



## YouGlish as a Tool for Enhancing English Pronunciation: Students' Perceptions at a University in Hanoi

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### ABSTRACT

**Keywords:** ICT tools, learning pronunciation, authentic language use, university students, perception.

This study investigates the university students' perceptions of using YouGlish, an innovative ICT tool, to enhance their English pronunciation. Using a mixed-methods approach, the current research explores students' overall perceptions of the tool, including its benefits and challenges. Data were collected within a group of 150 first-year students through a structured survey, supplemented by in-depth interviews with randomly selected respondents. The results highlight YouGlish's potential to enhance learners' pronunciation accuracy, raise their awareness of diverse English accents, and support autonomous learning. However, challenges related to technical issues, such as Internet connectivity and inconsistent video quality, as well as diverse accents, were also reported. Despite these limitations, the study concludes that YouGlish is a valuable resource for fostering engagement and motivation, offering learners an interactive, context-rich, and practical approach to mastering English pronunciation.

### Introduction

It is undeniable that pronunciation is a foundational skill in spoken language, essential for effective communication (Levis & McCrocklin, 2018). Due to developments in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), there has been an increasing interest in integrating technology into classrooms to support effective learning, including the use of technological media in L2 pronunciation teaching and learning (Rahmati et al., 2021). In the process of teaching and learning pronunciation, software and websites are commonly used, and YouGlish stands out as a valuable tool for improving English pronunciation. This tool facilitates pronunciation learning by showing students how English words are pronounced through YouTube videos from native speakers. Its accessibility and diverse pronunciation models support individual learning preferences, making it a practical and effective tool for enhancing students' pronunciation. To successfully adopt YouGlish in learning and teaching, it is crucial to consider students' perceptions, as they are the ones who use it directly in their learning. This led to the present study, which aims to investigate students' perceptions of the integration of YouGlish in enhancing English pronunciation at a university.

## Literature Review

### *Pronunciation*

Samad and Adnan (2017) define pronunciation as the process of learning how to articulate words clearly. Similarly, Szpyra-Kozłowska (2014) advocates the essential role of pronunciation in language learning, emphasizing that it can help people express their thoughts and ideas. Without proper pronunciation, misunderstandings in communication may happen. Moreover, many people are nervous and hesitant to speak because of poor pronunciation. Therefore, mastering pronunciation skills enables people to speak clearly and increases confidence. Many students reported that mastering pronunciation is one of the most challenging tasks (Samad & Adnan, 2017). In fact, students cannot fully express their ideas in English. Therefore, they feel nervous because they can easily make mistakes. Limitations in how to pronounce words correctly negatively affect the process of mastering a language. Wrembel (2002) points out that instruction on pronunciation is necessary because it can help students improve their pronunciation skills. Vo (2022) also mentions that regular pronunciation practice can help students produce English words correctly. Additionally, Rao (2014) emphasizes the importance of technology in enhancing pronunciation. To teach pronunciation effectively, Goodwin (2012) suggests that teachers should set achievable goals, make instruction clear, and use a variety of techniques and technologies.

### *YouGlish and L2 Pronunciation Learning*

In reality, many websites help students improve their pronunciation, including YouGlish. It is a YouTube-based website where students can hear authentic speech through videos, creating effective and engaging learning experiences (Saed et al., 2021). Moreover, this website also provides different English accents with exact pronunciation, stress, and word use (Fu & Yang, 2019; Sukmawati et al., 2024). Additionally, as noted by Mahmood (2024b), it has several nearby words that can aid learners in suitable contexts and reinforce the ability to use the appropriate word with proper pronunciation. While learning with YouGlish, students can not only be exposed to language in authentic contexts but also control the speed of the videos' pronunciation to effectively support their understanding of all aspects of pronunciation. This platform can enhance students' engagement and motivation rather than passively consuming content. Exposure to authentic language allows learners to recognize natural speech patterns, different accents, intonation features, and colloquial expressions, ultimately facilitating more effective oral communication (Ly et al., 2024).

Several studies have explored the effects of YouGlish on English pronunciation processing. Fu and Yang (2019) show that this tool contributes to improving verbal communication skills, particularly in pronunciation, intonation, and lexical choice. Besides, according to Syafiq et al. (2021), the use of YouGlish also strengthens other aspects such as grammatical structures, vocabulary, fluency, and content proficiency. A study by Quispe-Vargas et al. (2024) found that YouGlish can help students improve their pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and communicative interaction. A significant improvement in those aspects is found with an average increase of 45.26 points between pre-test and post-test scores. It can be concluded that YouGlish has a positive impact on students' learning of English pronunciation. Moreover, YouGlish is considered an effective method for improving learners' pronunciation competence. Previous studies have generally reported positive impacts of video-based tools on pronunciation learning, particularly in terms of exposure to authentic speech and learner engagement. However, some studies report inconsistent findings on the effectiveness of video-based tools such as YouGlish. While many learners benefit from authentic input, others may struggle with

fast speech, the variability of authentic accents, differences in learners' ability to process natural speech, or limited contextual understanding. In addition, there is an ongoing debate about the extent to which exposure to authentic video input alone can improve pronunciation, as some researchers argue that without guided feedback, learners may not make meaningful progress. These mixed observations suggest the need to further explore learners' perceptions of such tools in specific educational contexts, particularly among EFL learners in Vietnam. Moreover, the existing literature primarily examines the general use of YouGlish but fails to examine it in the tertiary education context in Vietnam. To bridge this gap, this study aims to gain insights into tertiary students' perceptions of integrating YouGlish to enhance English pronunciation at universities.

### *Research Questions*

To fulfill the purpose of the study, the research aims to answer the following research question:

*What are students' perceptions of using YouGlish in enhancing their English pronunciation?*

## **Methods**

### *Pedagogical Setting & Participants*

The study involves 150 freshmen aged 18-20 from a public university in Hanoi during the second semester of the 2024–2025 academic year. Each class consists of about 25 students who are at the pre-intermediate level of English proficiency. At the time the study was carried out, first-year students were enrolling in language practice courses. In each course, one session per week consists of two lessons totaling 100 minutes.

To help students develop pronunciation awareness, the instructor introduced YouGlish. This free online pronunciation resource allows learners to search for words and hear authentic pronunciations in real video contexts. Students used YouGlish both during class sessions under the teacher's guidance and as self-practice at home. In class, YouGlish was employed for pronunciation modeling, sound discrimination tasks, and word stress identification. Outside class, students were assigned weekly pronunciation homework using YouGlish to practice self-directed listening and imitation. Each week, one session of two 50-minute lessons was held.

All participants voluntarily took part in the research and were informed of its purpose. In addition, the authors obtained informed consent from participants before they completed the survey and participated in the interviews. The participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential and would be used only for research purposes. All participants' personal information was removed from the data.

### *Design of the Study*

The study adopted a mixed-method approach to address the research questions. As cited by Salmons (2016), this strategy is commonly employed to explore perceptions because it offers rich, detailed data about participants, facilitating a deeper understanding (Dörnyei, 2007). Questionnaires and interviews were chosen as data-collection tools. Given that the questionnaire is a useful instrument for collecting factual information and gathering respondents' perceptions and preferences (Cohen et al., 2011), it was used to evaluate the key research focus. Additionally, the study involved interviews. It is regarded as a useful data-collection tool in gathering more data (Cohen et al., 2011).

To ensure the reliability and validity of the research, questionnaires and interviews were piloted to identify any issues (Dörnyei, 2007). Firstly, an English teacher from the university was

invited to help with the checking of questionnaires and interview questions. Then, a group of 10 randomly selected students participated in the piloting phase to identify potentially unclear or confusing words or phrases. After receiving constructive feedback from both colleagues and students, the authors refined and finalized interview questions and questionnaires.

### *Data collection & analysis*

To explore students' perceptions of using YouGlish for pronunciation improvement, the questionnaires adapted from Mahmood (2024a) were used. The five-point Likert scale questionnaire, consisting of two sections, was employed. The first part includes questions about participants' personal backgrounds, while the second section focuses on students' perceptions and preferences towards the use of YouGlish. Data were collected at the end of a 10-week longitudinal course, during which participating students were invited to complete the questionnaire anonymously. Additionally, the use of semi-structured interviews helps further explore students' perceptions of using YouGlish to improve their pronunciation. The data were also gathered through 10-minute semi-structured interviews with 10 randomly selected students. The participants were randomly selected to ensure a diverse representation of students with different levels of engagement and learning experiences with YouGlish, thereby enhancing the credibility of the qualitative findings. All the interviews were audio-recorded, and the participating students were pseudonymized. Evidence from the interviews was carefully transcribed, coded, and categorized into thematic groups. The qualitative data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach, which involves familiarization with the data, initial coding, theme identification, theme review, theme naming, and report production. At the same time, the questionnaires' findings were compared with the interviews' responses to better understand how students perceive the use of YouGlish in enhancing their pronunciation.

## **Results/Findings**

### *Overall perception*

Figure 1.

Frequency of YouGlish Usage

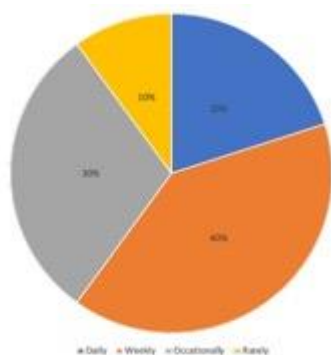
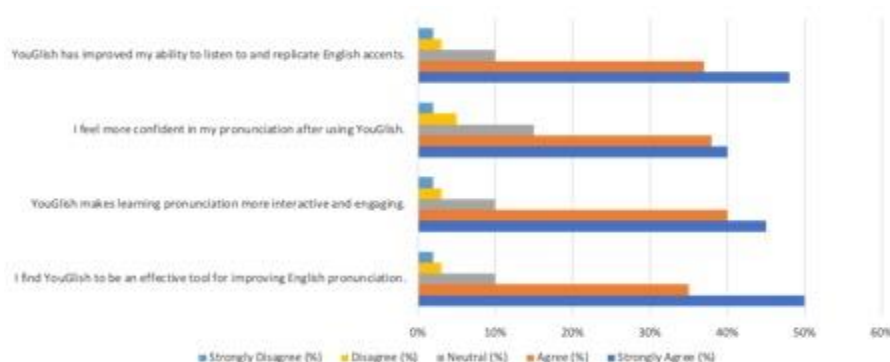


Figure 1 shows how often students used YouGlish for pronunciation practice. 40% of the students reported using YouGlish weekly, indicating it is a regularly used tool for their English pronunciation practice. Furthermore, a substantial portion of respondents (30%) used the platform occasionally, while 20% reported daily use. This data suggests that students exhibit a high level of steady interaction with YouGlish. The 10% of students who reported infrequent

use of YouGlish might be limited by internet connectivity issues or personal preferences for other learning materials.

Figure 2.

Learners' overall perception of using YouGlish



The majority of students expressed positive views about YouGlish, as shown in Figure 2. The survey results show that YouGlish effectively helps students improve their English pronunciation, since 85% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

The data show that students highly value the platform as an essential tool for meeting their basic language-learning needs. YouGlish's educational approach creates a motivating learning environment that sustains student interest in language practice.

The data also indicates that 78% of students gained greater confidence in their pronunciation abilities through YouGlish. One participant mentioned that YouGlish improved their confidence in both pronunciation and accent.

*[S12] YouGlish helped me realize that my sounds are different from those of native speakers, and it allowed me to practice and repeat them more. Now, I feel confident in my pronunciation and accent.*

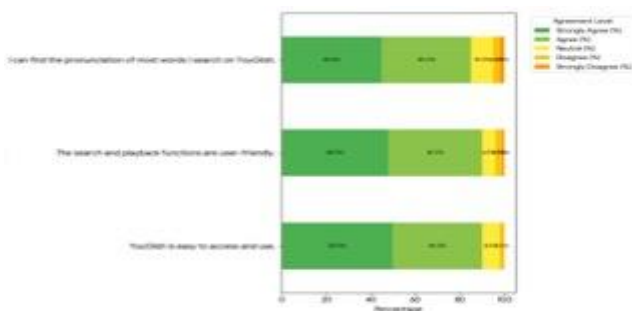
Finally, the data indicates YouGlish's effectiveness in developing specific auditory and productive skills. A total of 85% of students believed that the platform enhanced their ability to listen to and replicate English accents. This result is particularly important as it illustrates YouGlish's capacity to expose learners to diverse spoken English contexts, thereby improving their understanding and production of authentic accents.

### Benefits of YouGlish

#### Usability

Figure 3.

Students' attitudes towards usability



The result in Figure 3 demonstrates a very positive perception of YouGlish's usability. As shown in Figure 3, a significant majority agreed or strongly agreed that YouGlish is easy to access and use. This high level of agreement indicates that the platform's design and accessibility meet user expectations, facilitating a smooth entry into its features.

Furthermore, the core functionalities of YouGlish were also highly rated. An identical 90% of students (48% Strongly Agree + 42% Agree) found the search and playback functions to be user-friendly. This result was supported by the respondents' interview responses. These answers were written by the code. S2 means a comment from student number 2.

*[S2] I really like YouGlish because I really need an application that supports and makes it easy for my learning process.*

Regarding content availability, 85% of students reported being able to find the pronunciation of most words they searched for on YouGlish. This suggests that the platform largely meets users' needs for comprehensive pronunciation examples. Similar feedback was also gathered during the interviews.

*[S7] I rarely encounter a word that YouGlish can't provide pronunciation examples for.*

## Helpfulness

Figure 4.

Students' attitudes towards helpfulness

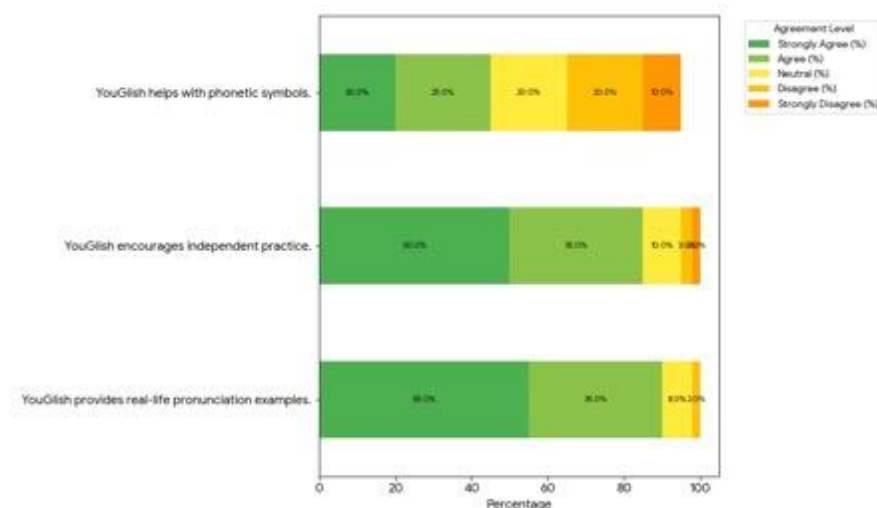


Figure 4 shows the effects YouGlish has on the learning process. The results indicate that students enhance their ability to hear different accents using this tool and simultaneously develop their skills in understanding spoken language in authentic situations. The tool helps students understand word pronunciation through real-life examples, with 55% strongly agreeing and 35% agreeing. One participant stated:

*[S11] YouGlish provides excellent training in listening to different accents, which has improved my ability to understand various speakers.*

The tool served as a powerful motivator for independent English learning, as 85% of participants (50% Strongly Agree + 35% Agree) reported feeling motivated to practice English independently. The interviewees provided important information that supported the positive effects of YouGlish.

[S11] *The visual representation of native speaker pronunciation in video clips makes new words easier to understand for me when I learn them.*

[S3] *Since starting YouGlish, I have increased my independent practice of pronunciation.*

The results showed that YouGlish had a different effect on students' ability to read phonetic symbols.

While YouGlish provides phonetic transcriptions in both Modern IPA and Traditional IPA, only 25% of students agreed that YouGlish helps them read phonetic symbols. A notable 30% (20% Disagree + 10% Strongly Disagree) disagreed, and 20% remained neutral.

[S10] *I tried to use the phonetic symbols feature a couple of times, but it was just too complex.*

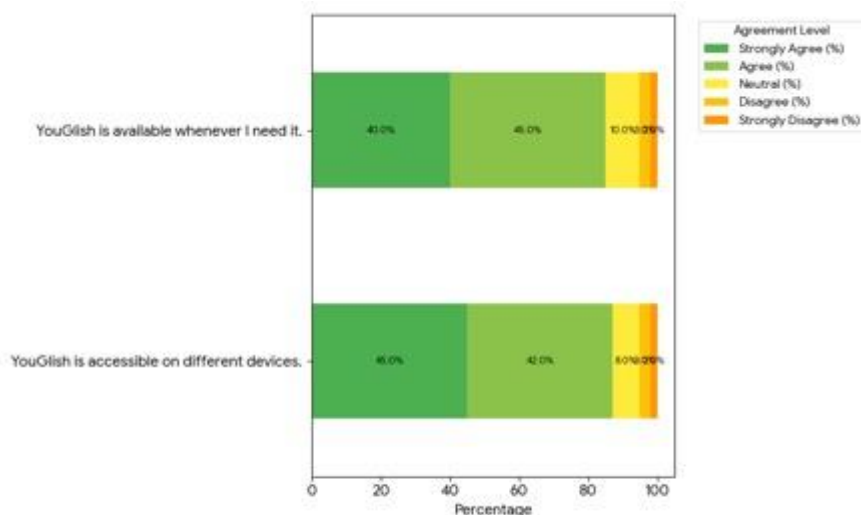
This result suggests that learners were less engaged with this specific feature or found less value in it. Students may struggle with phonetic symbols and find them difficult to grasp or less appealing than YouGlish's more interactive features.

Overall, the data confirm that students see YouGlish as an effective resource for enhancing their pronunciation. This result suggests students encounter difficulties with phonetic symbols which they find less effective than the interactive features of YouGlish.

### Accessibility

Figure 5.

Students' attitudes towards accessibility



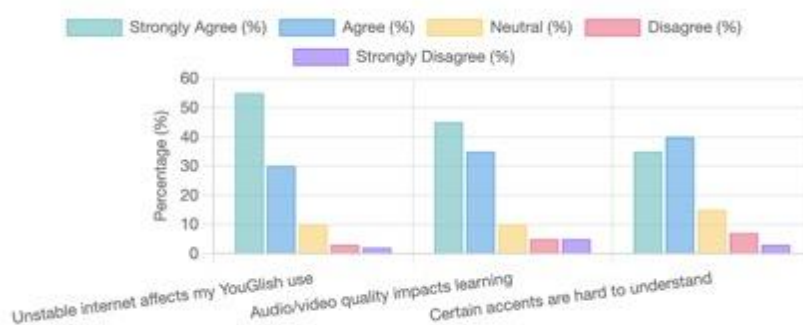
As presented in Figure 5, accessibility emerged as a major advantage of YouGlish. YouGlish is accessible across all devices, according to 87% of students who use smartphones and computers, and tablets. The platform supports different devices that effectively meet the diverse technological environments of modern learners. Furthermore, the survey reveals that 85% of participants found YouGlish easily accessible whenever they needed to use it. The platform demonstrates high accessibility because students can easily fit pronunciation practice into their daily schedules at any time and from any location.

[S5] *The best thing is that it's always there when I need it. I don't have to worry about when or where I can access it.*

## Challenges in using YouGlish

Figure 6.

Challenges in using YouGlish encountered by students



The most common issue that users encountered stemmed from their internet connectivity problems. Unstable Internet connections created a major obstacle for 85% of users. This concern was further emphasized during interviews.

[S1] *It is about the signal. To use YouGlish, you need an internet connection. For example, if the signal is weak, it buffers a lot.*

[S3] *For now, the main issue is the signal because YouGlish cannot be used offline.*

Although the survey implied YouGlish was usable anywhere and anytime, interviews unveiled problems that made its use less effective.

[S1] *I cannot access YouGlish if the internet connection is unstable.*

Furthermore, 80% of respondents experienced learning disruptions due to inconsistent audio/video quality, suggesting that the technical fidelity of otherwise valuable real-life examples can be an impediment.

[S6] *Sometimes the video clips themselves are low resolution, and the sound isn't clear.*

The survey results showed that 75% of participants struggled to understand certain accents, especially those from unfamiliar regions, suggesting a need for improved listening skills or additional support for accent diversity on the platform.

[S9] *I love that YouGlish has different accents, but some of them are really hard for me to understand. I think I need help from teachers to use it better.*

Therefore, improving internet stability, media quality, and accent support could substantially enhance YouGlish's learning experience and accessibility.

## Discussion

This research was designed to investigate students' perceptions in a Vietnamese tertiary education context regarding the use of YouGlish for learning English pronunciation, addressing a gap in the existing literature. The main outcomes align with previous literature on YouGlish and provide further insights into its role as a digital tool for language learning. Students' frequent use of YouGlish to practice pronunciation was consistent with Saed et al. (2021)'s finding that YouGlish encourages active engagement in learning. Similarly, the overall positive perception among respondents, who found YouGlish helpful for improving English pronunciation, aligns with Fu and Yang's (2019) findings. Furthermore, this study supports

Mahmood's (2024a) conclusion that YouGlish boosts learner confidence when communicating with native speakers. Additionally, studies by Fu and Yang (2019), Sukmawati et al. (2024), and Topal (2023) highlighted the same benefit of YouGlish: improving the ability to listen to and replicate English accents through immersion in real-life contexts. In terms of usability, the 85% rate of locating word pronunciations shared by students in this study further supports YouGlish's viability, as there appears to be ample content available, and it serves its function as a video dictionary or YouGlish dictionary (Saed et al., 2021). The research data further highlight the impact of YouGlish on student learning outcomes. The agreement that YouGlish helps learners understand pronunciation through real-life examples supports its function of allowing learners to hear words in authentic contexts (Saed et al., 2021). The positive perceptions of YouGlish may be attributed to its ability to provide authentic pronunciation models in meaningful contexts. Unlike traditional pronunciation exercises that focus on isolated sounds, YouGlish exposes learners to real-life speech from diverse speakers and in various communicative situations. This contextual exposure may help students better understand how words are pronounced naturally in connected speech.

However, the study results show that phonetic symbols remain challenging for students to understand. This differs from Mahmood (2024b) regarding the enhancement of YouGlish's phonetic transcription. Users fail to recognize the provided features as valuable despite their availability. Students also experienced multiple obstacles despite the broad range of positive perceptions they reported. Internet connectivity issues stood out as the main challenge because they affect all streaming platforms and determine how well a tool functions with continuous online access. Students reported interruptions in learning due to inconsistent audio and video quality. Additionally, some students struggle to understand certain accents due to unfamiliarity with regional speech variations. The research reinforces the findings of Fu and Yang (2019), Sukmawati et al. (2024), and Topal (2023), which indicate that mere exposure to different English accents is insufficient to master them.

Overall, while YouGlish's user-friendly interface supports independent practice, the transition from recognizing isolated sounds to mastering global English accents requires more than simple exposure; it demands a shift from passive usage to active, scaffolded integration. To address identified challenges such as technical disruptions, inconsistent video quality, and the difficulty of navigating regional accents, pedagogical practices in Vietnam must evolve. Rather than treating YouGlish as a mere digital dictionary, instructors should adopt evidence-based strategies to make it a structured training platform. For instance, "Accent Spotting" tasks can help students compare phonological shifts across regional filters, while "Shadowing Techniques" use the platform's speed control (0.5x) to help learners deconstruct the complexities of connected speech. Furthermore, to mitigate technical barriers such as unstable internet, teachers can adopt "flipped classroom" models in which students export transcripts or save favorites during periods of high connectivity for offline study. By integrating these specific learning strategies, educators can help students overcome the inherent obstacles of digital learning, ultimately enhancing YouGlish's capabilities as a vital component of modern language teaching.

## Conclusion

This research, which explores university students' perceptions of the effectiveness of YouGlish for learning English pronunciation, indicates positive results. In fact, the participating students perceived YouGlish as an effective tool for improving their pronunciation, which is crucial to better articulation. However, they also noted some drawbacks that impede the use of YouGlish,

namely, technical difficulties with Internet connectivity and unfamiliarity with regional accents. This underscores the integral role of teachers in supporting learners' pronunciation learning. While technology can help students gain exposure to authentic input, explicit feedback and guidance from teachers remain of great importance in facilitating learners' pronunciation learning. Therefore, integrating technological resources with traditional teaching methods is essential for comprehensively supporting EFL learners' pronunciation development.

The study has examined specific cases involving participants from a public university in Hanoi, Vietnam. Thus, it cannot cover all other circumstances of YouGlish usage in higher education. This limitation should be addressed by future research, which could employ broader, more diverse samples and incorporate objective measures to better understand how technology affects EFL pronunciation learning.

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