

Enhancing Pronunciation Proficiency via Listening Practice for Specific information with the help of ELSA Speak: Evidence from Foundation-Level Students at SLIIT City Uni, Sri Lanka

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Abstract—This study investigates the impact of English Listening skills for specific information (ELSSI) on English pronunciation (EP) among 40 Foundation semester 2 students at SLIIT City Uni. A mixed approach of questionnaires and experimental tests as research instruments, along with the AI tool, ELSA Speak, was applied to this group. Participants received structured, listening-based practice over the past few days by employing the ELSA Speak AI application. The Data were analyzed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Thematic analysis. Therefore, the results show a statistically significant improvement, based on the means of the inclusive posttests (83.49) being higher than the pretests (77.20), highlighting the effectiveness of targeted listening activities in enhancing pronunciation. The increase in the mean score was discovered after the listening treatments by the researchers. An increase in student scores was observed following the treatment. Positive feedback of the sample demonstrated the above-mentioned points. These results lead to the suggestion that ELSSI can help with the development of oral proficiency, while mobile-assisted language learning tools (ELSA Speak) play a crucial role when focusing on the improvement of oral proficiency, further offering valuable insights for educators and language enthusiasts around the world.

Keywords—*ELSA Speak application, Homophones, Listening skills, Media, Pronunciation,*

Pronunciation is a key component of speaking which enhances the meaningfulness of the English Language (EL). According to Adawiah, Muliati & Samtidar (2024) pronunciation is one of the prominent aspects that others will judge. Therefore, Adawiah, Muliati & Samtidar (2024) mentioned that there are several aspects that must be considered in speaking in EL. Pronunciation is one of the first impressions that other people will catch grasp when starting a conversation in English. Listening skills and related activities play a vital role in order to achieve better speaking skills in EL. Pronunciation and listening comprehension skills are interconnected; improving one often enhances the other. Specifically, focusing on the sounds of a language and practicing pronunciation can significantly improve listening skills and vice versa. The researchers observed that due to poor awareness among students, the importance of listening to improve one's pronunciation has been ignored, even while considerable mobile applications exist. This research is mainly aimed at helping students improve their pronunciation by using various listening exercises, as it is the main component that's directly linked to one's pronunciation. This also sheds light on a helpful mobile application for the self-improvement of students. Additionally, the research focuses on enhancing the concern of students in the direction of listening.

I. INTRODUCTION

Thereby, the present research points towards how listening impacts the enhancement of pronunciation with the help of the mobile app, 'ELSA Speak'.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Pronunciation and Listening

Listening skills and related activities play a vital role in order to achieve better speaking skills in EL. Pronunciation and listening comprehension skills are interconnected; improving one often enhances the other. Specifically, focusing on the sounds of a language and practicing pronunciation can significantly improve listening skills and vice versa. In language learning, pronunciation and listening are two sides of the same coin. Through a grasp of phonetics — the sounds of a language — serves as the foundation for both. (Miller, 2024).

B. Listening skills for specific information and Listening activities

Listening is an activity of listening to verbal symbols carefully with concentration so that the information transmitted can be obtained and appropriately understood. Paying attention to the sound, then identifying, monitoring, assessing, and then reacting to the sound is a skill needed for someone to communicate (Rahmawati & Br. Sianturi, 2021).

C. ELSA Speak application

Adawiah, Muliati & Samtidar (2024, p.65) stated that “English Language Speech Assistant is an acronym for ELSA. English Language Speech Assistant (ELSA) can be downloaded for free from the App Store or Google Play. In the Elsa application itself, there are several categories, namely daily lesson exercises, improved pronunciation, and topic-based learning (there are 14 topics here, and we can choose according to our abilities). In Elsa Speak, there are also phonetic symbols for each word, and we can also listen to how the word is pronounced”.

III. METHODOLOGY

The present study aims to determine whether the English Pronunciation (EP) has an impact on the English Listening Skills for Specific information (ELSSI) in the Sri Lankan context.

This model was developed by the author himself because none of the previous studies have investigated this relationship using EP and ELS. Therefore, this conceptual framework is developed based on previous literature. It is evident that people feel speaking and listening are the most important skills to learn. The variables used for this study are ELS as an independent variable and EP as the dependent variable.

A. Abbreviations and Acronyms

Most of the variables involved in this study are instinctive, which means most of them are subjective rather than objective. Therefore, a clear-cut definition or commonly accepted definition for these variables cannot be found. Hence, the defining scope of the present study is given by the following definitions.

EP - “The way in which a word or letter is said, or said correctly, or the way in which a language is spoken” (dictionary.cambridge, n.d.), “The act or manner of pronouncing something” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), “The way in which we make the sound of words” (English Club, n.d.)

ELSSI - “Paying attention to verbal and nonverbal cues to gain a full understanding of the speaker’s experiences, thoughts, feelings and objectives” (Indeed, 2025), “Paying attention to the use of language” (Agwuocha, 2024), “Receiving language through the ears” (English Club, n.d.)

B. Research Design

The study used a mixed methods approach, with a dominant quantitative aspect.

Population of the study - Since the study was conducted to identify how EP can be enhanced by ELSA the study population included all the Sri Lankan people who speak and willing to speak EL.

Sampling of the study -The geographical area for this study was selected as Colombo district, due to convenience. Gender wise, both males and females were taken to the sample and all of them are students attending SLIIT City University (SLU) foundation program to and age between 16-25 years were proportionately drawn as the sample for the study. 40 participants were taken as the sample for this study, and they were selected using purposive sampling technique, which is a non-probability sampling method as Adawiah, Muliati & Samtidar (2024, p.65) stated that In choosing the research participants, the researchers used a purposive sampling technique; on basis of that sample has been selected

Research Instrument - The questionnaire was used as a research instrument. A pre-test and a post-test questionnaire were provided for the participants. The purpose of the pre-test is to determine the students’ EP level before using the listening activities, and the purpose of the post-test is to understand the students’ improvement in EP after using the listening activities as treatment.

C. Procedure for Data Collection

The study was conducted in three phases, including pre-test, treatment, and post-test. During the pre-test, a questionnaire was provided for the 30 participants to collect the background information of the sample, listening habits, proficiency skill level and personal ideas regarding the relationship between ELSSI and EP. Then, each

		Mean	N	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
According to the Average of all 5 pretests and 5 post tests	Pre Test	77.20	40	16.14	1.47
	Post Test	83.49	40	16.34	1.49

participant was provided with 5 pronunciation tests covering, (1) vowel exercise, (2) Consonant exercise, (3) Homophones exercise using words that sounds alike but differ in meaning and spellings, (4) commonly mispronounced word test and (5) tongue twisters followed by measuring the time and pronunciation clearance level which were measured by ELSA Speak application. The researchers designed the above-mentioned tests with the assistance of the *Preply* blog (Wilhelmi, 2024).

Based on the research that has been done by Adawiah, Muliati & Samtidar (2024, p.65), they justified their experimental method with the help of Sugiyono (2014) by stating pre-experimental designs are designs that include only one group or class undergoing pre- and post-tests. In this study, the researchers only used the experimental group without the control group.

After completing the 5 stages of exercises, those will be uploaded to ELSA Speak AI application to monitor and measure the pre-test proficiency in EP. Then participants were provided with listening treatments by specific information about vowel sounds, consonant sounds, homophones, and tongue twisters where they can listen to selected audio clips covering all five exercises explained above and practice the pronunciation with a 1-day interventional period for each test. After the practice period, those 5 exercises were again conducted and measured through ELSA Speak application to check on the progress and improvement of EP. After the post-testing period was conducted, a post-stage questionnaire was provided for all the participants.

D. Technique of Data Analysis

The study analyzed data using the Social Science Statistical Package (SPSS) and Thematic analysis.

IV. RESULTS AND EVALUATION

A. Data analysis

Pre-stage questionnaire analysis: As an entrance to the research, a questionnaire was given to the students who were participating in the tests by the researchers so that the current level of each student could be discovered through this questionnaire.

Pretest and Posttest: Measured the frequency and the rate of percentage of the pre-test and post-test scores of students' pronunciation of each test (vowel Test, consonant

Test, homophones Test, commonly mispronounced words Test, Tongue twisters Test)

Students' mean score and standard deviation in the pretests and the posttests:

TABLE 1: STUDENTS' MEAN SCORE AND STANDARD DEVIATION IN THE PRE-TEST AND THE POST-TEST

TABLE 1 shows that the students' mean score on the pre-test was 77.20. This score is in the fair classification. The table also showed that the students' mean score in the post-test was 83.49, which is in the good classification, but with a significant improvement.

It can be concluded the listening skills/activities that were provided by researchers emphasized the progression of EPS and the AI tools/mobile applications like ELSA Speak can assist students to satisfy their desire by using them as self-learning tools.

V. CONCLUSION

Listening skills/activities for specific information are effective in students' English pronunciation development and enable the learners to engage in pronunciation skills or conversation with confidence. According to the findings, the inclusive posttests (83.49) were higher than comparison to the pretests (77.20). The increase in the mean score was discovered after the listening treatments by the researchers. This can be classified as an increase in student scores after being treated. The responses of the feedback survey also prove this particular point.

The researchers discovered the Homophones exercise as the best test among the five tests based on the posttest results and feedback survey.

Assistance with ELSA Speak, and other reliable AI tools/ Mobile applications can help to enhance the EPS, which is recognized by the students of the sample as the researchers expected.

In contrast, consciously focusing on the specific information while listening is confirmed by students of the sample as an important factor that can be distributed to the EL learners.

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