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STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF PRONUNCIATION PRACTICE VIA YOUTUBE AND PODCASTS

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Abstract

This study investigates the perceptions of second- and third-year university students regarding the use of YouTube and podcasts as tools for improving English pronunciation. Twenty students aged 18–21 participated in semi-structured interviews. Findings show that learners value these platforms for their authenticity, accessibility, and motivational features. While students reported improved listening comprehension, pronunciation awareness, and speaking confidence, some struggled with fast-paced speech and the absence of structured learning paths. The paper concludes with practical recommendations for integrating digital audio-visual tools into pronunciation pedagogy and suggestions for future research.

Keywords: Pronunciation, YouTube, podcasts, language learning, digital media, student perception.

1. Introduction

Pronunciation is a vital component of language learning that affects learners' intelligibility and confidence in communication. However, traditional classroom settings often provide limited time for pronunciation practice. In response, learners increasingly turn to online platforms such as YouTube and podcasts for additional exposure. These tools offer authentic language input and flexible, self-paced learning opportunities.

This study explores university students' perceptions of using YouTube and podcasts for pronunciation practice. Understanding students' experiences with

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these digital tools can inform pronunciation teaching strategies and enhance learner autonomy.

2. Methodology
2.1 Participants
Twenty students (13 females, 7 males), aged 18–21, participated in this study. All were second- and third-year students majoring in English Language and Literature at a university in Uzbekistan.

2.2 Data Collection
Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore students' experiences, challenges, and preferences related to using YouTube and podcasts for pronunciation improvement. Interviews lasted 15–20 minutes and were conducted in English or Uzbek, depending on the participant's preference.

2.3 Data Analysis
Interview transcripts were coded thematically. Key themes were identified and organized to reflect patterns in students' responses.

3. Findings
Four main themes emerged from the analysis:
3.1 Authentic Exposure
Most students appreciated the natural language input available through YouTube videos and podcasts. They mentioned that hearing native and fluent speakers helped them notice features like connected speech, intonation, and rhythm.
"I like watching interviews and TED Talks. I learn real pronunciation, not like in textbooks."

3.2 Improvement in Listening and Speaking
Students reported noticeable improvements in their listening comprehension and speaking fluency after regular exposure to these platforms.
"After shadowing podcast speakers, I feel more confident when I speak in class."

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3.3 Motivation and Autonomy

Many students described YouTube and podcasts as motivating and enjoyable tools that encouraged self-study and allowed flexible learning.

"I can learn at my own pace. It's fun, and I feel more free to repeat and practice."

3.4 Challenges and Limitations

Some learners, particularly at lower proficiency levels, found it difficult to follow fast-paced speech and expressed a need for more structured guidance.

"Sometimes I don't understand fast speakers. It would be easier with subtitles or explanation."

4. Discussion

The findings suggest that YouTube and podcasts serve as effective supplementary tools for pronunciation development. These platforms offer authentic exposure, which is often missing in traditional learning environments. Students benefit not only from improved pronunciation awareness but also from increased confidence and learner autonomy.

However, the challenges noted by some students underscore the need for scaffolding and guided support, especially for beginners. Without such support, learners may feel overwhelmed or fail to benefit fully from these resources.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study highlights the positive perceptions of university students toward using YouTube and podcasts for pronunciation practice. Students value these tools for their accessibility, motivational nature, and impact on listening and speaking skills. Nevertheless, challenges like fast speech and a lack of guidance remain.

Recommendations for educators:

- Incorporate short video and audio clips into lessons.
- Support students with pre- and post-listening tasks (e.g., transcript analysis, shadowing).

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- Teach students how to use subtitles and playback controls for better comprehension.
- Encourage reflective learning through pronunciation journals.
- Train teachers in using digital tools for pronunciation instruction.

Recommendations for future research:
- Compare guided vs. self-directed use of YouTube and podcasts.
- Assess long-term effects of digital media on fluency and intelligibility.
- Explore how different learning styles interact with digital pronunciation tools.

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