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FUNETIX: AN INTERACTIVE PHONETICS LEARNING GUIDE

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ABSTRACT

Phonetics is an essential subject in many academic programmes across local universities, yet students often face significant challenges in learning its complex sound symbols, particularly the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). Like learning any new language or writing system, mastering phonetics requires consistent practice, memory reinforcement, and effective revision tools—resources that are frequently lacking in traditional instruction. To bridge this gap, FUNETIX was developed as a digital application designed to support phonetics learning through interactive exercises and multimedia content. Inspired by established language learning applications, FUNETIX aims to enhance student engagement and retention by offering repetitive quiz-based activities that vary in content but reinforce the same phonetic principles. This method, grounded in cognitive learning theories such as active recall and spaced repetition, enables learners to gradually internalize phonetic symbols, improving both their accuracy and speed in transcription tasks. The application also includes optional supplementary materials available for purchase, providing users with extended learning opportunities. By integrating technology with linguistics education, FUNETIX serves as a practical and innovative solution for students seeking to strengthen their foundational skills in phonetics. This paper outlines the pedagogical rationale, design features, and educational potential of the FUNETIX application as a modern tool for phonetic instruction.

Keywords: *Linguistics, Language Learning Application, International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)*

INTRODUCTION

Phonetics, the study of speech sounds, is a crucial aspect of language learning. Mastering its symbols is fundamental for students across various levels of education; from undergraduate linguistics students to doctoral candidates. These symbols are also used widely in every other country, although their representation may vary across languages. FUNETIX aims to not only assist students who are particularly enrolled in English for Professional Communication (LG120) at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Melaka Kampus Alor Gajah. However, its potential may even go beyond and across the sea by aiding linguistics students all over the globe. This project focuses on the phonetic symbols of English. A study conducted by Salas-Morera, L., Arauzo-Azofra, A., and García-Hernández,

L. (2012) students rated between 4.06 and 4.20 out of 5 in regards of quizzes in keeping up with subject content. This further proves that learning in the form of quizzes may help the students' cognitive ability in recognising the symbols through repeated practice. Despite there being plenty of language learning applications readily available online, there are not many that are aimed at phonetic symbol learning. FUNETIX also provides additional notes that will be helpful for the users' studies on Instagram and sells PDFs of an exercise book. FUNETIX aims to increase linguistics students' ability in identifying IPA symbols, allowing improvements in phonetic transcription skills from a spoken word. This will also result in enhancement of English pronunciation accuracy as a result of better understanding of the proper oral placement of a sound. Moreover, due to the interactive element of the application and exercise book, students will feel more motivated to learn as their overall experience when learning phonetics becomes more enjoyable. This application focuses its market on semester 1 students who are furthering their studies in the Diploma in English for Professional Communication (LG120), specifically those who study the Pronunciation (ALS102) subject in Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). Not only can the application be used by LG120 students, but its marketability can be expanded amongst Linguistics students across the globe.

METHODS

This project, FUNETIX was born from multiple trials and errors on many different platforms. After much thinking, Genially was chosen for website making, and AppsGeyser will turn the website into the final version, which is an application. The exercise book on the other hand was made on Canva and converted into a PDF. FUNETIX focuses its performance in terms of interactivity and the utilisation of audio-visual aids. Learning phonetics without the help of audio-visual aids is a challenging procedure as the subject itself revolves around sounds and the way they are made. A study by Zerroug, E. (2019) mentioned that audio aids are helpful for EFL learners' motivation to attain a foreign language and refine their speaking skills. Learning from audio may guide the learning of spoken language to a native level. In the same study, it was found that visual aids may contribute greatly to the students' understanding and retention of information. This project is generally inexpensive and budget-friendly. Although that is the case, equipment, like gadgets and other necessities such as electricity and Internet connection are most certainly needed as the progress of this project is heavily online.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this project were gained through primary research questions conducted on semester 1, Diploma in English for Professional Communication (LG120) students through Google Form.

Which of the following challenges relate to you when learning phonetics?

 Copy chart

20 responses

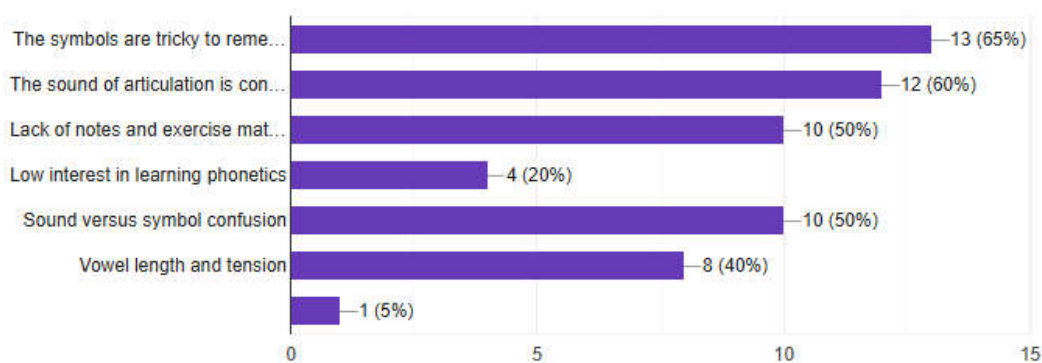


Figure 1.: Challenges in Learning Phonetics

The figure above shows that more than half of the first-semester students of LG120 face difficulties such as recalling tricky symbols, confusing the sound of articulation, a lack of notes and exercise materials, and sound versus symbol confusion. This shows the importance of exercises and learning sources in learning phonetics. In the survey, all 20 students agreed that interactive quizzes are helpful for their studies, showing FUNETIX’s application and exercise potential in aiding the students with their learning.

Have you come across any interactive website or materials on phonetics?

20 responses

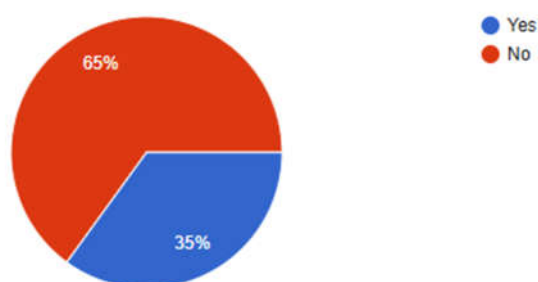


Figure 2.: The Availability of Interactive Website or Materials on Phonetics

As seen in Figure 2, 65% of the students could not find any interactive website or materials related to phonetics. This explains that despite interactivity being useful, content on phonetics is still limited. Based on the short pre-trial link of the application sent in the survey form, 100% of the responders find the website which was turned into an application helpful for their phonetics studies.

CONCLUSION

This project has received a generous amount of feedback due to its useful nature in helping studies on phonetics. Utilising interactivities on notes and exercises not only will make it interesting, but also effective, helping the project stand out in its own ways in comparison to other platforms. The addition of an exercise book also functions well as an extra hand for the memorization journey. With this project, study materials for these students will grow. This project is believed to have the potential to grow better in terms of interactivity. However, due to the limitations of budgets and sources, some initiatives had to be removed. Despite that, the project still received quite a massive amount of positive feedback.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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