

**AN ACTION RESEARCH: THE USE OF AN
AUTHENTIC WEB 2.0 TOOL TO OVERCOME
PRONUNCIATION PROBLEMS**

**Bir Eylem Araştırması: Özgün Bir Web 2.0 Aracının Sesletim
Problemlerini Aşmak İçin Kullanımı**

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Abstract

The cradle of humankind has welcomed many changes with the advancement of technology. On this aspect, it is of high importance to use something technological if you are teaching to digital citizens (Ribble et al. 2004; Collins and Halverson, 2009 among others). Therefore, the aim of the present action research is to see the effects of a website (see the References) which uses various YouTube videos with subtitles to see different pronunciations in different authentic contexts. Since the students had problems about pronunciation skill and they were able to practice it with solely coursebook, they had many problems at the first term. At the beginning of the second term prior to the website use, Pronunciation Attitude Inventory (PAI) (Elliott, 1995) was adapted, and it was applied to the students so as to grasp their attitudes toward the pronunciation skill. After the results highlighted that the students mostly had positive attitudes toward the pronunciation skill development and they needed more tools to overcome problems, the website was included in the syllabus. To find out their views, open ended questions were asked to the students. The results of the content analysis highlight that the use of an authentic Web 2.0 tool contributed a lot to the development of their pronunciation skills.

Key words: pronunciation skill, Web 2.0 tool, pronunciation problems

Özet

Teknolojinin gelişmesi ile insanoğlu pek çok değişim yaşamıştır. Bu açıdan, dijital vatandaşlara eğitim verilirken teknolojik bir araç kullanılması önemlidir (Ribble ve ark. 2004; Collins ve Halverson, 2009). Bu eylem araştırmasının amacı farklı ve özgün bağlamlarda geçen YouTube videolarını altyazılı bir şekilde kullanan bir internet sayfasından sesletim çalışmanın etkilerini araştırmaktır. Vakadaki öğrencilerin ilk dönemki derslerinde sesletim becerisi gelişiminde problem olması ve sadece ders kitapları ile çalışma olanakları olduğu için bu çalışma yapılmıştır. Bu özgün internet sitesi kullanılmadan önce, öğrencilere Elliott (1995) tarafından geliştirilen Sesletim Tutum Envanterinin adapte edilmiş hali uygulanmıştır. Böylelikle sesletim becerisi ile ilgili tutumları anlaşılmıştır. Envanterin sonucunda öğrencilerin sesletim dersindeki problemleri aşmak istediği sonucu çıkınca ve daha çok materyale ihtiyaç duydukları tespit edilince internet sitesi kullanılmaya başlanmıştır. Görüşlerini almak için çalışmanın sonucunda açık uçlu sorular sorulmuştur. Elde edilen içerik analizi sonuçlarına göre özgün Web 2.0 aracı kullanımı öğrencilerin sesletim becerisi gelişimine katkıda bulunmuştur.

Anahtar Sözcükler: sesletim becerisi, Web 2.0 araçları, sesletim problemleri

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Introduction

Since the beginning of this century, the use of technological tools has increased to a great extent. Web 2.0 tools, as the later development of Web 1.0 tools, are used in many contexts to increase success. As the teachers of the 21st century, it is of high importance to utilize from these tools and to use something technological if you are teaching to digital citizens (Ribble et al. 2004; Collins and Halverson, 2009 among others). On this issue, Hismanoğlu (2010) highlights the things which make students interested and attentive on a website as: speed, user-friendliness, display of navigational icons, and the design or layout of an online site.

Up to now, many studies have indicated the positive effects of technological tools for the development of language skills (Egbert et al., 2002; Zhao, 2003; Golonka et al. 2014; Lai, 2015 among others). In such a study, Tsai (2006) used a CALL software for developing pronunciation. Tsai (2006) highlights the results of the study by stating that CALL software was fruitful for the students in that it was autonomous, and it provided excellent feedback.

However, in this case, the problem is that the students were only able to practice pronunciation via a coursebook. Therefore, the students did not have the chance to listen to different accents at the same time. They were only able to listen to British and American accents which is not in line with the trend of the present century World Englishes (Yano, 2001; Kubota, 2001; Nelson & Kang, 2015; Khatib & Monfared, 2017 among others).

In the present study, with the Web 2.0 tool, the students were able to observe different accents in different contexts thanks to the Web 2.0 tool (see the References). To illustrate, they were able to watch somebody pronouncing the verb “consider” at a conference, at a cafe or maybe at school. This situation helped them to see different intonations in line with the context. Furthermore, as it is highlighted by Alipanahi (2014), “Technology assisted pronunciation instruction is very effective in promoting learner’s attitudes, perception, learning, and production of correct stress patterns.” (p. 461). A study in a similar vein, Pim (2013) emphasizes the importance of the internet as an authentic source for pronunciation teaching.

Methodology

Method

As the method, action research cycle has been used (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2013). After planning the use of Web 2.0 tool to overcome problems (see the References), the tool started to be used. The students were observed, and during that time to gather data, both quantitative and qualitative techniques were used. At the end of the study, the students pointed out their reflections on the use of the authentic Web 2.0 tool.

Participants

Participants of the present study are 40 prep class students. They are aged between 18-20. They all take part in English courses so that they can start up the faculty with level B1+.

Data collection tools

Before the study, Pronunciation Attitude Inventory (PAI) (Elliott, 1995) was applied to the students in order to see the problems that students encounter. At the end of the study, to find out the views of the students, open ended questions were asked to the students after

the application. The answers were analyzed via content analysis principles (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003).

Procedure

After students stated that they had problems in pronunciation skill development, the teacher made them report their problems with a scale, too. Thus, Pronunciation Attitude Inventory (PAI) (Elliott, 1995) was used to find out the details of the problems. Once they reported their problems, the teacher started to use the authentic website to make them listen to different accents to develop their pronunciation skills. At the end of eight weeks, the teacher asked open ended questions to see whether the website was fruitful for the students or not.

Results and Discussion

The results of Pronunciation Attitude Inventory (PAI) (Elliott, 1995) are as follows:

Item 1: I'd like to sound as native as possible when speaking English.

Table 1. The ideas related to sounding natively like

Somewhat true of me	Usually true of me	Always or almost always true of me
11,6%	26,9%	61,5.%

As it can be seen from Table 1, 61.5% of the students report that they want to sound as native as possible. The rest of them (38,5%) had also positive ideas to sound like native. It is important to note down that none of the students reported that they never want to sound like natives.

Item 2: Acquiring proper pronunciation in English is important to me.

Table 2. The ideas related to acquiring proper pronunciation

Usually not true of me	Somewhat true of me	Usually true of me	Always or almost always true of me
3,8%	26,9%	26,9%	42,3%

Table 2 above highlights the ideas related to acquiring proper pronunciation, and according to Table 2, it can be said that more than 95% of the students want to acquire proper pronunciation, while 3,8% of them report that they do not usually think that they need to acquire proper pronunciation.

Item 3: I will never be able to speak English with a good accent.

Table 3. The beliefs related to speaking English with a good accent

Never or almost never true of me	Usually not true of me	Somewhat true of me	Usually true of me
30,8%	30,8%	30,8%	7,7%

According to Table 3, it can be claimed that more than 60% of the students do not believe the idea that they will never be able to speak English with a good accent. 30,8% of the students report that this idea is somewhat true for them, while 7,7% of the students report that this idea is usually true for them.

Item 4: I believe I can improve my pronunciation skills in English.

Table 4. The beliefs related to improving pronunciation skills

Usually not true of me	Somewhat true of me	Usually true of me	Always or almost always true of me
7,7%	23,1%	42,3%	26,9%

In line with Table 4, it can be claimed that more than 69% of the students believe this idea and report that they usually or always think that this idea is true for them. 23,1% of them report that this idea is somewhat true for them, and 7,7% of them report that this idea is not usually true for them.

Item 5: I believe more emphasis should be given to proper pronunciation in class.

Table 5. The beliefs related to proper pronunciation emphasis in class

Somewhat true of me	Usually true of me	Always or almost always true of me
7,7%	46,2%	46,2%

As it is highlighted in Table 5, more than 92% of the students state that they believe more emphasis should be given to proper pronunciation in class. On the other hand, 7,7% of them state that this idea is somewhat true for them.

Item 6: One of my personal goals is to acquire proper pronunciation skills and preferably be able to pass as a near-native speaker of the language.

Table 6. The ideas related to personal goals to achieve pronunciation skill

Usually not true of me	Somewhat true of me	Usually true of me	Always or almost always true of me
7,7%	19,2%	26,9%	46,2%

Table 6 above displays that more than 73% of the students claim that they want to obtain proper pronunciation skills in order to be able to be like near native speakers. 19,2% state this idea is somewhat true for them, and 7,7% state this idea is not usually true for them.

Item 7: I try to imitate English speakers as much as possible.

Table 7. Ideas related to imitating English speakers

Usually not true of me	Somewhat true of me	Usually true of me	Always or almost always true of me
34,6%	46,2%	15,4%	3,8%

In line with Table 7, it can be said that more than 80% of the speakers do not prefer imitation, while about 20% of the speakers state that they try imitation.

Item 8: Communicating is much more important than sounding like a native speaker of English.

Table 8. Ideas related to communication vs. sounding native like

Usually not true of me	Somewhat true of me	Usually true of me	Always or almost always true of me
53,9%	19,2%	7,7%	19,2%

As it is displayed in Table 8, most of the students do not pay attention to communication (more than 72%), and they think that sounding native like is more important. On the other hand, about 28% of the students claim that communication is more important than sounding native like.

Item 9: Good pronunciation skills in English are not as important as learning vocabulary and grammar.

Table 9. Comparing the importance of pronunciation skill with vocabulary and grammar

Usually not true of me	Somewhat true of me	Usually true of me	Always or almost always true of me
15,4%	30,8%	23,1%	30,8%

Table 9 above shows the importance of pronunciation skill when compared with vocabulary and grammar. According to the results, 53,9 % of the students usually or always think that good pronunciation skills are not as significant as learning vocabulary and grammar. However, 30,8% of them state this idea is somewhat true for them. On the other hand, 15,4% of them report that this idea is not usually true for them.

Item 10: I want to improve my accent when speaking English.

Table 10. Ideas related to improving accent

Somewhat true of me	Usually true of me	Always or almost always true of me
8%	45,8%	46,2%

In line with the results in Table 10, it is obvious that 92% of the students think that they usually or always want to improve their accents when speaking English. 8% of them report that this idea is somewhat true for them.

Item 11: I'm concerned with my progress in my pronunciation of English.

Table 11. The concerns related to progress in pronunciation skill

Never or almost never true of me	Usually not true of me	Somewhat true of me	Usually true of me	Always or almost always true of me
11,5%	15,4%	42,3%	19,2%	11,5%

According to Table 11, 11,5% of the students state that they are always concerned, while 11,5% state that they are never concerned. On the one hand, 19,2% of them state they

are usually concerned; on the other hand, 15,4% of them state they are not usually concerned. 42,3% of them also report that this idea is somewhat true for them. The responses of the students vary a lot for this item.

Item 12: Sounding like a native speaker is very important to me.

Table 12. The ideas related to sounding like a native speaker

Somewhat true of me	Usually true of me	Always or almost always true of me
15,4%	26,9%	57,6%

As it can be seen from Table 12, more than 84% of the students usually or always would like to sound like a native speaker. 15,4% of them report that this idea is somewhat true for them. Moreover, after obtaining the results which illustrate that students have positive ideas regarding the development of pronunciation skill, the use of the authentic Web 2.0 tool started in the classroom setting. At the end of the program, ideas of the students about the program were gathered. Some of the responses are as follows:

- ✓ Before the tool, it was difficult for me to listen to different accents in that even the dictionaries include a limited number of accents.
- ✓ Thanks to the tool, I have begun to use YouTube like an English teacher. From now on, I could understand the differences among accents.
- ✓ It is of high importance to listen to different accents because our coursebooks are limited to British accent only.

Figure 1. The ideas of the students related to the use of an authentic tool for pronunciation skill

In a nutshell, not only the qualitative but also the quantitative results of the present study highlight the use of authentic Web 2.0 tool to overcome pronunciation problems. The results of the present study are consistent with the previous studies on the literature (Salaberry, 2001; Jenkins, 2004; Elimat & Abuseileek, 2014 among others). However, Hismanoğlu (2010) also points out that variables such as age, experience of teaching, style of teaching also affect how teachers prefer to teach pronunciation. According to Hismanoğlu, it is not rational to force teachers to use online sources for being successful pronunciation teachers. In addition to the idea of Hismanoğlu related to the use of online sources, Stenson et al. (1992) defends the idea that teacher and student interaction should not be replaced by a technological tool, and the tool should act as a supplement. Therefore, the results of the present study also support the supplementary use of Web 2.0 tools for improving pronunciation skill.

Conclusion and Implications

The present action research tried to find out whether such a Web 2.0 tool affects the pronunciation lessons or not. All in all, the results of the study indicate the use of authentic Web 2.0 tool for developing pronunciation skill. The results of the open ended questions, which were analyzed with content analysis techniques, also illustrate the use of these tools. While the results in this action research display the importance of using Web 2.0 tool for improving pronunciation, it should be kept in mind that more studies are

needed to verify the results. As an implication of the present study, it can be claimed that authentic Web 2.0 tools may be the needs of an adult pronunciation lessons in that they help to develop pronunciation skills. However, as it was highlighted before, more research on them is needed to have a consensus about the role of them on pronunciation skill. In a further research, the study may be done with two groups in order to see the difference between the control group and experimental group. Thus, the effect of such a tool may also be observed in quantitative manners.

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