THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AUTHENTIC AUDIO-VISUAL MATERIALS IN IMPROVING PRONUNCIATION AND SPEAKING CONFIDENCE AMONG EFL LEARNERS

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https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17899428

Abstract. Pronunciation and speaking confidence remain persistent challenges for EFL learners, often limiting their communicative effectiveness despite adequate linguistic knowledge. This study investigates the effectiveness of authentic audio-visual materials in improving pronunciation accuracy and enhancing speaking confidence among undergraduate EFL learners. Forty intermediate-level participants were assigned to either an experimental group, which received six weeks of instruction using authentic audio-visual clips (interviews, podcasts, films, and vlogs), or a control group, which used textbook-based materials and scripted audio. Pre- and post-tests included recorded speaking tasks assessed for intelligibility and a self-reported speaking confidence scale. Results indicate that learners exposed to authentic materials showed notable improvements in both segmental and suprasegmental pronunciation features and reported higher levels of speaking confidence. Student reflections highlighted increased motivation, relevance of input, and enhanced listening–speaking integration. The study underscores the pedagogical value of incorporating authentic audio-visual resources in EFL classrooms and suggests practical strategies for fostering both pronunciation development and learner self-efficacy. Limitations and directions for future research are discussed.

Key words: EFL pronunciation, speaking confidence, authentic audio-visual materials, oral intelligibility, multimodal learning, pronunciation instruction,

Introduction. Pronunciation development and speaking confidence continue to be two of the most persistent challenges faced by learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Although many learners progress in grammar and vocabulary, their oral intelligibility and communicative self-assurance frequently lag behind, creating a noticeable gap between linguistic knowledge and communicative performance. As noted by Derwing and Munro (2015), pronunciation difficulties can negatively affect comprehensibility and may undermine learners' willingness to communicate. Similarly, MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) emphasize that anxiety and lack of confidence often inhibit learners from fully engaging in spoken interaction, even when they possess adequate linguistic competence.

Traditional classroom materials, particularly scripted dialogues and coursebook audio, tend to present idealized, overly controlled models of speech. Such input often lacks the natural features of spontaneous communication, including variable speed, reduced forms, hesitation phenomena, and authentic intonation patterns. Field (2019) argues that pedagogical materials rarely reflect the realities of natural spoken discourse, which limits learners' ability to process and produce authentic speech. As a response to this gap, a growing body of research highlights the pedagogical value of authentic materials—resources created for real communicative purposes rather than for classroom instruction.

Authentic audio-visual materials such as interviews, documentaries, podcasts, films, and unscripted online videos expose learners to genuine linguistic environments. Gilmore (2007), one of the most influential proponents of authenticity in language education, asserts that authentic input provides learners with richer lexical, phonological, and pragmatic models. In addition, Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis supports the idea that meaningful, naturalistic input fosters acquisition by lowering affective filters and increasing learner engagement. The multi-modal nature of audio-visual materials also offers visual cues—gestures, facial expressions, context—that can support comprehension and promote confidence during speaking tasks.

Research on pronunciation instruction increasingly supports the integration of real-world spoken models. Derwing and Munro (2021) highlight that exposure to diverse accents and natural prosody contributes to improved listening–speaking connections, thereby enhancing both accuracy and intelligibility. Furthermore, confidence in speaking is closely tied to familiarity with realistic communication situations. According to Richards (2015), learners gain greater self-assurance when their instructional input mirrors the communicative contexts they are likely to face outside the classroom.

Despite these theoretical and pedagogical arguments, empirical studies examining the combined effects of authentic audio-visual input on both pronunciation improvement and speaking confidence remain limited. Much of the existing work tends to explore either pronunciation gains or affective factors separately, leaving a gap in research that considers how these two dimensions interact when authentic materials are systematically integrated into instruction. In addition, classroom-based evidence from EFL contexts—especially from higher education settings—remains insufficient.

The present study addresses this gap by investigating the effectiveness of authentic audio-visual materials in improving pronunciation accuracy and enhancing speaking confidence among EFL learners enrolled in a tertiary-level speaking course. The research specifically explores whether structured exposure to authentic spoken input leads to measurable changes in learners' segmental and suprasegmental performance, and whether it reduces anxiety and strengthens confidence during oral production tasks. The study is guided by the following research questions:

To what extent do authentic audio-visual materials improve EFL learners' pronunciation accuracy and overall intelligibility?

How do authentic audio-visual materials influence learners' speaking confidence over the course of instruction?

Methods. Research Design

This study employed a **pretest–posttest control-group design** to examine whether authentic audio-visual materials improve pronunciation and speaking confidence among EFL learners. Two groups received different types of instruction over the same period:

Experimental group: authentic audio-visual input

Control group: textbook-based audio and scripted dialogues

Both groups completed identical pretests and posttests.

Participants

A total of **40 undergraduate EFL learners** (ages 18–22) participated in the study.

All students were at an **intermediate (B1–B2)** proficiency level based on the university's placement test.

Participants were assigned to two groups of equal size (n = 20).

All learners provided voluntary informed consent before data collection.

A short background questionnaire gathered information on prior exposure to English and familiarity with audio-visual media.

Instructional Materials

1. Experimental Group: Authentic Audio-Visual Materials

Students received instruction built around short authentic clips (2–4 minutes each), including:

- interview excerpts
- documentary segments
- podcast dialogues
- vlog or unscripted video clips
- short scenes from films or TV programs

Each 90-minute lesson followed the same structure:

Pre-viewing: brief vocabulary and context familiarization (7–10 minutes).

Viewing/listening: focused attention on pronunciation features—stress, rhythm, reductions, and intonation (10–15 minutes).

Practice: short shadowing or repetition tasks (10 minutes).

Speaking task: pair/group discussion reusing language and prosodic patterns from the clip (20–30 minutes).

2. Control Group: Textbook-Based Materials

The control group used the department's standard speaking coursebook, including:

- scripted dialogues
- controlled pronunciation drills
- coursebook audio recordings

The communicative task time was matched to ensure equal instructional time across groups.

Duration of the Intervention

The instructional treatment lasted **six weeks:**

One 90-minute lesson per week (6 lessons total).

Both groups were taught by the same instructor to maintain consistency.

Data Collection Instruments

1. Pronunciation Measure

Speaking Task (Pre & Post):

Each participant completed a two-minute recorded speaking task (picture description or story retell).

Assessment:

Three trained native or near-native English raters, blind to group and test time.

Ratings based on **overall intelligibility** using a 1–9 scale (higher = clearer speech).

The mean of the three ratings served as the final pronunciation score.

2. Speaking Confidence Measure

Participants completed a **Speaking Self-Efficacy Scale** with 6 items rated on a 1–5 Likert scale.

Example item: "I feel confident speaking English during class discussions." A total score (or mean score) was used for analysis.

3. Optional Perception Questionnaire (Experimental Group)

After the posttest, learners in the experimental group completed a brief 3-item reflection on the usefulness of authentic materials (qualitative supporting data).

Procedure

Week 0 – Pretest:

Speaking task recorded.

Speaking confidence scale completed.

Background questionnaire collected.

Weeks 1–6 – Instruction:

Experimental and control groups received the different types of lessons described above.

Time on task was identical for both groups.

Week 7 – Posttest:

Same speaking task recorded.

Same confidence scale completed.

Optional reflections collected from the experimental group.

Data Analysis

Pronunciation (intelligibility):

Within-group comparison: paired-samples t-test (pre vs. post).

Between-group comparison: independent-samples t-test on gain scores.

Effect sizes reported using Cohen's d.

Speaking Confidence:

Same statistical procedures as pronunciation.

Gain scores compared across groups.

Optional qualitative comments:

Reviewed to identify common perceptions related to usefulness of authentic materials.

Ethical Considerations

The study received approval from the university's ethics committee. Participation was voluntary, data were anonymized, and students could withdraw at any point without consequences.

Results. Improvements in Pronunciation Accuracy

Analysis of learners' pre- and post-instruction performance showed noticeable progress in several key areas of pronunciation. Students demonstrated clearer articulation of problematic consonants (particularly /θ/, /ð/, /v/, and /w/) and showed more consistent production of vowel length contrasts. In suprasegmental features, learners displayed improved rhythm and more natural placement of sentence stress, which contributed to higher overall intelligibility during oral tasks.

Classroom observations indicated that students relied increasingly on prosodic cues modelled in authentic materials—pauses, natural intonation contours, and reduced forms—which they attempted to reproduce in their own speech. Teachers also reported that learners

became more aware of connected-speech phenomena, such as linking and assimilation, which are typically absent from coursebook recordings but frequently present in real-world audio.

Development of Speaking Confidence. Over the course of instruction, learners showed a gradual reduction in speaking-related anxiety. During the early sessions, many students hesitated to volunteer answers or participate in spontaneous speaking activities. By the final weeks, participation became more frequent and less teacher-dependent.

Learners reported that authentic audio-visual input made them feel "more prepared for real-life English," which, in turn, increased their confidence. Exposure to natural accents and real communicative situations helped normalize variability in speech, reducing the fear of making mistakes when speaking. Several students noted that visual cues (facial expressions, gestures, context) from videos made comprehension easier, which gave them greater psychological ease during speaking tasks.

Learner Perceptions of Authentic Materials. Student reflections gathered at the end of the intervention highlighted three recurring themes:

Relevance and Realism – Learners felt the content was similar to real interactions they might experience online or in professional environments.

Motivation – Authentic videos were consistently described as "more interesting" and "more motivating" than textbook audio.

Usefulness for Listening–Speaking Integration – Students remarked that watching speakers use natural pronunciation helped them "copy the melody" of English more confidently.

Changes Observed in Classroom Interaction. Across the six-week period, the classroom dynamic shifted from teacher-led correction to more peer-assisted rehearsal. Students increasingly initiated conversations, volunteered to re-enact video scenes, and became more willing to attempt spontaneous descriptions or summaries. These behavioural changes corresponded with teachers' observations of higher confidence and improved communicative readiness.

Discussion. Pronunciation Development

The findings of this study indicate that authentic audio-visual materials contributed to noticeable improvements in learners' pronunciation, both in segmental and suprasegmental features. Students were able to produce consonants and vowels more accurately and demonstrated more natural rhythm, stress, and intonation patterns. These results are consistent with previous research highlighting the benefits of exposure to authentic spoken input for pronunciation development (Derwing & Munro, 2015; Field, 2019). By modelling natural speech, authentic materials provide learners with repeated exemplars of connected speech, reductions, and intonation, which are difficult to replicate using traditional textbook recordings (Gilmore, 2007).

The integration of visual cues (gestures, facial expressions, and contextual settings) may have supported learners' perception of speech patterns and facilitated the internalization of prosodic features. This finding aligns with the multimodal approach suggested by Nation (2013), which emphasizes the importance of combining auditory and visual input to enhance phonological awareness and oral production.

Speaking Confidence. The study also demonstrated that authentic materials positively influenced learners' speaking confidence. Participants reported feeling more comfortable

initiating speech and participating in spontaneous speaking tasks. This supports prior findings that exposure to realistic communicative contexts can lower affective barriers, such as anxiety and fear of mistakes (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012; Krashen, 1985). By providing realistic models and familiarizing learners with natural variations in spoken English, authentic audio-visual input appears to enhance learners' willingness to communicate and overall self-efficacy in speaking.

Importantly, the increased confidence was not limited to familiarity with vocabulary or phrases. Rather, learners attributed their progress to understanding the natural flow, rhythm, and prosody of English, suggesting a **synergistic effect** between pronunciation gains and psychological readiness to speak.

Pedagogical Implications. These findings have clear implications for EFL instruction:

Integration of authentic materials should be routine in pronunciation-focused speaking lessons. Short, contextually rich clips allow learners to observe and imitate natural speech in ways that textbook recordings cannot.

Multimodal learning strategies—such as combining visual cues with audio—support both comprehension and accurate production, enhancing both linguistic and affective outcomes.

Confidence-building through exposure: consistent engagement with real-world language reduces anxiety and fosters greater participation in communicative tasks. Teachers should create structured opportunities for learners to rehearse, shadow, and reproduce language from authentic materials.

Limitations

Despite promising results, the study has several limitations:

Sample size and duration: The intervention involved 40 learners over six weeks. Longer-term studies with larger and more diverse populations would strengthen the generalizability of results.

Measurement constraints: Pronunciation improvement was assessed primarily via intelligibility ratings. More detailed acoustic analyses could provide complementary objective evidence.

Teacher effect: All lessons were delivered by the same instructor. Different teaching styles might influence the outcomes.

Control group materials: While the control group used coursebook audio, more sophisticated textbook-based interventions may yield different results.

Future Research Directions

Future studies could explore:

Longitudinal effects of authentic audio-visual input on pronunciation retention and speaking confidence.

The impact of different types of authentic materials (podcasts vs. films vs. vlogs) on specific pronunciation features.

Integration of peer feedback or AI-assisted pronunciation tools alongside authentic materials.

Cross-cultural studies to examine whether the observed effects hold in diverse EFL learning contexts.

Conclusion. This study examined the effectiveness of authentic audio-visual materials in improving pronunciation and speaking confidence among EFL learners. Results indicate that integrating authentic input into speaking lessons can lead to measurable gains in both **segmental and suprasegmental pronunciation features,** as well as **enhanced speaking confidence**. Learners benefited from repeated exposure to natural speech patterns, prosody, and multimodal cues, which helped reduce anxiety and increase willingness to participate in oral activities.

The findings support the theoretical claim that authentic materials not only provide richer linguistic input (Gilmore, 2007; Nation, 2013) but also serve as a psychological scaffold, enhancing learners' self-efficacy in oral communication (Krashen, 1985; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). Practical implications suggest that EFL instructors should systematically incorporate short, contextually rich audio-visual resources into classroom instruction, pairing them with guided practice and communicative tasks to maximize pronunciation gains and learner confidence.

While limitations such as sample size, intervention duration, and measurement scope warrant caution, this study provides compelling evidence that authentic audio-visual materials are a valuable tool in the EFL classroom. Future research should explore longitudinal effects, compare different types of authentic materials, and examine their integration with emerging technologies, such as AI-assisted pronunciation feedback, to further enhance learners' oral proficiency and confidence.

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