IMPROVING THE STUDENTS' ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION THROUGH THE BABBEL PLATFORM

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ABSTRACT
This study investigates the effectiveness of the Babbel platform in enhancing English pronunciation skills among senior high school students. Many students struggle with clear and accurate pronunciation, which affects their communication confidence and fluency. The study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the Babbel platform in improving English pronunciation skills among senior high school students. A total of 25 students, selected through purposive sampling based on predetermined criteria, participated in this cyclical action research. These students, with beginner-to-intermediate English proficiency, used Babbel's pronunciation practice feature for 30-minute sessions. The research was conducted over one cycle, involving four phases: planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting. In the planning phase, activities were designed based on Babbel's features to target students' specific pronunciation difficulties. The implementing phase involved practicing pronunciation with real-time feedback from the app. During the observing phase, pre- and post-tests were administered, showing a 61.6% improvement in pronunciation, with the mean score rising from 45.00 to 86.60. Semi-structured interviews provided qualitative insights into students' learning experiences. In the reflecting phase, both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed to assess improvements in pronunciation. In the planning phase, activities were designed based on Babbel's features to target students' specific pronunciation difficulties. The implementing phase involved practicing pronunciation with real-time feedback from the app. During the observing phase, pre- and post-tests were administered, showing a 61.6% improvement in pronunciation, with the mean score rising from 45.00 to 86.60. Semi-structured interviews provided qualitative insights into students' learning experiences. In the reflecting phase, both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed to assess improvements in pronunciation. Results confirmed a significant enhancement in pronunciation skills and increased student confidence. Data validity was ensured through triangulation, incorporating pre- and post-test results, interviews, and observations. The findings suggest that the Babbel platform effectively improves English pronunciation and boosts learners' confidence, contributing to more effective communication.
Keywords: *Babbel, EFL learners, English pronunciation, Mobile learning apps, Technology-assisted learning*

INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, mastering English, especially pronunciation, is an increasingly urgent necessity. Good pronunciation skills are essential for effective communication and strengthen one's competitiveness in various fields, including education, business, and technology (Martin, 2020). Even speakers with excellent grammar and vocabulary may find it difficult to express their intended meaning without precise and clear pronunciation, which can result in a lot of misunderstandings and a decline in confidence in both social and professional situations (Srakaew, 2021). People can understand us more readily if we pronounce things correctly. Even when we employ sophisticated language or vocabulary, poor pronunciation may cause people to get confused and result in negative conversations and misunderstandings (Prashant, 2018). As a result, while we may use basic grammar or phrases to help others understand us, we can't always utilize simple pronunciation (Farhadi et al., 2016).

However, many English learners still have difficulty mastering proper and correct English pronunciation. For, one of the hardest things for a language learner to grasp is pronunciation, and it's also one of the subjects that professors dislike discussing in class (Gilakjani et al., 2011). This is evident in their unclear pronunciation and tendency to use patterns influenced by their native language (Normawati et al., 2023).

This challenge hinders their ability to communicate fluently and confidently, which affects their academic performance, professional opportunities, and social interactions. Mispronunciations can lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations, resulting in a lack of clarity. This can reduce a speaker's credibility and confidence in both formal and informal settings (Panicker, 2024). In contrast, teaching pronunciation should be approached more carefully and with precise consideration, as it is a crucially important matter. Both teachers and learners should be made aware of the importance of correct pronunciation is fundamental (Abdalla et al., 2020).

Additionally, perception, production, and prediction are the three facets of speech that must be understood to teach pronunciation. Oral language perception includes hearing, listening, seeing, and feeling. Pronunciation requires the sense and consideration of every component of the speech system, including the lips, tongue, throat, vocal chords, sinuses, and face muscles (Farhadi et al., 2016). In the context of globalization and cross-cultural interaction, mastering English pronunciation is becoming increasingly important, particularly since English is a common language of communication in many international settings (Lin et al., 2024). Hence, application-based technology such as computer-assisted language learning (CALL) has been used to improve students' pronunciation (Suwartono et al., 2024). Mobile

applications powered by AI have the potential to improve the pronunciation skills of EFL learners. These applications offer real-time, personalized they provide personalized learning experiences, convenience, and accessibility (Nur Ardini et al., 2024). One such application is Babbel, which has been found to assist students in enhancing their pronunciation.

The Babbel app is a language learning platform that uses technology to teach various foreign languages (Mendes de Oliveira et al., 2023). Babbel's core principle is that language learning should be contextualized and relevant to everyday life. Each lesson is structured to improve speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills in real-life situations (Loewen et al., 2020). The app's user-friendly design features a simple, intuitive interface and interactive, responsive lesson modules that adapt to multiple devices. Users start by selecting the language they want to learn. Then, they are guided through courses tailored to their ability level and exercises involving speaking, writing, and listening, with immediate feedback (Loewen et al., 2020). Babbel's main strength is its practical approach, which allows users to learn a language that can be used immediately in everyday conversation. However, the app has some weaknesses is limited material for advanced levels, a limited focus on basic conversational language, and a

subscription fee to access all features (Belfakir et al., 2024).

In this regard, platforms like Babbel have been recognized as language-learning apps that promote good pronunciation through repetition, immediate feedback, and audio-visual training. By providing more linguistic and scaffolding support, Babbel enhances expectations for learner oral production, providing cohesive support as learners progress in L2 proficiency (Bajorek, 2017). Thus, Babble is effective for those looking to gain a thorough knowledge of language (Zheltukhina, 2023). Babble has been proven to improve pronunciation. The lessons are designed to be applied to real-life situations, and the speakers are native, so students can quickly apply what they have learned to everyday conversation (Guliyeva, 2024). It is aligns with Riyadi & Sudiyatno (2023), they found, that students like online learning's adaptability, accessibility, and individualized approach. The option to study at their own speed and go over classes again as needed was preferred by many users. Babbel's approach to pronunciation is superior to that of its competitors. However, previous studies have generally emphasized the use of language learning technology rather than focusing specifically on Babbel for improving English pronunciation. This study focuses on senior high school students and employs a cyclical action research approach. Unlike earlier studies, this study emphasizes the impact of Babbel on student

confidence and learning flexibility, which are often overlooked aspects in the literature. Furthermore, combining quantitative and qualitative data provides a more comprehensive understanding of Babbel's effectiveness in teaching pronunciation. The significant improvements observed in a short period of time offer new insights into Babbel's use in formal education, underscoring its potential to bolster pronunciation skills and student confidence. Although many studies explain Babbel's effectiveness in improving English language skills, few in-depth studies have examined the platform's effectiveness in improving students' pronunciation skills, particularly at the formal education level (e.g., high school or university). Babbel has interactive features designed to correct pronunciation in real time, facilitating more practical, personalized improvement.

This research is important because it will fill a gap and contribute to the development of English learning methods, especially those related to effective pronunciation. This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the Babbel platform in improving students' pronunciation skills. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following question: To what extent can the Babbel platform improve students' English pronunciation skills?

METHODS

The objective of this study is to analyze the improvement of the Babbel platform in teaching students' English pronunciation skills. This study employs a cyclical action research method with 25 senior high school students, selected using purposive sampling based on predetermined criteria, who have beginner-to-intermediate English proficiency and difficulties in pronunciation. The research followed a clear procedure, using Babbel's pronunciation practice feature for 30-minute sessions focused on improving pronunciation. In the planning phase, activities were designed based on Babbel's pronunciation features to address the students' specific pronunciation issues. During the implementing phase, students practiced pronunciation with real-time feedback from the app.

In the observing phase, progress was measured through pre- and post-tests, along with semi-structured interviews to gather qualitative insights. Finally, in the reflecting phase, both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed to evaluate improvements in pronunciation. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and percentage gains) and inferential statistics (paired-sample t-test) for the pre- and post-test results. Qualitative data from interviews were putically analyzed to explore students' perceptions, learning experiences, and confidence.

Data validity was ensured through triangulation, combining three sources of data: pre- and post-test results, semi-structured interviews, and observations. Consistent improvements and positive

perceptions across all data sources supported the reliability and comprehensiveness of Babbel's impact on pronunciation development. The results confirmed a significant improvement in pronunciation skills and increased student confidence.

Result

After analyzing the quantitative and qualitative data, the findings of this study showed that in the preliminary study, the researcher did a pre-test to prove the student's initial skill of English pronunciation, it showed that their initial skill is still low both quantitatively and qualitatively. As shown in Table 1, a pre-test was administered to assess the participants' initial pronunciation skills, followed by an intervention using the Babbel platform, and finally a post-test to measure the improvements after the intervention. A descriptive analysis was performed to obtain the mean (M), median (Md), and mode (Mo), as well as the standard deviations (SD) of the students' vocabulary test scores.

Table 1. Pre-Test Scores

N	Test	M	Md	Mo	Sd
25	Pre-test	45.00	45.00	45	3.46

The following Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the pre-test results, mean score of the pre-test was 45.00. The standard deviation (SD) for the pre-test was 3.46, indicating a relatively low level of pronunciation proficiency at the start. To support the quantitative findings of the pre-test, which revealed a low average score of 45.00 in students' English pronunciation proficiency, the researcher conducted interviews with several participants. The qualitative data gathered from these interviews further confirmed the students' struggles with pronunciation at the initial stage of the study. As student 1 said:

> *"I often feel confused about how to say the word correctly, especially the long words. Sometimes, I just guess the pronunciation without checking." (S1-Int-EP-BP)*

This data expressed frustration with correctly pronouncing words, particularly longer ones, often resorting to guessing the pronunciation instead of verifying it. This reflects a common challenge faced by language learners, where uncertainty about pronunciation can lead to hesitation or reliance on incorrect assumptions. It highlights the need for more practice and feedback in developing confidence and accuracy in speaking, especially when dealing with complex words. This insight underscores the importance of interactive platforms that offer real-time correction, helping students improve their pronunciation and reduce reliance on guesswork. As stated by student 7:

> *"When I read English text aloud, I'm not sure if my pronunciation is right. I'm afraid to speak because my friends might laugh at me." (S7-Int-EP-BP)*

The above data shared a common concern about speaking

English aloud, expressing uncertainty about whether their pronunciation was correct. The fear of being ridiculed by peers further discouraged them from speaking, which is a typical barrier for many language learners. This reflects how anxiety and fear of judgment can hinder practice and language development. The student's experience highlights the importance of creating a supportive and non-judgmental learning environment, where learners feel safe to make mistakes and practice without the fear of negative feedback, ultimately boosting their confidence and fluency. According to participant student 15:

> *"I know how to write and read English, but saying the words is difficult. The way the word is written and spoken is not the same." (S15-Int-EP-BP)*

Student 15 highlighted a common challenge for many language learners: the disconnect between written and spoken English. While they are able to read and write the language, pronouncing the words correctly remains difficult due to differences between spelling and pronunciation. This difficulty reflects the complexities of English pronunciation, where many words do not follow phonetic rules. It emphasizes the need for targeted speaking practice that bridges the gap between reading and speaking, helping students become more confident in producing accurate spoken English.

The interview results showed that students had trouble with English pronunciation because they lacked confidence and practice. Student 1 said they often guessed how to say difficult words. Student 7 felt unsure when reading aloud and was afraid of being laughed at. Student 15 said that even though they could read and write English, speaking was challenging because the words don't sound the way they're written. These responses support the pre-test results showing that students' pronunciation skills were still low.

Additionally, to determine whether the learning intervention improved students' pronunciation skills, the researcher established a plan to use the Babbel platform to improve pronunciation through the post-test and follow-up interviews conducted. The post-test results and students' reflections offer clarity about how their pronunciation developed and whether the pre-test identified challenges were addressed.

Table 2. Post-Test Scores

N	Test	M	Md	Mo	Sd	t
25	Pre-test	45.00	45.00	45	3.46	
						73.93
25	Post-test	86.60	86.00	86	2.12	

The following Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the post-test mean score, which was significantly higher at 86.60, indicating a marked improvement in pronunciation after using the Babbel

platform. While the post-test SD was 2.12, indicating more consistent performance after the intervention. A paired-sample t-test was conducted to determine whether the observed differences between the pre-test and post-test scores were statistically significant. The t-statistic calculated for the comparison between the pre-test and post-test was 73.93. This indicates that the improvement in pronunciation scores was highly significant and unlikely to have occurred by chance.

The results of the paired t-test confirm that there was a statistically significant improvement in students' pronunciation skills after using the Babbel platform. The mean score increased from 45.00 in the pre-test to 86.60 in the post-test, representing an improvement of approximately 61.6%. These findings suggest that the Babbel platform was effective in enhancing students' pronunciation skills. This improvement is further supported by the paired t-test results, which indicated a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores (t-statistic = 73.93). The data clearly shows that the Babbel platform had a positive impact on students' pronunciation abilities.

In addition to the quantitative analysis through the pre-test and post-test, this study also gathered qualitative data through in-depth interviews with the participants. These interviews aimed to explore students' perceptions and experiences after using the Babbel platform to improve their English pronunciation skills.

From the interview results, most students reported feeling more confident after using the Babbel app for pronunciation practice. They particularly appreciated the real-time feedback provided by the platform, which helped correct pronunciation errors immediately. For example, one student 1 shared:

> *"I find it easier to remember how to pronounce words that were difficult before because Babbel gives me real-time feedback. This helps me not to repeat the same mistakes."* (S1-Int-EP-BetP)

Some participants also appreciated the ability to repeat lessons according to their needs. This allowed them to focus more on areas they found difficult, such as certain vowel pronunciations or word stress patterns. As stated by student 4:

> *"I like being able to go back to parts I find difficult, like vowel pronunciation. With Babbel, I can learn at my own pace and check my pronunciation repeatedly."* (S4-Int-EP-BetP)

These interview findings support the pre-test and post-test results, which showed a significant improvement in pronunciation skills after using the Babbel platform. Most students who initially showed pronunciation difficulties in the pre-test (with an average score of 45.00) reported great progress after using Babbel, with the average post-test score reaching 86.60. According to participant student 8:

"Before using Babbel, I found it challenging to pronounce some words correctly, especially in fast conversations. After practicing with Babbel, I feel more fluent and no longer fear speaking." (S8-Int-EP-BetP).

The post-test results revealed a significant improvement in students' pronunciation abilities, reflecting the positive impact of the Babbel platform. Several students also mentioned that they not only gained better pronunciation skills but also felt more comfortable speaking English. This suggests that the use of Babbel not only impacted the technical aspects of pronunciation but also increased the confidence of students in communication. Overall, the in-depth interview results provide a deeper understanding of how the Babbel platform not only improved pronunciation accuracy but also helped boost motivation and self-confidence in students when speaking English. This aligns with the findings from the pre-test and post-test, which showed significant improvement in the students' pronunciation abilities.

Discussions

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the Babbel platform in improving students' English pronunciation skills, which is an essential aspect of language learning that is often overlooked in formal education contexts. The results of this study show a significant improvement in students' pronunciation skills after using the Babbel platform. This

supported study by Kessler et al., (2023) found Babbel users perceived Babbel as more effective for learning grammar, speaking, and pronunciation skills. Before the intervention, the average pre-test score was 45.00, indicating relatively low pronunciation skills. However, after using Babbel, the average post-test score increased significantly to 86.60, representing an approximate 61.6% improvement in pronunciation proficiency. This improvement is also supported by the paired t-test results, which show a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores (t = 73.93), confirming that this improvement did not occur by chance. These findings align with previous research that highlights the importance of pronunciation in language learning. For instance, Mounkoro, (2024) emphasizes how technology-based learning applications, such as language learning apps, can improve pronunciation skills through real-time feedback and repeated practice applied in a contextualized manner. In this study, Babbel provided real-time feedback that allowed students to immediately correct their pronunciation errors, an approach also found to be effective in Elva et al., (2023) study, which demonstrated that language learning apps like Babbel offer strong and structured linguistic support that gradually improves pronunciation.

Moreover, this study also highlights the positive impact on students' confidence in speaking

English. Many students reported feeling more confident in their pronunciation after using Babbel. This suggests that, in addition to improving the technical aspects of pronunciation, the platform also contributed to increasing students' motivation and self-confidence. These findings are in line with research, Panagiotidis et al., (2018) which showed that technology-based language learning that can be tailored to individual students' needs such as the approach offered by Babbel can enhance students' motivation and confidence. A key advantage identified by the students was the ability to learn pronunciation at their own pace and the ease of revisiting lessons they found challenging, such as vowel pronunciation or stress patterns (Akkara et al., 2020). This also supports findings, De Oliveira et al., (2021) which indicate that technology-based learning apps like Babbel can accommodate various learning styles and needs, providing opportunities for more flexible and focused practice. Therefore, students not only gained more accurate pronunciation but also felt more comfortable and confident when speaking, which is crucial for effective communication, particularly in an increasingly globalized context.

This study also supported the argument of Prodanovska-Poposka, (2017) that clear and precise pronunciation is vital for communication, whether in formal or informal settings. While students may have mastered vocabulary and grammar, poor pronunciation can lead to confusion and misunderstandings in conversations. These findings reinforce the argument that teaching pronunciation should go beyond providing theoretical or technical pronunciation techniques; it should also address students' psychological aspects, namely boosting their confidence in using the target language more freely and naturally (Pardede, 2018).

While this study makes significant contributions to understanding Babbel's effectiveness in improving English pronunciation, there are some limitations to consider. The study was conducted with a relatively small sample size, consisting of only 25 students, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, the focus of this study was solely on Babbel, meaning the results may not be directly applicable to other language learning platforms. For instance, other similar learning apps, such as Duolingo or Memrise, may have different approaches to improving pronunciation, leading to different outcomes. Therefore, further research with a larger sample size and a comparison between various language learning platforms could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of these apps in improving pronunciation skills.

This study also opens the door for future research on the long-term impact of using Babbel for English pronunciation learning. So far, this

study only measured the outcomes immediately after the intervention, but how students' pronunciation skills are retained after several months or years remains unknown. Future research could explore whether the improvements in pronunciation gained from using Babbel are permanent or if students need ongoing practice or maintenance to sustain the results.

Thus, this study provides strong evidence that Babbel can significantly improve students' English pronunciation skills, both in terms of accuracy and confidence in speaking. The results also confirm that technology-based language learning, particularly apps offering real-time feedback and learning tailored to individual needs, can play a critical role in enhancing language instruction quality, especially in the area of pronunciation. As a result, Babbel and similar platforms hold significant potential to improve students' pronunciation and speaking skills in this digital age.

Conclusion

This study provides strong evidence that the Babbel platform effectively enhances English pronunciation skills among senior high school students, significantly improving both pronunciation accuracy and students' confidence in speaking. The intervention led to a substantial increase in pronunciation proficiency, with the post-test average score rising by approximately 61.6% from the pre-test, a result confirmed by a statistically significant paired-sample

t-test (t = 73.93). Qualitative data from interviews revealed that students valued Babbel's real-time feedback, which allowed them to immediately correct errors and refine their pronunciation, as well as the platform's flexibility in enabling them to repeat lessons at their own pace and focus on challenging areas like vowel sounds and stress patterns. These features align with previous studies highlighting the effectiveness of personalized learning in improving language proficiency.

Furthermore, the study underscores the critical role of pronunciation in effective communication, particularly in a globalized world, supporting the argument that poor pronunciation can hinder understanding despite strong grammar and vocabulary. However, the study's small sample size of 25 students limits the generalizability of the findings, and the focus on Babbel means the conclusions may not apply to other language-learning platforms. Future research could address these limitations by expanding the sample size, comparing Babbel with other platforms, and exploring the long-term retention of pronunciation skills to better understand the sustained impact of digital tools in language learning. Overall, the findings suggest that Babbel is a promising tool for improving English pronunciation, contributing to the growing body of literature on technology-driven language learning and its potential to enhance communication skills in an increasingly interconnected world.

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