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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF
RESEARCH ON LANGUAGE EDUCATION 2023

**EMBRACING CHANGE:
EMANCIPATING THE LANDSCAPE
OF RESEARCH IN LINGUISTIC,
LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

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SAY IT RIGHT WITH YA

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ABSTRACT:

Pronunciation errors in certain English words have been imminent among Malaysians due to assimilation. This phenomenon could be seen in the daily conversations of university students. The creation of *Say it Right with Ya* revolves around correcting commonly mispronounced English words made by Malaysians, specifically university students through Instagram. Presently, social media has become a platform for students to gain new knowledge in an interactive manner, as opposed to the traditional way of only learning within their classrooms. Numerous social media platforms have been used by educators to teach students, including Instagram. A verbal interview was conducted to observe how university students pronounce certain English words and it was noted that most participants made pronunciation errors during the interview. Multiple feedback received also showed that many young people did not realise that they were mispronouncing certain words wrongly and the Instagram account created helped them to correct their mistakes. This research was able to conclude that correcting mispronunciation among students could be done using social media, namely Instagram.

Keywords: Correcting mispronunciation, Instagram, pronunciation errors, students.

1. INTRODUCTION

Having spent two years in Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Melaka and socialising with students from other campuses, it is a normal occurrence for tertiary students to use English in their daily conversations. This is because the British government had previously colonised Malaysia and English had formerly served as the primary language of communication in the nation. However, once Malaysia attained independence in 1957, English was reduced to the status of a second language (Lee, 2015). Lee (2015) also mentioned that since gaining its independence, Malaysia's English has developed into what is today referred to as modern Malaysian English. Due to assimilation, Malaysian English deviates from Standard English in terms of the sound of some vowels, which causes pronunciation issues (Kamarudin & Kamal, 2021). Researchers have noted that there has been some normalisation of pronunciation errors during the years of conversing with university students. Consequently, several students frequently mispronounce various English words without realising it since they are used to hearing incorrect English pronunciation from other people. This could lead to fossilisation, the process by which inaccurate language becomes rooted and difficult to rectify. Hassan et al. (2021) mentioned elements that contribute to fossilisation include the behaviours of imitation, mishearing, and mispronouncing. Being a student of Diploma in English for Professional Communication, the researcher felt encouraged to take the initiative to correct the pronunciation errors made in others' daily conversations. *Say it Right with Ya*, an

Instagram account dedicated to correcting commonly mispronounced English words among young people in Malaysia, primarily university students, was founded as a result of this. As a start, the primary audience for this account will be mainly university students.

The global population's use of digital technologies increased enormously as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic breakout, beyond anyone's wildest expectations (Al-Rahmi et al., 2021). On account of that, social media platforms have been widely used as a form of communication, which includes teaching and learning. According to Chawinga (2017), due to its interactivity, a social media platform would be a better medium for virtual classes. Social media not only makes it more convenient for educators to communicate, it also enhances active learning and student-centered learning (Alamri et al., 2020). In accordance with the Internet Users Survey 2020, 88% of Instagram users in Malaysia are under the age of 39 (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2020). This illustrates the widespread use of Instagram among young people in Malaysia. A study based in Indonesia conducted by Lailiyah and Setiyaningsih (2020) also found that according to an analysis of the data they received, students had favourable perceptions toward the use of social media, particularly Instagram, for language learning. Aside from that, the students concur that Instagram helps to motivate them to learn English, according to results of one of the questionnaires they provided. These findings proved that utilising Instagram can be an effective tool to correct pronunciation errors made by university students.

1.1. Project Objective / Purpose

The purpose of this project is to correct pronunciation errors frequently made by university students in their daily conversations. As mentioned by Asikin and Ibrahim (2020), correctly pronouncing English words will assist students in improving their communication skills. English conversational fluency is crucial for employability, particularly in the age of globalisation (Mustafa, 2018). Therefore, the inability to speak English smoothly without errors could lessen their employability as English proficiency is a criteria that employers seek for. Being able to pronounce English words correctly will boost their confidence as well as avoid miscommunication. Although mispronunciation may seem like a minor issue for some people, it should be addressed as it could affect them in the future. In agreement with Hassan et al. (2021), though difficulties faced by non-native speakers in pronouncing various words correctly are respectfully acknowledged, there is a worry that such practise would eventually lead to fossilisation.

A research conducted by Pratiwi et al. (2021) to study the effectivity of social media, particularly TikTok, in learning English pronunciation concluded that the TikTok application, which has numerous advantages and is excellent in assisting students and teachers in teaching and learning activities in the twenty-first century, can be utilised as a medium for pronunciation learning in English. However, the researchers choose to use the Instagram platform for this project rather than TikTok, which has fewer application functionalities. Using Instagram will attract more people to visit the page to improve their pronunciation due to the application being highly accessible and frequently used primarily by young people. Mahmudah & Ardi (2020) in their article mentioned several Instagram accounts that managed to draw a lot of interest from Instagram users, as evidenced by the vast amount of followers on these accounts in which the concept of their postings is sharing English educational content such as grammar, pronunciation, speaking exercises, quizzes, and challenges. This shows that a lot of users are keen to develop their English skills through Instagram when they are presented with informative and interactive educational contents.

1.2. Entrepreneurial Opportunities

Say it Right with Ya is used as a platform to correct mispronunciation; however, it also has the potential to generate income. By being an interactive account where students can visit to improve their English, many students can be attracted to follow the account to keep up with the content updates. Hence, when the number of followers starts to grow, the platform can be used to advertise other people's products. A rising amount of academic research demonstrates the effectiveness of influencers as a tool for advertising, which is why social media platforms are used as product endorsers more frequently (Janssen, Schouten & Croes, 2022). On Instagram, there is a feature that allows users to release a post that will stay on the account for 24 hours named Instagram Story. This feature can later be used to promote people's products to generate some income in the future. This service can be used by anyone that needs more exposure on their product with a fee of RM3 per Instagram Story post.

However, this fee can be increased as the sum of followers expand. In addition, as the number of followers grows in the future, the opportunity to conduct classes to teach the followers how to improve their conversational skills may arise. These sessions can assist students to improve their presentation abilities in addition to correcting their pronunciation, allowing the researchers to put the knowledge learned from the course Diploma in English for Professional Communication to work.

2. METHODOLOGY

The *Say it Right with Ya* Instagram page contains commonly mispronounced words, videos to demonstrate the correct way of pronouncing those words, phonetic transcriptions, and definitions of those words to promote more understanding. The words that have been chosen to be posted on the account are categorised as 'commonly mispronounced words' based on our observations. A standard template was then created for the frequently mispronounced words to be posted as shown below:



Example of images containing frequently mispronounced words

Instagram provides a function that enables users to post numerous pieces of media at once in which as a result a video and an image can be posted simultaneously. Users who come across the postings will first see the above media as a 'cover page', where they can swipe to the

following media to view a video demonstration of how to pronounce the words correctly. The video is started by greeting the audience, introducing the researcher, and stating the objective, which is to correct commonly mispronounced English words among Malaysians. Then it is proceeded to ask how the viewer would pronounce a word and give multiple options on how it could be pronounced where the options consist of how people usually mispronounce it as well as the actual pronunciation. The viewers were given a few seconds to choose the option that they think is the right one, like a mini quiz, and only then the correct pronunciation were demonstrated. To provide more in-depth understanding, a sample sentence is included so that the viewers know how to use the word in their daily conversations. Snapshots of one of the videos are shown below to illustrate:



Introducing the word



Options for the audience to pick from



The correct pronunciation and transcription



Sample sentence

For this project, 30 students from UiTM Alor Gajah were interviewed to observe whether they are able to pronounce five English words that are frequently pronounced incorrectly. The five words that were selected are: swap, Wednesday, steak, salmon, and waffle. They were asked to pronounce these words the way that they usually would in their daily conversations. After they



were done pronouncing these words, they were then shown the Instagram account, *Say it Right with Ya*, for them to check whether they pronounced those words accurately. After three questions were asked to obtain their opinion regarding the effectiveness of the account as well as useful feedback for improvement in the future. The three questions asked are:

- i. Do you think *Say it Right with Ya* was helpful for you to know correct pronunciations for some English words?
- ii. Do you wish for there to be more words posted on the account so you can know the correct pronunciation for more words?
- iii. Is there anything that you would like me to fix regarding the account?

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Students Pronunciation of Commonly Mispronounced Words

An interview was conducted with 30 students from UiTM Alor Gajah to observe their pronunciation of five English words that are frequently mispronounced among Malaysians, namely ‘swap’, ‘Wednesday’, ‘steak’, ‘salmon’, and ‘waffle’. The table below will show the number of students that pronounced the given words correctly.

Table 1: The Number of Students Who Pronounced the Words Correctly

Word	swap /swɑp/	Wednesday /'wenz,dei/	steak /steik/	salmon /'sæmən/	waffle /'wafəl/
Correct pronunciation	7	1	3	5	3

Based on the table above, 76.67% of students pronounced the word ‘swap’ wrongly. Most of them articulated ‘swap’ as /swɛp/ instead of /swɑp/. Next, only one student (3.33%) pronounced the word ‘Wednesday’ accurately, hence a total of 96.67% students made a pronunciation error. From the interview, it was observed that some students pronounce the word ‘Wednesday’ as /wɛt'nɛsdei/ or /wɛnɛsdei/ rather than /'wenz,dei/. For the third word on the list which was ‘steak’, 90% of the interviewees pronounced the word as /stik/ as opposed to the correct pronunciation: /steik/. Subsequently, 83.33% of the respondents pronounced ‘salmon’ in an incorrect manner where they stress on the L letter (/sɛl'mən/) which was supposed to be silent. Finally, only three out of the 30 interviewees (10%) pronounced the word ‘waffle’ correctly. Some of the respondents pronounced ‘waffle’ as /wɛrfəl/ or /wɛrfɛr/ when it should be /'wafəl/.

3.2 Feedback from Students

There were three questions that were asked during the interview to receive the respondents’ opinions and feedback. The first question was ‘Do you think *Say it Right with Ya* was helpful for you to know the correct pronunciations for some English words?’ and 100% of the participants said the Instagram account was useful. 6 out of 30 respondents also added that it was helpful because they did not realise they have been pronouncing certain words wrongly. Next, the second question that was asked to the participants was ‘Do you wish for there to be more words posted on the account so you can know the correct pronunciation for more words?’ and all of the interviewees answered ‘Yes’, indicating that they were interested in more

content. Lastly, the final question was asked to see if the participants would like to suggest any improvements that should be made on the account. To the question ‘Is there anything that you would like me to fix regarding the account?’, most of the participants answered ‘No’ while two out of 30 respondents gave their suggestions. One of them suggested that to reveal the correct pronunciation of every word, the researcher should repeat the words thrice instead of only twice. She said that this could assist her to hear the pronunciation more clearly. The other participant suggested that the researchers move the page to TikTok as she feels that by doing this, the videos could gain more traction due to the algorithm on said application.

Apart from the feedback obtained from conducting the interview, comments were also left on the *Say it Right with Ya* Instagram page by its visitors expressing how the videos helped them in knowing the accurate manner to pronounce certain English words. Some of the comments are as shown below:

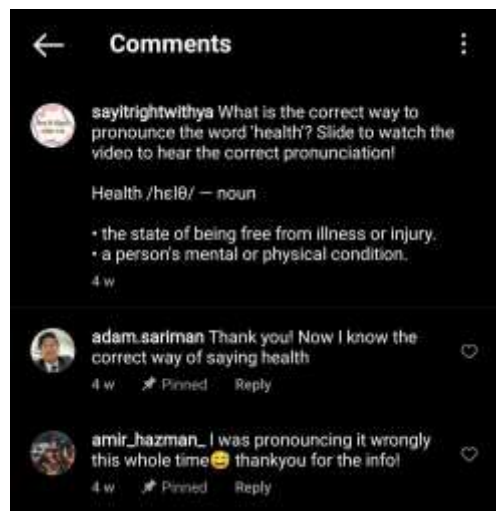


Figure 1: Comments left on the video of how to correctly pronounce the word ‘health’



Figure 2: Comments left on the video of how to correctly pronounce the word ‘pause’

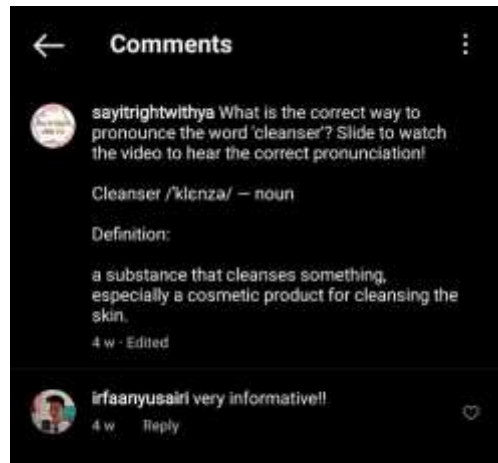


Figure 3: Comment left on the video of how to correctly pronounce the word 'cleanser'

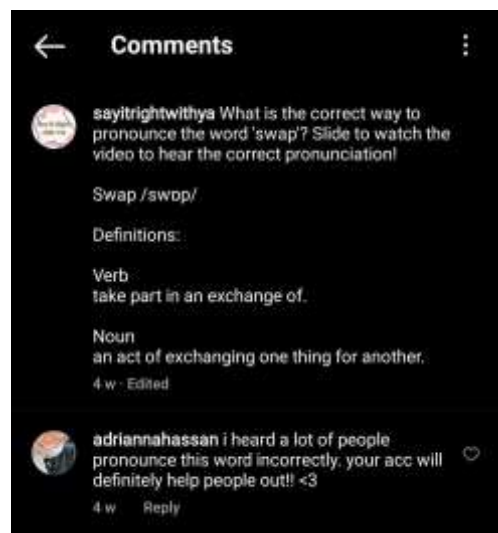


Figure 4: Comment left on the video of how to correctly pronounce the word 'swap'

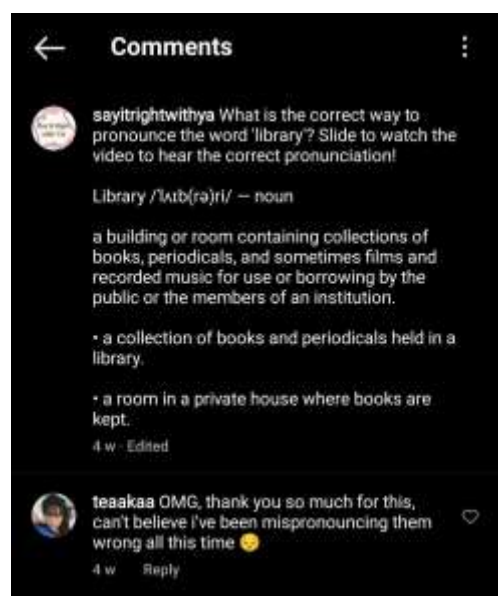


Figure 5: Comment left on the video of how to correctly pronounce the word 'library'

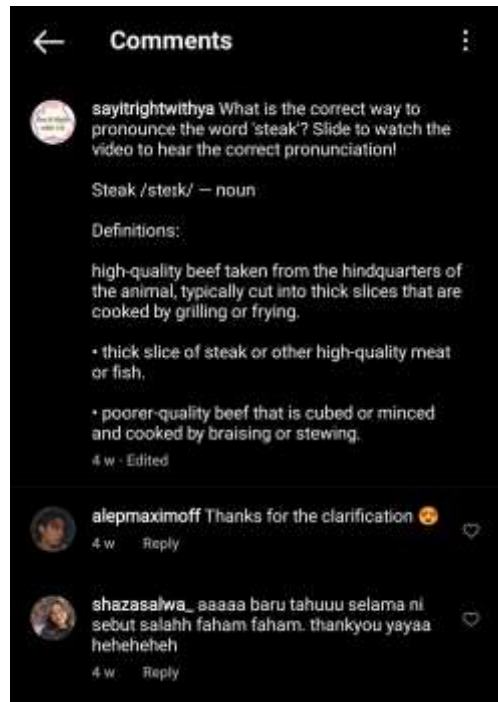


Figure 6: Comments left on the video of how to correctly pronounce the word ‘steak’

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the intent to rectify mispronunciation that often occurs around university students can be executed effectively through social media, namely Instagram. Creating engaging content to spread linguistic knowledge could attract social media users to learn from their mistakes and improve. *Say it Right with Ya* was able to receive attention from youngsters, especially university students by posting videos on how to pronounce English words accurately while also providing sample sentences as well as definitions on an application that they are familiar with. Despite there being nothing wrong with sounding native when speaking a foreign language, the normalisation of mispronunciation could result in fossilisation which should be avoided. However, using Instagram could be effective in correcting mispronunciation, still not everybody is familiar with this social platform, especially those from the older generation. Future researchers could decide to use an application that is more widely used by users of all ages in order to gain more followers and visitor

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Last but not least, I am eternally grateful for the Instagram users that visited the Instagram page, shared the page around, as well as leaving comments that really motivated me to continue with this project. Without these people, *Say it Right with Ya* would not have been successful

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