

Enhancing Students' British Accent Proficiency:

The Impact of Language Translator Devices

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of language translator devices on students' mastery of British accent. Accent mastery has become a critical skill with the increasing global importance of English proficiency, particularly in professional and academic settings. Language translator devices, which offer real-time translations and pronunciation guides, have the potential to enhance students' ability to adapt and refine their British accent accurately. The study utilized a pre-experimental research design, specifically a one-group pre-test and post-test approach. A sample of 30 students from class IX C was selected using a cluster random sampling method. Data collection was conducted through pre-test and post-test assessments, revealing that students' performance in the pre-test was lower than their post-test results. In addition, the effect size score (3.34) denoted that using these devices significantly improves pronunciation and helps students internalize the phonetic patterns of British English.

Additionally, the study explores the challenges and limitations associated with technology for accent acquisition. This research contributes to the growing field of technology-assisted language learning and offers valuable insights for educators and students seeking to improve accent proficiency in English.

Keywords: British, Accent, Language Translator, Pronunciation

1. Introduction

English pronunciation is a vital aspect of language learning that significantly influences communication effectiveness and the speaker's overall fluency. Proper pronunciation ensures that speakers convey their intended message accurately and be understood by others, which is essential for successful interactions in both personal and professional contexts. According to Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin (2010), pronunciation plays a critical role in communicative competence, as it directly

impacts the intelligibility of spoken language. Mispronunciation, on the other hand, can lead to misunderstandings and reduce the clarity of communication, even when a speaker has a strong command of grammar and vocabulary (Fraser, 2000). English pronunciation is a crucial aspect of foreign language teaching and learning as it significantly impacts students' communication skills and performance. Clear and accurate pronunciation is essential for effective communication (Lucky et al., 2022; Srakaew, 2021; Plailek & Essien, 2021). Therefore, it is imperative to focus on pronunciation during language instruction. Pronunciation difficulties can hurt learners' self-esteem and social interactions. Learners' ability to communicate effectively depends on their ability to pronounce words correctly, which they continue to improve throughout their lives (Afzal, 2019; Burns & Seidlhofer, 2019; Jarosz, 2019). Pronunciation is an essential part of learning English; even if their grammar is great, learners will not be understood if their pronunciation is poor (Kobilova, 2022; Lightbown & Spada, 2021; Djurayeva, 2021). EFL teachers can help their students develop the necessary pronunciation skills for effective communication (Pennington & Rogerson-Revell, 2019; Almusharraf, 2022). According to Mahmood (2021), language was developed as a way of communication between humans; communication consists mostly of speaking and listening before communicating. Recognizing speech sounds involves perceiving the sounds of words, including accents and tonal changes.

Good pronunciation makes learning easier, but poor pronunciation makes language learning more difficult (Gilakjani et al., 2020; Levis & McCrocklin, 2018; Munro, 2018). Ahmed (2017) states that English teachers found that emphasis on rhythm, word stress, sentence stress, and intonation is the best way to teach pronunciation to non-native students. Allowing learners to pronounce the language without compromising their ability to understand the message would be a more practical strategy (Akhmatovna, 2022). The importance of pronunciation is further highlighted by the fact that English has become the dominant language for oral communication worldwide. Pronunciation is a crucial aspect of oral communication (Berry, 2021; Darcy, 2018; Vančová, 2019). Learning English as an international and foreign language is crucial for students. English has at least two dialects: British and American. These two dialects may differ in vocabulary, pronunciation, structure, and accent (McKay & Hornby, 1975). The accent is the most apparent distinction between the two dialects. Dialects are variations of the same language that are specific to certain geographical regions or social groups (Li et al., 2017).

Language translator devices are particularly beneficial in pronunciation training, as they offer accurate phonetic representations and immediate auditory feedback. According to O'Brien (2019), these features allow learners to identify and correct their pronunciation errors in real time, leading to more effective learning outcomes. Furthermore, research by Levy and Hubbard (2005) suggests that technology-assisted language learning can cater to individual learning paces, making it easier for students to focus on areas where they need improvement, such as accent refinement.

The role of pronunciation in language proficiency cannot be overstated. Clear pronunciation is crucial for intelligibility, and poor pronunciation can hinder communication even when a learner's grammar and vocabulary are strong (Derwing and Munro 2015). These devices are useful for learners who do not have regular access to native speakers, as they can simulate native-like pronunciation models (Kim, 2017). As students become more independent in their learning process, tools like translator devices enable them to take control of their pronunciation practice, thereby enhancing their overall language proficiency.

Nevertheless, language translator devices remain a valuable supplementary tool in pronunciation training, particularly in contexts where learners have limited access to native speakers. As Warschauer and Healey (1998) argue, technology should not replace traditional language learning methods but rather complement them to enhance the learning experience.

Research on identity has highlighted that accent plays a crucial role in shaping and expressing identity. Accents are also advantageous for individuals learning a new language (McCrocklin & Link, 2016). Social accents are closely tied to the cultural and educational backgrounds of speakers. Instead of being about “sounding right” or suggesting superiority, accents are more about representing community and place. As Massai (2020) observes, English accents significantly influence both national and social identity. The most well-known British accent is Received Pronunciation (RP), which is regarded as the standard English accent in England (Hosseinzadeh et al., 2015). Although RP is one of the most studied and documented forms of spoken English globally, recent estimates indicate that only about 3% of the UK population speaks it (Qizi, 2022). However, written English in the UK shows a high level of consistency, often referred to as Standard English (Baratta & Halenko, 2022). While the British accent is recognized as distinctive and intriguing, it can be challenging to master. Its impact on English language learning can be substantial, particularly when used as a model. Non-native speakers may find it difficult to fully adopt the British accent. Nonetheless, in today's technologically advanced world, there is easier access to information about English, including British accents. Various media tools have greatly transformed the landscape of English as a Foreign Language Learning (EFL) in the digital and e-Learning era (Yadav, 2020; Bennour, 2024; Beddiaf & Lamri, 2022). Learning the British accent can be facilitated through different media, such as listening to British music, using resources from the British Council, and using language translator devices.

Despite the growing body of research on technology-enhanced language learning, the specific impact of language translator devices on accent mastery, particularly in British English, remains underexplored. Most studies on pronunciation focus on traditional methods of instruction or the use of general language learning applications (Derwing & Munro, 2015; Walker, 2010). While the benefits of technology in language acquisition are well-documented, there is a lack of research addressing the effectiveness of translator devices in helping students acquire specific accents, such as the British accent (Kim, 2017; O'Brien, 2019).

Previous research has highlighted the potential of language translator devices for pronunciation improvement (Hsu, 2016), but these studies often do not differentiate between accent training and general pronunciation enhancement. Additionally, existing studies tend to focus on the general intelligibility of pronunciation rather than the nuances of accent-specific features (Levy & Hubbard, 2005; Stockwell, 2007). This gap indicates a need for targeted research on how these devices can aid learners in mastering the phonetic and prosodic aspects of a British accent, which involves specific vowel and consonant sounds, intonation patterns, and stress.

Furthermore, while language translator devices are increasingly being integrated into language learning environments, there is limited empirical evidence on their long-term impact on accent acquisition and retention (Godwin-Jones, 2011; Walker & White, 2013). Most studies provide short-term results without considering the sustained effectiveness

of these devices in maintaining accent mastery over time. According to Aeni et al (2021), "Accents typically differ in the tone of the voice, the division of vowels and consonants, stress and prosody. An accent reveals information about who people are and what community they belong to or want to belong to." Students consider British and American accents to be the most important for English Language Teaching (ELT), particularly in subjects that require verbal communication and pronunciation (Yuwita & Ambarwati, 2023).

Moreover, the role of student motivation and engagement in using translator devices for accent training is another area that requires further investigation. Although technology can enhance learning autonomy (Kim, 2017), the extent to which students remain motivated and whether this leads to meaningful accent improvement over extended periods has not been sufficiently explored.

Students often focus on learning English through reading, neglecting the vital aspect of listening to authentic examples, which is crucial for improving pronunciation, particularly for British accents. It was found that the challenge for students in pronouncing words with a British accent stemmed from their lack of exposure to appropriate technology devices. Therefore, the researcher aimed to enhance and refine students' pronunciation skills by incorporating a variety of educational activities, with a particular emphasis on using the Language Translator Device as a tool for improving pronunciation.

The research objective was to enhance the pronunciation abilities of ninth-grade students at Alagar Public School, Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu, specifically by using the Language Translator Device as a medium for teaching British accent. The study also focused on introducing and teaching the students proper pronunciation of the British accent by utilizing a popular technology AI-assisted tool using which a regional language could be translated into this accent. The expectation was that this method would assist students in improving their pronunciation skills and mastering the British accent by mimicking the words translated by the device.

In conclusion, while the potential of language translator devices in aiding pronunciation is acknowledged, there is a clear research gap in understanding their specific impact on British accent mastery. This study aims to fill this gap by providing empirical data on the effectiveness of these devices in helping students acquire and retain British accent, thereby contributing to the broader field of technology-assisted language learning.

Methodology:

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative approach to analyse static data, such as pre-test and post-test scores, to assess whether the Language Translator Device effectively improved learners' British accent pronunciation. A pre-experimental design was used, featuring a pre-test and post-test format. According to Creswell (2014), experimental research in the quantitative domain investigates the impact of an intervention or treatment on an outcome while controlling other influencing

factors. As the research design was quantitative, the study aimed to determine the causal relationship between the intervention and the outcome, with students participating and comparing results to evaluate the effect of the treatment.

Creswell and Creswell (2018), supported by Amupanda (2023), note that experimental research assesses the effectiveness of a product or concept. The observation occurred twice—once before and once after the treatment—during the pre-test and post-test phases. In this study, the researcher acted as the instructor. The experimental design followed this structure:

Figure1. One group pre-test and post-test

| | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| O1 | X | O2 |
| Pre-Test | Treatment | Post-Test |

Figure 1 explains the One-Group Pre-Test and Post-Test Design of which O1 represents the Pre-test; x indicates Treatment and O2 represents the Post-test. The research design included a pre- test before the treatment to compare results with the pre-treatment condition. The pre-test was administered to the experimental group of students before the researcher introduced the Language Translator Device as a teaching tool. The regional language, Tamil was used by a student from the selected experimental class. It was translated into English by other students. Pronunciation was checked by the researcher. The post-test was given to the same group after the treatment to evaluate changes in their ability to pronounce the British accent. Both tests were used to measure the impact of the Language Translator Device on students' British accent pronunciation.

Population and Sample:

The research population consisted of ninth-grade students at Alagar Public School for the academic year 2024/2025. The school is in Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu. The study included 30 students from the entire ninth-grade C class at Alagar Public School. The term "population" refers to the entire set of units that are the focus of a study, which could include objects, organizations, individuals, or events (Hossan et al., 2023). In this study, the researcher chose the ninth-grade C class, consisting of 30 students, as the sample. The selection was made using cluster random sampling.

Technique of Data Collection:

Data was collected using a pre-test conducted in class, where the researcher administered an oral test on a written sheet containing 20 words of regional language. Those words were read by the volunteer student. Those words were translated by another 30 students in the paper. Each student was called by the researcher. Those 20 words were pronounced by each student. They were given marks according to their correct British English pronunciation. The test comprised 20 words. colour [/'kʌl.ər/], schedule [/'ʃed.ju:l/], aluminium [/,æ.l.jə'mɪn.i.əm/], advertisement [/'æd.vɜ:.tɪs.mənt/], mobile [/'məʊ.baɪl/], herb [hɜ:b/], vitamin [/'vɪt.ə.mɪn/], garage [/'gær.ɑ:ʒ/], lever [/'li:.vər/], tomato [tə'mɑ:.təʊ/],

autumn[/ɔ:təm/], half [/hɑ:f/], lamb[/læm/], know[/nəʊ/], island[/aɪlənd/], light[/laɪt/], cupboard[/'kʌbəd/], write [/raɪt/], often[/ɒfən/], and handbag[/hænbæg/]. The pre-test was administered to assess the students' initial ability to pronounce words with British accent before the intervention. Students were awarded one point for each word they correctly pronounced using the British accent guidelines provided by the researcher. After the pre-test, the instructor delivered several lessons on British accents, using the Language Translator Device as a teaching tool. For this research, a specific list of twenty words was used for both the pre-test and post-test. The tests were conducted orally, as Iqbal et al. (2010) mentioned that oral tests are a common way to assess skills. To meet the research goals, data was gathered through in-person oral tests to evaluate students' proficiency in British pronunciation. Students could earn up to 100 points if they correctly pronounced all the words according to the scoring rubric. A score of 60 or below was considered failing, as it did not meet the passing mark of 70. According to Ary et al. (2010), a test involves presenting a series of prompts to a person to generate responses that can be scored numerically. This study aimed to explore how the AI-generated Language Translator Device could improve students' pronunciation of British accents.

Essential Data Collection Tools:

This research utilized oral tests to assess the influence of the Language Translator Device on the pronunciation skills of ninth-grade students at Alagar Public School, with a focus on British accent. According to Ary et al. (2010), a test involves presenting a series of prompts to an individual to generate responses that can be scored numerically. The study sought to examine how the Language Translator Device affected students' ability to pronounce words in British accent. The objective of the test was to evaluate the students' accuracy in pronouncing words.

Research Procedures and Data Analysis:

The students received the treatment, which the researcher administered thrice. The first session lasted 3x40 minutes, during which the researcher provided instruction on procedure texts to assist students to pronounce words with British accent. According to Mataram (2018), procedure texts are instructional documents that guide readers on how to complete, use, or create something comprehensively. The procedure text was intended to be vivid and simple, supporting students in accurately learning pronunciation. During the second treatment, the researcher used a Language Translator Device to find out whether students were able to learn the British accent or not. Since the device has real-time translation, the response was prompt. Phonetic transcriptions of words were offered by this device. These transcriptions were referred by students to understand the specific sounds and intonations used in British accent. Learning the correct pronunciation and accent was thus made possible by students using this device. Playback features with native British English pronunciations were included in this device. Students were able to listen to words or phrases pronounced by the device in British accent, and those words were imitated by them to grasp the nuances of the British accent. Mastering English pronunciation requires two types of knowledge: intuitive and analytic (Akhatovna, 2022). In this study, the intervention was conducted thrice:

first, to instruct students on pronunciation, particularly the British accent, and second, to help students mimic the voice in the Language Translator Device by listening to it. Finally, they were given a paragraph to check the accent. As a result, the intervention took place over three days.

The researcher administered a post-test to evaluate any improvement in British accent pronunciation among students after listening to the Language Translator Device. The post-test was the same as the pre-test, and the results were scored to assess the device's impact on the student's ability to pronounce in British accent. After gathering the scores from both the pre-test and post-test, the researcher used the T-test formula, as adapted from Ary et al. (2010), to determine the effectiveness of the Language Translator Device in teaching British pronunciation. Additionally, the researcher examined the effect size to gauge how significantly the device improved students' British accent pronunciation.

Table 1. The data obtained from the t-test analysis:

| | Pre-test | Post-test |
|-----------------------|----------|-----------|
| Mean Score | 16.67 | 85 |
| Observations | 30 | 30 |
| Degree of Freedom | 29 | 29 |
| T-Stat | 28.47 | 28.87 |
| T-Critical One-tailed | 1.699 | 0.34 |

The results show that the t-test exceeds the value of the t-table ($28.47 > 1.699$). The effect size value (3.34) indicates a strong effect of the Language Translator Device. The results suggest the potential of the said tool as a medium for teaching British accent pronunciation to students. With one degree of freedom ($df = N-1$ ($30-1$)= 29) and 95% DF confidence ($p=0.05$), the t-test outperformed the t-table ($28.47 > 1.699$).

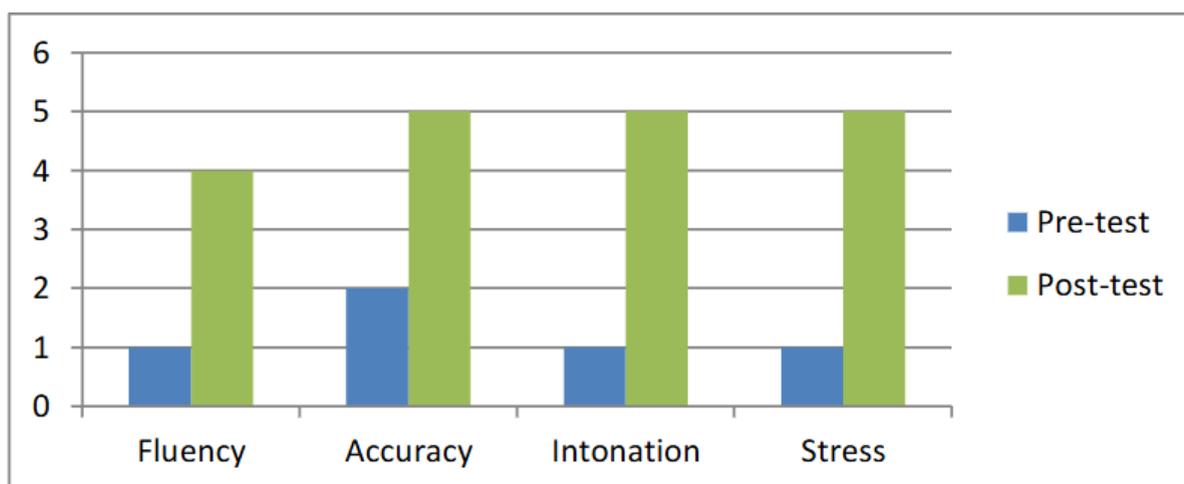


Table 2. Pre-test Scores Frequency Distribution:

| Pre-test | | |
|----------------|-----------|------------|
| Score Interval | Frequency | Percentage |
| 0 | 11 | 36.6 |
| 10 | 11 | 36.6 |
| 20 | 3 | 10 |
| 30 | 1 | 3.3 |
| 40 | 1 | 3.3 |
| 80 | 1 | 3.3 |
| 90 | 2 | 6.6 |
| Sum | 30 | 100 |

The table shows that a substantial portion of students did not meet the minimum standard of completeness, which is set at 75. Specifically, 36.6% of the students received scores of either 0 or 10. Furthermore, 10% of the students scored 20, while 3.3% achieved scores of 30 or 40. Only a small number of students exceeded the 75 threshold, with 6.6% scoring 90, and one student achieving a score of 80. The main objective was to improve the students' ability to pronounce 20 specific words in British accent. This imitation technique helps students improve their listening skills and pronunciation abilities (Lengkoan & Hampp, 2022). The researcher guided the students to pronounce words by listening to and mimicking the characters' pronunciation, following the correct methods and sounds of the words they had been taught.

Table 3. Post-test Scores Frequency Distribution

| Post-test | | |
|----------------|---------------|-------------|
| Score Interval | Frequency (N) | Percentage% |
| 60 | 3 | 10 |
| 7.-80 | 11 | 36.6 |
| 80-90 | 16 | 53.3 |
| SUM | 30 | 100 |

The third area of focus was fluency. The researcher observed that before the treatment, students exhibited poor fluency when pronouncing English words. They frequently stuttered and hesitated while trying to say certain words. This could have been due to their limited experience in learning English pronunciation and the absence of a model to imitate. The findings from the pre-test and post-test on teaching pronunciation, particularly in mastering British accent pronunciation using the device, support this conclusion.

Conclusion:

The research conducted by the researcher showed a notable improvement in participants' ability to accurately pronounce English words and use British accent, as taught through the Language Translator Device. Moreover, the participants successfully imitated the pronunciation of words based on the device's pronunciation. Learners can gain cognitive and linguistic benefits through real-world exposure, contextual learning, and active participation. The study conducted by the researcher showed a significant improvement in the participants' ability to pronounce English words correctly and adopt British accent after using the Language Translator Device as a learning tool. The t-test results support this, with a pre-test mean score of 16.67 and a post-test mean score of 85, indicating a score difference of 85. Consequently, the null hypothesis (Ho) was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (Ha) was accepted. The research demonstrated a notable difference in enhancing students' pronunciation skills in British accent, specifically for ninth-grade students at Alagar Public School, Thoothukudi during the academic year 2024-2025. The effect size was found to be large, with $ES > 1.00$ ($3.34 > 1.00$), indicating that the Language Translator Device had a significant impact on students' pronunciation abilities. The data analysis and effect size results confirmed that using the Language Translator Device is highly effective in teaching pronunciation to Year 9 students at Alagar Public School, Thoothukudi.

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