2. man
3. other
4. Chinese
5. The three regions achieved peace.

Contrasts

1. [i] sit
2. feel fill
3. least list
4. seek sick
5. I beat my brother. I let my brother.

2. kid [i]

Practice

1. is
2. give
3. busy
4. women
5. I isn't permitted to begin until six-thirty.

Contrasts

1. [i] site
2. give gear
3. less case
4. liberal labor
5. The pin is sharp. The pin is sharp.

Product Name: *American English Pronunciation Tutor and The Corpus-Based American English Pronunciation Card*

Reviewer: Mariah Krauel

Author and/or Sponsor: Language Arts Press, LLC

Software Type and Source: Mobile iOS app (7.1 or later)—compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch (Android version under development); website; and

heavy, laminated, 10-1/2" X 24-1/2", sextuple-fold, color-printed, paper card. Available from the Apple App Store, and at <http://www.languageartspress.com/pronunciationcard.html>

Cost: Free for basic app. Upgrade for \$5.99. The card costs \$8.95, plus shipping and handling.

Instructional Type: The mobile app provides four types of interactive exercises designed to develop students' pronunciation. The compact, inexpensive card is a reference tool that provides an overview of the various features of American English that prove challenging to ESL learners. It provides example words (with various spellings of the target sound) accompanied by illustrations of their meanings and the tongue and lip positions for each target sound.

Intended Users: Although content is appropriate for all proficiency levels, instructions are targeted toward at least high beginner English language learners.

Instructional Purpose/Objectives: The objective of the app/card is to provide clear and engaging pronunciation instruction. The app has interactive exercises intended to help learners develop clear, confident speech and master key aspects of English pronunciation. The card serves mostly as a reference tool that can be used without accessing an electronic device. Key aspects include pronunciation of vowel and consonant sounds, accuracy and awareness of grammatical endings, word-level stress, and sentence-level stress and rhythm.

General description: The card provides a review of sounds and stress patterns with multiple examples and tongue/mouth positions for the target sounds. The app then provides 10 interactive units that guide users through the pronunciation topics to improve pronunciation, fluency, and grammatical awareness. Exercises include practice, where words and short sentences are practiced and compared with recordings; contrasts, where learners listen and repeat minimal pairs; listening quizzes, where learners identify words/sentences they hear; and speech recognition, where learners test their progress and are assessed on clarity and comprehensibility.

Strengths: As a teacher, I find this reference card and app to be very beneficial. They provide a clear overview of pronunciation and possible tools to help students improve. They are a great supplement to course instruction and are easy to use. Teachers can use the card during face-to-face instruction. Students can use

the app to complete the lessons at their own pace, receive immediate feedback, and continue to review the sounds and patterns.

Weaknesses: The app is free for the first few units; however, to have access to the other lessons, users must purchase the “pro” version for \$5.99. Although interactive, the app is linear and builds on itself, which may hinder spontaneous practice and retention. The instructions for both app and card are also too complex for English learners at lower levels of proficiency.

Overall Conclusion: Although the free app is limited, the content is clear and concise. It is a much-needed resource for pronunciation practice, especially for students at the higher levels who can practice more on their own. The card is a great tool to supplement class time, providing clear explanations for teachers to present and examples for students to practice. I strongly recommend these resources for teachers who would like to incorporate pronunciation more in their instruction.

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BBC Learning English

The screenshot shows the BBC Learning English website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the BBC logo, a search bar, and a menu. Below this is a banner for 'LEARNING ENGLISH' with the tagline 'INSPIRING LANGUAGE LEARNING SINCE 1943'. A secondary navigation bar highlights the 'Pronunciation' section. The main content area is titled 'The Sounds of English' and includes a sub-section for 'Long Vowels - Programme 5'. A large graphic displays the number '3' and the letter 'X' with arrows indicating the direction of the strokes used to form them.

Product Name: *BBC Learning English: Pronunciation*

Reviewer: Kaitlyn VanWagoner

Author and/or Sponsor: BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation)

Software Type and Source: Website and mobile app for iOS and Android. Content is limited on mobile applications. Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning-english> as well as in the Apple App Store and Google Play Store.

Cost: There is no cost to use this website or download this app. Users may create a BBC ID in order to receive emails updates and save their progress.

Instructional Type: This resource could be a valuable classroom supplement (particularly the listening aspects of the site). It would also be valuable to students wishing to review the sounds of English with visual support.

Intended Users: The pronunciation lessons are labeled as intermediate and would be appropriate for adults at an intermediate, or higher, proficiency level.

Instructional Purpose/Objectives: The pronunciation instruction on this site consists of brief, 5-7 minute videos. Each focuses on specific sounds in the following categories: diphthongs, long vowels, short vowels, voiceless consonants, voiced consonants, and other consonants. The videos are sequential and build upon principles presented previously. Each video models the sound, using both audio and visuals. The instructor moves at an appropriate pace, repeating the sounds for clarity, and also describes the movement and shapes of the mouth for proper articulation. The pronunciation modeled is Standard Southern British English.

General Description: The pronunciation component of this website is a minor feature of a larger language learning gold mine. *BBC Learning English's* primary resources consist of authentic listening material. Topics for podcasts (generally very short) include, but are not limited to, colloquialisms, idioms, literature, and current news topics. As noted above, the pronunciation resources are limited to a series of videos teaching the sounds of English for intermediate to advanced English language learners.

Strengths: The videos are very clear to listen to and follow. The close-ups of the mouth to demonstrate each sound are very valuable for students who need visual instruction. The videos also cover a fairly comprehensive range of English sounds. The videos are easy to use and clearly marked. The use of the videos is very flexible. Students working independently, or teachers looking for a particular sound, may go directly to the sound they need without having to work their way through unnecessary material. The overall design is very user friendly and advertisement-free.

Weaknesses: The videos are insufficient independently. Instruction relies on students' having a previous knowledge of the International Phonetic Alphabet, a hindrance for students unfamiliar with IPA. Also, the videos do not provide much visual reinforcement. For example, the instructor gives examples (*hear, fear*, etc.) but the written words are not shown, so students may see no visual representation of the sound they are learning to say.

Overall Conclusion: This resource is valuable as a supplement or review for advanced students seeking to achieve more comprehensible and native-like pronunciation.

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English Accent Coach



Product Name: *English Accent Coach, EAC Vowels 1, and EAC Echo*

Reviewer: Lynn Henrichsen

Author and/or Sponsor: Ron Thomson, Brock University (with advisory guidance from Tracey Derwing, University of Alberta, and Murray Munro, Simon

Fraser University; and developmental support from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Brock University, and Thuris Media).

Software Type and Source: Website and iOS apps for iPhone, iPad, and iPod Touch. Available at <http://www.englishaccentcoach.com/index.aspx>. The *EAC Vowels 1* and *EAC Echo* apps can be purchased from the Apple App Store.

Cost: Access to the *English Accent Coach* website is free (no advertisements but registration is required, although it is possible to play a limited demonstration version as a guest); *EAC Vowels 1* and *EAC Echo* cost \$1.39 each.

Instructional Type: Interactive online games designed to improve users' English pronunciation by giving them practice recognizing English vowels.

Intended Users: Older children, teenagers, and adults at the (ACTFL) Novice-High and higher proficiency levels could play these games, enjoy them, and benefit from them. Even Advanced-level English learners who still have difficulty pronouncing some English vowels correctly could use these games to overcome their particular difficulties. Although these games seem intended for individual use, a creative teacher might be able to use them with a class of English language learners.

Instructional Purpose/Objectives: According to the website's home page, *English Accent Coach* "works because it trains the brain to recognize new sounds—an essential foundation for improved pronunciation." In other words, these games are designed to give English learners practice in listening discrimination. Actual production is left for later stages of the language-learning process. Many L2 acquisition researchers would agree with this sequence. For instance, a tenet of Flege's (1995, p. 238) Speech Learning Model is "that many L2 production errors have a perceptual basis." In other words, learners' ability to produce L2 sounds correctly is related to their ability to perceive those same sounds.

General Description: These games all involve the recognition of 10 English vowel phonemes (/i/, /ɪ/, /e/, /ɛ/, /æ/, /ɑ/, /ʌ/, /o/, /ʊ/, /u/; /ɔ/, /ə/, and rhotic vowels like /ɚ/ are not included) in single-word or single-syllable contexts. The *English Accent Coach* website also focuses on 24 consonants (including /θ/ and /ð/, and /tʃ/ and /dʒ/). The *Tour* section takes users to a screen that displays the target vowels or consonants. Clicking on a particular phonetic symbol produces a "pop-up"

window that gives example words, a simplified articulatory description, and a technical IPA description. Learners first listen to the pronunciation of each vowel or consonant by clicking on the IPA symbol on the screen. When they are ready, they can play the game, by reversing the process—clicking on the symbol for the vowel they just heard (or the vowel that was used in a “key word” that they read on the screen). After playing, they can see their score, along with a color-coded guide (green = “mastered,” yellow = “satisfactory,” and red = “needs more practice”) that lets them know where they need to focus their learning efforts in the future. The website also includes the *Echo* game, which is also available in a mobile app (described below).

EAC Vowels 1 is a mobile app modeled after the vowels section of the *English Accent Coach* website. It also provides instruction and practice with three diphthongs (/aj/, /aw/, and /ɔj/).

EAC Echo is like the classic electronic memory game *Simon*. The app plays syllables containing a variety of English vowels and flashes a colored button, starting with only one button but the number increases with each round. The user must touch the corresponding vowel button(s) in the proper order.

Produced in Ontario, Canada, at Brock University (near Toronto), *English Accent Coach* teaches general North American English vowels with a few minor variations. Depending on the difficulty level selected by the user and following a learning model called High Variability Pronunciation Training (HVPT), *EAC Echo* plays slightly different audio versions voiced by various people whose pronunciations vary in natural ways. (For instance, some nasalize their vowels or use an onglide.) At the “Easy” level, to make distinctions easier to perceive, there is a different voice for each of the four vowels. At the “Medium” level, all four vowels are spoken by the same person. At the “Difficult” level, different voices play randomly for every vowel and for every tap-back by the user. Further, each of these three difficulty levels can be made more challenging by turning off the flashing, color visual cues.

Strengths: The game format is *English Accent Coach*’s greatest asset. It provides learners with an unlimited amount of intrinsically rewarding practice. Research has shown the special High Variability Pronunciation Training (HVPT) instructional paradigm to be productive with the learning of L2 vowels (Wang & Munro, 2004). In addition, the visual design is clean and attractive, and navigation

is simple. To adjust to learners at different levels of English proficiency, the programs have settings that allow users to choose the desired level of difficulty, number of words used, and number of attempts they are allowed per sound. *EAC Vowels I* has three levels of difficulty, and *EAC Echo* has six: three “Easy,” “Medium,” and “Hard” settings, each of which can be played with or without visual support. In the “Easy” version, it is possible to win by watching the lights and simply playing visually. In the highest “Hard” setting, however, with the visual cues turned off and different voices speaking each word, selecting the right buttons is much more difficult.

Weaknesses: While the amount of practice provided by these games is a strength, some ESL learners might wish for more guidance in the perception and production of the target vowels and consonants. The only articulatory explanations are buried in the *Tour* section and are easy to overlook. In addition, the games focus exclusively on vowels (and consonants in the website version) and ignore the suprasegmental aspects of English pronunciation—stress, intonation, rhythm, etc.—which are crucial to intelligibility. The vowels are limited to ten (plus three diphthongs in the mobile app). While many English vowels are normally diphthongized (e.g., “oh” is pronounced /oʊ/ [or /əʊ/ in British English]), the IPA symbols used in *English Accent Coach* give no indication of this process. All of these scope limitations might be the result of deliberate choices of designers wishing to keep things simple for learners and easier to understand, and that simplicity might actually be a program strength. Nevertheless, potential users of *English Accent Coach* should be aware of this aspect of the software’s design. Of course, another glaring instructional gap is the fact that *English Accent Coach*’s focus is entirely on listening discrimination. Users don’t have to pronounce anything to win the game; they merely listen and select the right buttons. Finally, all practice involves sounds in single-word or syllable contexts only.

Overall Conclusion: User friendly software that makes pronunciation learning enjoyable and rewarding is definitely welcome. Learners (and teachers) who recognize that the correct perception of new sounds is a necessary precondition to correct production of those sounds will be pleased with the foundation that *English Accent Coach* provides to ESL learners. It’s unfortunate that the phonological scope of these programs is restricted to vowels (and consonants) only. While that design decision was probably deliberate and the designers did not intend to produce

an “all-in-one” instructional solution to the full range of ESL learners’ pronunciation challenges, we can only hope that a future version of *English Accent Coach* will use the same, successful, game-like instructional design and HVPT approach to teach suprasegmentals.

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English Central



Product Name: *English Central*

Reviewer: Alhyaba Moore

Author and/or Sponsor: English Central, Inc.

Software Type and Source: Website, mobile app for iOS and Android. Available at <http://www.englishcentral.com>; also available from the Apple App Store and Google Play Store.

Cost: \$15/month-\$130/month depending on the number of live lessons learners want and yearly vs. monthly payments. Individual quotes for institutions are also available.

Instructional Type: Video-based articulatory explanations and examples of various pronunciation difficulties experienced by English language learners, followed by practice activities.

Intended Users: Adult learners at most levels.

Instructional Purpose/Objectives: *English Central* presents both teachers and learners with a polished, ad-free resource for pronunciation improvement, as well as other aspects of English language learning.

General description: *English Central's* activities revolve around short video clips graded for difficulty. More advanced videos tend to contain more academic vocabulary, while beginner and intermediate-level videos contain simpler language, as well as subtitles in the learners' native tongue. All videos include English captions. *English Central* contains several pronunciation-specific resources, such as video lessons demonstrating the pronunciation of individual English phonemes in depth. The production of the target sound is described and then demonstrated both visually and aurally, in isolation and in context. A sagittal cross-section of the human speech apparatus making the sound is also shown. Next the video highlights a useful feature. Then, learners are asked to speak into their computer microphone and practice making the sound they just learned about. This feature is also available in other short clips in which students are asked to repeat key words and phrases. Another valuable feature is the ability to receive short, individual lessons with the company's tutors. Learners can easily open an account with English Central by linking with their Facebook or email account. After creating an account, they select their native language, and take a short assessment to determine their level. After joining, they can also take a diagnostic test in order to discover their precise proficiency level within the site. Learners are then able to choose lessons and videos appropriate for their level. Once learners choose a video, they watch it three times. The first time, they simply watch and read the captions. The second time, several key words and phrases are missing from the captions and learners type them in. The third time, learners repeat the line containing the key word into the computer's microphone. After watching the video, learners can choose to "go live" and speak to a tutor about the video.

Strengths: Segmentals are thoroughly discussed and practiced, and speaking practice is abundant. Further, the website contains modern, genuine clips of movies and presents a few varieties of English. In addition, individual feedback from tutors

is available, learners can use the same site for all aspects of English learning, and the site and app track learners' progress and history.

Weaknesses: Unfortunately, no videos teach or make mention of suprasegmentals. Also, the ability of the site to give valuable pronunciation feedback is questionable. When speaking into the microphone, a letter grade and number of points are awarded. However, there is no feedback as to what the speaker must change in order to receive a higher score. Finally, learners must purchase a membership to access most of the site's features.

Overall conclusion: If learners are looking for a professional and fun site for general English-learning, *English Central* is a solid paid option. The videos and activities are motivating, and learners' progress can be seen and tracked. The opportunity to interact with live tutors also gives learners conversation practice not typically available through individual online study. However, if learners are looking only for pronunciation-specific resources, they might fare better by saving some money and looking elsewhere.

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Fun Easy English: Pronunciation and Reductions



Product Name: *Fun Easy English: Pronunciation and Fun Easy English: Reductions*

Reviewer: Lynn Henrichsen

Author and/or Sponsor: Howie Hayman

Software Type and Source: Website at <http://funeasyenglish.com/new-american-english-pronunciation-introduction.htm> and <http://funeasyenglish.com/new-american-english-reductions-reduced-words-introduction.htm>.

Cost: Free (no advertisements).

Instructional Type: Student (or teacher) resource that provides articulatory explanations, model words, and imitative practice for English vowels, consonants, and reductions.

Intended Users: Low-proficiency-level, child (or adult) learners of English.

Instructional Purpose/Objectives: Intelligible production of American English vowels and consonants in single-word contexts. Recognition of rudimentary connections between English spelling and pronunciation. “Natural” pronunciation of English reductions such as *whassup*, *gonna*, *gimme*, and *betcha*. Ultimately, the website explains, the goal is intelligibility, so that “people understand what you’re saying the first time.”

General Description: *Pronunciation and Reductions* are two sections of the larger *Fun, Easy English* website that also has sections on English grammar and “classroom” language learning activities (365 mini-lessons, one for every day of the year). The *Pronunciation* section includes 44 lessons—20 on vowels and 24 on consonants. Each of these lessons is presented via a short (approximately three-minute) video that (1) introduces the target sound, (2) provides a few sample words that use the sound, (3) explains how the sound is spelled, (4) shows a sagittal-section diagram indicating the position of the articulatory organs when making this sound, (5) explains whether the sound is voiced or unvoiced, (6) describes the position of the mouth, lips, and tongue, and (7) pronounces a few model words for the student to imitate. An introductory video provides a few simple hints for practice pronunciation. The *Reductions* section focuses on the “reduced forms of English words” and explains, “You need to use reductions when you speak English in order to sound more natural” and “to understand conversations between native English speakers.” The presentation of the targeted reductions is organized by their lexico-grammatical constructions. For example, one subsection is titled *what+is+word* and teaches reductions like *whatsiz* (*What is his...*); another is titled *word+you* and teaches reductions like *gotcha* (*got you*).

Strengths: Using *Fun, Easy English* costs nothing, and there are no distracting advertisements. The introduction emphatically declares the importance of pronunciation, explaining, “Knowing a lot of vocabulary, and using perfect grammar MEANS NOTHING if nobody can understand you. Pronunciation is the most important part of your English language study.” In the videos, the teacher/presenter (“Mr. Howie”) uses simple, slow speech that is intended to be easy for low-level English learners to comprehend. In addition, his speech is supported by written captions, in case learners still have trouble understanding what he says. To appeal to younger learners, the visual design of *Fun, Easy English* is light-hearted, with “alphabet-block” letters, simple cartoons, lots of photos, and a “toilet seat” mouth. The author attempts to make the video presentations entertaining by wearing odd clothing and including strange, puppet characters, like “Mr. A. Lee En” (who speaks like an alien robot).

Weaknesses: The *Pronunciation* section focuses on segmentals (vowels and consonants) only. No mention is made of important suprasegmental features of English (stress, intonation, rhythm, etc.). All presentations and practice exercises are limited to the single-word level. No sentences or larger contexts are used. Learners do not need to understand the meaning of the words they are repeating and no attempt is made to convey their meaning. The videos (many of which were made nearly ten years ago) seem “home-made” (rudimentary and unprofessional). The hints for practicing pronunciation are so simple as to be useless (e.g., “Practice pronunciation in front of a mirror,” or “Remember the spelling of words and their pronunciation are often different.”) No mention is made of more modern or helpful metacognitive or motivational strategies for pronunciation improvement. The author (Howie Hayman) holds a degree in business administration and a TEFL certificate. His lack of advanced training in linguistics, phonetics, language learning psychology, and pronunciation instruction is evident in many of the explanations. For instance, he never mentions simple but powerful phonological rules (such as palatal assimilation or unstressed vowel reduction) when teaching reductions. He merely presents models for students to imitate and repeat.

Overall Conclusion: *Fun, Easy English* is one of the few websites that attempts to teach English pronunciation to younger learners. In some ways it probably appeals to children, but its reliance on didactic, articulatory explanations followed by minimal (and meaningless) imitative practice of single words leaves

much to be desired. The *Reductions* section addresses an important aspect of spoken English that is often overlooked by speaking/pronunciation instructors.

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Juna: Your American Accent Coach



Product Name: *Juna: Your American Accent Coach*

Reviewer: Judy James

Author/Developer: Ann Bartholomew/Noble Applications

Software Type and Source: iOS, made for iPhone and iPad; available at <http://AmericanAccentOnTheGo.com>.

Cost: The app and some content is free to explore; a \$4.99 in-app purchase provides the complete American Sounds Content.

Instructional Type: *Juna* is an easy to use app with little need of prompts. It provides supplementary exercises, new and additional information, as well as self-access activities. It allows students to record themselves and compare their recording with the model sound file, and it can be used in small chunks as needed. A teacher could open the app to introduce a sound that students are pronouncing incorrectly so they can see its proper formation. The app could also be assigned as homework for students to self-correct their pronunciation errors, and it could easily be used for pair work during class.

Intended Users: English language learners in general who want to learn, correct, or perfect their own American English pronunciation. In addition, it could be used by a teacher focusing on particular sounds students may need help with.

Instructional Purpose/Objectives: *Juna* promotes proper American English pronunciation. It does not promote new language acquisition or novel responses but it does allow for student autonomy and proactive learning. It is interactive and could be used in groups or for individual work. *Juna* provides exercises for more than one learning style, and there is also some room for unintended learning.

General Description: *Juna* shows the inside of the mouth as it makes American English sounds. An animated mouth character, Mimo, demonstrates tongue position, air flow, and movements for each of the sounds. Students practice imitating Mimo by listening and watching. There are also recording features so students can compare their pronunciation to Mimo's, and there are extra videos for the difficult sounds [r], [l], "th," and diphthongs.

Strengths: *Juna* is easy to use and navigate with a "Welcome" section, back button, and menu with video practice and audio practice, as well as how to make sounds, about, and help sections. The app's strongest points are the wide range of sounds included for American English and the option of working with the sounds that the user chooses (without going through the whole program). The user interface is simple, not too complicated, and very user friendly. There are no distracting elements throughout the app.

Weaknesses: A weak point is the animation, which may seem juvenile to some people. Further, *Juna* does not evaluate or provide feedback, but it does allow students to record themselves and compare the recording with the sound file. The app is not modifiable nor does it keep records or provide feedback.

Overall Conclusion: *Juna* is well worth the low \$4.99 purchase cost. It is quick and easy to use, can be pulled out in a classroom for a quick review, and may even be given as homework. The option to try some parts for free is a plus.

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Mango Languages



Product Name: *Mango Languages*

Reviewer: Leanna Fry

Author and/or Sponsor: Mango Languages, Inc.

Software Type and Source: Subscription database, Android and iOS mobile apps. Available at <http://mangolanguages.com>, participating public and school libraries in the United States and Canada, and the Apple App Store, Google Play Store, Amazon Apps Store, and Nook App Store.

Cost: Free at participating libraries; personal subscriptions cost \$20/month.

Instructional Type: Student resource, drills, voice comparison.

Intended Users: Novice learners, school-age to adult; English-learning content generally limited to the basic level.

Instructional Purpose/Objectives: Listening perception and speech production.

General Description: *Mango Languages* offers language-learning software for libraries, schools, businesses, governments, and individuals. It is not limited to English as a second/foreign language, as lessons are offered in over 70 languages, with instructions given in English. *Mango Languages* describes its program as “PhD-created and linguist-approved” and is accessible through database

subscription or via a subscription-based downloadable app. Lessons target novice learners, although intermediate English lessons are also offered for Spanish-speakers. Topics focus on functional vocabulary and include greetings, introductions, and shopping. English lessons' vocabulary and pronunciation represent American English, and recordings are spoken by native American English speakers. Instructions for these English lessons, however, are given by native speakers in the user's choice of 18 world languages, including Spanish, Arabic, and Chinese, Turkish, Bengali, and Vietnamese. A microphone is necessary to use the voice comparison feature. The software tracks users' progress through the lessons.

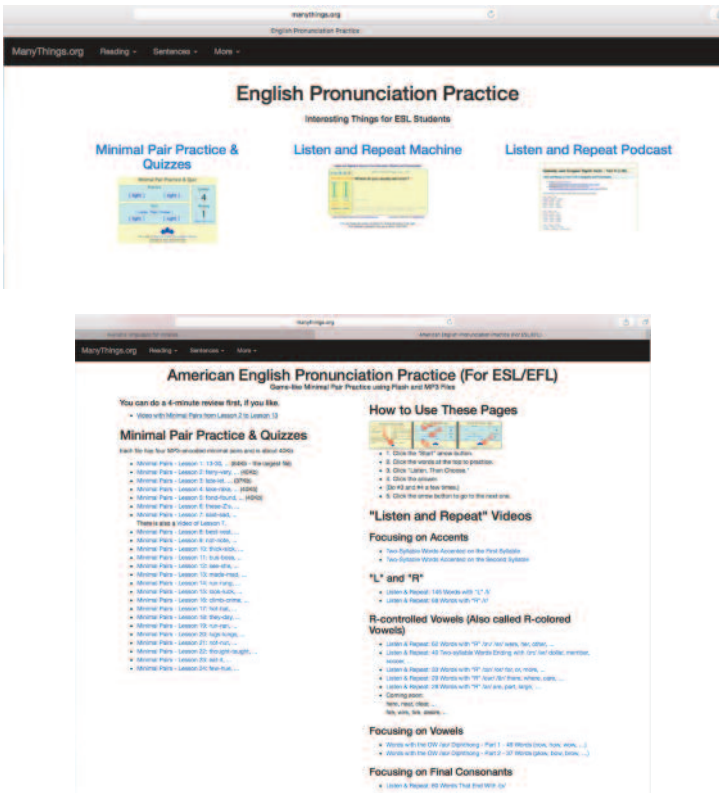
Strengths: *Mango's* primary focus is on speaking and listening, but it also includes a pronunciation element. Native speakers pronounce basic words, and users can click on individual elements of a word to hear a slower pronunciation that includes a transcription in their native alphabets. Voice comparison software allows users to see how their pronunciation compares to a native speaker's.

Weaknesses: Because the cost of an individual subscription could be prohibitive for many English language learners, *Mango* may be more appropriate for use in contexts where learners have free access to it through their local libraries or schools.

Overall Conclusion: For novice learners with access to *Mango*, the product can help learners with their pronunciation of basic vocabulary as it provides opportunities for both input and output. However, due to *Mango's* cost, access to the software may be difficult for most learners.

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ManyThings.org English Pronunciation Practice



Product Name: *Manythings.org English Pronunciation Practice*

Reviewer: Jared Sell

Author and/or Sponsor: Charles and Lawrence Kelly

Software Type and Source: Website (currently being updated to be mobile friendly) at <http://www.manythings.org/e/pronunciation.html>.

Cost: Free (no advertisements).

Instructional Type: Mostly a student resource for drills and some games.

Intended Users: The website doesn't specify level or age for the materials; however, it could be useful at many levels. The Japanese translations that appear occasionally suggest that it was originally designed for Japanese learners of Eng-

lish. While the website includes help for other language skills besides pronunciation, the pronunciation part is the focus of this review.

Instructional Purpose/Objectives: This website is intended to help users understand the differences in minimal pairs, utilizing listen-and-repeat practice.

General description: The pronunciation part of this website includes three major sections. The first section, *Minimal Pair Practice & Quizzes*, includes several practices where a student listens, repeats, and then chooses the correct choice of the minimal pairs. Prior to having to choose the correct answer, students may practice listening and repeating as many times as they want. Also inside this section of the website are various videos for listen-and-repeat practice as well as songs, poems, and tongue twisters.

The second section is called the *Listen and Repeat Machine*. Students who use this section may choose to hear a sentence X number of times while also repeating what they hear. There is one page of 50 sentences for each day of the year, so users could potentially use a new practice every day.

Finally, there is a section called the *Listen and Repeat Podcast* where students can listen to a podcast (albeit very short) that is designed to help practice particular points of the language. For example, there is one podcast that helps students learn how to pronounce irregular verbs.

Strengths: One of the strengths of *English Pronunciation Practice* is the amount of practice available. Students would be hard pressed to find something that has more practice than this website. It is unlikely that students will find a place where they can practice pronunciation on something new each day of the year, as this website offers. Another strength is the use of audio and visual components within some of the practices. These components facilitate and add meaning to the practice. Another strength of this website is the fact that it is very flexible. Students don't have to follow a certain order for the activities, which fosters self-regulation in learners.

Weaknesses: From a visual standpoint, *English Pronunciation Practice* is not very appealing. In fact, it is very plain with text in boxes. While it is being updated, it currently appears to be very simple and outdated. This is a weakness in that it does not appear as well developed as many other ESL websites. Another weakness for students who are learners of English but do not have a Japanese background is that the Japanese translations (included in various locations) may be confusing

and/or unnecessary. Lastly, the website does not have a lot of variety in presenting the information. Most of the practice involves simply listening and repeating, and it seems to go overboard in this category, including too much of the same thing.

Overall Conclusion: *English Pronunciation Practice* includes some valuable practice material for students looking to supplement their ESL skills. Nevertheless, its lack of visual appeal, simplistic and outdated instructional approach, and lack of variety make it less than optimal.

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One-Stop English, Pronunciation



Product Name: One-Stop English, Pronunciation

Reviewer: Sofia Carreño

Author and/or Sponsor: Macmillan Education

Software Type and Source: Website at <http://www.onestopenglish.com/skills/pronunciation/>.

Cost: \$68 for a one-year membership; free 30-day trial option.

Instructional Type: Teacher resource with videos, articles, and instructional materials for various language-skill areas, including pronunciation.

Intended Users: This site is recommended for teachers of EFL, ESL, and ESOL who teach at any level, to learners of any age, and in British or American English.

Instructional Purpose/Objectives: *One-Stop English* provides English language teachers with lesson plans, worksheets, flashcards, audio, and videos. The resources are organized by skill areas (e.g., pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary), but they can also be found based on learners' age, level, and language focus (e.g., English for business, or other purposes).

General Description: *One-Stop English* looks very professional, and it is user-friendly. Its home page has eleven main tabs that provide access to business *English*, *ESP*, *ESOL*, *exams*, *grammar*, *skills*, *teaching children*, *teaching teenagers*, *CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning)*, *teaching methodology*, and *MacMillan's "One-Stop English" community*. It also provides information on the latest *Guardian Weekly* news, scholarships, and tips for teachers. It contains lesson plans, worksheets, flashcards, audio, and videos to aid the teachers. Under the *Skills* tab, there is a pronunciation section, which contains videos, articles, and activities by Adrian Underhill and Adrian Tennant, a glossary of terms, a bibliography, a phonemic chart and a *Sounds* app developed by Adrian Underhill, a series of pronunciation activities and lesson plans, and other pronunciation exercises.

Strengths: *One-Stop English* includes videos that explain very clearly the basics of the British phonemic chart, how to teach articulation, and other processes. The videos are very clear and provide all the necessary information for novice teachers who may not be acquainted with the International Phonetic Alphabet. Another positive is how this site provides a lot of exercises to take to class—a real advantage for teachers who are starting to teach pronunciation and need some guidance and modeling.

Weaknesses: Besides the site's naturally heavy (but limiting) focus on British English, the exercises and lessons seem to be focused on segmental features mainly, disregarding the important role that suprasegmentals play in learners' intelligibility. Out of twelve lessons only two are about word stress. However, a few articles about suprasegmentals (such as intonation, assimilation, and elision) can be found in one of the subsections under the *Pronunciation* tab. Another limitation is that the exer-

cises I was able to access consisted mainly of simply repeating words after a model. If teachers were to use that type of activity only, students would not get any contextualized, communicative pronunciation practice. There was, however, a long list of exercises that I could not access without purchasing a membership, and some of them could provide more contextualized and meaningful practice.

Overall Conclusion: Without full access to all the exercises, it was difficult to gauge the value of the pronunciation instruction and practice provided by *One-Stop English*. Nevertheless, it seems to provide a great deal of helpful guidance and many useful ideas for teachers, who should then be able to make decisions with respect to how to utilize the materials provided in this site in their classrooms.

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Perception of Spoken English (POSE) Test



Perception of Spoken English (POSE) Test

Sign In

Improve your pronunciation
Find your specific problems and focus your pronunciation practice for faster progress.

Get Started

Students

Find the most common problems in your class
Track students' progress and see compiled results.

Get Started

Teachers

[Preview](#) | [Interpreting Results](#) | [System Requirements](#) | [Copyright Information](#) | [Bibliography](#) | [Contact](#) | [FAQ](#) | [Pronunciation Matters](#)

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Product Name: *Perception of Spoken English (POSE) Test*

Reviewer: Yuting Ruby Li

Author and/or Sponsor: Justin R. Shewell

Software Type and Source: Website at <https://posetest.com/>.

Cost: Free for students; free 30-day trial for teachers, after which payment is required. The basic “classroom” cost for teachers is \$1 per student seat. If a teacher buys more than 20 seats at a time, there is a slight discount, up to 50 seats, which costs \$40. Seats are valid for 1 year from the date of purchase and can be used with multiple students, but only one student at a time.

Instructional Type: This diagnostic tool is designed to help non-native English speakers diagnose their individual problems in speech perception. In addition, it can provide this information to teachers who can use it to design appropriate pronunciation instruction focusing on their students’ most common pronunciation problems.

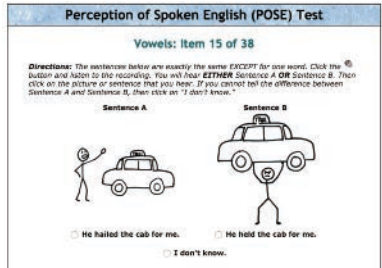
Intended Users: Students at ACTFL OPI levels from novice-low to advanced-high will find this site helpful. The diagnostics are clear and easy to navigate, but are also fairly text-dense. Therefore, novice-level students might need teacher guidance in taking the test and/or interpreting the results.

Instructional Purpose/Objectives: On the *POSE Test*’s home page under “How is the Perception of Spoken English (POSE) Test different?” an explanation states that the POSE Test focuses on the perception of both segmentals and suprasegmentals. The problematic areas that this instrument can diagnose include vowels, consonants, word stress, sentence-final intonation, and sentence stress. By focusing on speech perception and having students distinguish between minimal pairs framed in sentences, the *POSE Test* measures the students’ listening discrimination and, by extension, indicates where they may have pronunciation production problems that can be improved.

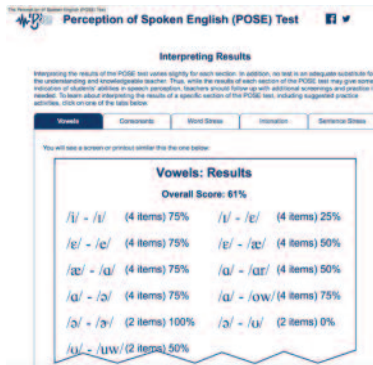
General Description: The *POSE Test* website consists of three major parts: (1) introduction, (2) the diagnostic test, and (3) interpretation of results. The feature of greatest interest on this site is the diagnostic test that evaluates learners’ accuracy in perceiving both segmentals and suprasegmentals in English.

Strengths: This website is easy to use and navigate because it provides clear instructions with examples of how to take the test and a clear introduction to the website. The minimal pairs are presented in meaningful, sentence contexts. Moreover, each sentence in the test has a corresponding visual image, making it easier for learners to understand the meaning of the sentence rather than dwell on the possibly unfamiliar word.

Weaknesses: Admittedly, it is difficult to make up two sentences that make sense when the only difference between them is a single phoneme. Naturally, naturalness is sometimes compromised when creating such minimal-pair sentences. Because of this, the meaning of the sentence or the pictures provided frequently signals the more likely answer based on how realistic it is. Of course, sometimes the unrealistic, unlikely answer is the correct one. To fix this distracting problem, some sentences need revising. For instance, in the figure on the right, the sentences (and drawings) could be modified to read, *Superman hailed the cab for me*, and *Superman held the cab for me*.



After taking each section of the test, students see the results based on their choices of the correct meanings of minimal pairs they heard. Unfortunately, there is no way for them to go back to the questions and see the particular words they



missed, because they are not shown. Because the order of the questions is randomized in each administration of the test, even if students retake it, they will not get the same items in the same order again. Lastly, in the second “Sentence Stress” test, students merely mark the word/syllable which they hear as having the strongest stress. No understanding of word or sentence meaning is required. This test could be improved by

having students match what they hear with its meaning. Students would then have to understand what each sentence means rather than merely choose between emphasized words.

Overall Conclusion: The *POSE Test* is a useful and unique tool for identifying problematic areas in both segmentals and suprasegmentals and raising students’ awareness of their own speech perception. However, this diagnostic test could be improved by polishing some of the sentences and perfecting the design.

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Pronuncian: American English Pronunciation

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AMERICAN ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION

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I started listening to your podcast a week ago, and I'm really enjoying it. - Rafael, Brazil

English pronunciation is the most neglected part of ESL, ELL, and EFL programs today. When it comes to speaking English, it's not just what you say; it's how you say it. Pronuncian brings English pronunciation to the forefront, teaching you online and at your own pace how to speak with an American accent.

Pronuncian offers free access to hundreds of pronunciation lessons and thousands of American English sounds. [Subscribe now](#) and get even more:

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Product Name: *Pronuncian: American English Pronunciation*

Reviewer: Ksenia Zhao

Author and/or Sponsor: Mandy Egle, Seattle Learning Academy, founder and leader

Software type and Source: Website at <https://pronuncian.com>.

Cost: *Pronuncian* has both free and paid membership options. (This review focuses on the free version of the website and does not describe features available in the membership or subscription options.) Pronuncian.com offers two options for members: subscription, which renews automatically (monthly—\$25, three months—\$54, six months—\$90), as well as actual membership which expires at the end of fixed three (\$60) or six-month (\$100) period.

Instructional Type: *Pronuncian* offers resources related to pronunciation improvement for both students and teachers. Student resources include lessons with theoretical information, videos, and audio files, as well as exercises, drills and quizzes. Members have unlimited, ad-free access to all the lessons, videos, struc-

tured online English classes, the TrueVoice® recording and feedback system, personalized sound/stress/linking recommendations, as well as expanded tests and quizzes. Moreover, for a fee of \$110 users can get a remote assessment of their personal pronunciation issues via phone, Skype®, or voicemail. Teacher resources include a library of ready-made pronunciation-improvement lessons and materials to be used in English language classrooms.

Intended Users: *Pronuncian* is designed to serve three main audiences: English language learners (ELLs) of any proficiency level, English language teachers, and businesses with English communication challenges.

Instructional Purpose/Objectives: *Pronuncian* units address segmentals (vowels and consonants), suprasegmentals (stress, linking, pitch, intonation), and perception (listening and minimal pair discrimination). The website also provides articulatory explanations with pictures and audio files, production and practice (quizzes), and awareness building activities.

General description: *Pronuncian* is an online resource targeted at American English pronunciation. The free version of the resource offers a wide range of material including theoretical explanations, lessons, podcasts, practice drills, and assessment quizzes. Memberships allow learners to receive personalized pronunciation recommendations, structured online lesson sequences, expanded tests, and lessons with no third-party advertisements.

The free version of the website allows limited access to the main five subsections:

- 1) The *Video* section provides access to at least 16 pronunciation instruction videos of good quality. The explanations on the videos are clear and consistent, as well as quite detailed and well-illustrated. The language level of some of the segmental-oriented videos is suitable even for beginners. The topics cover most of the English vowels and some consonants. However, some videos for non-members contain only parts of the full videos available to members only.
- 2) The *Lessons* section, available for free, includes various lessons on vowels, consonants and stress. Each contains detailed explanations of how to produce a sound in different locations within words, complete with examples. Examples include pictures showing tongue movements and sound files. The language of some explanations may be too complex for ELLs, which makes the sound files, pictures and graphs particularly useful. Each lesson has quizzes

to allow learners to check their understanding. However, most quizzes are available only with a paid subscription.

- 3) The *Assessment* section refers learners to a personal, 45-minute pronunciation assessment conducted via Skype® (or in person for residents of Seattle) by Amanda Lillet. Learners read a special script and get immediate feedback from Amanda, as well as a personalized self-study report. This assessment costs \$200.
- 4) The *Minimal Pairs* section provides an extensive listing of vowel minimal pairs. Users can see, choose, and then listen to a list of words contrasting the two vowels involved.
- 5) The *Podcast* section contains video and audio podcasts on pronunciation. The video podcasts overlap with the video section described above. The audio podcast section allows access to 209 audio explanations of common pronunciation issues that pose difficulties for ELLs.

Strengths: Even without a paid membership, *Pronuncian* offers a wide range of pronunciation material. The topics available with no membership cover both segmental- and suprasegmental-related issues. The content is well-organized and well-structured. Each section has plentiful, clear examples. The language used in podcasts and audios is well-suited for ELLs. The website provides English language learners with opportunities to view structured material, listen to examples, practice on their own, and assess their progress with the help of the extensive tests.

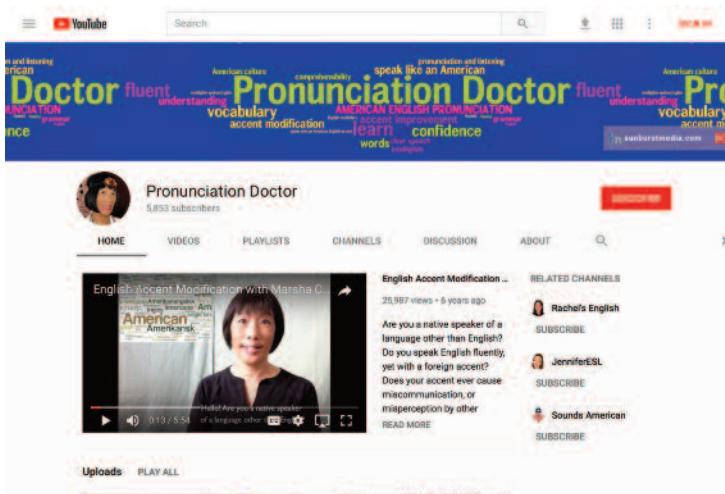
Weaknesses: Membership is required to view the full content of some topics and the full range of videos and lessons. Some explanations of suprasegmental issues use complex academic language that may pose difficulties for learners below the advanced level. However, each subpage still has a well-organized chart and examples with audio files. The descriptions of some vowel sounds are not exactly accurate or consistent. For instance, one description makes a distinction between long and short (rather than tense and lax) vowels. Moreover, the /ai/ diphthong is referred to as ‘long *i*’, while the /i:/ sound is referred to as ‘long *e*’, which may be confusing for some learners. Also, some of the assigned sound names (e.g., ‘the other u’, or ‘the *ow* sound’) are not widely used and may appear strange.

Overall Conclusion: *Pronuncian* is a well-made, well-organized resource targeted on American English. It provides a wide range of material for those interested in improving their pronunciation. Even the free section of the site provides access to a variety of good quality pronunciation material. The diversity of material both

in content and type is, undoubtedly, a strength. Minor disadvantages like complicated language in some sections and certain phonetic inaccuracies can be compensated for by teacher's instructions and do not outweigh the benefits. Overall, *Pronuncian* is a great resource for pronunciation learning, both self-regulated and instructor-assisted. Combined with a teacher's instruction, it can benefit English language learners even more than if used alone.

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Pronunciation Doctor



Product Name: *Pronunciation Doctor*

Reviewer: Lynn Henrichsen

Author and/or Sponsor: Marsha Chan (Sunburst Media)

Software Type and Source: website, YouTube® channel. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/user/PronunciationDoctor>.

Cost: Free (no ads, but occasional references to Marsha's *Phrase by Phrase*, a pronunciation improvement program, and other commercial books, software, and instructional materials available from www.sunburstmedia.com).

Instructional Type: Teacher and student resource videos that demonstrate and explain various aspects of English pronunciation, speaking, listening, grammar, and vocabulary.

Intended Users: English language learners (adults and possibly teenagers) with pronunciation challenges but enough English listening proficiency to understand the videos, as well as teachers of ESL pronunciation, speaking, and listening.

Instructional Purpose/Objectives: The videos provide demonstrations and explanations of many aspects of English pronunciation: segmentals, suprasegmentals, listening discrimination, sound-spelling correspondences, etc. Some videos also address vocabulary, grammar, and other elements of the English language. Several playlists focus on English language skills for parents and child care providers.

General Description: *Pronunciation Doctor* is a YouTube® channel with over two thousand videos curated into over 20 playlists (and with nearly 6,000 subscribers). The producer of, and main character in, the videos is Marsha Chan, an emeritus faculty member with over 30 years of experience teaching English skills to ESL learners at Mission College in Santa Clara, California (where she received university awards for excellence in teaching) and elsewhere. Over the past six years, Marsha has created and posted an impressive array of videos addressing a huge variety of the challenges faced by ESL learners in the areas of pronunciation, listening, speaking, and more. The topics of these videos run the gamut from the pronunciation of reduced and contracted forms like *gonna* and *hafta*, to irregular verbs, and college oral communication. According to the channel's home page, Marsha's title "Pronunciation Doctor" was "given to her by those who know her superior talent at teaching various aspects of language, most notably, pronunciation." This talent, as well as her experience and energy, is very evident in the videos.

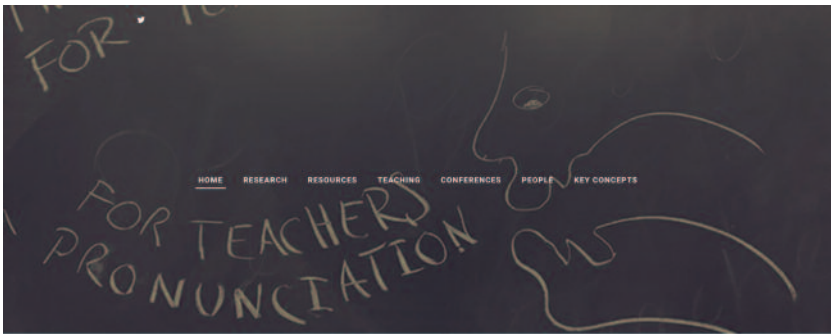
Strengths: Besides the large number and variety of topics addressed in the videos available at *Pronunciation Doctor*, the fact that the videos are generally very entertaining (due to Marsha's lively personality and acting) adds life to what might otherwise be boring linguistic topics. The entertainment value adds motivation. Marsha's excellent teaching skills also make the explanations very clear and memorable.

Weaknesses: Due to their very nature, the videos offer only one-way instruction. They provide explanation and demonstration but no interaction. The fact that the *Pronunciation Doctor* YouTube channel offers videos on so many different and wide-ranging topics may make it hard for users to find what they are looking for. Also, some of the older videos are not as well made or entertaining as the more recent ones.

Overall Conclusion: *Pronunciation Doctor* is a “treasure trove” of ideas, activities, and information for instructors seeking to improve their ability to teach English pronunciation (and other language skills). It is also a resource not to be overlooked by ESL learners who wish to improve their intelligibility or reduce their foreign accent in English.

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Pronunciation for Teachers



Pronunciation for Teachers

"Pronunciation for Teachers" is meant to provide professional help and resources for those interested in teaching pronunciation in all educational contexts. We started this site to provide teachers and researchers a place to find out what others are doing in this quickly growing area of language study.

Product Name: *Pronunciation for Teachers*

Reviewer: Lynn Henrichsen

Author and/or Sponsor: John Levis and a “worldwide steering committee” of pronunciation experts

Software Type and Source: Website at <http://www.pronunciationforteachers.com/>.

Cost: Free; no advertising.

Instructional Type: Teacher (and researcher) resource.

Intended Users: Teachers (and researchers) of pronunciation.

Instructional Purpose/Objectives: According to its home page, Pronunciation for Teachers is “meant to provide professional help and resources for those interested in teaching pronunciation in all educational contexts.” In addition, it serves as a place for teachers and researchers “to find out what others are doing in this quickly growing area of language study.”

General Description: The home page has links to six sub-sections of the website: *Research*, *Resources*, *Teaching*, *Conferences*, *People*, and *Key Concepts*. The *Research* section contains lists of references to articles (organized by date of publication or the topic they address), book chapters, reviews of books and software, conference presentations, PSLLT conference proceedings, and journals dealing with different aspects of L2 pronunciation. The *Resources* section refers users to “useful” websites, videos, and books for pronunciation teaching. The *Teaching* section is intended to provide visitors with exercises and other activities that teachers can use to help students improve their pronunciation. The *Conferences* section provides links to the websites of various pronunciation-related conferences, such as PSLLT (Pronunciation in Second Language Teaching and Learning), Accents, EPIP (English Pronunciation: Issues and Practices), Speech Rhythm, and Phonology and Interphonology of Contemporary English. After clicking on the *People* menu item, viewers see a display of photos of various pronunciation experts. Clicking on some photos takes viewers to brief biographical sketches. From there (in some cases), another link takes viewers to ResearchGate.net, where information (and links) related to that expert’s publications and presentations can be viewed. Finally, the *Key Concepts* section provides visitors with links to articles and talks on topics related to pronunciation teaching, such as accent.

Strengths: The topics covered are pertinent, and the information they provide will be useful to teachers needing an introduction to the field of pronunciation teaching, as well as to more experienced pronunciation teachers and researchers hoping to update or expand their knowledge. Overall, it is very convenient and helpful to have so many online resources related to pronunciation teaching together in one place. The fact that they have been screened by the steering committee en-

sures their high quality and usefulness. The provision of photos, as well as bios, of the various pronunciation experts featured in the *People* section, personalizes and humanizes them. In addition, the website’s visual design is clean and uncluttered, making it easy to use and navigate.

Weaknesses: This website is a work in progress that is currently in only its beginning stage. Many of the sections are empty or sparsely populated. For instance, the *Teaching* section contains only one link to one set of “Perception Exercises in Pronunciation Teaching,” and the only topic under *Key Concepts* (at the time this review was written) is *accent*. As members of the steering committee (and others) contribute additional information, the website will increase in value as an information resource.

Overall Conclusion: *Pronunciationforteachers.com* shows great promise. With the passage of time and the addition of more resources, it will become increasingly valuable to teachers (and researchers) looking for information on the teaching of L2 pronunciation.

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Pronunciation Matters

PRONUNCIATION MATTERS
Communicative, Story-Based Activities
for Mastering the Sounds of North American English

Lynn E. Henrichsen
Brent A. Green
Atsuko Nishizumi
Carol Lynne Bogley

Diagnosis of Difficulties Teaching Materials Teaching Procedures

Pronunciation Matters is an instructional system for improving the pronunciation of intermediate and advanced learners of English as a second or foreign language. It provides meaningful, communicative, and motivating practice activities leading to the mastery of targeted sound contrasts in North American English.

Pronunciation Matters contains 186 focused, independent instructional units that help English language learners recognize and overcome their pronunciation difficulties in a wide variety of areas that experienced ESL/EFL teachers around the world have noted as problematic for learners of English. The units are organized in eight sections—vowels, consonants, consonant clusters, reduction and blending, word stress, sentence stress, intonation, and segmentation.

Product Name: *Pronunciation Matters: Communicative, Story-Based Activities for Mastering the Sounds of North American English*

Reviewer: Katie Devenport Blanco

Authors: Lynn E. Henrichsen, Brent A. Green, Atsuko Nishitani, and Carol Lynne Bagley

Software Type: website.

Source: <http://www.pronunciationmatters.com/>.

Cost: On the *Pronunciation Matters* website, users can purchase all 186 individual units (which include story text, accompanying audio, practice sentences, and peer-practice card masters) for \$25.00. Users may also purchase individual units for \$1.00 each. For each unit, a free preview PDF is available to give users an idea of what it is like. The printed *Pronunciation Matters* book (without the audio files, card masters, or teachers manual) is also available on Amazon.com for around \$20. Access to the online “Diagnosis of Difficulties” and “Teaching Procedures” sections is free.

Instructional Type: *Pronunciationmatters.com* has material for both students and teachers including diagnostic materials, instructional units, practice activities, and peer-tutoring practice cards. It also includes a section for teachers on suggested teaching procedures.

Intended Users: *Pronunciationmatters.com* is intended for learners at any proficiency level who want to improve their pronunciation, but it may be most suitable for learners at the intermediate and advanced levels who are capable of understanding and telling stories in English.

Instructional Purpose/Objectives: *Pronunciation Matters* units focus on the perception and production of suprasegmentals (intonation, sentence and word stress, reduction and blending, and pausing) as well as segmentals (vowels, consonants, and consonant clusters).

General description: *Pronunciation Matters* instructional materials are divided into 186 units focusing on various aspects of pronunciation such as vowels, consonants, consonant clusters, word and sentence level stress, and intonation. It uses stories to give context for meaningful, authentic practice activities that focus on improving users’ pronunciation of North American English. Besides these teaching materials, the website also has a section with recommendations and materials for diagnosing English language learners’ pronunciation difficulties. In addition, a third section of the website provides phonological explanations, hints for helping learners distinguish and produce sounds using other sensory modalities

(tactile, visual, etc.) besides listening, and sample lesson plans (with video clips) that describe the instructional procedures to be used with each unit.

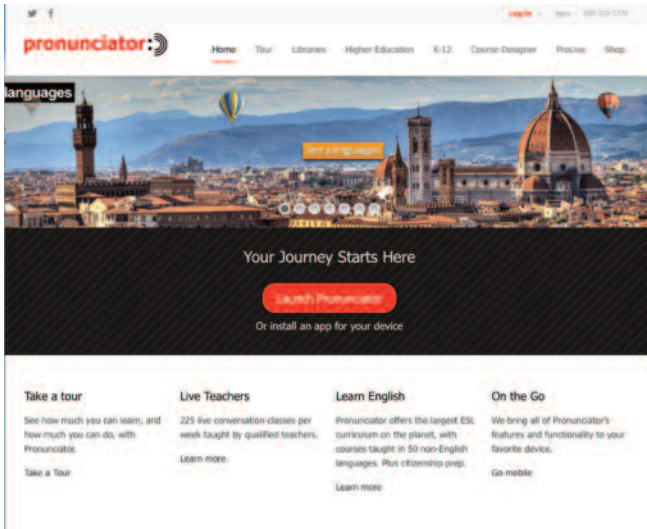
Strengths: *Pronunciationmatters.com* excels at providing meaningful, contextualized, interesting activities to help English learners focus on and grasp the various features of North American English pronunciation that may be difficult for them. Chalkboard-style pictures help learners of all levels to understand concepts and activities (and can also be used by teachers). The clear articulatory explanations also allow teachers at any experience level to explain problematic areas with ease and simplicity. In addition, the site takes teachers through all stages of the teaching process—diagnosis, explanation, practice, and performance.

Weaknesses: The website presentation is a little dated, and the content is little more than an electronic version of what appeared in the original print book (University of Michigan Press, 1999), but it is easy to access and navigate and instead of purchasing the entire book, users can buy only the units they need. Although payment is necessary to access the full set of teaching materials available at the site, brief previews of each lesson are free. Overall, *Pronunciation Matters* provides so many useful, quality materials that it is well worth the purchase price.

Overall Conclusion: In summary, *Pronunciationmatters.com* is a valuable resource for both teachers and students. The wide variety of pronunciation features it addresses, the stories that provide context and emphasize meaning, and its ease of use make this website an asset in any pronunciation-teaching setting.

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Pronunciator



Product Name: *Pronunciator*

Reviewer: Jeff Peterson

Author and/or Sponsor: Pronunciator, LLC

Software Type and Source: Website and mobile app (iOS, Android, Kindle Fire), available at <http://www.pronunciator.com>, the Apple App Store, Google Play Store, and Amazon.

Cost: Free for all features, one user per login email address.

Instructional Type: Teacher and student resource including tutorials, drills, games, flashcards, course designer tools, dictionary lookup, grammar textbooks, assessment tools, and many others.

Intended Users: Language learners at all levels, from K-12 through higher education

Instructional Purpose/Objectives: For the most part, instruction focuses on suprasegmentals, the pronunciation of words and phrases as a whole, and listening.

General Description: *Pronunciator* provides users with many different learning options for learners with different learning styles. Learners can use the program

(i.e., read the instructions) in up to 50 different languages to study 80 languages including American and British English. It provides audio clips of words and phrases that users can listen to as they attempt to mimic native speakers. The program also provides users who wish to strengthen their accuracy skills the option of listening to audio clips either at normal speed or at a slower speed (for those who have difficulty processing input at native-speaker speeds). The program is organized into language courses with a main course and a *Learning Guides and More* section. These sections provide the audio clips of words and phrases related to the course and the level of the learner. These audio clips give learners the opportunity to practice using tracking or shadowing (listening and then imitating and repeating along with or immediately after the speaker) (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Goodwin, & Griner, 2010, p. 342; Foote & McDonough, 2017; Henrichsen, 2015; Rosse, 1999). Much of the content is not contextualized in any sentence or story format, which takes away from its meaningfulness. Furthermore, the slow version of the audio clip provides a digitally slowed down version that diminishes the authenticity of the pronunciation as well as the user experience. I would recommend using the normal speed functionality alone. Unfortunately, little feedback is provided to users other than what words they get correct when working through the flashcards and assessments provided.

Strengths: *Pronunciator* has many strengths, including narration of the activity to be done, a good mix of topics and levels for all learners, ease in getting set up and started, flexibility to learn at any level and autonomously, high quality visuals and design, great course organization, and instruction in multiple orthographies for languages that use characters, as well as American and British English options

Weaknesses: My examination of *Pronunciator* also revealed some of its weaknesses. For instance, some pictures don't reflect the word or phrase being studied (e.g., random pictures accompanied the phrase *Where is the toilet?*), poor audio quality in the "slow" version of words and phrases, lack of interaction or feedback regarding learners' pronunciation of practice words and phrases, decontextualization of words and phrases, the fact that normal speed may be slightly slower than normal to some, and heavy reliance on users' self-checking.

Overall Conclusion: Overall, this software may be a great companion to learners' language studies, both on their own as well as in a language course. If users play the audio clips at normal speed and are able to self-check their pronunciation,

this program provides many words and phrases for pronunciation practice and vocabulary building. As an instructor tool, *Pronunciator* will most likely be best used as a pronunciation practice supplement to a class. However, instructors and learners should be aware of the weaknesses described above as they use *Pronunciator*.

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Rachel's English

The screenshot shows the homepage of Rachel's English. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for VIDEOS, LESSONS, BOOK, ABOUT, CONTACT, and RESOURCES. A prominent banner features a woman holding a 'welcome' sign, with text stating 'At Rachel's English, you'll find everything you need to speak better English.' Below this, there are bullet points about free videos and an eBook. To the right, a 'FREE 10 DAY MINI COURSE' sign-up form is present. The lower half of the page is divided into 'POPULAR VIDEOS' and 'RECENT VIDEOS' sections, each displaying video thumbnails and titles like 'Stress: DA-da' and 'English Conversation'. A 'VIDEO CATEGORIES' section is also visible at the bottom right.

Product Name: *Rachel's English, American English Pronunciation Guide and other sections devoted to pronunciation*

Reviewers: Steven Carter and Laura Decker

Author and/or Sponsor: Rachel's English

Software Type and Source: Website at <http://www.rachelsenglish.com/> generally, or more particularly at <http://rachelsenglish.com/improve-sound-like-native-speaker/>, <http://rachelsenglish.com/video-categories/>, and <https://www.rachelsenglishacademy.com/>.

Cost: Most of the videos and instructional features at this site are free. The site also advertises Rachel's English Academy at a price of \$14 per month. The Academy is described as "a collection of online video and audio courses for inter-

mediate to advanced speakers of English as a foreign language to dramatically improve English conversation skills.”

Instructional Type: *Rachel's English* is largely a student resource, but it can also serve as a valuable pronunciation resource for tutors working with English learners.

Intended Users: This site seems designed for English language learners who have achieved at least high-intermediate proficiency. In order to navigate the site and understand the resources available (along with the explanations offered in the instructional videos) users would need basic proficiency in English.

Instructional Purpose/Objectives: The pronunciation-related sites at *Rachel's English* offer instruction on a variety of pronunciation features: segmentals (vowels and consonants), suprasegmentals (stress, rhythm, intonation, and pausing), perception, awareness building, production, articulatory explanations, and sound-spelling correspondences. It also walks users through practice exercises.

General description: *Rachel's English* is a YouTube® channel (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvn_XCl_mgQmt3sD753zdJA) with over 1,000,000 subscribers. Rachel, the creator, has produced a variety of videos focusing on American English, which can be accessed by clicking on the *Videos* tab on the home page. The videos are detailed and provide lots of breakdown, which is helpful for English language learners. Instruction addresses many of the individual segmental sounds in English and explains the production of specific vowel and consonant sounds in detail. Perhaps more important, *Rachel's English* also has materials that deal with *suprasegmental* aspects of pronunciation (blending/linking, intonation, rhythm, stress). This is particularly noteworthy because despite the importance of suprasegmentals, it is often difficult to find instructional materials that explicitly teach students how to improve their production of these features.

The variety of language used on the site is largely American English. The majority of the videos feature Rachel herself, but she often has guest speakers join her, and some videos feature other speakers by themselves. The language is fairly authentic, but the speakers often speak carefully, as though they were addressing an English-learner audience, raising the volume of their voices and increasing the pausing and stress levels in their speech. There are also options to slow down the audio, and in the subscription materials the website also mentions the possibility of more advanced classes with faster pronunciation.

Strengths: The site's most valuable feature is the level of detail with which it dissects different aspects of pronunciation. Explanations are thorough and involved; frequent pausing and repetition are used to raise the user's level of awareness. One particularly good example of this is found in a video called "English Conversation Exercise—Is Rachel Stressed? Ben Franklin Exercise." It teaches students how to dissect what they are hearing in such a way as to focus on suprasegmental aspects of the text. It goes through a sample conversation very slowly, highlighting instances of re-syllabification, linking, reduction, stress placement, intonation, etc. The video essentially demonstrates a strategy that cultivates awareness, boosts perceptive skills, and could help students practice monitoring their own speech.

Rachel's English is generally user-friendly, and it is fairly easy to navigate the site. Topics under the *Videos* tab are clearly listed and things are well organized visually. The interface is clean and uncluttered. The instruction is presented in a buffet-like fashion. This could be viewed as a strength because it gives learners a fair amount of autonomy and favors a self-directed learning approach. However, no support is provided to guide users from more basic lessons to more complex ones, which could be viewed as a weakness.

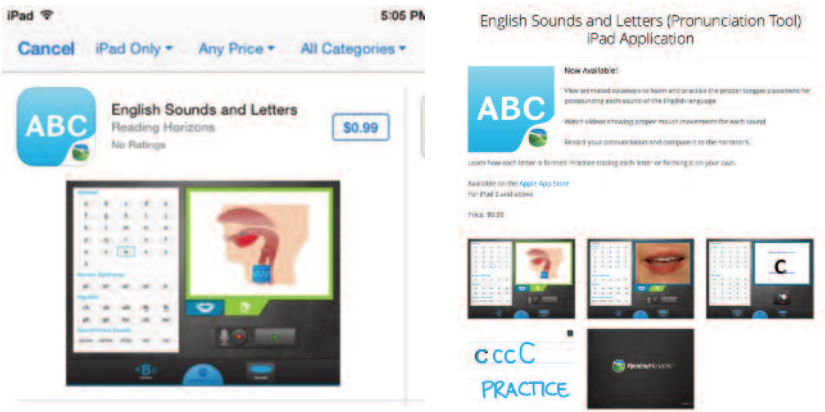
Weaknesses: Students could possibly use this website to learn English pronunciation independently, but its usefulness is limited because the videos provide only didactic explanation, with no practice activities for students. Also, the length of the videos ranges from 5 to 16 minutes. That is a lot of material for a language learner to internalize. The videos might be better used in short segments in a classroom setting, with a teacher providing additional explanation and practice. Further, a lot of jargon is used in the videos, and for inexperienced English learners this could be frustrating because they may not understand all of the terminology they hear. Also, the interface of the site was recently changed, making it somewhat difficult to go back and locate previously viewed videos. Some aspects of the organization seem fairly clear and forthright while others are vague and seemingly arbitrary. Re-locating specific videos, especially those that focus on suprasegmentals, can be challenging. They are not arranged in alphabetical order, nor do they follow an overly transparent ordering system. Fortunately, a search function exists to assist users in locating previously viewed videos.

Overall Conclusion: *Rachel's English* has a great deal to offer and gives a very thorough treatment of many different aspects of pronunciation. It provides

very specific, helpful pronunciation instruction and practice for those who have achieved at least a low-intermediate level of proficiency. Additionally, some of the videos and exercises teach users how to use different materials to help themselves learn. Despite some organizational flaws, the site is an excellent resource with a wealth of information overall. While students with high intrinsic motivation and a good ear can benefit from viewing the videos individually, these resources might be of greater benefit when used occasionally and as a supplement to regular instruction in a teacher-led classroom.

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Reading Horizons, English Sounds and Letters



Product Name: *Reading Horizons, English Sounds and Letters*

Reviewer: Ana-Lisa Mullen

Author and/or Sponsor: Reading Horizons

Software Type and Source: Mobile app for iOS (iPad only). Available at <https://www.readinghorizons.com/reading-intervention-program/mobile-applications/pronunciation-tool>. Electronic and paper-based instructional materials, independent study materials, and software. Available from <http://www.readinghorizons.com/esl-reading-instruction/product-overview>.

Cost: The iPad *English Sounds and Letters* app can be downloaded from Apple's App Store for \$0.99. For the full *Reading Horizons* package, a free 14-

day software trial is available online. An “at-home-use” 30-day trial costs \$10; then \$189 for a full-year subscription. For school use, the price of each product varies according to how many students it is intended for. There is also an additional cost for language packs for ESL students (\$35). A yearly subscription to the software package starts at \$199. The instructor-guided materials cost \$379, and the blended instruction package starts at \$525.

Instructional Type: Teacher resources, student resources, and assessment tools

Intended Users: *Reading Horizons* has several different programs designed to help those who struggle with reading (decoding) and related pronunciation challenges in English, including children K-12, adults, and ESL learners. Special ESL language packs are available for speakers of Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, Haitian Creole, and Thai.

Instructional Purpose/Objectives: *English Sounds and Letters* is designed to supplement and support the main *Reading Horizons* package. As the word *reading* in the title indicates, the primary purpose of the *Reading Horizons* program is to teach decoding skills. Using a systematic phonics approach, *Reading Horizons* materials cover all the basic sounds and syllables of English. They teach much more than just how to pronounce each consonant and vowel, however; sound-symbol correspondences are also emphasized. For example, units teach the difference between “long” and “short” vowels using a marking system. Diphthongs with either two vowels or a vowel and *r* are also covered in depth. Digraphs such as *ch* or *th* are taught, as well as those with silent letters, such as *kn* or *ck*, using a visual marking system to indicate the silent letter. Blends with *l*, *r*, or *s* (like *bl*, *dr*, or *sm*) are also taught, as are three-letter blends (like *str*) and digraph blends (like *thr*). Through instruction and exercises, users learn many patterns of relationships between the sounds and symbols of English that can otherwise be confusing.

General Description: *English Sounds and Letters* allows users to view animated vocal-tract cutaways and see the placement of the tongue and other articulators for every English language sound. In addition, videos show the proper mouth movements for each sound. The app also allows users to record their own pronunciation and compare it to a model. Finally, the app shows users the way to write each letter and allows them to practice forming it on their own by tracing it. Using the complete *Reading Horizons* package, students learn to recognize, mark and pro-

nounce different letter/sound combinations gradually as they work through a series of small units. Immediately after learning certain syllables and sounds in a unit, learners are also taught rules that govern which phonological environment these sounds occur in. For example, one unit teaches that when a one-syllable word ends in a consonant, the vowel will be “short”—as in *pit*, *kick*, *sat*, *pet*, and *loss*. Following the rule, learners are given a list of high-frequency vocabulary words that illustrate the sound patterns and rules they have just learned. Thus, not only do learners learn a wide range of commonly-used words, they use these words as exemplars of pronunciation patterns that they can use to decode unknown words with similar structures. Following the rule instruction section, multiple activities and worksheets help learners practice marking (and pronouncing) words according to the rules.

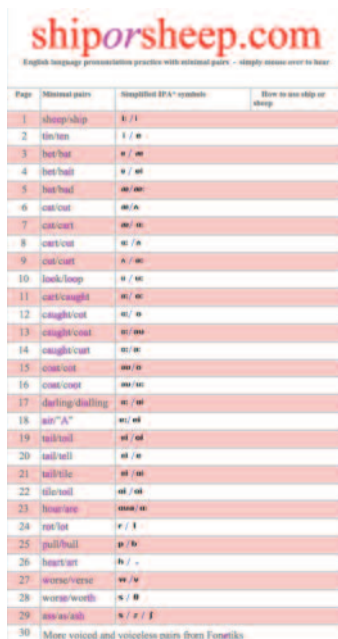
Strengths: The *English Sounds and Letters* app provides basic articulatory information in a helpful way at a low cost. The systematic way in which *Reading Horizons* materials teach the spelling and phonological rules of English in the context of important vocabulary seems to be very effective for English language learners. Because step-by-step guidance is provided, even teachers who have never used this instructional approach before can learn to teach it with minimal effort and preparation. Most important, by learning the rules of English spelling and pronunciation that *Reading Horizons* teaches, learners no longer have to rely on memorization or native speakers in order to read aloud and correctly pronounce unfamiliar English words.

Weaknesses: While the cost of *English Sounds and Letters* is low, *Reading Horizons* is expensive. Unless users are part of a school program that has purchased a site license, they may not be able to afford it. Also, by design, *Reading Horizons* focuses on a very narrow range of reading (decoding) and pronunciation (segmentals) difficulties. While it helps learners master the daunting system of sound-spelling correspondences in English, it leaves other aspects of pronunciation—such as suprasegmentals, pausing, and fluency—to other programs. Finally, for technical reasons, as with many other CAPT programs, the *English Sounds and Letters* app records users’ pronunciation, but they are left on their own to compare their own pronunciation with the model and determine what they need to do to improve. To help overcome this drawback, in the *English Language Enhancement* section, students are taught self-monitoring strategies.

Overall Conclusion: *English Sounds and Letters* is a helpful addition to the overall *Reading Horizons* package, which is one of only a few online programs that teach English language learners the correspondences between spelling and sounds in English. The materials and program are expensive, so they may not be practical for individuals or small programs, but for larger programs with a healthy budget *Reading Horizons* can be an extremely effective tool. Furthermore, *Reading Horizons* provides a two-year, money-back guarantee. This policy reflects the overall caliber of the instructional approach and products. Properly applied, *Reading Horizons* should produce good results in the areas it targets.

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Ship or Sheep



shiporsheep.com
English language pronunciation practice with minimal pairs - simply mean over to hear

Page	Minimal pairs	Simplified IPA* symbols	How to use ship or sheep
1	ship/sheep	ʃ / ʃ	
2	sheep/see	ɪ / e	
3	see/sea	ɪ / e	
4	see/sea	ɪ / e	
5	see/sea	ɪ / e	
6	see/sea	ɪ / e	
7	see/sea	ɪ / e	
8	see/sea	ɪ / e	
9	see/sea	ɪ / e	
10	see/sea	ɪ / e	
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24	see/sea	ɪ / e	
25	see/sea	ɪ / e	
26	see/sea	ɪ / e	
27	see/sea	ɪ / e	
28	see/sea	ɪ / e	
29	see/sea	ɪ / e	
30	More voiced and voiceless pairs from Fonetiks		

Product Name: *Ship or Sheep*

Reviewer: Rachel Messenger

Author and/or Sponsor: Tim Bowyer

Software Type and Source: Website at <http://www.shiporsheep.com>.

Cost: *Ship or Sheep* is free of cost for users. The advertisements that pay for the site aren't obnoxious and are neatly placed on the edges of the page.

Instructional Type: *Ship or Sheep* is mainly a student resource. It provides practice for the perception of single-word minimal pairs.

Intended Users: Users of *Ship or Sheep* can be of almost any age and at any English-proficiency level. The interface is very simple and can easily be used by beginners. However, learners with prior knowledge of the vocabulary used in the minimal pairs will benefit more.

Instructional Purpose/Objectives: The purpose of this website is to provide practice for the perception of English sound segments in minimal pairs. Students may also record themselves and compare their pronunciation with the original recordings. The instructional goal is for learners to be able to differentiate between the two members of the minimal pair.

General Description: The main feature that sets this website apart is that it allows learners to hear each of the words in the minimal pairs as the cursor hovers over the words. The website is organized into pages of minimal pair practice linked to the table of pairs that appears on the home page. The IPA symbols for the contrasted sounds are also listed on the main chart and each corresponding page. Each minimal pair set has its own page with a list of multiple example sets to practice with. For each differentiated set, pictures (instead of definitions) accompany the words represented. In addition, a practice "tongue twister" (or loaded sentence) related to the minimal pairs appears on each page. The voices of the recordings switch back and forth between a male and female for each set of pairs. British English is used and there are also some uniquely British words, such as *pram*, used in the minimal pairs. For this reason, users should be aware of differences between British and American pronunciation. For example, *hour* is pronounced like /aʊə/ in British English, while it is pronounced with a final r sound, /aʊər/, in most varieties of American English.

Strengths: *Ship or Sheep* is very easy to navigate and use for learners of all ages and levels. It provides many opportunities for learners to practice their perception of minimal pairs. The easy accessibility of recordings is the main strength as learners don't have to click and wait to hear the different sounds. The technology

also doesn't allow the previous recordings to continue if a new word is hovered over; the new word starts and the old word abruptly stops (this is not true of some pronunciation sites in which multiple hovered sounds will simultaneously play in a jumble of noise). The large number of minimal pair sets is also a strength. Learners have plenty of words to practice with.

Weaknesses: *Ship or Sheep* is severely lacking in terms of providing users with authenticity or context. While it clearly demonstrates the importance of correct segmental pronunciation, the pictures used are the only help student receive to understand the meaning of unknown words. As a native speaker of American English, I wasn't sure about some of the British vocabulary, even with the help of pictures. For example, I didn't know what the words *pram* and *offal* meant, but I now know how they are pronounced and won't

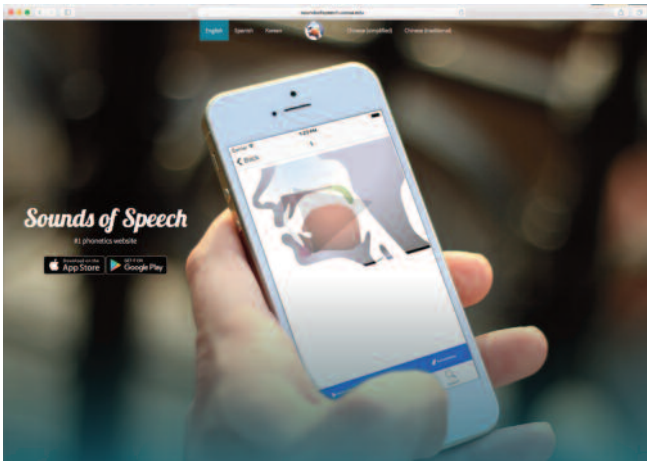
confuse them with their minimal pairs. Nevertheless, I wouldn't be able to use them in a sentence. I think English language learners may feel the same about many of the vocabulary items used in *Ship or Sheep* that they haven't had previous experience with.

Overall Conclusion: This site is very simple. While focused only on minimal pairs, it is a great resource for learners to use for practice. While it does use British pronunciation, the large majority of sounds focused on in the minimal pairs are the same across all English accents. Since this site is free of cost and well organized, I would definitely recommend it to students looking for helpful resources to improve their pronunciation of vowel and consonant segments in English. If students are interested in acquiring a British accent, this site would be even more beneficial. If not, I would warn them about the British vocabulary and accent differences before sending them to it.

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Sounds of Speech



Sounds of Speech
By The University of Iowa Research Foundation

Open iTunes to buy and download apps.

Description
Note: This contains English only content. Spanish and German not included.
This application was originally developed at the University of Iowa to help students learning how the sounds of
[The University of Iowa Research Foundation Web Site](#) | [Sounds of Speech Support](#) | [More](#)

What's New in Version 2.2.2
New educational materials with updated text.
Outstanding sound.
Text translations for: Spanish, Korean, Chinese (Simplified and Traditional), English (American only).

Screenshots

iPhone | iPad

Price
\$3.99

Category Education
Updated: Feb 22, 2014
Version: 2.2.2
Size: 79.8 MB
Languages: English
Seller: University of Iowa Research Foundation
© 2014
Rated 4+

Compatibility Requires iOS 5.0 or later. Compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch.

Customer Ratings
Current Version: 4.5 (2 Ratings)
All Versions: 4.5 (2 Ratings)

More from the Get It on Store

About
The development of the Sounds of Speech app was a collaborative effort of the [Department of Spanish and Portuguese](#), [Department of German](#), [Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders](#), [Department of Information Technology Services](#), and the [University of Iowa Research Foundation](#).
© 2014 University of Iowa
[Inquiries to Teachers](#) | [Technical Support](#)

Product Name: *Sounds of Speech*

Reviewer: Vadym Malyshkevych

Author and/or Sponsor: A collaborative effort of the Departments of Spanish and Portuguese, German, Communication Sciences and Disorders, and Information Technology Services at the University of Iowa.

Software Type and Source: The mobile app can be downloaded from <http://soundsofspeech.uiowa.edu/index.html - english> or Apple’s App Store or Google’s Play Store. In addition, a fully functional online version of the program is available for free at <http://soundsofspeech.uiowa.edu/index.html#english> (below the advertisements for the iOS and Android versions of the program on this page, click “English Module” and then click on a particular category of sounds; works only with some browsers and requires Adobe Flash Player plugin). There is also a short video trailer of the program on YouTube® at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16b2M-YwgKs>.

Cost: The mobile app (either iOS or Android) costs \$3.99. For desktop and laptop users, the website version is free.

Instructional Type: Teacher and student resource, a reference tool that shows and explains the articulations of English vowels and consonants.

Intended Users: *Sounds of Speech* is a resource intended for use by both teachers and students. Students need to be mature and motivated and possess a fairly high level of English and linguistic proficiency in order to understand the terminology; however, a new translation feature allows Chinese, Korean, and Spanish-speaking users to read explanations in their own native language.

Instructional Purpose/Objectives: *Sounds of Speech* provides explanations (supported with visuals and audio) of the articulations of English segmental sounds (associated with IPA symbols) in isolation. It does not delve into suprasegmentals, nor does it provide practice activities other than providing a model that users may wish to imitate and repeat.

General Description: *Sounds of Speech* is an articulatory phonetics tool that can be used by both teachers/tutors to teach, and students to learn the sound system (segmentals) of English. Version 2.0 (February 2016) boasts a “totally new, improved, tablet-friendly interface,” plus a “dictionary search” feature and “translations for Chinese, Korean, and Spanish.” The website (now ten years old) is in the process of being updated.

Strengths: The sound inventory is logically broken down into categories and subcategories. Using this program can be a good way of learning the basics of the English sound system. The sounds are presented and classified according to the criteria and taxonomy used by English linguistics professors. The IPA notation is

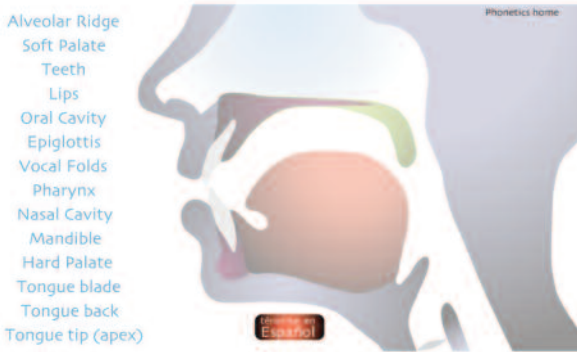
American English oriented. Such a professional, academic approach may create problems for ESL/EFL students who are not familiar with linguistic/phonetic terms like *glide*, *fricative*, *liquid*, etc. However, these problems are easily solved by on-line searches for these terms or the use of the Spanish, Chinese, or Korean options.

The structural design of the program is very clear. Vowels are divided into three “horizontal” groups according to their place of articulation—front, central and back. Vowels are not classified by their vertical location. There is also a brief explanation of what diphthongs are.



Consonants are arranged even more meticulously—according to (1) the manner of articulation, (2) place of articulation, and (3) voicing.

When users choose a sound, they get access to several interface elements— (1) *animation*, which shows how the parts of the articulatory apparatus (tongue, lips, vocal folds, uvula, etc.) move when producing the sound; (2) *annotate*, which explains the articulatory process in words; (3) audio *examples* of (American English) words containing the sound; and (4) *video* clips, which will be helpful for in-front-of-the mirror pronunciation practice. The online version also contains the *anatomy* tab, which takes users to an interactive picture that shows all the upper elements of the human articulatory apparatus.



Weaknesses: Simply seeing the movement of the human articulatory apparatus will not, by itself, satisfy learners' need to practice these movements until they are accurate and natural. In other words, this program will not directly and quickly help English language learners adjust their articulatory apparatus' movements and thus sound more native-like. Nevertheless, it will be helpful for raising English learners' awareness of what they need to improve and work on.

Despite all its merits, the creators of *Sounds of Speech* omitted one thing, which, if added, would propel this program to a more professional level. It is the allophonic variations of English phonemes. It would be helpful if this program supplied that information and were capable of switching between the two modes – the basic (just as it is now) and the advanced. For example, in American English, the consonant “t” has several allophones—[t], [t^h], [t^r], [ɾ], [ɹ], [ɻ]. It would really be useful to have these allophones presented and supplied with the explanation and examples of the environments in which the said allophones occur.

Overall Conclusion: All in all, the program is a very useful tool. I cannot commend the creators enough for saving me time and effort when, for example, I need to explain to Japanese ESL learners the difference between the American liquids /l/ and /r/. The animated representation provided by the program clarifies the difference in no time. The same could be said about teaching non-native students the nasalization of *-ing* endings in English. While there is still some room for upgrades and development, even in its present incarnation *Sounds of Speech*® is a solid professional instrument that can be called “a must” for ESL teachers' and students' toolbox.

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Train Your Accent

Product Name: *Train Your Accent: ESL Accent Reduction Training and Conversational English Practice*

Reviewer: Chirstin Stephens

Author and/or Sponsor: Randall Davis

Software Type and Source: Website at <http://www.trainyouraccent.com/>.

Cost: Free (with advertisements).

Instructional Type: Like Randall Davis's popular cyber-listening lab (www.esl-lab.com), this pronunciation-oriented website provides students with resources for individual practice and personal improvement. However, this site could certainly be adapted for use by teachers in the classroom, or assigned for out-of-class pronunciation practice.

Intended Users: Adult students from intermediate-high to advanced levels of proficiency will probably find this site very helpful if they are using it on their own. The "About This Site" page gives directions for how students can use it, but they will need to be fairly proficient readers to understand the directions.

Instructional Purpose/Objectives: Randall Davis states on the *About This Site* page that its purpose is to help students reduce their accents, understand relaxed speech, and learn how relaxed speech is used. It focuses heavily on the production of the reduced (schwa) vowel /ə/ in unstressed syllables or words.

General Description: *Train Your Accent* is made up of sixteen lessons centered on common topics and situations (restaurants, families, shopping, etc.). Each lesson includes an audio sample, two transcriptions, and discussion questions. The audio samples feature American English pronunciation and include common reductions. The first transcription of each audio sample is written with standard American English orthography, while the second transcription uses the IPA symbol for the schwa in red (ə) every time the schwa sound occurs in prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions, and articles. However, nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs that have vowel reductions to schwa are not noted. Discussion questions follow each passage with an extension activity.

Strengths: Davis recommends that users first read the written version of the audio sample to become familiar with the content, and then listen to the paragraph. After that, they should read the paragraph aloud, record themselves reading aloud, pay attention to the reductions, and compare their production to the audio sample. Later, they should create sentences using words from the paragraph, and then discuss their responses to the questions at the end with a partner, noticing whether or not their accent transfers to the new context. This recommended sequencing scaffolds students through the learning process by first allowing them to activate schema and familiarize themselves with vocabulary, and then moving on to listening discrimination before reaching production.

Additionally, the site provides multiple types of input to help students notice reductions. For instance, the second transcription in each lesson demystifies part of the English sound-spelling correspondence system visually for students by including the schwa in red so students can see, as well as hear, where they can produce reduced vowels.

Weaknesses: The biggest limitation to this website may be its name: *Train Your Accent*. That implies that the purpose of the site is much broader than it actually is. Davis clearly states that his purpose is only to only teach English language learners to use reductions and relaxed speech. Further, his use of *accent* ignores the professional literature (e.g., Derwing & Munro, 1997) that distinguishes among L2 accent, intelligibility, and comprehensibility and encourages L2 teachers to help learners aim at developing intelligible, comprehensible, but not necessarily accent-free language.

A related limitation within the scope of reductions is that *Train Your Accent* focuses only on reductions in function words. It would also be helpful to note in the second (or a third) transcription the reduced sounds in the unstressed syllables of content words.

Overall Conclusion: This site offers valuable practice for intermediate to advanced students who want to sound more natural in connected speech by reducing function words. If the practice this site offers is deemed appropriate for a certain group of learners, it would be very convenient to use in a computer lab in conjunction with an audio recording program so students could compare their production to that of the model. Davis asks that the material be used in the original online format (rather than storing the audio files in another format). After students understand how to use the site, they could use it independently outside of class.

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Conclusion

Despite the common theme of pronunciation teaching/learning that these websites and apps all share, readers will note the great variety in their objectives, procedures, quality, costs, etc. That variety is a good thing because no single instructional tool is ever clearly superior for all learning purposes and learners. Rather, selecting the right website, app, or other tool is largely a matter of finding the right “fit” with a learner’s particular needs, goals, level, learning style, and situation (Byrd & Schuemann, 2014, p. 383).

Given the massive “forest” of websites dealing with different aspects of English pronunciation, we hope that this collection of reviews will help teachers and learners of English pronunciation find the right “tree” for their particular learners, purposes, teaching/learning circumstances or styles, and budget.

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