



ΣΧΟΛΗ ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΚΩΝ, ΑΝΘΡΩΠΙΣΤΙΚΩΝ ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΤΕΧΝΩΝ
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**ΒΕΛΤΙΩΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΠΡΟΦΟΡΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΓΓΛΙΚΗΣ ΓΛΩΣΣΑΣ ΜΕΣΩ
ΔΙΑΔΙΚΤΥΑΚΩΝ ΕΡΓΑΛΕΙΩΝ**

της

ΖΩΗΣ ΣΑΜΟΥΛΑΔΑ

Υποβλήθηκε ως απαιτούμενο για την απόκτηση μεταπτυχιακού διπλώματος ειδίκευσης στις
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Improving EFL Learners' Pronunciation of English Language through Online Digital Tools

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To my beloved parents, Christos & Eleni

Abstract

The present dissertation provides the descriptive analysis of an action research project upon the application of two online pronunciation tools – Voki and Speechace. Specifically, it aims at investigating the English language teachers’ perceptions towards the effectiveness of these two pronunciation tools on EFL learners’ pronunciation improvement. Voki is an online tool which includes speaking avatars for education. Its goal is to enhance class engagement, classroom instruction and mainly expose learners to a native English accent. Speechace is an online speech recognition software which assesses learners and provides them with feedback on mistakes and thus motivate them to improve their speaking skills. Considering the fact that the beneficial integration of online applications in foreign language teaching has been documented in many studies, the current research aims at exploring the possible impact of Voki and Speechace, as a means of increasing learners’ motivation and engagement in the classroom and also improving their pronunciation in English language, as well as helping teachers themselves in their professional development.

For this purpose an action research project was designed in which 15 EFL teachers both in Greece and abroad participated by integrating Voki and Speechace in their lessons. Instruments of both the quantitative and qualitative data collection were adopted to give answers to the research questions, meaning an online self-administered questionnaire completed by the participating teachers, as well as unstructured discussions on social media sites so as to examine the teachers’ perceptions concerning the use of Voki and Speechace in the teaching process. The research findings revealed that teachers had a positive attitude towards the integration of the particular pronunciation tools in the EFL context, since they increased students’ engagement in the lesson, boosted their motivation to speak and improve their pronunciation; also, they were beneficial to the instructors’ professional development. After presenting and analyzing the research findings, limitations and suggestions for further

research are also discussed towards the effective implementation of Voki and Speechace in the EFL teaching process.

Abstract in Greek (Περίληψη)

Η παρούσα διατριβή παρέχει την περιγραφική ανάλυση μιας έρευνας δράσης με την εφαρμογή δύο ηλεκτρονικών εργαλείων προφοράς – το Voki και το Speechace. Συγκεκριμένα, η έρευνα στοχεύει στη διερεύνηση των αντιλήψεων των καθηγητών της αγγλικής γλώσσας σχετικά με την αποτελεσματικότητα αυτών των δύο εργαλείων για τη βελτίωση της Αγγλικής προφοράς των μαθητών. Το Voki είναι ένα ηλεκτρονικό εργαλείο που περιλαμβάνει ομιλούντα avatars τα οποία οι μαθητές ακούνε και μιμούνται την ιθαγενή Αγγλική γλώσσα. Σκοπός του εργαλείου είναι να ενισχύσει την εμπλοκή των μαθητών στο μάθημα και την κινητοποίησή τους αλλά και φυσικά τη βελτίωση της προφοράς τους. Από την άλλη, το Speechace είναι επίσης ένα ηλεκτρονικό λογισμικό αναγνώρισης της ομιλίας το οποίο αξιολογεί τον εκπαιδευόμενο και του παρέχει σχολιασμό σχετικά με τα λάθη· με αυτό τον τρόπο, παρακινεί τους μαθητές να βελτιώσουν τις δεξιότητες της ομιλίας τους. Επιπροσθέτως, λαμβάνοντας υπόψη το γεγονός ότι η ενσωμάτωση των ηλεκτρονικών εφαρμογών στη διδασκαλία ξένων γλωσσών έχει συνεισφέρει θετικά στην εκπαίδευση και αυτό έχει τεκμηριωθεί σε πολλές μελέτες, η παρούσα έρευνα στοχεύει στη διερεύνηση των πιθανών επιπτώσεων του Voki και του Speechace, ως μέσα που βοηθούν αφενός στην κινητοποίηση και την εμπλοκή των μαθητών στο μάθημα και στη βελτίωση της προφοράς τους αναφορικά με την απόκτηση της αγγλικής γλώσσας, και αφετέρου στην επαγγελματική ανάπτυξη των ίδιων των καθηγητών που διδάσκουν την Αγγλική γλώσσα.

Για το σκοπό αυτό σχεδιάστηκε ένα ερευνητικό πρόγραμμα δράσης στο οποίο συμμετείχαν 15 καθηγητές Αγγλικής γλώσσας τόσο στην Ελλάδα όσο και στο εξωτερικό, ενσωματώνοντας το Voki και το Speechace στα μαθήματα διδασκαλίας τους. Πιο συγκεκριμένα, για να απαντηθούν τα ερευνητικά ερωτήματα χρησιμοποιήθηκαν εργαλεία τόσο της ποσοτικής όσο και της ποιοτικής συλλογής δεδομένων· με άλλα λόγια, χρησιμοποιήθηκε ένα ηλεκτρονικό ερωτηματολόγιο το οποίο απευθύνθηκε στους

συμμετέχοντες καθηγητές, καθώς και ανεπίσημες συζητήσεις μέσα από κοινωνικά μέσα δικτύωσης, ώστε να διερευνηθούν σε βάθος οι απόψεις των εκπαιδευτικών σχετικά με τη χρήση του Voki και του Speechace στο μάθημα των Αγγλικών. Τα ευρήματα της έρευνας αποκάλυψαν ότι οι συμμετέχοντες εκπαιδευτικοί ανέδειξαν μια θετική στάση απέναντι στην ενσωμάτωση των δύο αυτών εργαλείων, καθώς κινητοποίησε και αύξησε τη συμμετοχή των μαθητών στο μάθημα των Αγγλικών αλλά και ταυτόχρονα ωφέλησε την επαγγελματική ανάπτυξη των καθηγητών που συμμετείχαν στην έρευνα. Μετά την παρουσίαση και την ανάλυση των πορισμάτων της έρευνας αυτής, συζητούνται επίσης περιορισμοί και προτάσεις για περαιτέρω έρευνα που στοχεύει στην αποτελεσματικότερη εφαρμογή των δύο αυτών εργαλείων προφοράς στη διδασκαλία της Αγγλικής ως ξένης γλώσσας.

Table of contents

Chapter 1	14
Literature Review	14
Introduction	14
1.1 Definitions of Pronunciation.....	14
1.2 Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) and how it Affects L2	15
1.3 The Importance of Teaching English Pronunciation.....	15
1.4 Reasons why Pronunciation is ignored in EFL/ESL Class	17
1.5 Teaching English Pronunciation in Greek Context	19
1.6 The Use of the Computer in Assisting English Pronunciation Improvement	20
1.6.1. The Use of Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) Program	21
1.7 Teacher’s Role in Class and The Use of Pronunciation Training Software	23
1.8 Difficulties for Learners of English in Learning English Pronunciation	23
1.8.1 Difficulties for Greek Learners in Acquiring English Pronunciation.....	25
1.8.2 Pronunciation Differences between Greek and English	27
1.9 Surveys on the Application of Pronunciation Software	29
Conclusion	30
Chapter 2	31
Professional Development of Greek Teachers in English	31
Introduction	31
2.1 Pronunciation Training of English Teachers in Greece	31
2.2 MOOCs & Webinars – Innovative Approaches for English Pronunciation Training	33
2.3 Toolkit of Pronunciation Training	34
2.4 Pronunciation Tools used for the Particular Survey.....	40
Conclusion	44
Chapter 3	45
Research Design	45
Introduction	45
3.1 Research Purpose and Questions	45
3.2 Research Methodology – Action Research	46
3.2.1 The Quantitative Method of Research: Questionnaire	47
3.2.2 Voki and Speechace Instruments	48
3.2.3 The Qualitative Method of Research: Unstructured Discussions	50

3.2.4 The Mixed-Method of Research	51
3.3 Sampling Process	52
3.4 Research Procedures.....	52
3.4.1 The Preparation Stage: Selecting the Participating Teachers	52
3.4.2 The Implementation Stage: Voki and Speechace Application in EFL classroom	54
3.4.3 The Follow-Up Stage: Reflecting on Voki and Speechace Integration.....	55
Conclusion	55
Chapter 4	57
Presentation and Discussion of the Research Findings	57
Introduction	57
4.1 The Participants’ Profile as the Background for the Research Findings	57
4.2 Presentation of the Findings	59
4.2.1 Voki and Speechace’s Impact on Teachers’ Professional Development	59
4.2.2 Voki and Speechace’s Impact on Learners’ Improvement.....	70
4.3 Discussion of the Findings.....	78
Chapter 5	80
Implications, Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research	80
Introduction	80
5.1 Critical analysis of the Research Findings	80
5.1.2 Implications of the Current Research.....	80
5.2 Limitations of the Research	81
5.3 Suggestions for further Research	82
Conclusion	84
Concluding Remarks	85
Appendix A: Google Forms Questionnaire	94
Appendix B: Google Forms Questionnaire Findings	102
Appendix C: Snapshots from Facebook Groups – Addressing to EFL Teachers	115
Appendix D: Snapshots from Facebook	117
Appendix E: Qualitative Research Method Data	118
Appendix F: Summary of the dissertation in Greek	124

List of Abbreviations

EFL	English Foreign Language
L1	Mother Tongue
L2	Second/Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
CAPT	Computer Assisted Pronunciation Training
CALL	Computer Assisted Language Learning
ASR	Automatic Speech Recognition
MOOCs	Massive Online Open Courses
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
ICT	Information Communication Technology

List of Graphs

Graph. 1 “Teachers’ current employment”

Graph. 2 “Recommending Voki and Speechace to a colleague”

Graph. 3 “Voki and Speechace to improve teaching procedure”

Graph. 4 “Teachers’ overall impression on their participation in Voki and Speechace’s investigation”

Graph. 5 “Voki and Speechace’s contribution to other language skills development”

Graph. 6 “Teachers’ comments on their participation in Voki and Speechace’s action research project”

Graph. 7 “Voki and Speechace’s further integration in the EFL context”

Graph. 8 “Voki and Speechace to helping teachers understand English pronunciation”

Graph. 9 “Voki and Speechace to help in efficient teaching of pronunciation”

Graph. 10 “Voki and Speechace to helping practicing concrete sounds in English”

Graph. 11 “Voki and Speechace integration into EFL class”

Graph. 12 “Voki and Speechace to helping teachers learn more about pronunciation in English”

Graph. 13 “Teachers’ comments on Voki and Speechace’s contribution to themselves”

Graph. 14 “Voki and Speechace in helping instructors teach confidently”

Graph. 15 “Class levels and Voki and Speechace implementation”

Graph. 16 “Teaching hours of Voki and Speechace implementation”

Graph. 17 “Number of students and Voki and Speechace implementation”

Graph. 18 “Voki and Speechace and learners’ motivation”

Graph. 19 “Students’ motivation to practice English sounds”

Graph. 20 “Students’ motivation and practice Voki and Speechace outside class”

Graph. 21 “Voki and Speechace’s contribution to learners”

Graph. 22 “Correlating Voki and Speechace practice and EFL context”

Introduction

Just as technology is influencing and supporting what is being learned both in schools and universities, so too is it supporting changes to the way students are learning nowadays (Oliver R., 2002). Oliver (2002) also argues that by using technology-facilitated approaches, contemporary learning settings now encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning in contradiction with the past in which students had become very comfortable to learning through transmissive modes and also had been trained to let other people present to them the information presented in the curriculum; however, the growing use of ICT as an instructional medium is totally changing and will possibly continue to change most of the strategies employed by both teachers and students in the learning process (Oliver R., 2002).

Undoubtedly, ICT can also bring innovative and alternative teaching approaches into English as a foreign language. The current study attempts to investigate teachers' attitudes towards the effectiveness of online software of pronunciation and its integration into the EFL context, as a means of enhancing learners' motivation and pronunciation improvement along with teachers' professional development. For this purpose, an action research project was designed in which 15 EFL teachers both in Greece and abroad participated integrating two online pronunciation tools – Voki and Speechace, in their teaching sessions. In the end, they reflected on the effectiveness of the particular tools by completing an online questionnaire and discussing with the researcher on social media about their impact on both themselves and the learners.

Chapter 1 provides the theoretical framework of English pronunciation, the importance of teaching pronunciation in class and the reasons why it is often neglected, as well as difficulties that Greek learners of English cope with. Chapter 2 presents the professional development of EFL teachers in Greece along with a toolkit composed of a selection of online

tools that can be used in teaching English language and pronunciation. Chapter 3 analytically describes the research design and the data collection instruments resorting to the mixed research method, which is a combination of the quantitative and qualitative method. Lastly, Chapter 4 presents the research findings and their critical analysis in correlation with the three research questions based on the results of the data collection instruments. Lastly, Chapter 5 deals with the researcher's implications about the application of Voki and Speechace in the EFL classroom along with suggestions for further research that will possibly lead to the improved implementation of this educational innovation without neglecting the potential limitations of the research. The chapter ends with recommendations for further research.

Chapter 1

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter provides the theory of this study focusing on various definitions of what pronunciation is and the way the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) affects the acquisition of a foreign language. Moreover, it examines the importance of teaching English pronunciation in class, while presenting the reasons why it is often neglected. Much emphasis is also laid on the use of the computer as an assistive tool to improve pronunciation in class, along with past studies related to its usage in the field of language learning. Finally, the chapter presents pronunciation difficulties that Greek learners of English usually deal with.

1.1 Definitions of Pronunciation

Many definitions concerning pronunciation have been attributed through years. According to Sewell, “Pronunciation, {...} is usually defined more narrowly as the way particular sounds or words are pronounced; it is taken by Moyer (2013) to refer to the articulation of segmental features” (Sewell A., 2016: 43). He also states that “{...} in its pedagogical or descriptive sense, ‘pronunciation’ can also refer to suprasegmentals such as word stress and intonation.” (ibid). Harmer (2007) additionally, argues that pronunciation is the method we form the sounds of a language, the way we situate the stress of the words and the sentence and finally the way we are able to express our emotions or our meaning through intonation and pitch (Harmer, 2007). According to Richard and Schmidt (2002), pronunciation has to do with the way humans produce sounds and especially how the listeners are able to comprehend these sounds. As well as that, they claim that pronunciation is crucial in English

because using the wrong pronunciation can lead to misunderstandings of the meaning of the sentences (Richard & Schmidt, 2002). Cook (1996) argues that pronunciation is a set of habits of sounds production. The habit of producing a sound is obtained by reiterating it many times and by being corrected when the sound is pronounced in a wrong way. Learning the way to pronounce a second language means building up new pronunciation habits and overcoming the bias of the first language (Cook, 1996). Nevertheless, stress and intonation are as crucial as learning the appropriate pronunciation; Buck (2001) argues that part of the communicative effect of utterances is expressed by stress and intonation and thus, listeners should be able to comprehend that to form a reasonable interpretation (Buck, 2001).

1.2 Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) and how it Affects L2

In general, it is worth mentioning the fact that acquiring a language even from the early stages of life of a human being is really crucial. Birdsong (1999) states that, according to the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH), there is a limited period of development during which there is a possibility to acquire a language – either L1 or L2 - to normal, nativelike levels. However, when this window of chance is passed, the ability to learn languages declines (Birdsong, 1999). That is to say, especially concerning the second language acquisition, it should be occurred in learners' early stages of life so that they are able to become nativelike speakers. Apparently, pronunciation is a crucial part of English language so, it becomes obvious and really important that it should be taught in early stages of life, as well.

1.3 The Importance of Teaching English Pronunciation

Hubbard et al (1984) highlight the fact that pronunciation should be an integral part of every English teaching program even from the early stages, as is the case with structures of

grammar and vocabulary (Hubbard et al., 1984). Dan (2006) argues that speaking plays a decisive role in the way we use a language. What he also pays emphasis on, is the importance of Phonetics both in theory and practice which lay the foundations of speaking; thus, pronunciation becomes the foundation of speaking. Using proper pronunciation can make the communication easier, more relaxing and even more useful (Dan, 2006). Therefore, it becomes clear that it is crucial that teaching pronunciation must be included in the curriculum of English lessons. According to Gilakjani & Sabouri (2016), “Understandable pronunciation is an important part of communicative competence. Individuals who have acceptable pronunciation can easily improve their language skills better than those who have weak pronunciation.” (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016: 195). Therefore, it is plausible the conclusion that the correct English pronunciation leads to prosperous communication among speakers. Additionally, they argue that using grammar and lexis in a correct way is not enough for a prosperous communication among speakers. Thus, it is crucial not only to understand what someone says but to make them speak in a comprehensive manner. However, there are a lot of EFL learners who pronounce sounds, use intonation and put stress of sentences in a wrong way (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). Wong (1993) claims that learning pronunciation is a key element for learners to comprehend spoken English, while unawareness of pronunciation affects reading and spelling skills (Wong, 1993). According to Gilakjani (2012), weak pronunciation can influence the language ability of speaker in a negative manner, whereas bad pronunciation can cause misunderstandings and also ruin communication. On the other hand, good pronunciation enables listeners to comprehend speakers’ speech in an effective way regardless any grammatical mistakes. Gilakjani also states that various pronunciation activities give learners the ability to feel more certain on how to use different sounds and thus ameliorate their speaking abilities. Therefore, such activities should be integrated in English courses through tests or other stuff, while using a good pronunciation can improve listening skills, as well (Gilakjani,

2012). In fact, some of the writers argue that speaking and pronunciation are interconnected; particularly, Swidlhofer (2001) states that every lesson which involves the spoken language is additionally, a pronunciation lesson (Seidlhofer, 2001) and Harmer (2001) underlines that pronunciation is not a separate skill, but it is part of the way we speak (Harmer, 2001). Apparently, we should bear in mind that learning pronunciation is not an easy task and it depends on miscellaneous factors; that is to say, Georgountzou, & Tsantila, (2017) have argued that there are various factors - instructional, neuropsychological, sociological, as well as attitudinal – that can determine sufficient foreign language learning. In particular, regarding pronunciation learning, it should be noted that it is affected by age, gender, formal instruction and exposure to L2, L1 interference, aptitude and motivation (Georgountzou & Tsantila 2017).

1.4 Reasons why Pronunciation is ignored in EFL/ESL Class

Despite the importance of pronunciation in learning English, this is unquestionably often neglected by most of the teachers in class and it is limited in many English course books, as well. Barrera (2004) argues that “pronunciation teaching has often been relegated to a subsidiary role of broader language performance skills such as speaking and listening” (Barrera, 2004: 6). Furthermore, concerning EFL/ESL course books, pronunciation is not the part that catches all the attention; Marks (2006) pointed out that pronunciation often appears at the end of a unit, in the bottom right-hand corner of a page, with the only purpose to reinforce its lowly status as the thing that it is most possible to be omitted when there is lack of time (Marks, 2006). Therefore, it would be plausible the question why pronunciation is barely mentioned in the course books. Vassilakis (2004) states one of the reasons that pronunciation is often neglected in classroom; it is due to the majority of pronunciation activities which can be found in course books and are mainly based on a behaviourist drill-and-kill paradigm, which however, leads to boredom among students and teachers (Vassilakis, 2004). According to Yates

and Zielinski (2009), pronunciation matters in learning English as a foreign language and teachers should scrutinize new effective ways to point out, practice and assess English pronunciation in their classes through useful and efficient materials in order to assist their learners in assimilating the target language in an effective manner (Yates & Zielinski, 2009).

Undoubtedly, as Derwing & Munro (2015) claim, the majority of teachers ignore teaching pronunciation in their class, either because they do not have enough time or they do not feel confident enough to do so (Derwing & Munro, 2015). Gilbert (2008) also quotes some reasons why pronunciation is overlooked in English courses. Specifically, English foreign language teachers avoid teaching pronunciation in class because they lack time; in addition to that, learners themselves do not feel as confident of their pronunciation as of their grammar and lexis and as a result they are prevented from improving their comprehension skills (Gilbert, 2008). Gilakjani & Sabouri (2016) claim that pronunciation plays a decisive role in oral communication; nevertheless, teachers tend to overlook teaching pronunciation in class, while they pay more emphasis on grammatical and lexical structures because they believe that they are not knowledgeable enough to assist students in an effective way (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). Along with these arguments, Kelly (2007) notes that teachers tend to neglect integrating English pronunciation in their class, while they emphasize teaching grammar and vocabulary (Kelly, 2007). Thus, most of the teachers prefer paying attention to lexical and grammatical structures of English language rather than pronunciation. Rivers (1986) mentions that English speakers have difficulties in understanding speech of people who learn English as a foreign language and this is not due to their lack of vocabulary structure but due to their weakness and inability to use sounds, intonation and stress of English language in a correct manner (Rivers, 1986). As a result, teaching English pronunciation in an effective way is crucial in order for teachers to create lessons that are interesting and attractive to learners.

As Kelly (2000) highlights, pronunciation guidance may sometimes be tedious for teachers, and therefore they should incorporate teaching pronunciation to learners through engaging materials in order to achieve a highly effective lesson (Kelly, 2000). In addition to that, Elliot (1995) adheres to the view that teachers have the trait to perceive pronunciation as the least useful of the basic language skills and thus, they tend to sacrifice teaching pronunciation in order to spend valuable class time on other areas of language. Or, teachers feel justified neglecting pronunciation because they think that for adult foreign language learners it is more difficult to attain target language pronunciation skills than other aspects of second language acquisition. It is possible, however that teachers just do not have the appropriate background or tools to efficiently teach pronunciation and this way it is disregarded (Elliot, 1995).

1.5 Teaching English Pronunciation in Greek Context

Concerning teaching pronunciation in Greece, it should be argued that, according to a survey (Dendrinou, Zouganeli & Karava, 2013) conducted on behalf of the European Commission with a view to gathering comparable data on the quality of foreign language education in Europe, data collected by Greek schools had proved that both English and French second language teachers seem to be less concerned with the practice of writing and pronunciation than with practice in understanding and producing oral speech. In fact, English teachers are even less concerned with pronunciation than French teachers, and they pay more emphasis to the use of written comprehension. That is to say, teachers of both languages emphasize learning and practicing vocabulary and grammar, although English teachers are more concerned with grammar than French teachers (Dendrinou, Zouganeli & Karava, 2013). In addition to the above survey, a different survey conducted by Kanellou (2001) in

Thessaloniki, Greece showed that teachers pay not much emphasis on teaching pronunciation in classroom while they regard teaching grammar and vocabulary structure to be of utmost importance. It is worth mentioning here the fact that, the results showed that improving pronunciation skills is indeed an area of utmost importance for most of the learners who had been participating in the survey, but not for most of the teachers (Kanellou, 2001).

In contrast to the above surveys, Vassilakis (2004) states that, the listener's first impression of the majority of Greek learners' speech is that it is generally comprehensible, although distinctly non-native. That is to say that Greek learners may deal with difficulties in mastering a native-like pronunciation, but their English can be understood (Vassilakis, 2004). Such an instance is that "some features of Greek intonation carried over into English (such as the use of a high fall where English would be a low rise) may make speakers sound abrupt and impolite" (Papaefthymiou-Lytra, 2001: 132), notwithstanding comprehensive.

1.6 The Use of the Computer in Assisting English Pronunciation Improvement

Apart from the role of the teacher inside the class, who assists learners in improving their pronunciation in English, the computer is a tool which, according to surveys, could be useful in meliorating pronunciation. According to Neri, Cucchiarini, and Strik (2002), the use of particular computer software can help learners improve their pronunciation. Specifically, learners become able to access various input, as well as benefit from the automatic feedback the computer software offers. Moreover, learners are given the opportunity to practice sounds through articulatory actuations that the software provides with when sounds are produced (Neri, Cucchiarini & Strik, 2002). Furthermore, according to Neri, Cucchiarini, Strik, and Boves (2002), Computer Assisted Pronunciation Teaching (CAPT) methods can provide

learners with private, stress-free practice with individualized and direct feedback on teaching pronunciation. Instead of using traditional printed materials, such as course information, lecture notes, exercises or quizzes, a majority of pronunciation teachers opt for using digital materials to motivate learners (Neri, Cucchiarini, Strik, and Boves, 2002). According to Hismanoglu (2011), the use of computer in classes can improve learners' pronunciation through drilling activities and thus, the procedure of learning becomes interactive in various ways, as for instance, a class as a whole or individually (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2011). Levis (2007) argues that through computer, learners can access individualized guidance, practice via listening differentiation and, additionally they are provided with automatic feedback which enables them to compare their own pronunciation to a native one, so that they can improve it (Levis, 2007). According to Walker (2005), learners' pronunciation can improve through recordings, which attract learners' interest, motivate them and make them more independent, as they are able to assess themselves (Walker, 2005). Additionally, Dekaney (2003) emphasized the effectiveness of computer to improve pronunciation rather than the use of traditional ways in classroom (Dekaney, 2003). Such surveys show that the use of digital tools can make English courses efficient and help learners acquire English language and particularly pronunciation in an easier and more effective way. As well as that, teachers cease to be the authenticity in class and learners become masters of themselves.

1.6.1. The Use of Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) Program

According to a survey (Chen, 2006) conducted in Taiwan, there were used some CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) products which were based on Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) technologies and they aimed at examining the potentials for developing better pronunciation of students. The results showed a significant improvement and proved that

the state-of-the-art automatic speech recognition can be really useful for language teachers and learners. In fact, there are various schools and colleges in EFL settings which want to assist students in improving their oral abilities, but they may do not have enough qualified teachers or class time. Thus, the ASR technologies might be able to play an important role in these settings. What is more, in the particular study, the lower level students gained lower scores from different ASR programs. It becomes obvious that ASR programs can be used to identify students who might need extra help on pronunciation or oral communication and teachers should feel more comfortable to allow learners to interact with these ASR programs (Chen, 2006).

As Neri, Cucchiarini, & Strik (2002) stated, the use of CAPT systems in EFL setting can offer a number of advantages. Some of them are the following: they can address individual problems, allow students to practice as long as they wish and in their own pace, may lead to a reduction of foreign language classroom anxiety and finally, they can store student profiles in log-files, so that both the teacher and the students can monitor problems and improvements. These systems can evaluate students' speech and provide feedback in real-time. Nevertheless, there are also some limitations of this technology, which imply that the speaker's sentence must be predictable and that error diagnosis is only possible with a limited degree of detail. Moreover, the type of feedback which is provided, ideally should address both segmental and suprasegmental aspects of speech production and the form in which feedback is provided is very crucial as it must be pertinent and easy to interpret. Even though this state-of-the-art ASR technology can guarantee correct feedback at least in the majority of the cases, it is not feasible to gain a detailed diagnosis due to the fact that the performance levels attained are still poor (Neri, Cucchiarini, & Strik, 2002).

1.7 Teacher's Role in Class and The Use of Pronunciation Training Software

Utilizing computer in class to facilitate pronunciation training is really efficient and effective, as previously mentioned, but what is the role of the teacher? Pourhosein & Sabouri (2017) argue that a teacher can be a planner, manager, facilitator, guide, and participant while particular pronunciation training software is used in class in order to assist learners in improving English pronunciation. More precisely, as a planner, the teacher should be aware of the programs that are appropriate for the students' needs and create a learning environment where learners have the chance to be motivated so as to work together; as a manager, the teacher should be certain that all learners have access to the computer and should apply programs that cover the learners' needs. Moreover, as a facilitator, the teacher should help learners to master their own knowledge; as a guide, the teacher should urge learners to reveal new learning and take part in tasks that call for their critical thinking; lastly, as a participant, the teacher should cooperate with learners to conduct multiple cognitive learning tasks. Therefore, it could be argued that the teacher's role changes completely; the teacher's traditional role of authenticity providing the students with limited information, converts into a facilitator of information (Pourhosein & Sabouri, 2017).

1.8 Difficulties for Learners of English in Learning English Pronunciation

It is important to state that pronunciation should be taught even from the early stages of learning. According to Gilakjani & Ahmadi (2011), it has been shown that people who start to learn English after their school years tend to face serious difficulties in acquiring intelligible pronunciation, with the extent of difficulty increasing significantly with age. However, this difficulty is not pertinent with intelligence or level of education, or even with knowledge of English structures of grammar and vocabulary. Apparently, there is no simple answer to why

pronunciation is difficult to learn - indeed there is a huge scope of theoretical perspectives on this question. Psycholinguists and phonologists who specialized in this area, accept the fact that the difficulty of learning to pronounce a foreign language is cognitive rather than physical, and this is related to the way 'raw sound' is categorized or conceptualized in using speech. Nevertheless, there are learners of English who face difficulties in pronouncing sounds correctly even after years of speaking English, but this may prevent them from finding employment. The major problem that learners of a second language have with pronunciation is correlated with their trait to change a conceptual pattern which is suitable for their first language that they have internalized in childhood. Therefore, learners should categorize or conceptualize sounds in a way which is appropriate to English. It should also be stated here that individual sounds are not in themselves crucial to intelligibility. This is proved by the fact that many native speakers pronounce individual sounds differently from the norm, and they have no difficulties with intelligibility (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). Harmer (1991) states that the main aim is that students be understood; good pronunciation is needed for this, but a "perfect accent" is not (Harmer, 1991). However, it should be highlighted here that it is not only the case that learners deal with problems of sounds. Munro and Derwing (1999) found out that even heavily accented speech can be sometimes intelligible and that prosodic errors (i.e., errors in stress, intonation, and rhythm) tend to affect intelligibility more than do phonetic errors (i.e., errors in single sounds) (Munro and Derwing, 1999). Pennington (1996) highlights another difficulty that many learners of English deal with. Particularly, "the tendency to weaken vowels towards schwa in conversational English seems to be a difficult aspect of English to learn for most nonnative speakers, possibly in part because of an over-reliance on spelling as a guide to pronunciation" (Pennington, 1996: 94).

1.8.1 Difficulties for Greek Learners in Acquiring English Pronunciation

Regarding teaching English pronunciation to Greek learners many surveys have been conducted which have highlighted various difficulties. Nicolaidis & Mattheoudakis state that regarding the Greek EFL context, there is not a specific syllabus on how to teach pronunciation in the primary and secondary level of education. In addition to that, the majority of the most well-known coursebooks that teachers use in Greece lack any treatment of pronunciation. They have also found out that Greek has a five vowel system /i, ε, ε, ο, u/ and therefore, a lot of English vowel contrasts are neutralized by Greek learners of English, e.g., contrasts between /i/-/ɪ/, /e/-/ɜ:/, /æ/-/ʌ/-/ɑ:/, /ɒ/-/ɔ:/, /ʊ/-/u:/. Moreover, Greek lacks the postalveolar consonants /ʃ/, /ʒ/ and /tʃ/, /dʒ/ and there is not any contrast between /s/-/ʃ/, /z/-/ʒ/, while the postalveolar affricates are produced as alveolar [ts] and [dz] by Greek learners of English (Nicolaidis, & Mattheoudakis, 2012).

According to Perikleous & Kokoni (2017), when Greek students begin to learn English, they cope with some difficulties due to the different phonological systems of the two languages. Based on the international phonological alphabet, English is composed of 26 letters which produce 44 sounds. Moreover, one common phenomenon is the existence of voiceless graphemes in the words; namely, letters that the students see, they must write them but they do not read them. Such an example is the word [night], where the learners see 5 graphs [n-i-g-h-t], but when they read they produce only 3 sounds /nait/. Nevertheless, they must distinguish the difference between the specific word and the word [knight], as the particular words are homophones. In other words, English language is somehow phonemic; this means that there is no systematic correspondence among phonemes and graphemes of the language. For instance, in the word [fox] the student can see three letters (graphemes) and hear three sounds (phonemes). However, this is not the case in the words [tough] and [though], where the suffix is the same but the sound is completely different. On the other hand, Greek language is

composed of 24 letters and there is a systematic correspondence among phonemes and graphemes. English language is characterized as non-transparent; due to the non-systematic correspondence among graphemes and phonemes there aren't any stable rules, while the sounds of the letters depend on the surrounding of the word is read. Such an example is the word [ball], where the vowel sounds neither as /a/ nor as /ei/ which are the most common sounds of the particular grapheme, but as /o/ (Perikleous & Kokoni, 2017).

Correspondingly, Wolf (2009) argues that the most difficult letters of English language are the vowels because there are five vowels – including [y] in some cases – which attribute more than twelve vowels' sounds (Wolf, 2009). According to Moats (2005), one of the main reasons that English language is so erratic, is that it is composed of various spellings for the same sound. For instance, the / k / sound can be written with different letters, or even letter combinations, such as k (king), c (cat), ck (back), qu (queen) and ch (chorus) and this is due to the fact that Modern English has been influenced by various languages, such as AngloSaxon, Norman French, Latin, and Greek (Moats, 2005).

Vassilakis (2004) highlights how crucial the vowels are in learning English. However, he also highlights the problem which causes problems of intelligibility. That is the lack of aspiration of syllable initial fortis plosives /p/, /t/ and /k/ in accented syllables, which possibly can be perceived as the equivalent voiced lenis plosives; “thus, a Greek speaker might be heard as saying ‘bat’, ‘duck’ and ‘gore’ when (s)he is actually trying to articulate ‘pat’, ‘tuck’ and ‘core’ respectively” (Vasilakis, 2004: 30). In fact, as Kenworthy (1987) argues, it is important for learners to use proper aspiration when they pronounce words such as ‘pit, ‘tip’ and ‘kit’ because “if there is no obvious puff of air, then English listeners will probably hear these sounds as /b, d, g/ respectively” (Kenworthy, 1987: 59).

Another instance Kenworthy mentions, is related to the tendency of Greek learners to hear, as well as to produce /j/ and /w/ as full vowels; /i/ and /u/ respectively. Despite that the last two sounds are similar to the consonants, the major difficulty is that if /j/ and /w/ are pronounced in this way, then the English listener would interpret them as separate syllables (ibid). Moreover, another example has to do with the number and intricacy of cluster types. Particularly, Greek learners usually mishear and misproduce the second consonant of these phonemes: /mp/, /nt/ and /nk/. That is to say, the word ‘simple’ might be misheard as ‘symbol’ and the word ‘ankle’ might be mispronounced as ‘angle’. In addition to that, some Greek learners deal with problems in pronouncing the cluster /sm-/ in a correct way (ibid: 140-141). Nonetheless, we have to take into consideration that the schwa /ə/ does not exist at all in Greek and thus “Greek learners tend to substitute either /e/ as in ‘bed’ or the Greek vowel /a/ as in ‘iota’ for schwa” (Kenworthy, 1987: 141). Apart from this, Greek learners of English sometimes confuse ‘beat’ with ‘bit’, because the Greek language has only one vowel which is midway between the two vowels /i:/ and /ɪ/ and as a result, learners need to use ultimate lip-spreading in order to be able to finally produce /i/ (Kenworthy, 1987). Another problematic area that Greek learners of English find difficulty in is the production of diphthongs; namely, the Greek language has almost no diphthongs, despite the fact that two vowel sounds can coexist in order in words (Hooke & Rowell, 1982).

1.8.2 Pronunciation Differences between Greek and English

Swan & Smith (2001) also state some pronunciation differences between the two languages – Greek and English – and thus some difficulties of Greek learners in acquiring English pronunciation.

“Among the features of Greek which give rise to a ‘Greek accent’ in English are:

- *Less energetic articulation than English, with lax vowels, less lip-rounding and less spreading.*
- *Lack of contrast between weak and strong forms in natural speech as compared in English.*
- *Lack of elisions and assimilations; this makes the English of Greek speakers sound slow, drawling and rather formal.*
- *Tendency to speak at a higher volume and on a more uniform pitch level than most English people do.*
- *Different stress and intonation patterns.” (ibid: 129).*

They additionally, argue that due to the fact that Greek spelling is phonetic – this means that there is almost a one-to-one correspondence between sounds and graphic symbols, with only a few ambiguities, Greek learners and particularly beginners, tend to pronounce all the letters that are written giving them their Greek values. For example:

/kold/ for could

/me/ for me

/water/ for water

As well as that, Greek learners face difficulties concerning the English stress. Namely, Greek language tends to have one stressed syllable in each word, in contradiction with English words, which may have some syllables with secondary stress. Therefore, Greek learners have the tendency to pronounce one primary stress in English words and give all the other syllables weak stress:

/sʌbstɪ'tjuːʃən/ for /,sʌbstɪ'tjuːʃən/

Apart from the stress, intonation plays a decisive role in using English in a proper way, as well. According to Swan & Smith, some features of Greek intonation carried over into

English and thus may result in speakers sounding abrupt and sometimes impolite. So, emphasis must be paid on special practicing regarding intonation of polite requests, suggestions, commands, offers, question tags, interruptions as well as the use of stereotyped responses, as for instance “Mm, Yes, I see, That’s right” with the proper intonation patterns (ibid: 132).

1.9 Surveys on the Application of Pronunciation Software

AbuSeileek (2007) in the survey he conducted he separated learners in two different groups, one experimental, using an accent software and one controlled, following traditional ways of teaching pronunciation. The survey proved that the use of software was beneficial to learners as the experimental group performed better than the controlled one (AbuSeileek, 2007). Moreover, Hincks conducted a survey (2005), applying a software (Talk To Me) - which is based on Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) – to learners of English. More specifically, she applied the particular software to a group of learners and compared it to a controlled one which simply followed instructions by the teacher. It turned to show that the automatic feedback the experimental group took was more efficient than feedback taken by the controlled group regarding the improvement of pronunciation (Hincks, 2005). Kim (2006) conducted a survey applying a similar software based on ASR. The results showed that learners benefited from this software regarding the improvement of their pronunciation because they were exposed to listening to sounds that were produced by native speakers (Kim, 2006). Lai, Tsai, and Yu (2009) applied a software based on ASR to learners of English to see to what extent their pronunciation could improve. Learners were separated in two groups - one experimental and one controlled. The results showed that the experimental group which used the particular software had a significant improvement in pronunciation, compared to the controlled one (Lai, Tsai, and Yu, 2009). In his study, Hismanoglu (2012) paid emphasis on the improvement of

Turkish learners' word stress of English language and he found out that not only is computer software beneficial to learning and improving pronunciation – especially the way learners produce stressed syllables – but also that the experimental group which used the software in class performed better in pronunciation courses compared to the controlled one (Hismanoglu, 2012). Baradaran and Davvari (2010) studied the effect of a pronunciation software (Pronunciation Power 2) on foreign accent decrease. The learners were separated in two groups – one experimental which used the particular software and one control which simply followed instructions by the teacher. The study showed that the experimental group had achieved higher scores in the post-test which had been given after the application of the software regarding pronunciation (Baradaran and Davvari, 2010). According to Hsieh (2013), it was proved in a survey that the use of CALL software can benefit both teachers who work with a large group of students by minimizing the burden they have, and students individually who deal with learning problems, such as pronunciation and grammar (Hsieh, 2013).

Conclusion

This chapter presented the theory of this study starting with defining English pronunciation followed by a reference on past studies. Teaching pronunciation in class, is undoubtedly a complicated procedure and although significant, it is most of the time ignored. However, the use of technology is proven to be useful and beneficial to teaching pronunciation in class. The following chapter will focus on professional development of Greek teachers in English and present a toolkit that might assist them in their teaching procedure, especially teaching pronunciation.

Chapter 2

Professional Development of Greek Teachers in English

Introduction

This chapter examines the professional development of Greek teachers of English. More specifically, it presents some innovative approaches along with a toolkit, which provide teachers with English pronunciation training. Finally, it aims to present and elaborate on the use of Voki and Speechace – the two pronunciation tools used for the purposes of this survey.

2.1 Pronunciation Training of English Teachers in Greece

In Greece there are only two universities which provided someone with the qualification to teach English as a foreign language. Particularly, holding a Bachelor degree of English Language and Literature from these two universities – National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, is the one and only qualification which gives someone the right to work as an English teacher in public schools. However, regarding the private sector and especially the foreign language schools, even though this degree is the superior qualification and fully acknowledged, some language schools used to hire English teachers who had passed the exams of the C2 Proficiency level (such as the exams provided by the University of Michigan or the University of Cambridge) and acquired a teaching status which enabled them to teach English as a foreign language. Nowadays, the C2 Proficiency certificate does not provide teachers with the right to legitimately teach English.

Examining thoroughly the academic curricula of the two university departments of English Language and Literature, we should consider the pronunciation training offered and

whether this is adequate for the forthcoming English teachers' professional development. Concerning the academic curriculum in pronunciation training of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, it should be mentioned that the course of "English Phonetics and Phonology" had been included in the list of Required Elective Courses until the academic year 2010.¹ That is to say, that it was not a compulsory course until then and students had the option to opt for attending the particular course or even not. Therefore, up to that year, forthcoming English teachers had been graduating from the university without having been trained in English pronunciation and even if they had, it was because they had chosen to attend the corresponding course. However, in the academic years of 2010-2011 and onwards, the course of "English Phonetics and Phonology" has been included in the list of the Compulsory courses; this means that there is no chance for someone to graduate the school without having been trained in English pronunciation. It has got 6 ECTS and it is taught for one semester. Respectively, examining the academic curriculum of pronunciation training of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and after a personal telephone communication with the department of English School, it should be noted that the course "English Phonetics and Phonology" has been always included in the list of the Compulsory Courses. This fact highlights the significance of English pronunciation training of English teachers in Greece. Lastly, the course has got 6 ECTS and it is taught for one semester.

From all the above, the conclusion that could be drawn is that English teachers in Greece should constantly develop in the field of teaching English as a foreign language and especially in pronunciation, as it is a crucial part of English. They should try to become as professional as they can and find new methods to teach English pronunciation to their students in an efficient and effective way.

¹<http://www.enl.auth.gr/guides.html>

2.2 MOOCs & Webinars – Innovative Approaches for English Pronunciation Training

Correspondingly, one way that English teachers can develop their own as well as their students' pronunciation is through the attendance of MOOCs (Massive Online Open Courses). The particular courses offer English pronunciation training so, English teachers have the opportunity to develop in the field of teaching. For the particular study it was deemed critical to examine some courses which had been offered in January 2019 – the time when this study had been conducted. Some of these courses are the following:

<https://www.coursera.org/learn/tesol-speaking> - the particular course offers the chance to include pronunciation both in listening and speaking classes and demonstrates various strategies to incorporate pronunciation activities in class.

<https://www.coursera.org/learn/tricky-american-english-pronunciation> - this course helps teachers practice the American English sounds which can be confusing. It also highlights ways on how to stress the right syllable in words, how to use pitch and make your voice go up and down, and how to connect sounds and words in a natural way.

<https://www.mooc-list.com/course/linguistics-102-speech-science-vlc> - the course is about articulatory phonetics. There is an introduction to auditory phonetics along with crucial physical aspects of speech.

Accordingly, there is a variety of webinars which offer the opportunity to teachers to practice English sounds. As with the MOOCs which were offered the time when the particular survey had been conducted, there were some webinars which had been conducting by Macmillan Education. These webinars had been held until January 2019 and were mainly free to interested individuals. Some of them are the following:

<http://www.macmillanenglish.com/events/teaching-pronunciation/> - this webinar provides innovative methods to teach pronunciation in respect of speaking, listening and learning new vocabulary, as well as to demonstrate the way teachers can use the Sounds application in class.

<http://www.macmillanenglish.com/events/phonics-the-building-blocks-for-reading-and-writing/> - the webinar offers ways to help students read effectively.

<http://www.macmillanenglish.com/events/teaching-difficult-sounds/> - the particular webinar boosts teachers' confidence in teaching pronunciation while in class, as well as offers practical advice on how to deal with some of the trickiest sounds, such as th, r, l.

<http://www.macmillanenglish.com/events/teaching-tips-for-pronunciation-webinar-tim-bowen/> - this webinar is about improving various aspects of pronunciation, such as sounds, stress, intonation and sounds in contact.

http://www.macmillanenglish.com/teaching_English_pronunciation_for_the_real_world_pm/ - the last webinar considers new pronunciation priorities and challenges that both learners and teachers of English deal with in everyday spoken English.

2.3 Toolkit of Pronunciation Training

After examining online various tools which can boost English pronunciation improvement, it was deemed critical for the needs of the particular survey to create a toolkit that could be useful both for English teachers' and their students' training. One important advantage which should be taken into account, is that the majority of these tools can be used either inside or outside the class. That is to say, students have the opportunity to practice English pronunciation individually and according to their personal needs and pace whenever they want. Some of these tools are indicatively listed in categories below:

Online free dictionaries

<https://howjsay.com/> - this site is actually a free online talking dictionary of English pronunciation. Once you search for one word it automatically pronounces it. What is more, it provides you with various derivatives underneath which can be defined or translated.

<https://www.wordhippo.com/> the site offers you the ability to search for one word and then listen to its pronunciation. As well as that, underneath there is a list with synonyms, opposites, sentences including the particular word or derivatives of the word you search for.

<http://www.macmillandictionary.com/> - the site is an online dictionary by Macmillan. There is an option where users can listen to the pronunciation of the word have looked for.

<http://www.dictionarist.com/> - along with the above ones, this is an online dictionary which provides both word meaning and its pronunciation.

https://forvo.com/?fbclid=IwAR32KMaicGd00gewMBxoaMIIAPD18PYYtvULkQ373SAs_knNwg266g4s44w – the site is an online dictionary where you search for a word and then you are able to listen to its pronunciation. Also, there is indicatively a list of miscellaneous sentences including the particular word which you can also listen to its pronunciation.

Pronunciation video lessons

<http://english.mimicmethod.com/drill-index.html> - the particular site could benefit both teachers and students, as it provides various drills that are correlated with problems which learners deal with when they acquire English pronunciation. Specifically, the site provides the English Sound Menu and the English Sound Comparisons; the first one displays the way in which English vowel and consonant sounds are made in the speech organ and how they are sound. The second menu highlights possible confusion among different sounds that may sound

the same (for instance, p vs b, t vs d, a vs æ). For vowel confusion there is an extra page which highlights the difference in tongue position and sounds with the use of some word lists, while for consonant confusion there is a page which presents the difference in articulation and sound in various syllable contexts.

<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/free-english-pronunciation-lessons?fbclid=IwAR2nQ827XXpi74Joj2nvQP> -

[GjRGTc2PwL2xbELj6lzeI9G63bu3qGU](https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/free-english-pronunciation-lessons?fbclid=IwAR2nQ827XXpi74Joj2nvQP) Us&utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Ffacebook.com%2F - in this site various video lessons are offered presenting many aspects of English pronunciation, such as weak forms, sentence stress, English contractions, tongue twisters, linking in English, intonation, English sounds and spelling and lastly how to pronounce similar sounds (ɪ vs i:).

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/features/pronunciation/introduction> - this site offered by BBC presents a plethora of video lessons with pronunciation workshops. The videos contain among others, assimilations of sounds, contractions, linking, plosives, schwa, short vs long vowels and many more.

<http://funeasyenglish.com/new-american-english-language-video-lessons-introduction.htm> - the particular site includes various videos with characters who display mouth movements concerning of the pronunciation both of vowels and consonants. It also includes videos introducing to writing the English alphabet for kids.

Pronunciation activities and practice

<http://www.spokenskills.com/index.cfm?type=15&content=studentactivities> - this is a site in which there are plenty of units each one with a different topic (for example, general English, everyday English, business English, consonant and vowel sounds). Every unit includes

sentences which you can hear. You are able to record your own version and compare the recording with the original one.

[http://www.manythings.org/pp/?fbclid=IwAR2Ug12BNqIZKcGA-](http://www.manythings.org/pp/?fbclid=IwAR2Ug12BNqIZKcGA-y6aITHJbT2V15q4y3xRCHQk5IQbb9zIzSDHB18n36o)

[y6aITHJbT2V15q4y3xRCHQk5IQbb9zIzSDHB18n36o](http://www.manythings.org/pp/?fbclid=IwAR2Ug12BNqIZKcGA-y6aITHJbT2V15q4y3xRCHQk5IQbb9zIzSDHB18n36o) – the particular site is about American English pronunciation practice. It offers a list of minimal pair practice (for instance: hot-hat, lake-rake, run-rung, best-vest) and quizzes along with a variety of “listen and repeat” videos. Each of them focuses on different aspects (vowels, final consonants, consonant clusters, tongue twisters and many more).

Pronunciation Applications

<http://www.englishlearning.com/products/learn-english-app/> - this is an application which provides the users with effective ways to learn all 52 sounds of the English Language. There are side view animations with mouth movements, sample words and comparative words.

<http://www.macmillaneducationapps.com/soundspron/> - this is a mobile English pronunciation aid by Macmillan Education which can be downloaded in a smart phone. Learners have the opportunity to study, practice and play with pronunciation whenever they are.

<https://www.englishaccentcoach.com/> - it is both a mobile application and a website. There are interactive game-like activities and learners are able to check their progress.

Recording websites

<https://vocaroo.com/> - this is a free site and can be accessed through an online browser. It is an online tool that allows users to record, send, and download voice messages. Teachers and learners can use it in various activities, such as podcasting, digital storytelling, broadcasting,

and mainly giving feedback. Learners and teachers can provide voice comments as well as they can share a link to the voice comments. In addition, learners can record and listen to themselves along with taking notes on their grammar and especially pronunciation. They can also use this website to rehearse their presentations, record their presentations, listen, and practice as many times as they wish.

Pronunciation Games

Yolageldili & Arikan (2011) point out that games play a decisive role in any foreign language teaching program because they facilitate foreign language learning specifically for young learners. Games have become crucial both for English language learners and teachers, not only due to the fact that they offer enjoyment and relaxation, but also because they encourage students to use the language in a creative and communicative way. It should be also noted that in many games, learners must cooperate to achieve the goal and the majority of them enjoy cooperation and social interaction (Yolageldili & Arikan, 2011). Ashraf, Motlagh & Salami (2014) highlight that games are used to increase learners' motivation and authentic communicative practices, since games compose an enjoyable factor in language learning. Furthermore, they create a fun environment in which both learners and teachers become more concerned about learning and teaching process on the whole. Lastly, games constitute an effusive element for providing stimulation in various educational settings (Ashraf, Motlagh, & Salami, 2014).

Online games can help learners acquire a second language either inside or outside the class. According to Turgut & Irgin (2009), learners may be hesitant to take part in language classes because of their fear of making a mistake in front of their peers, but may be more eager to interact with a video game in order to gain valuable linguistic feedback, as well as practice with language before applying their knowledge in the real world. Moreover, the user must

appropriately use menus, select items, or follow instructions in virtual pet, role-playing or action/adventure games. What is more, there are games in which the player must vocally interact with the game via a microphone and use correct vocabulary, pronunciation or grammar, as well as speak appropriately in the game's context (Turgut, & Irgin, 2009).

It is also worth mentioning the fact that by playing online games the learners not only do they improve their pronunciation but they also acquire new vocabulary. Turgut & Irgin (2009) argue that internet has created a world of possibilities for improving the vocabularies of young learners. By using online games, teachers and parents can make sure that young learners are prepared for the adventure of reading and writing. Online games are a valuable means that enables learners to explore new ways in which new and older forms of literacy and multimodality combine, altering understandings of what constitutes text and engagement and also providing insights into the highly effective learning principles which are incorporated into games as an essential precondition of commercial success and play (Turgut, & Irgin, 2009). Therefore, there is a toolkit following composed of various online games which can help learners practice English pronunciation.

<https://www.vocabulary.co.il/phonics/> - this particular site includes fun phonics games which can help students recognize the connection between spellings and sounds and therefore improving their reading skills.

http://www.cambridgeenglishonline.com/Phonetics_Focus/?fbclid=IwAR04PI21t33t0nYb4gDf_LBV-8I8bOg3VOuWGQYGbR5MBKM26YUzN3XmIC4 – the site provides the students with a variety of games which can assist them in practicing English pronunciation. Some of them are the phonemic chart puzzle, phonemic hangman, phonemic search, phonemic reader, phonemic clip, shoot a symbol and many more.

http://www.oddcast.com/home/demos/tts/tts_example.php?sitepal&fbclid=IwAR1yjIA8klF2

[Sb8aejTQVjw-oWgd8AXj9iQ5A8avGG0 2Zt9XXV 9u82Wk](http://www.oddcast.com/home/demos/tts/tts_example.php?sitepal&fbclid=IwAR1yjIA8klF2) – this is a site in which an avatar character pronounces whatever you search for. There is a choice which offers you the chance to select among different voices and accents, such as British, American, Australian, Scottish and other.

<http://www.starfall.com/> - this site includes games, stories, songs, and various activities for very young pupils to practice English pronunciation.

<http://www.dreamenglish.com/phonics-a-lesson> - this is a site that introduced young pupils to learning the alphabet. There are videos for every single letter along with phonics worksheets for extra practice.

<http://www.abcfastphonics.com/> - this site contains plenty of phonics tutorials and cartoons for kids.

<https://www.neok12.com/Phonics.htm> - the site presents a great deal of songs, quizzes and games for young learners.

<http://www.readingbear.org/> - the specific site includes many videos, quizzes, as well as reviews for young children to learn phonics.

2.4 Pronunciation Tools used for the Particular Survey

To serve the needs of the particular survey, two online pronunciation tools - Voki and Speechace² - had been examined and used by English Second Language (ESL) Teachers in

² <https://www.voki.com/>
<https://www.speechace.com/>

different foreign language schools in Greece. Below, there are past surveys which had been conducted experimenting the particular tools.

According to Anastasiou, Georgalas & Androutsou (2013), Voki is a model of online practice and acquisition of pronunciation. It is based on the free software provided by www.voki.com. Concerning its technical features, it offers the possibility of online audio by a virtual character (avatar). The sound can either be set up in advance with the recording capabilities of the computer or can be made from text to speech conversion. After that, this particular audio sample can be directly online or embedded in a web page (Anastasiou, Georgalas & Androutsou, 2013). In fact, the Voki program is considered to be one of the ten best Web 2.0 training tools (Riedel, 2009 cited in Anastasiou, Georgalas & Androutsou, 2013).

More specifically, Anastasiou, Georgalas & Androutsou (2013) state that this tool had been used in a survey conducted in the 1st Experimental Primary School of Thessaloniki to examine in which level the learners' English pronunciation could improve. Specifically, this application was presented in two classes of the fifth-grade and the sample included a total of 43 students. Experimental teaching was held in the classroom in cooperation both with the responsible professor of computer science and the school principal. For the implementation of this survey there were used one computer and one projector. The students recorded words and sentences from their books and then they created virtual characters (avatars) that prompted the audio files with the phrases recorded. Listening to the appropriate accent in English, the students reshaped the same phrases, trying to correct and improve their own pronunciation. In the end, they created virtual characters in which they incorporated the new sound tracks with their own corrected accent.

The English language teacher of the two classes noticed a significant qualitative improvement in the students' pronunciation. In fact, the chance of unlimited repetition of

phrases by the virtual characters offered the students the opportunity to focus on the sounds that are especially difficult for Greek speakers learning English. In the end, it was proved that students managed to assimilate the pronunciation of the phrases that were taught. It should also be mentioned that the use of such new Web 2.0 tools which allow the creation of spoken characters can be a valuable assist in the teaching and practice of English pronunciation in Primary education in our country. In this case, the computer stimulates learners' interest through interactivity, images and sound. Furthermore, the particular software moves away from the central model of the teacher, who can only pronounce the phrases in a certain way and renders the student into an active creator and participant in the process of learning through the usage of the computer (Anastasiou, Georgalas & Androutsou, 2013).

Yona, & Marlina (2014), state that Voki is an effective means to teach speaking in oral descriptive text. It can assist both the teacher in monitoring the students' progress in learning, and the students in speaking properly without feeling nervous. Lastly, this tool can make the students' progress in speaking to be faster than speaking in front of the class, as learners can benefit from the feedback on their work from their peers and the teacher directly in their own Voki (Yona, & Marlina, 2014).

Speechace is another tool that is utilized for the needs of this survey regarding pronunciation improvement. According to Papadima-Sophocleous, Bradley & Thouëсны (2016), www.speechace.com is an application which is included among others (such as, pronunciation applications by Macmillan English, pronunciation by Kephram) in the list of applications which are based on linguistic and pedagogical content. Specifically, it focuses on pronunciation training at a segment level and also includes pre-training tasks which are correlated with interactive phonemic charts, along with a depiction of descriptions of the articulatory features of the sounds of English language. This application provides recording facilities and diagnosis of learners' productions which can be compared with targeted

productions in the chosen model – UK or US English (Papadima-Sophocleous, Bradley & Thouësny, 2016).

According to Spaulding, Chen, Ali, Kulinski, & Breazeal (2018), Speechace has been used in a survey in order to describe and analyze a pipeline for automatic analysis of learners' speech and pronunciation; the tool served for future development of autonomous, speech-based language tutors. More specifically, the tool was used to analyze speech samples via sending a sample of recorded audio phonemized representation of particular words. The application computes scores representing how well they were pronounced in the words. The results showed that this tool can be used to classify learners' pronunciation as acceptable or not. The expert ratings were binarized and the results showed that the final ground truth test set had 396 acceptable (positive examples) and 148 (negative) examples (Spaulding, Chen, Ali, Kulinski, & Breazeal, 2018).

A survey conducted by Lee (2018) in Massachusetts, examined the level at which children could improve their reading skills with the assistance of Speechace software. It is a well-known fact that children's reading ability improves through personalized feedback and curriculums, and reinforced associations between audio and visual representations of words. Based on the particular survey, the children that participated in the survey spoke a sentence and then the audio was recorded and finally was sent to the Speechace service along with the intended sentence text. After that, Speechace returned feedback with pronunciation quality scores for the whole sentence, each word, as well as each phoneme within each word. The students had access to Speechace feedback concerning their pronunciation. The results showed that learners achieved a high score in both pronunciation and knowledge of the target words (Lee, 2018).

Conclusion

This chapter presented a toolkit with pronunciation tools that might be beneficial to teachers when they have to teach pronunciation in EFL classroom. Apart from that, webinars and MOOCs can also contribute to their continuous professional development as they provide training concerning teaching pronunciation to learners of English. The following chapter will focus on the nature of the study along with the hypothesis, the research questions, the participants, and the data collection instruments.

Chapter 3

Research Design

Introduction

This chapter presents the design and the research methodology adopted in order to explore teachers' perceptions towards the effect of Voki and Speechace in English lessons. Therefore, it initially describes the research aim and questions as well as the data collection instruments, which are both quantitative and qualitative. Finally, there is a presentation of the research procedure and the suggested material that was designed by the researcher.

3.1 Research Purpose and Questions

The current study aims at investigating teachers' perceptions towards the effectiveness of the application of Voki and Speechace concerning the improvement of learners' pronunciation training. In other words, the research focuses on whether these two pronunciation tools can be effectively integrated into the Greek EFL classroom as a means of enhancing learners' motivation to use English more confidently, as well as teachers' capacity to teach pronunciation in the EFL classroom. With reference to these two pronunciation training software – Voki and Speechace, the researcher, along with the EFL teachers' contribution, attempts to:

- 1) investigate whether or not the teachers are willing to incorporate the particular pronunciation tools in their teaching choices and the effect of these software in teaching pronunciation in the EFL classroom.
- 2) investigate whether the integration of such digital tools could increase teachers' confidence in teaching pronunciation in the EFL classroom.

- 3) investigate whether these two pronunciation training software have contributed on rendering learners into active learners in a TEFL context.

More precisely, the research questions that guide the research purpose are the following:

- 1) Are the EFL teachers who work in Greece and abroad willing to incorporate the use of Voki and Speechace in their teaching and to what extent?
- 2) Can digital tools (such as, Voki and Speechace) help teachers develop a deeper understanding of how to teach pronunciation in EFL classroom?
- 3) To what extent can Voki and Speechace increase learners' motivation and interest towards the use of English, according to teachers' opinion?

3.2 Research Methodology – Action Research

Clark (2013) argues that the key of action research is to fulfil an intervention and also conduct a review on whether or not it meliorated a situation (Clark, 2013). According to Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon (2013) research action is viewed “as an approach to research and change which is best represented as a self-reflective spiral of cycles of planning, acting and observing, reflecting and then re-planning in successive cycles of improvement”. They also state that “the purpose of critical participatory action research is to change social practices, including research practice itself, to make them more rational and reasonable, more productive and sustainable, and more just and inclusive” (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2013 :2). The particular study can be considered as an action research since it is implemented in a real classroom context with the participation of 15 EFL teachers. Also, the intervention is the application of two pronunciation training software – Voki and Speechace. To answer the research questions (see 3.1) it was deemed critical to adjust both quantitative (see 3.2.1) and

qualitative (see 3.2.2) data collection and eventually resulting in the adoption of the mixed-method research (see 3.2.3).

3.2.1 The Quantitative Method of Research: Questionnaire

In order to explore teachers' reflections towards Voki and Speechace implementation in teaching procedure, a questionnaire was initially chosen as a research tool. According to Dörnyei (2007), quantitative research has to do with data collection procedures that result mainly in numerical data which is analyzed by statistical methods. Moreover, the quantitative inquiry is systematic, rigorous, focused, and tightly controlled; it also involves precise measurement and produce both reliable and replicable data that is generalizable to other contexts. Besides, this method is relatively quick and offers good value for money, since the data analysis can be done using statistical computer software. Last but not least, quantitative findings tend to enjoy a universally high reputation with any audience or stakeholder group. However, one of the drawbacks is that this method averages out responses across the whole observed group of participants, while by working with concepts of averages it is rather impossible to do justice to the subjective variety of an individual life (Dörnyei, 2007).

For the purpose of the particular study, the researcher designed a Google Forms questionnaire entitled "*Voki and Speechace to improve pronunciation: Questionnaire for EFL teachers*" (see Appendix A). The questionnaire addressed the participating teachers after applying the two pronunciation tools in the EFL classroom and was sent via message on Facebook common group. In addition, the provided covering letter informed the participating teachers about the purpose of the study as well as the guarantee of both anonymity and confidentiality. In the end, it expressed the researcher's appreciation for completing it. Concerning its length, it could be stated that it is short and requires approximately 13 minutes

to be completed. There were given clear instructions and the questionnaire was carefully divided into five sections, all of which had a title. Moreover, a piloting test to the questionnaire was conducted to avoid any misleading statements and possible lack of ambiguities before taking its final form. Specifically, the questionnaire was pilot-tested on 3 EFL teachers and the feedback was valuable to the researcher.

Lastly, concerning the layout, in the beginning the questionnaire is composed of factual questions concerned with respondents' gender, age group, academic qualifications, years of teaching experience and current employment. Also, it includes fixed-response questions ranging from "yes/no" questions, *multiple choice* and *rating scale questions* - which follow either the Likert format of "*Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly agree*" or "*Not at all = 1, To a small extent = 2, To some extent = 3, To a moderate extent = 4, To a large extent = 5*" choices, as well as *open-ended*, narrative-response questions at the end of it, which aim at collecting teachers' opinions and comments on their experience while suggesting ideas towards Voki and Speechace's further integration into the EFL classroom.

3.2.2 Voki and Speechace Instruments

Apart from the questionnaire which was used as an instrument in the quantitative method of research, Voki and Speechace also compose instruments that played a decisive role in the conduction of this research. The researcher thoroughly elaborated on the way each tool can be used in the EFL classroom to all the participating individuals. Specifically, as far as Voki is concerned, the teachers have the option either to use the ready avatar provided by the site – this option does not call for any creation of an account, or log in by using their personal email address. The second option offers the ability to create your own avatar in the way you prefer; for instance, you opt for the clothes, the accessories, the makeup etc. However, this

option is provided only for fifteen days as a free trial, otherwise it requires particular payment. Along with the avatar presence, there is a text in which the teachers have to type the words or sentences they want to teach. After that, the avatar repeats them and the learners have the opportunity to listen to a native accent and repeat it. It is worth mentioning that the avatar offers the choice to select different accents, such as American, British or Australian so that the learners have the chance to get exposed in various accents.

Regarding the second pronunciation tool, Speechace is a website which provides various topics (such as, “present simple regular verbs”, “present progressive sentences”, simple past sentences”, “Checking in to a hotel – Dialog”, “phrases related to time”, “Shopping words and phrases”, “Neighborhood vocabulary”, “Expressions for giving directions”) in different levels (“simple sentences”, “beginner sentences”, “basic sentences”, intermediate sentences”). There are also some units that the teachers can find interesting to practice especially with young learners, which offer practice with vowels and consonants (“Vowel ai, ei and oi”, “Vowel ao and oo”, “Consonant s and z”, “Consonant ʃ and ʒ”) which some of them may be confusing to learners. Therefore, the teachers have the chance to either freely practice any of the topics provided or correlate any topic of them with the vocabulary or grammar phenomenon they teach. For instance, if a teacher teaches Past Simple, then he or she can practice the unit with Past Simple. This way the learners become capable of listening and acquiring a proper pronunciation. More specifically, this tool provides words and sentences and then the learners have to record their own voice trying to immitate the original one. After that, they get their feedback which is measured to a percentage up to 100%. Moreover, every time the learners pronounce words or sentences in a wrong way, the website provides in a detailed way what exactly is wrong, highlighting the correct syllable, the phoneme which the learners pronounce wrongly and the score (good/bad and how it sounds like). The learners can repeat the same

word or phrase as many times as they want until they achieve the highest result. The teachers can continuously observe the learners' improvement throughout the lesson.

3.2.3 The Qualitative Method of Research: Unstructured Discussions

Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey (2005) argue that the strength of qualitative research is the fact that provides complex textual descriptions of the way people experience a given research issue. Specifically, it provides information about the people's contradictory behaviors, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2005).

Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey (2005) also state that qualitative methods are typically flexible; this means, they allow spontaneity and adaptation of the interaction between the researcher and the study participant. For example, there are usually "open-ended" questions which allow participants to freely respond in their own words. Thus, these responses are more complex than simply "yes" or "no". Furthermore, they enable the researcher to be more flexible to examine initial participant responses and therefore ask why or how. The researcher must pay attention to what participants say, engage with them in accordance with their individual personalities and styles. What is more, participants have the chance to respond elaborately and in detail, as the relationship between the researcher and the participant is usually formal (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2005). Nevertheless, one downside of this particular kind of research method is that it can be rather time consuming, which also explains the small participant samples that qualitative studies usually investigate (Dörnyei, 2007).

Concerning the particular survey, in order for the researcher to address the weaknesses of the quantitative nature of questionnaires or even issues that might not have been anticipated

while designing the questionnaire she held unstructured discussions. This way, the participating teachers had the chance to elaborate further and express their ideas and comments towards Voki and Speechace experience. Specifically, unstructured interviews took place in a friendly and natural way via phone calls. Five of the participating teachers were asked a specific number of questions and then expressed their opinions and attitudes towards their experience using Voki and Speechace in classroom (see Appendix E). These unstructured discussions assisted the researcher in gaining valuable feedback about teachers' attitudes towards the Voki and Speechace integration into their teaching process.

3.2.4 The Mixed-Method of Research

According to Dörnyei (2007), by using both quantitative and qualitative approaches researchers can bring out the best of both paradigms and therefore combining quantitative and qualitative research strengths; this means that, the strengths of one method can be utilized to overcome the weaknesses of another method used in the study. In addition, the combination of both methods improves the validity of the research. Mixed methods research has a great potential to produce evidence for the validity of research outcomes through the convergence and corroboration of the findings (Dörnyei, 2007). Also, Yin (2003) points out that mixed-method research enables the researcher to use various sources of evidence which ensure triangulation, because the researcher can reach more convincing and accurate results (Yin, 2003). The quantitative part of the method in the particular study is mostly based on the questionnaire while the qualitative one on the unstructured discussions held between the researcher and the participating teachers.

3.3 Sampling Process

“The sample is the group of people whom the researcher actually examines, and the population is the larger group of people whom the survey is about” (Dörnyei & Csizer, 2012 :80). For the purpose of this study, the researcher selected a convenience sample. Etikan, Musa & Alkassim (2016) argue that “Convenience sampling (also known as Haphazard Sampling or Accidental Sampling) is a type of nonprobability or nonrandom sampling where members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate are included for the purpose of the study. It is also referred to the researching subjects of the population that are easily accessible to the researcher” and they also add that “Convenience Sampling is affordable, easy and the subjects are readily available” (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016 :2).

3.4 Research Procedures

3.4.1 The Preparation Stage: Selecting the Participating Teachers

In the particular survey, the researcher addressed to EFL teachers working in the private sector or as freelance teachers both in Greece and abroad. The participants were on the whole 15. To be more specific, the researcher addressed to two colleagues very close to her who have been working at a foreign language school and as freelance teachers. Moreover, she addressed to three colleagues with whom she had been working at a summer school in London last summer (2018) – two of them are Greek working at the private sector in Athens and one of them is from Hungary working at a Presbyterian School there. Six of the rest participants were EFL teachers familiar to the researcher; specifically, four were graduates from the English Department of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, one was a fellow graduate and one was

one of the former colleagues with whom the researcher used to work at a foreign language school one year ago. Furthermore, the researcher addressed to three groups on Facebook³ (see Appendix C). One of these groups was composed of English Teachers in Greece («ΞΕΝΟΓΛΩΣΣΟΙ ΚΑΘΗΓΗΤΕΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΕΛΛΑΔΑ»), while the other two were composed of English teachers working abroad (“TEACHING ENGLISH ABROAD”, “TEFL, TESOL & English Teachers: Resources & Jobs”). Therefore, from the first group one individual working in Athens was eager to contribute to the research and from the other two, two individuals were also willing to participate – one of them had been working as an English teacher in the United Kingdom and the other one in Zimbabwe. It should be stated here that the two EFL groups consist of 49.832 and 72.375 members each and the Greek group 21.009 members; however, only two members of the foreign groups were willing to participate in the research while only one from the Greek group. The last participant was the researcher herself. After that, the researcher created two common groups on Facebook with all the participating teachers – one with Greek EFL teachers and one with English teachers abroad (see Appendix D).

The questionnaire along with the two pronunciation tools were sent via instant messages on Facebook (Appendix D). The researcher described in a thorough and detailed way the procedure to the participating teachers in order for them to apply the tools in their class and also highlighted how beneficial they would be to learners concerning the use of English language and particularly the acquisition of English pronunciation. The teachers had to apply the two pronunciation tools for three hours at least in their teaching process either in their class or in their private courses. It should be also noted that, no particular lesson was required to be taught, since each teacher had the opportunity to freely apply the tools in any lesson he or she deemed it would be helpful and effective for the students, regardless the level or topic. In the

³ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/212484332104984/?ref=bookmarks>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/teflcommunity/>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1583546091866900/>

end, interviews were conducted by the researcher in a friendly, natural way, so they were like unstructured interviews rather than in a standard order. Precisely, 5 out of the 15 participating teachers were asked a few questions (see Appendix E) and they expressed their ideas and opinions regarding their experience with Voki and Speechace.

3.4.2 The Implementation Stage: Voki and Speechace Application in EFL classroom

The application of the pronunciation tools was conducted in the academic year 2018-2019 from February to April. During the whole procedure, the researcher constantly contacted the participating teachers to clarify potential ambiguities and provide any help concerning the application of the pronunciation tools. Facebook was the main tool that the researcher used to communicate with the participating teachers. The teachers applied the tools both in their EFL classes at the language schools they had been working and the private courses they had been tutoring. The target groups that the tools were applied were learners of English of different ages, specifically 8-16.

Some of the instructors used Voki and Speechace as freer practice in class at the end of the lesson. Everyday vocabulary and dialogues were practiced via these tools. Some common vocabulary was “giving directions”, “travel dialogues”, “shopping”, “time”. It was practiced through relevant units in Speechace (“Lessons 28, 29, 34, 40, 46, 47, 48”- unit 1) and the creation of relevant texts in Voki. The teachers used this kind of everyday English as part of speaking skills practice. The majority of them used them in correlation with the vocabulary or grammatical phenomenon they were teaching. Different coursebooks, such as “Webkids”, “Young Stars”, “Portal 1”, “Incredible 5” were the basis on which the implementation of these tools depended on. For instance, some of the learners practiced Past Simple, regular – irregular verbs through “Lessons 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 – unit 1” via Speechace along with the

correspondent unit 4 - Portal 2. Another teacher taught countable and uncountable nouns via Voki. The students learned healthy and unhealthy food and they had to describe some relevant pictures in their course book (the avatar repeats the collection of the students' answers⁴). Extra lessons (19, 20, 21 – unit 1) via Speechace were also used for further practice. A class of young learners, aged 11-12 reviewed the tenses via Speechace, especially in “Lessons 1- 18 – unit 1” and also they thought of their own examples using the tenses and typed them in the text provided by Voki. This way they had the chance to listen to their own examples with proper pronunciation. Furthermore, a class of beginner learners of English practiced the numbers through sentences using Speechace (unit “Beginner”) and afterwards they wrote down similar sentences using the numbers and typed them in the text provided by Voki.

3.4.3 The Follow-Up Stage: Reflecting on Voki and Speechace Integration

After the completion of the application of Voki and Speechace tools, unstructured discussions between the researcher and participating teachers were held, so as the latter to reflect on their experience and elaborate on their personal view concerning the two tools. A significant amount of feedback was collected from both research method techniques which constitutes the basis of the findings of the present research (see Chapter 4).

Conclusion

This chapter thoroughly presented the research design, specifying the research aim and questions, the research method instruments, as well as the research procedure that was

4

https://www.voki.com/site/pickup?scid=15289093&chsm=a0cfb8ff8680fd3172b2eaad5bca7211&fbclid=IwAR3d9QO1LC5i_FkfZZYne9jzE6csoHH29en4H5GzyPxzsquoqvhXc_t4QFA#.XGAL_0CXQvk.facebook

followed. Chapter 4 provides a presentation and a critical analysis of the results of the research, aiming at evaluating the effectiveness of Voki and Speechace in teaching procedure.

Chapter 4

Presentation and Discussion of the Research Findings

Introduction

This chapter aims at presenting and elaborating on the research findings as they were formed by the quantitative and qualitative method instruments adopted. The procedure will be unfolded based on the research purposes and questions posed in the third chapter (see 3) to shed light on the issues under investigation and particularly, the effect of the Voki and Speechace application in the EFL class.

4.1 The Participants' Profile as the Background for the Research Findings

The 15 English teachers who volunteered to integrate the two pronunciation tools – Voki and Speechace in their lessons were emailed the link⁵ to the described questionnaire. The ultimate goal was for the teachers to express their attitudes and reflections towards the effect of Voki and Speechace in their lesson, and specifically to see the extent to which they believe that these pronunciation tools can affect positively the teaching procedure.

Specifically, *Part 1* (“*Teacher’s Profile*”) included five questions about demographics concerning the respondents’ teaching background. Thirteen of the participants (86,7%) are female while only two (13,3%) are male (Question 1). As far as the age group is concerned,

5

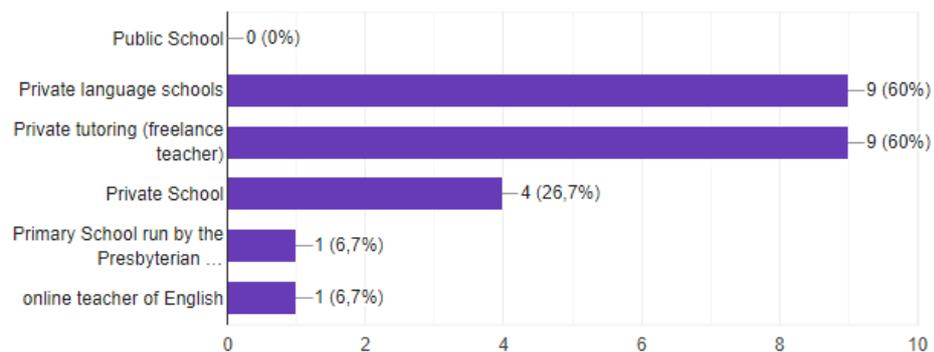
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSePqME_fRue7C9E5xgSbr4Tm5GRU15minn5GRPb3pM_fgEWDQ/viewform

eight of them (53,3%) are 21-30 years old, three of them (20%) are 31-40, three (20%) are 41-50 and only one of them (6,7%) is 61 (Question 2). Concerning their academic qualifications, the respondents are highly qualified; six of the participant teachers (40%) are in the process of acquiring a Master's degree, five of them (33,3%) hold a Bachelor's degree, three of them (20%) hold a Master's degree and only one (6,7%) is in the process of acquiring a PhD degree (Question 3). Regarding the years of experience, five of them (33,3%) have a teaching experience of 0-5 years, four of them (26,7%) of 11-15 years, three of them (20%) of 15+ years and the rest of the three (20%) of 6-10 years (Question 4).

The current employment of the teachers can be described as following; nine of them (60%) work at private language schools, nine of them (60%) are private tutors – freelance teachers, while four of them (26,7%) work at private schools; lastly, one of them (6,7%) works at a Presbyterian Primary School and one of them (6,7%) teaches English online (Question 5).

5. Current employment (you can tick more than one)

15 απαντήσεις



Graph. 1 “Teachers’ current employment”

4.2 Presentation of the Findings

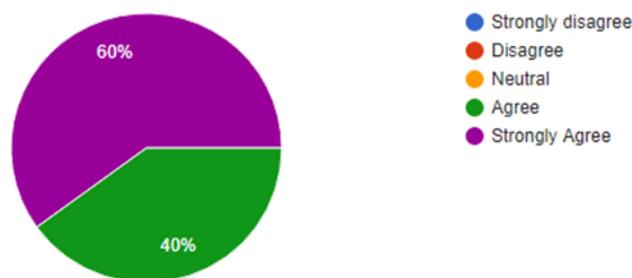
4.2.1 Voki and Speechace's Impact on Teachers' Professional Development

Research Question 1: “Are the EFL teachers who work in Greece and abroad willing to incorporate the use of Voki and Speechace in their teaching and to what extent?”

This research question can be firstly correlated with the findings of question 19, in which it can be shown that all fifteen teachers either “*Strongly Agree*” or “*Agree*” with the fact that Voki and Speechace were beneficial to them and thus they would recommend them to other colleagues.

19. I would recommend Voki and Speechace to a colleague

15 απαντήσεις

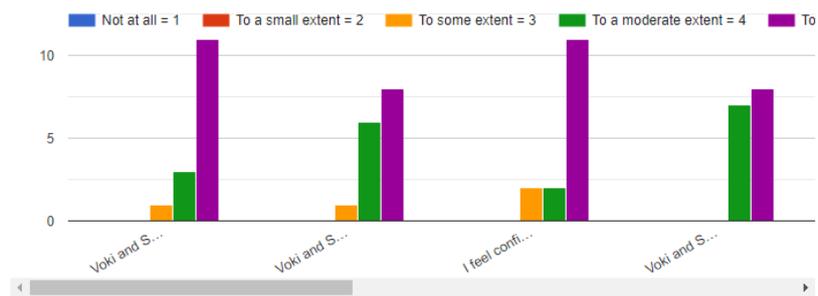


Graph. 2 “Recommending Voki and Speechace to a colleague”

Also, the results collected from question fourteen (Graph 3) show that the two pronunciation tools actually contributed in improving the teaching procedure. Specifically, the vast majority of the teachers – eleven of them, answered that Voki and Speechace contributed to teaching procedure “*To a large extent = 5*”, six of the participants said that they contributed “*To a moderate extent = 4*”, whereas only one admitted that they contributed “*To some extent = 3*” and one “*To a small extent*” as far as pronunciation is concerned. From the demographics of question 14 it is obvious that eleven out of fifteen participants said that they think these tools

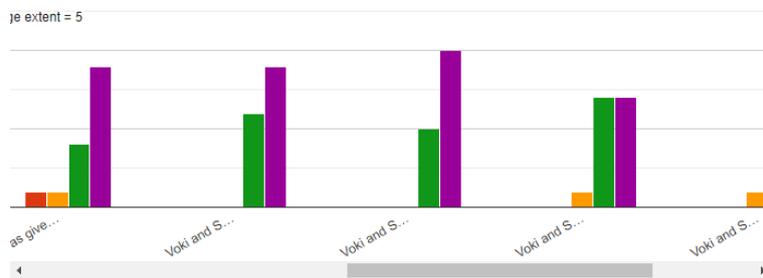
are easy to be integrated in their teaching practices; they also feel confident in their ability to integrate Voki and Speechace into their teaching process and additionally, they realize that through pronunciation technology they are even more encouraged to start searching for innovative learning methodologies.

14. To what extent do you feel that Voki and Speechace have contributed to improve teaching procedure?



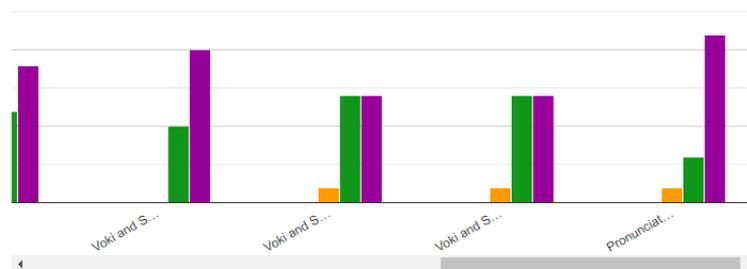
■ Not at all = 1 ■ To a small extent = 2 ■ To some extent = 3 ■ To a moderate extent = 4 ■ To a large extent = 5

14. To what extent do you feel that Voki and Speechace have contributed to improve teaching procedure?



■ Not at all = 1 ■ To a small extent = 2 ■ To some extent = 3 ■ To a moderate extent = 4 ■ To a large extent = 5

14. To what extent do you feel that Voki and Speechace have contributed to improve teaching procedure?

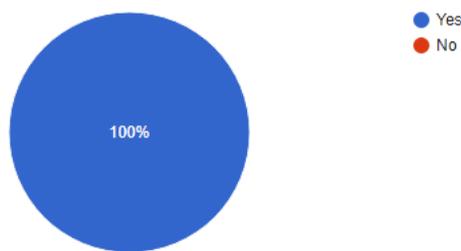


Graph. 3 “Voki and Speechace to improve teaching procedure”

The important thing that can be noticed in the question 27 (Graph. 4) is that all fifteen participating teachers (100%) gained something as a person or a teacher through their participation in the particular research action. This means that both Voki and Speechace proved to be beneficial to teachers' development. Also, in question 15 (Graph. 5) it is obvious that all the participating teachers agreed that these two pronunciation tools can contribute in developing other language aspects/skills, and especially, the skill of listening (100%) and vocabulary (86,7%) (Graph 5).

27. I gained something as a person/teacher through my participation in this investigation.

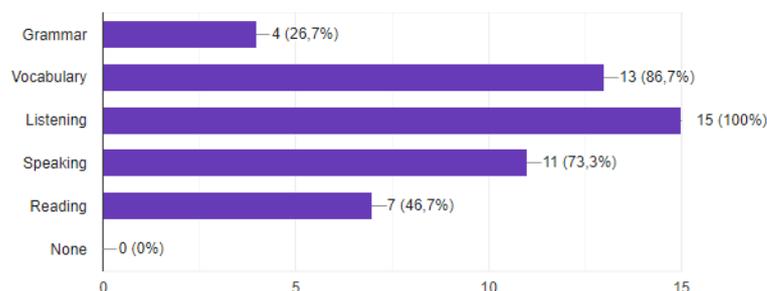
15 απαντήσεις



Graph. 4 “Teachers’ overall impression on their participation in Voki and Speechace’s investigation”

15. Which other language aspects/skills do you think that Voki and Speechace can contribute to develop in the EFL classroom? (you can tick more than one. If your answer is none you can skip the next question)

15 απαντήσεις



Graph. 5 “Voki and Speechace’s contribution to other language skills development”

The following statements confirm the aforementioned percentages:

“Therefore, I could say that these tools helped all learners in spite of their learning style. For instance, visual learners loved the appearance of the avatars and wanted to imitate their facial expressions and mouth movements, while aural learners also tried to imitate their intonation, rhythm, etc. My students’ listening skills were enhanced the most. As I am not a native speaker myself, they were benefited from the extra exposure to native-like pronunciation.”

“We all enjoyed it very much and I will absolutely integrate it in my teaching practices”

“I would try to integrate these tools in the future since I realized how beneficial technology can be in education!”

“Voki’s game-like environment not only attracted but also sustained my students’ interest and resulted in Implicit Learning.”

Furthermore, in Questions 28 and 29 (Graph 6 and 7) the teachers answered that technology can play an important role in education and help instructors conduct a lesson in a more fun way. They stated that Voki and Speechace proved to be very beneficial both to themselves and their learners. To conclude, this Voki and Speechace action research project had a great impact on the participants (students and teachers alike), as it can be shown by the comments of the participant teachers in the particular questions underneath.

28. Please explain, based on your previous answer

14 απαντήσεις

I am keen on using digital tools during my lessons. I have already used 'Natural Reader' to have more text pronounced. These tools inspire me to search for similar tools time by time. I am really grateful to take part in this investigation.

Improved my students' speaking skills

I had the chance to try out a new app, and see how my learners responded. I was amazed by how engaged they were and how confident using a totally new app.

Students of different learning types require different methodologies/materials/approaches to EFL learning. Voki and Speechace provided many opportunities for acoustic learners to develop their skills and pronunciation.

It helped me find a more interesting and helpful way to teach pronunciation to my students

Through my experience working with Voki and Speechace I found out how helpful the use of technology can be at teaching pronunciation.

Both Voki and Speechace were very useful tools that helped me make the lesson more efficient and effective to my students

Yes, because it made me be able to pronounce correctly words I have difficulty in pronouncing.

I wasn't aware of the fact that there are such motivating tools that can be used to improve pronunciation in class

Graph. 6 “Teachers’ comments on their participation in Voki and Speechace’s action research project”

29. Please provide any other comments/thoughts/ideas you may have towards Voki and Speechace’s further integration in the EFL classroom

11 απαντήσεις

It could be used with shy students who are afraid to talk for the teaching of speaking.

Voki could provide us with dialogues ready to use

It is worth browsing similar programmes or their developed versions.

Very useful tool

It is very motivating for young learners who love being engaged with technology and role-simulation.

All of my students thought that Voki and Speechace is fun and easy to use and I couldn't agree more, as it was really effective in improving my students' pronunciation skills.

ICT can indeed contribute to education in an effective manner. The particular pronunciation tools can be innovative teaching approaches in the EFL classroom

The tools were good in improving speech and listening skills.

Using them can be implemented in higher levels when and where there are specific issues concerning pronunciation.

learners have the chance to explore any subject area through an efficient and free source which is available at any time and anywhere.

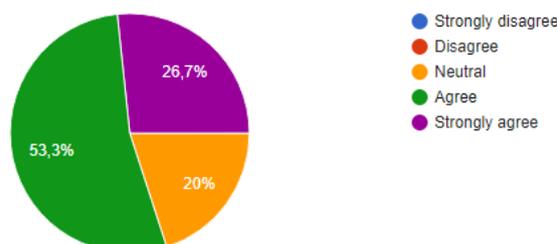
Graph. 7 “Voki and Speechace’s further integration in the EFL context”

Research Question 2: “Can digital tools (such as Voki and Speechace) help teachers in developing a deeper understanding of how to teach pronunciation in EFL classroom?”

The implementation of Voki and Speechace in EFL classroom had a positive impact on teachers’ professional development. Specifically, the results from questions 16 and 17 (Graph. 8 and 9) show that the majority of the instructors admitted that these two pronunciation tools gave them the opportunity to comprehend better of the way English pronunciation functions and therefore become able to transmit and teach it more efficiently to learners. Concerning the results from Question 16 (Graph. 8), it is obvious that the majority of teachers – eight of them (53,3%) “*Agree*” with the fact that the two pronunciation tools gave them a better understanding of how pronunciation can function and also helped them to present it in a more effective way to their students. Additionally, four of them (26,7%) “*Agree*” with the previous percentage, while three of them (20%) have a neutral attitude. In a sequel, the findings of Question 17 (Graph. 9) indicate that nine out of fifteen teachers (60%) “*Agree*” with the fact that these tools proved to be helpful since they managed to teach English pronunciation in a more effective way. Five of them (33,3%) “*Strongly agree*” with this statement, while only one of them (6,7%) is neutral.

16. Voki and Speechace gave me a better understanding of how pronunciation functions and present it better to my learners

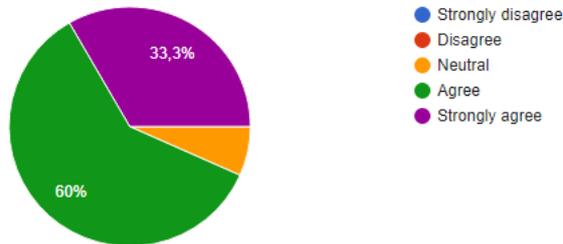
15 απαντήσεις



Graph. 8 “Voki and Speechace to helping teachers understand English pronunciation”

17. The integration of Voki and Speechace help to teach pronunciation more efficiently to my learners

15 απαντήσεις

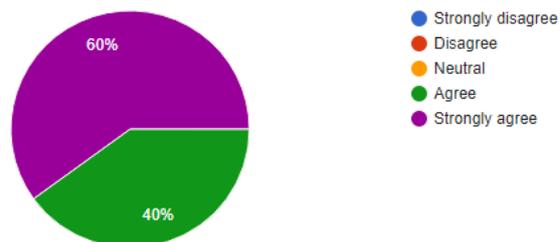


Graph. 9 “Voki and Speechace to help in efficient teaching of pronunciation”

Also, concerning especially the findings of question 18 (Graph. 10), these tools provided teachers with more time to focus on teaching concrete sounds. More precisely, the majority of the participating teachers – nine of them (60%) “*Strongly agree*” with the fact that Voki and Speechace can give them extra time to practice concrete sounds in English inside the class whereas another 40% (six teachers) also “*Agree*” with this statement.

18. The integration of Voki and Speechace gave me more time to practice concrete English sounds with my students

15 απαντήσεις



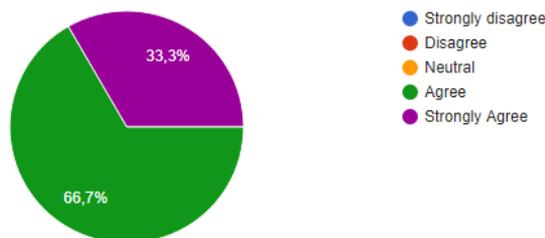
Graph. 10 “Voki and Speechace to helping practicing concrete sounds in English”

Lastly, regarding Questions 20 and 21 (Graph. 11 and 12), it could be claimed that these particular pronunciation tools were actually proved to be really beneficial to teachers’ professional development since they gave them the chance to learn new things about teaching

English pronunciation. Through this experience they learned something new and mainly they learned how to use new tools in their classroom. In addition, the two pronunciation tools proved to be useful for teachers’ professional development as it is obvious from the findings of question 20. In this question, ten participants out of the total (66,7%) “*Agree*” with the statement that the tools were useful for teachers’ professional development, while the rest five (33,3%) also “*Strongly Agree*”. The findings of the question 21 show that the tools also assisted teachers in learning more about English pronunciation as well as how to teach it to their learners.

20. Voki and Speechace were useful tools for my professional development since I learned how to integrate these tools in my lessons

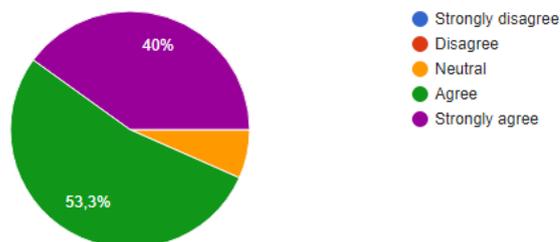
15 απαντήσεις



Graph. 11 “Voki and Speechace integration into EFL class”

21. Voki and Speechace helped me learn more about English pronunciation and how to teach it to my students

15 απαντήσεις



Graph. 12 “Voki and Speechace to helping teachers learn more about pronunciation in English”

The above teachers' perceptions were also expressed in the following words:

"I was more like an instructor to them and helped them when they needed me."

"Moreover, I have to admit that I also corrected minor pronunciation mistakes I tended to make."

"What is more, the tools helped me realize that although correct pronunciation fosters communication and conveyance of messages, general English (EFL) teachers are not trained in teaching pronunciation (as it is not covered on most CELTA or TEFL teacher training courses). It motivated me to search for relevant online seminars (about teaching English pronunciation to young learners) and grow as a teacher and as an English speaker."

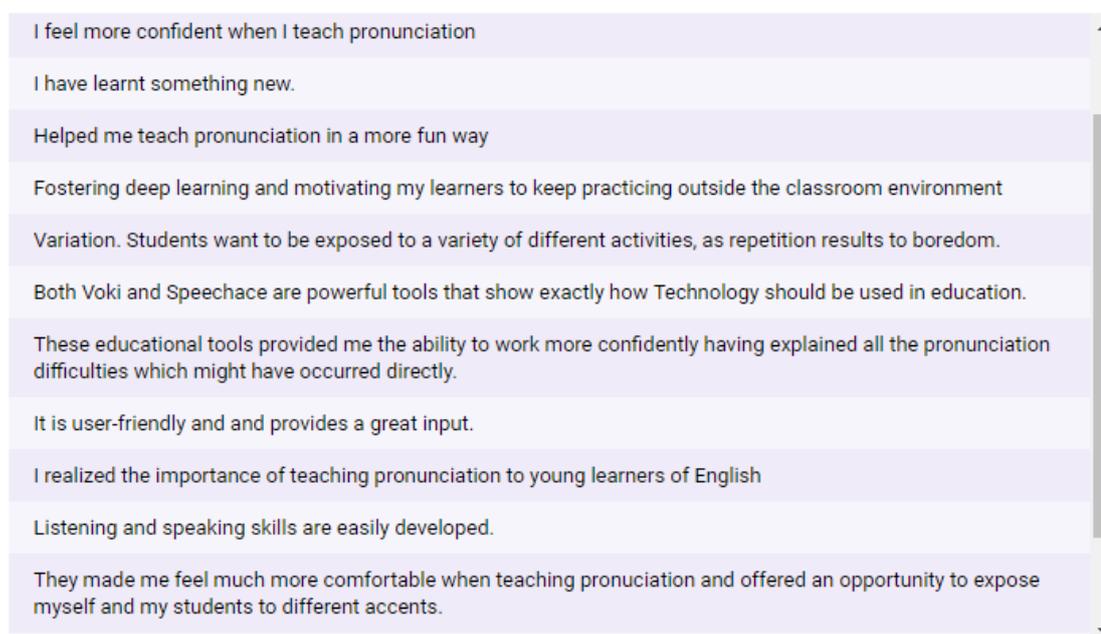
"As I am not a native speaker myself, they were benefited from the extra exposure to native-like pronunciation. Moreover, I have to admit that I also corrected minor pronunciation mistakes I tended to make. We used Voki across a wide range of newly introduced vocabulary, concerning FOOD, CLOTHES, the DAYS of the WEEK and the teaching of the Simple Past Tense. It was proven extremely helpful for teaching the pronunciation of 'complex' words such as 'vegetables', 'clothes', etc. where there is a huge gap between spelling and pronunciation. Generally speaking, Greek learners of English have a difficulty pronouncing complex English words, due to the fact that their mother-tongue is a transparent language and cannot understand all the underlying phonological rules and patterns."

"I should mention that the two pronunciation tools helped me see the teaching of pronunciation from another perspective. First of all, I didn't know of any pronunciation tool before using them and I used to teach pronunciation through the activities of the coursebook that most of the times are repetitive. I realized that they can be easily integrated in all levels and even in the smaller ones as a game, thus from now on I am definitely going to connect the pronunciation phenomenon of the book with Speechace and Voki!"

The comments in Graph. 13 (question 30) indicate that teachers learned something new through the implementation of Voki and Speechace in their class, feel more confident when they have to teach pronunciation, become able to motivate students and also become more familiar with ICT in education.

30. In your opinion, what was the most important contribution of Voki and Speechace to you as a teacher?

15 απαντήσεις



Graph. 13 “teachers’ comments on Voki and Speechace’s contribution to themselves”

The following comments confirm the above questionnaire results:

“I tend to strongly believe that ICT can actually be beneficial to learning English and assist teachers in conducting a more interesting and effective lesson which ensures that students do not get bored!”

“I think that all teachers should give it a go since it's something new and a great way for both parts to relax!! Thank you for reminding us that teaching can be fun!!”

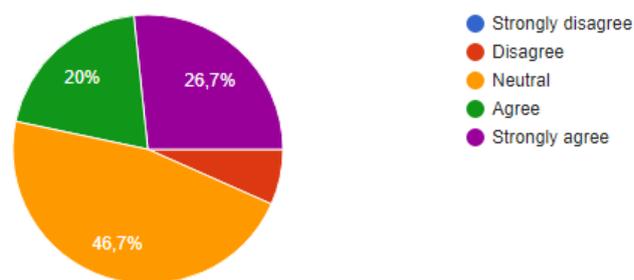
“When they know how to pronounce a word correctly, they seem to be able to hear it more clearly and easily. This motivated me to develop professionally and start finding ways to improve my teaching methods in order to cater for pronunciation teaching.”

“As an English teacher, I have always been interested in pronunciation teaching. But I tended to focus on more traditional methods such as drills. However, the latter’s repetitive use had made my students bored and the teaching tools I found online did not seem to be effective, as the learners were not interested in them. This was not the case with Voki though.”

However, as far as the question 25 is concerned (Graph. 14), the results show that Voki and Speechace failed to make the teachers feel more confident when they have to teach pronunciation to their learners, since most of them – six out of fifteen (46,7%) answered “Neutral”; four of them (26,7%) “Strongly agree” with the statement, only three (20%) “Agree” and there is one individual (6,7 %) who seems to “Disagree”.

25. Voki and Speechace made me more confident when I teach pronunciation to my learners

15 απαντήσεις



Graph. 14 “Voki and Speechace in helping instructors teach confidently”

Two of the teachers whom the researcher held an interview, when they were asked whether these two tools can make a teacher feel more confident when teaching pronunciation, they responded:

“I enjoyed the tools very much but in order to become more confident when we have to teach pronunciation I think that much more time and specific training – seminars or whatever, should be provided to us that focus on ways to teach pronunciation to learners.”

“However, I should mention that teaching English pronunciation is very important and sometimes challenging so I think that every teacher should be trained regularly in order to become more confident when teaching it. Voki and Speechace are great tools and did help me as a teacher to motivate my students and make my lesson more effective and fun but in order to be fully confident, more training should be offered to teachers exclusively.”

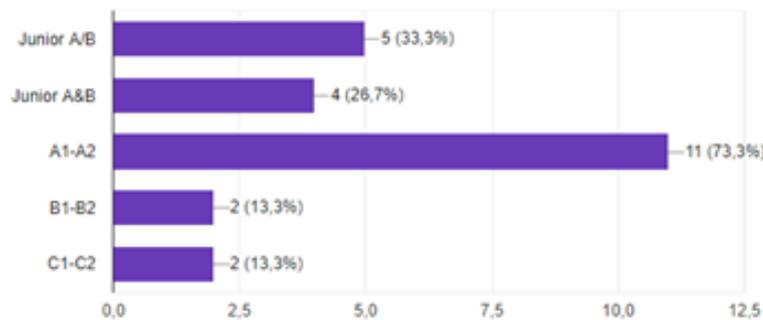
4.2.2 Voki and Speechace’s Impact on Learners’ Improvement

Research question 3: “To what extent can Voki and Speechace increase learners’ motivation and interest towards the use of English, according to teachers’ opinion?”

To begin with, Graph. 15 in question 11 depicts the level of class in which Voki and Speechace were implemented. Specifically, the majority of the participants - eleven of them (73,3%) applied them to A1-A2 level, five of them (33,3%) to Junior A/B, four of them (26,7%) to Junior A&B, while two (13,3%) to B1-B2 and another two of them (13,3%) to C1-C2 level (Question 11). Thus, it could be argued that pronunciation needs to be taught even from the early stages of acquiring English language and that young students are more likely to improve their pronunciation than the older learners.

11. What is the level of the class you implemented Voki and Speechace?
(you can tick more than one)

15 απαντήσεις

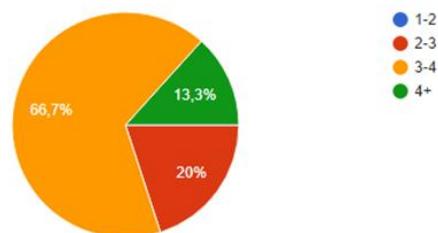


Graph. 15 “Class levels and Voki and Speechace implementation”

Demographics in question 12 (Graph. 16) present the results of the teaching hours devoted to Voki and Speechace application. The biggest majority – ten of the teachers (66,7%) implemented the tools more than 3 hours, three of them (20%) up to 3 hours and finally, two of them (13,3%) for more than 4 hours. It can be inferred that the majority of the instructors integrated Voki and Speechace in a sufficient number of lessons based on the suggested guidelines for the current action research.

12. How many teaching hours were devoted to Voki and Speechace implementation?

15 απαντήσεις



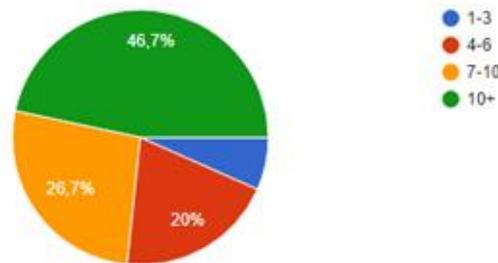
Graph. 16 “Teaching hours of Voki and Speechace implementation”

Regarding the students that the two pronunciation tools were applied, the majority of the participating teachers – seven (46,7%) answered that they applied them to more than 10

students, four of them (26,7%) to 7-10, three of them (20%) to 4-6, while only one (6,7%) applied them to 1-3 students (Question 13, Graph. 17) and thus the sample of the students that the two tools were applied was quite sufficient.

13. How many students have you introduced Voki and Speechace to?

15 απαντήσεις

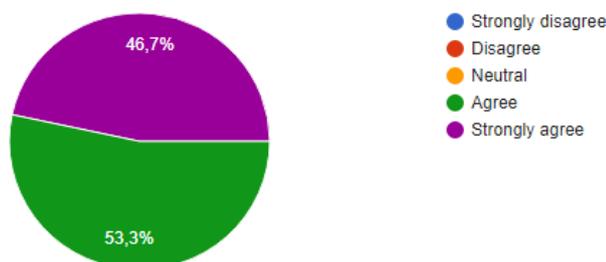


Graph. 17 “Number of students and Voki and Speechace implementation”

Concerning the results from question 22 (Graph. 18), it could be stated that all the participants are in favor of the fact that Voki and Speechace motivated students to participate more in the class, since eight of the teachers (53,3%) “*Agree*” and the rest seven (46,7%) “*Strongly Agree*”. The findings prove that the particular tools are indeed an effective means that can motivate learners and increase their interest towards the use of English language to a great extent. Question 23 (Graph. 19) also verifies the above statement. Precisely, the total of the participants answered that Voki and Speechace can increase learners’ motivation, since eight of them (53,3%) “*Strongly Agree*” while the rest seven (46,7%) “*Agree*”. Obviously, the results from both questions prove that students’ motivation increases through the use of these pronunciation tools.

22. The integration of Voki and Speechace motivated my students and made them more engaged in the lesson

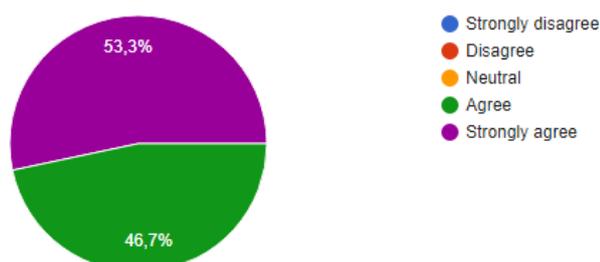
15 απαντήσεις



Graph. 18 “Voki and Speechace and learners’ motivation”

23. My students were motivated to learn English sounds with Voki and Speechace

15 απαντήσεις



Graph 19 “Students’ motivation to practice English sounds”

These results are further supported by the instructors’ comments:

“Their fantasy is infinite. Speechace was liked by everybody... It raised the competitive spirit and it motivated them to try the pronunciation again and again”

“They were so motivated that their scores were really high!”

“My students were enthusiastic about these tools! They saw our lesson as a game – especially when they played with the avatar”

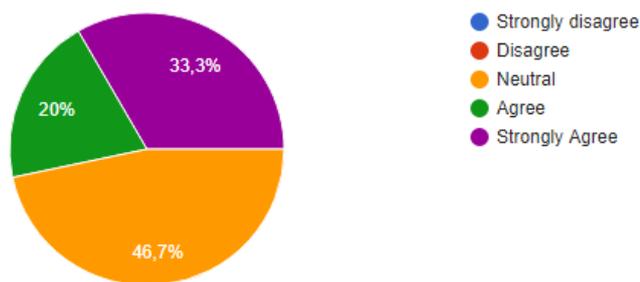
“They were keen on creating their own avatar and playing with it. When I asked them what they liked most, they said that they felt independent since they had the chance to practice English sounds via this particular tool on their own”

“In conclusion even the limited free versions had a great extent of motivation and they proved to be useful elements of a digital English lesson.”

On the other hand, regarding the findings of question 24 (Graph 20), these show that learners were not very eager as to practice their pronunciation via Voki and Speechace on their own outside the class. The majority of the teachers – seven of them (46,7%) answered *“Neutral”* and this means the students were not willing to practice extra. Seven of them (33,3%) *“Strongly Agree”* with the fact that their learners were keen on further practicing pronunciation, whereas only three (20%) *“Agree”*.

24. My students were keen on practicing their pronunciation via Voki and Speechace on their own outside the class

15 απαντήσεις



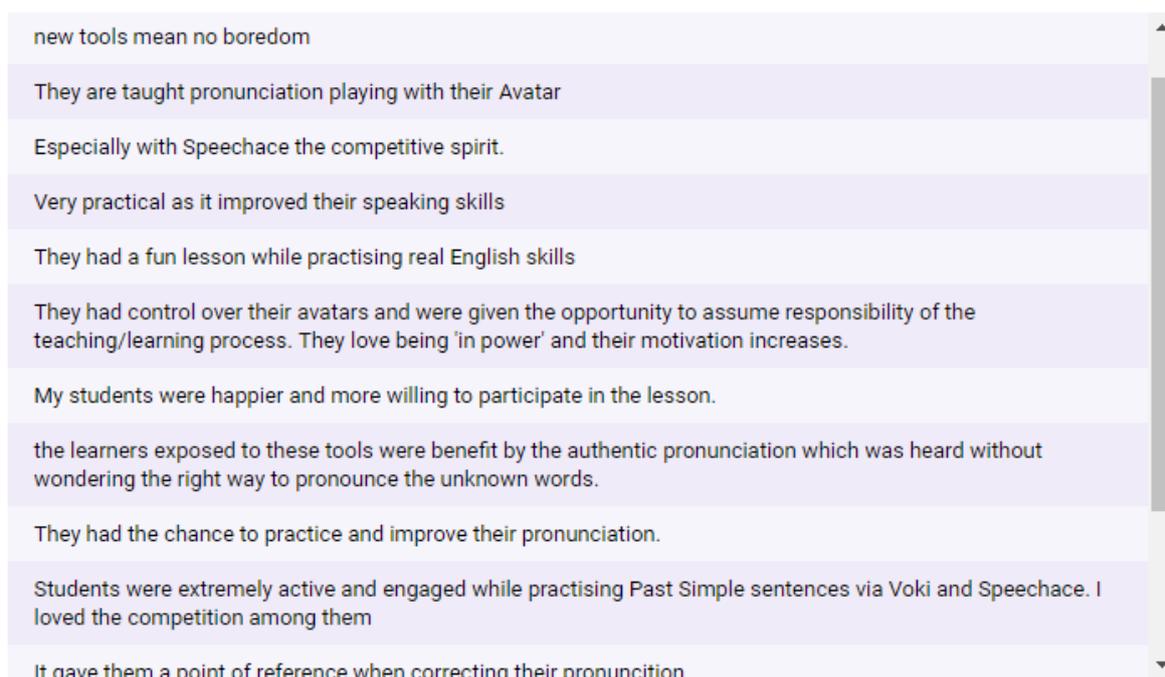
Graph 20 “Students’ motivation and practice Voki and Speechace outside class”

Regarding the findings of the last open questions 31 and 32 (Graph. 21 and 22) it could be stated that the feedback taken concerning the application of Voki and Speechace is positive. Additionally, it can be shown that these pronunciation tools were truly beneficial not only because they enhanced learners’ pronunciation but also, they boosted teachers’ professional

development. Learners had the opportunity to practice English sounds in correlation with the vocabulary or grammar phenomenon they had been taught and also, improve other learning skills, such as listening and speaking. Last but not least, the two tools assisted learners in becoming more engaged in the lesson, motivated and eager to participate in activities or tasks inside the class more easily. All in all, the answers indicated that pronunciation can be taught in a more fun, easy and effective way to students via technology and especially these pronunciation tools and that students were active and happier to participate, since they learned through a gamification-like way avoiding any chance to resulting in boredom.

31. In your opinion, what was the most important contribution of Voki and Speechace to your learners?

15 απαντήσεις



new tools mean no boredom
They are taught pronunciation playing with their Avatar
Especially with Speechace the competitive spirit.
Very practical as it improved their speaking skills
They had a fun lesson while practising real English skills
They had control over their avatars and were given the opportunity to assume responsibility of the teaching/learning process. They love being 'in power' and their motivation increases.
My students were happier and more willing to participate in the lesson.
the learners exposed to these tools were benefit by the authentic pronunciation which was heard without wondering the right way to pronounce the unknown words.
They had the chance to practice and improve their pronunciation.
Students were extremely active and engaged while practising Past Simple sentences via Voki and Speechace. I loved the competition among them
It gave them a point of reference when correctina their pronunciation

Graph. 21 “Voki and Speechace’s contribution to learners”

32. Did you integrate Voki and Speechace in your lessons in correlation with any specific coursebook/grammar phenomenon/syntax or vocabulary?

15 απαντήσεις



we practised countable and uncountable nouns
With our daily vocabulary
Yes.
Yes
No, we tried it out as freer practice
The programs were used in correlation with different materials based on the needs of different groups of students (in terms of language level and age). They proved very successful in supplementing my lessons and serving the learning objectives set, as far as teaching vocabulary and pronunciation are concerned.
No
The tools were used in correlation with webkids 1 coursebook and companion.
I mostly used it with A senior students, while we were practicing some "Everyday English" dialogues from the 15 1 coursebook by Express Publishing.
Yes. Past Simple (regular and irregular verbs) - Young Stars & Portal 1
Yes and especially in comprehension reading.

Graph. 22 “Correlating Voki and Speechace practice and EFL context”

Question 32 (Graph. 22) can be correlated with the above statements of the participating teachers:

“We used Voki across a wide range of newly introduced vocabulary, concerning FOOD, CLOTHES, the DAYS of the WEEK and the teaching of the Simple Past Tense. It was proven extremely helpful for teaching the pronunciation of ‘complex’ words such as ‘vegetables’, ‘clothes’, etc. where there is a huge gap between spelling and pronunciation... Moreover, I used these tools in teaching the Simple Past and the differences in pronouncing the –ed suffix. (played VS worked VS ended VS laughed etc.) The tools made it much easier for the students to classify the past tense- verbs under the categories: /t/, /d/, unvoiced and voiced.”

“In Voki, I entered derivatives in order for them to better understand the changes in pronunciation between verbs and nouns, such as inform-information, advertise-advertisement etc. In the next two lessons, I used Speechace and I selected "Level 1" to practice irregular verbs and Simple Past! Especially the section with the sentences where they had to think of the correct answer and then record their voice was really challenging!”

4.3 Discussion of the Findings

In general, the results show that the feedback was very positive and the participating teachers successfully implemented the integration of Voki and Speechace in their teaching process. Given the fact that nowadays most of the schools in private sector are equipped with a computer or an interactive board, the integration of these pronunciation tools into the EFL class was much easier and feasible. Most of the participating teachers were already familiar with educational technology and innovative methods and this made them more confident in the use of the computer. Furthermore, teachers operated as instructors in the class communicating with their learners who became independent individuals and thus learning facilitators. What should be mentioned here is also the fact that, even though most of the teachers did not use to devote much time to teaching English pronunciation in class, they realized how important this is. Actually, they had the opportunity to gain a deeper insight of how pronunciation should be taught and integrated into the EFL context; and this integration can be even more fun and effective if it is presented in a game-like way which makes learning more interesting and efficient. Thus, it could be noted that this experiment applying two pronunciation tools in the EFL class was actually a rewarding experience for the participating teachers to the point of further applying it in their teaching process and recommending it to other colleagues. Equally important is the fact that the use of Voki and Speechace was a means that made learners more engaged in the lesson, motivated them to participate in activities and tasks and made them responsible of their own learning of English. To conclude, it seems to be that this experience was a positive one which benefited not only the learners' improvement of English pronunciation but also teachers' professional development.

Conclusion

In the particular chapter, the results of the quantitative and qualitative research method instruments were employed and analyzed in detail in the current study in order to provide accurate answers to the research questions. In the following chapter, a discussion on the implications of the findings will be attempted and critically unfolded in order to shed light on the investigation purpose: Voki and Speechace integration in the EFL class.

Chapter 5

Implications, Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

Introduction

The purpose of this last chapter is to critically discuss and elaborate on the findings of the current research in order to provide verified and theoretically based answers to the research questions posed in section 3.1; therefore, it tests the hypothesis that the integration of Voki and Speechace in the EFL class can be beneficial both to learners' improvement and teachers' professional development. Furthermore, reference to the limitations of the study is made and the chapter ends with some teaching implications and suggestions for further research.

5.1 Critical analysis of the Research Findings

According to the findings, the total of the participating teachers in this action research project felt that Voki and Speechace intervention had positively influenced their students' motivation and their own teaching practices.

5.1.2 Implications of the Current Research

To begin with, it could be stated that both Voki and Speechace's intervention managed to increase students' engagement in the learning process, as learners seemed to be more eager to participate in the lesson and specifically practice English pronunciation through these two

tools. This result derives from the fact that these tools give the ability to their users to practice English language on an appealing and more innovative environment, which catches their attention and stimulates their interest as almost all the instructors responded.

The questionnaire's results along with the participants' comments also implied that the integration of Voki and Speechace facilitated the learning process and specifically the acquisition of concrete English sounds. The instructors argued that especially Speechace integration created a positive competitive spirit among learners and thus made them even more motivated to participate in the lesson. It was also proved that both tools were not only useful and beneficial to learners' pronunciation improvement, but also to their listening skills, as all the fifteen teachers admitted. All in all, a positive classroom atmosphere was built contributing in learners' enhancement of motivation.

Based on the participating teachers' perceptions, they were all willing to incorporate Voki and Speechace in their future teaching process, as they all gained something special through this experience. Thus, these tools not only did they help learners to improve their pronunciation, but also assisted instructors in learning new things and mainly incorporating ICT in EFL class, realizing how effective and efficient it can be. Even though the majority of the participating teachers admitted that these tools did not assist them as to be more confident when they teach pronunciation in class, they stated that Voki and Speechace proved to be useful for their personal professional development, since they learnt how to integrate the particular tools in the EFL context.

5.2 Limitations of the Research

At this point, a few limitations of the study need to be mentioned. It is a well-known fact that EFL teachers working especially at the public sector in Greece must follow the course

book provided by the foreign language school and most of the times they rarely have time to do anything extra. For this reason, the research sample size was limited since many EFL teachers around Greece were reluctant to experiment these two pronunciation tools due to the lack of time. Undoubtedly, this research should be conducted on a number of schools and private foreign language schools to possibly generalize the results in the context of Greece. Furthermore, the three-month-time, from January to late April, for the conduction of this action research project was constrained by the due date of the dissertation to examine the impact of Voki and Speechace on learners. What is more, the reliability of the data from teachers' unstructured discussions was mainly based on the participants' honest intentions. Consequently, it could be said that the research findings were partly incomplete distorting the validity of the analysis.

5.3 Suggestions for further Research

Since the limitations of the current action research have been analyzed, it should be noted that there is further room for ameliorating the reliability of the results extracted even though that the findings of the particular study were promising as well as encouraging towards the improvement of English pronunciation. Of course, further research should be conducted and especially on a larger scale; this would aim to ensure the reliability of the results and also provide more convincing results.

Further research should be also conducted to investigate teachers' beliefs and attitudes in public sector of Greece, since this action research took place in private sector only. Additionally, all fifteen teachers said that the two pronunciation tools – Voki and Speechace, helped learners to improve not only their pronunciation but additional skills, such as listening;

therefore, further research could be conducted in order to prove the extent that the particular tools can enhance learners' listening skills.

Another recommendation would be the time expansion of the research, for instance, on an annual basis to fully unfold the potential of the two pronunciation tools. This way EFL teachers could be more flexible to apply Voki and Speechace for long without being confined by fixed timetables and deadlines. Instead, they can combine grammar or lexis they teach in class using Voki and Speechace.

Even though the findings of the current research showed that there was a positive feedback regarding these online pronunciation tools, ICT in education is still a controversial issue. In other words, the researcher addressed to three groups on Facebook; two of them consist of members who are EFL teachers abroad and the third group EFL teachers in Greece (Appendix C). Much to the researcher's dismay, only two members of the foreign groups were willing to participate in the research, while only one individual from the Greek group was eager to assist the researcher. Taking into consideration that the two EFL groups consist of 49.832 and 72.375 members each and the Greek group 21.009 members, the correspondence was minimum.

In addition to that, concerning the public sector in Greece and as far as the foreign language schools are concerned, it is well known the fact that the time EFL teachers have in class is very limited; thus, there is not plenty of time for further activities and tasks but the course book's only. There is time pressure since the teachers have to assess learners, introduce the new vocabulary and the grammar phenomenon, practice it in class and assign homework. Activities and tasks are more when learners are getting ready to sit exams, like those providing by Cambridge and Michigan universities – usually in levels of B2 and C2. Therefore, it is rational that time is usually not enough and teachers are afraid of introducing something new

in class. Taking this fact into account, it is logical that many of the teachers did not respond to the researcher's posts on Facebook groups. However, concerning the participating teachers it should be stated here that they were extremely collaborative, the communication with the researcher was brilliant and they all followed the instructions as the researcher showed.

In general, undoubtedly ICT is here to stay and can benefit education in many aspects, especially to acquiring a foreign language, as proved in the current research. Teachers must overcome any possible fear or hesitation to use technology in class and replace traditional teaching ways with innovative ones.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the findings of the quantitative and qualitative research method instruments were analyzed in order to provide sufficient answers to the research questions. So, the research's findings imply Voki and Speechace are some of the Web 2.0 tools which had positively affected learners' English pronunciation as well as teachers' professional development. These two pronunciation tools encouraged learners to participate in class and become more motivated towards the acquisition of English language. Despite that the findings were encouraging and promising enough, the limitations of this study should be taken into consideration and further research should be done related to the discussed issues.

Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this research was to investigate teachers' perceptions towards the effectiveness of two online pronunciation tools – Voki and Speechace - on EFL learners' development and teachers themselves through the implementation of an action research project. Specifically, fifteen EFL teachers around Greece and abroad participated in the current research by integrating Voki and Speechace in their lessons and then provided the researcher with valuable feedback. To secure validity and reliability of the results the researcher adopted two data collection instruments; in particular, she formed an online questionnaire and then conducted some unstructured discussions with the participating teachers via phone calls. Therefore, findings from both research methods were interpreted to enlighten the current study.

The findings of this action research were positive since the integration of Voki and Speechace increased learners' motivation and engagement in class and also boosted teachers' professional development. More precisely, the two pronunciation tools assisted learners in acquiring English sounds in a more fun and effective way. Voki provided them with the avatars which helped students learn through gamification; Speechace was a tool which provided them with automatic feedback every time they recorded their own voice giving them the chance to improve their pronunciation until they get the desirable result. Furthermore, the competitive spirit raised among learners was another asset of Speechace. Concerning the professional development of the teachers, it is obvious that they benefitted as well, since they became aware of new online tools which helped them teach in an efficient way and realize the importance of teaching English pronunciation in class.

All in all, it is hoped that the current study will be food for thought for future researchers who would like to explore further Voki and Speechace's potential, as a way to improve both teaching and learning process.

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Appendix A: Google Forms Questionnaire

Voki and Speechace to improve pronunciation: Questionnaire for EFL teachers

Dear colleagues,

Thank you for your willingness to participate in my dissertation research for my Master's degree in Sciences of Education and Lifelong Learning – ICT in Education at the University of Macedonia, Greece and integrate the web tools Voki and Speechace in your teaching procedure. This questionnaire aims at investigating your reflections concerning the effectiveness of Voki and Speechace towards improving English pronunciation. Specifically, it focuses on the way you perceive Voki and Speechace as learning tools that improve and develop learners' pronunciation in English, while facilitating your teaching practices. I would be more than grateful if you could spend a few minutes to respond, as it is vital to the completion of my dissertation. Please remember that the questionnaire is anonymous and the data received will be used only for the purposes of the research.

* Απαιτείται

Part 1: Teacher's Profile

1. 1. Gender *

Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη.

- Male
 Female
 Άλλο: _____

2. 2. Age group *

Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη.

- 21-30
 31-40
 41-50
 Άλλο: _____

3. 3. Academic qualifications *

Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη.

- University degree
 Master's degree
 Master's degree in progress
 PhD
 PhD in progress
 Άλλο: _____

4. 4. Years of teaching experience *

Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη.

- 0-5
 6-10
 11-15
 15+

5. 5. Current employment (you can tick more than one) *

Επιλέξτε όλα όσα ισχύουν.

- Public School
- Private language schools
- Private tutoring (freelance teacher)
- Private School
- Άλλο: _____

Part 2: Teaching Pronunciation in Class

6. 6. How much time is usually devoted to teaching pronunciation in class? *

Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη.

- 0 minutes
- 5 minutes
- 10 minutes
- 15+ minutes
- Άλλο: _____

7. 7. How often do you use technology when you teach pronunciation? *

Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη.

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

Part 3: Teachers' Perception Concerning Voki and Speechace Integration in EFL Lessons

8. 9. Were you aware of Voki and Speechace before the researcher's presentation? *

Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη.

- Yes
- No

9. 10. Is this the first time you have integrated Voki and Speechace in your lessons? *

Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη.

- Yes
- No

10. 11. What is the level of the class you implemented Voki and Speechace? (you can tick more than one) *

Επιλέξτε όλα όσα ισχύουν.

- Junior A/B
- Junior A&B
- A1-A2
- B1-B2
- C1-C2
- Άλλο: _____

11. 12. How many teaching hours were devoted to Voki and Speechace implementation? *

Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη.

- 1-2
- 2-3
- 3-4
- 4+
- Άλλο: _____

12. 13. How many students have you introduced Voki and Speechace to? *

Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη.

- 1-3
- 4-6
- 7-10
- 10+
- Άλλο: _____

13. 14. To what extent do you feel that Voki and Speechace have contributed to improve teaching procedure? *

Να εισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη ανά σειρά.

	Not at all = 1	To a small extent = 2	To some extent = 3	To a moderate extent = 4	To a large extent = 5
Voki and Speechace were easy to be integrated in my teaching practices/procedures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Voki and Speechace promote interaction between learners and me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel confident in my ability to integrate Voki and Speechace into my teaching	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Voki and Speechace help me act as a facilitator and not as a spoon-feeding teacher	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was given the incentive to further explore educational technology	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Voki and Speechace promote skills integration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Voki and Speechace help to practice various kinds of pronunciation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Voki and Speechace foster a relaxing atmosphere in the classroom	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Voki and Speechace are suitable for most learning styles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pronunciation technology encourage me to start searching for alternative /innovative learning methodologies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. 15. Which other language aspects/skills do you think that Voki and Speechace can contribute to develop in the EFL classroom? (you can tick more than one. If your answer is none you can skip the next question)

Επιλέξτε όλα όσα ισχύουν.

- Grammar
- Vocabulary
- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- None

15. 16. Voki and Speechace gave me a better understanding of how pronunciation functions and present it better to my learners *

Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη.

- Strongly disagree
 Disagree
 Neutral
 Agree
 Strongly agree

16. 17. The integration of Voki and Speechace help to teach pronunciation more efficiently to my learners *

Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη.

- Strongly disagree
 Disagree
 Neutral
 Agree
 Strongly agree

17. 18. The integration of Voki and Speechace gave me more time to practice concrete English sounds with my students *

Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη.

- Strongly disagree
 Disagree
 Neutral
 Agree
 Strongly agree

18. 19. I would recommend Voki and Speechace to a colleague *

Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη.

- Strongly disagree
 Disagree
 Neutral
 Agree
 Strongly Agree

19. 20. Voki and Speechace were useful tools for my professional development since I learned how to integrate these tools in my lessons *

Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη.

- Strongly disagree
 Disagree
 Neutral
 Agree
 Strongly Agree

20. 21. Voki and Speechace helped me learn more about English pronunciation and how to teach it to my students *

Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

21. 22. The integration of Voki and Speechace motivated my students and made them more engaged in the lesson *

Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

22. 23. My students were motivated to learn English sounds with Voki and Speechace *

Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

23. 24. My students were keen on practicing their pronunciation via Voki and Speechace on their own outside the class *

Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

24. 25. Voki and Speechace made me more confident when I teach pronunciation to my learners *

Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Part 4: Limitations to Implementing Voki and Speechace

25. 26. Were there any problems towards the use of Voki and Speechace? *

Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη ανά σειρά.

	Strongly disagree = 1	disagree = 2	Neither/not agree = 3	Agree = 4	Strongly agree = 5
Internet connection was poor	<input type="radio"/>				
Voki and Speechace are time-consuming	<input type="radio"/>				
Voki and Speechace made classroom management more difficult	<input type="radio"/>				
Voki and Speechace were difficult in use	<input type="radio"/>				
Voki and Speechace were difficult to me because I had realized I had inadequate knowledge concerning pronunciation	<input type="radio"/>				

Part 5: Overall Thoughts on Voki and Speechace

26. 27. I gained something as a person/teacher through my participation in this investigation. *

Να επισημαίνεται μόνο μία έλλειψη.

- Yes
 No

27. 28. Please explain, based on your previous answer

28. 29. Please provide any other comments/thoughts/ideas you may have towards Voki and Speechace's further integration in the EFL classroom

29. 30. In your opinion, what was the most important contribution of Voki and Speechace to you as a teacher?

30. 31. In your opinion, what was the most important contribution of Voki and Speechace to your learners?

31. 32. Did you integrate Voki and Speechace in your lessons in correlation with any specific coursebook/grammar phenomenon/syntax or vocabulary?

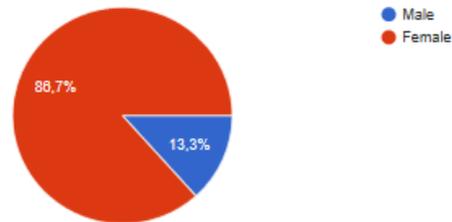
32. 33. You reached the end of your questionnaire. Please feel free to share any comments, thoughts or concerns that were not covered in the aforementioned questions. Thank you for participating!

Appendix B: Google Forms Questionnaire Findings

Part 1: Teacher's Profile

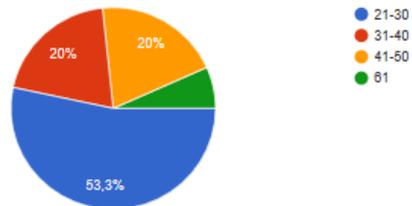
1. Gender

15 απαντήσεις



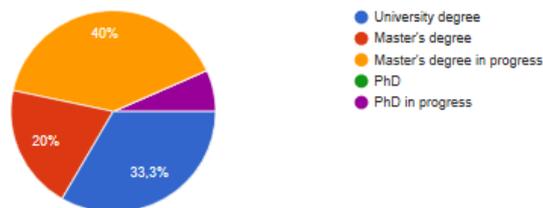
2. Age group

15 απαντήσεις



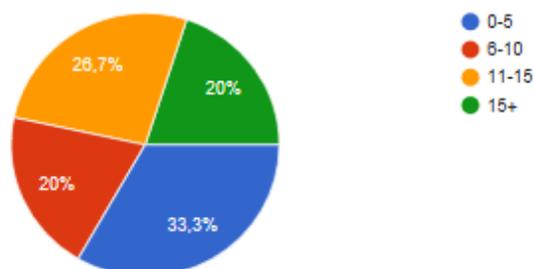
3. Academic qualifications

15 απαντήσεις



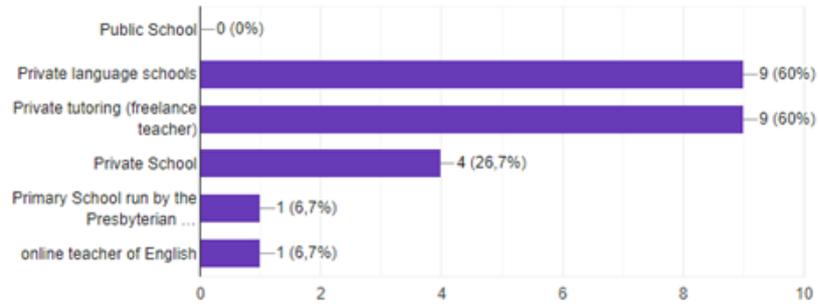
4. Years of teaching experience

15 απαντήσεις



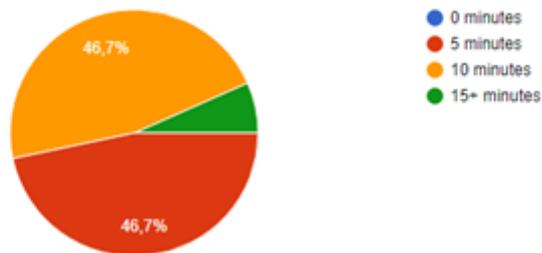
5. Current employment (you can tick more than one)

15 απαντήσεις



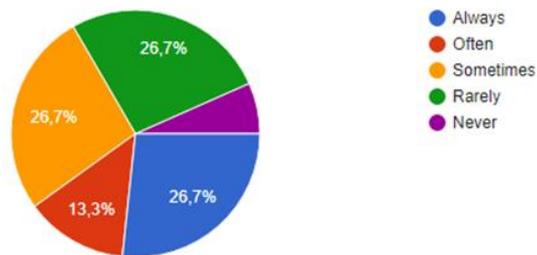
6. How much time is usually devoted to teaching pronunciation in class?

15 απαντήσεις



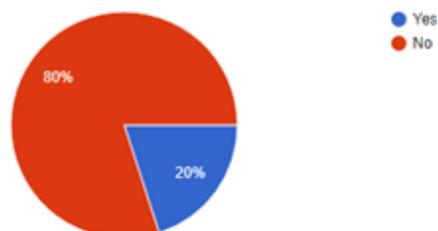
7. How often do you use technology when you teach pronunciation?

15 απαντήσεις



9. Were you aware of Voki and Speechace before the researcher's presentation?

15 απαντήσεις



10. Is this the first time you have integrated Voki and Speechace in your lessons?

15 απαντήσεις



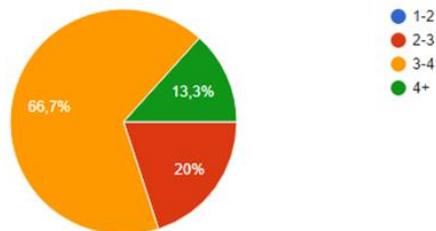
11. What is the level of the class you implemented Voki and Speechace? (you can tick more than one)

15 απαντήσεις



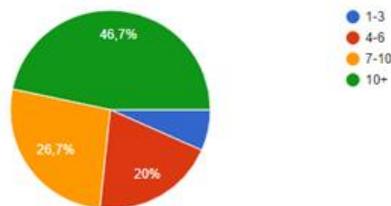
12. How many teaching hours were devoted to Voki and Speechace implementation?

15 απαντήσεις

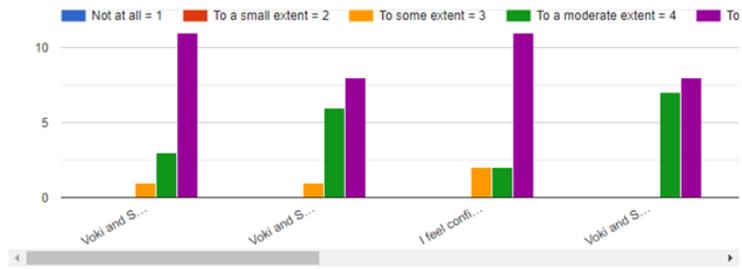


13. How many students have you introduced Voki and Speechace to?

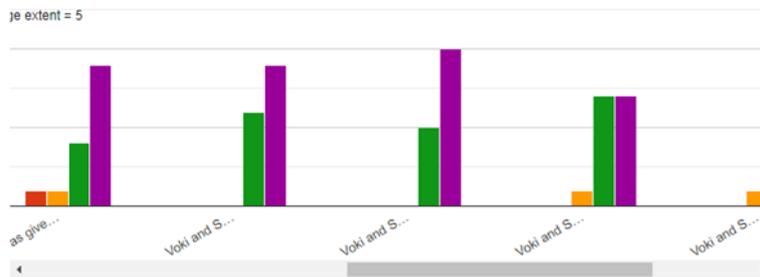
15 απαντήσεις



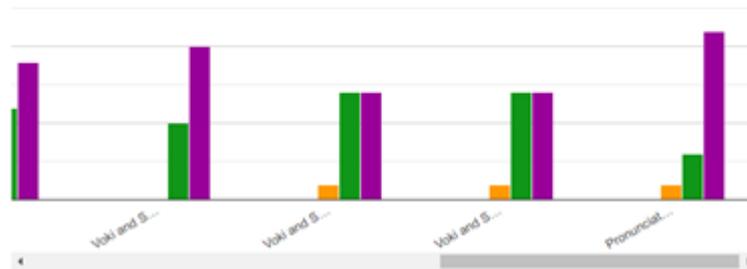
14. To what extent do you feel that Voki and Speechace have contributed to improve teaching procedure?



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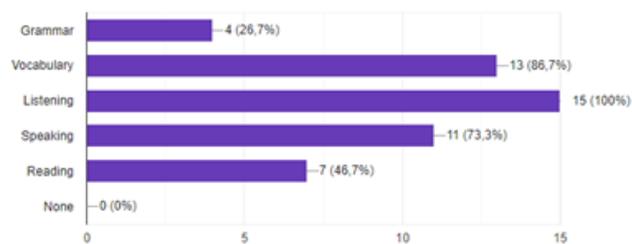


14. To what extent do you feel that Voki and Speechace have contributed to improve teaching procedure?



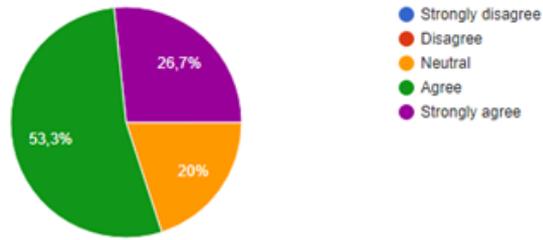
15. Which other language aspects/skills do you think that Voki and Speechace can contribute to develop in the EFL classroom? (you can tick more than one. If your answer is none you can skip the next question)

15 απαντήσεις



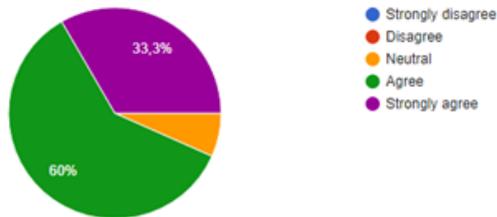
16. Voki and Speechace gave me a better understanding of how pronunciation functions and present it better to my learners

15 απαντήσεις



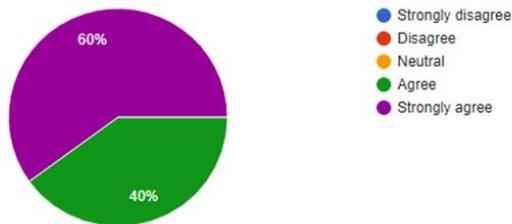
17. The integration of Voki and Speechace help to teach pronunciation more efficiently to my learners

15 απαντήσεις



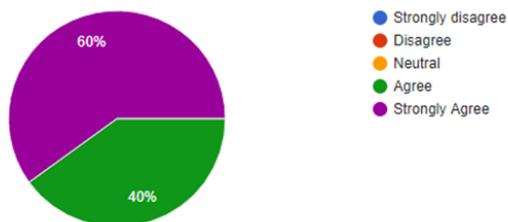
18. The integration of Voki and Speechace gave me more time to practice concrete English sounds with my students

15 απαντήσεις



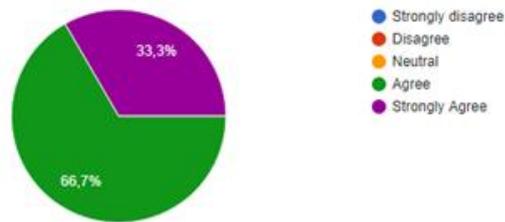
19. I would recommend Voki and Speechace to a colleague

15 απαντήσεις



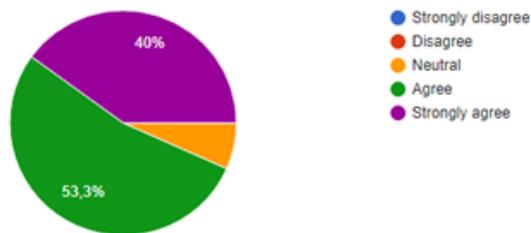
20. Voki and Speechace were useful tools for my professional development since I learned how to integrate these tools in my lessons

15 απαντήσεις



21. Voki and Speechace helped me learn more about English pronunciation and how to teach it to my students

15 απαντήσεις



22. The integration of Voki and Speechace motivated my students and made them more engaged in the lesson

15 απαντήσεις



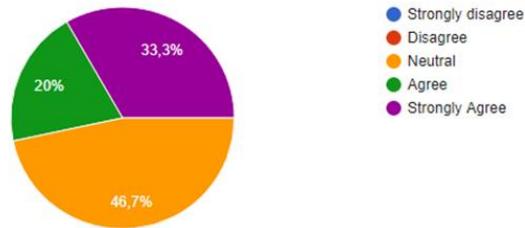
23. My students were motivated to learn English sounds with Voki and Speechace

15 απαντήσεις



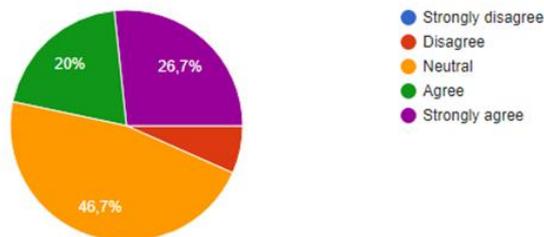
24. My students were keen on practicing their pronunciation via Voki and Speechace on their own outside the class

15 απαντήσεις

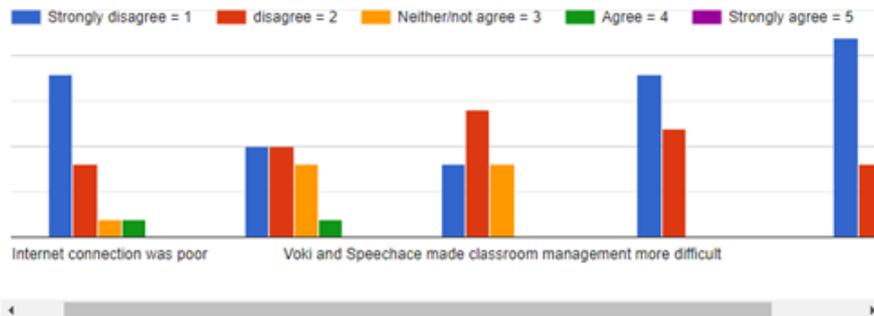


25. Voki and Speechace made me more confident when I teach pronunciation to my learners

15 απαντήσεις



26. Were there any problems towards the use of Voki and Speechace?



27. I gained something as a person/teacher through my participation in this investigation.

15 απαντήσεις



28. Please explain, based on your previous answer

14 απαντήσεις

I learned that technology can enhance the teaching of difficult skills, such as pronunciation.

I became aware of these tools

I have learned a new useful tool

I am keen on using digital tools during my lessons. I have already used 'Natural Reader' to have more text pronounced. These tools inspire me to search for similar tools time by time. I am really grateful to take part in this investigation.

Improved my students' speaking skills

I had the chance to try out a new app, and see how my learners responded. I was amazed by how engaged they were and how confident using a totally new app.

Students of different learning types require different methodologies/materials/approaches to EFL learning. Voki and Speechace provided many opportunities for acoustic learners to develop their skills and pronunciation.

It helped me find a more interesting and helpful way to teach pronunciation to my students

Through my experience working with Voki and Speechace I found out how helpful the use of technology can be at teaching pronunciation.

Both Voki and Speechace were very useful tools that helped me make the lesson more efficient and effective to

28. Please explain, based on your previous answer

14 απαντήσεις

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Both Voki and Speechace were very useful tools that helped me make the lesson more efficient and effective to my students

Yes, because it made me be able to pronounce correctly words I have difficulty in pronouncing.

I wasn't aware of the fact that there are such motivating tools that can be used to improve pronunciation in class.

great pronunciation tools to practice English sounds and therefore develop students' speaking skills.

I loved these tools! extremely useful and I am thinking of applying them in the future

29. Please provide any other comments/thoughts/ideas you may have towards Voki and Speechace's further integration in the EFL classroom

11 απαντήσεις

It could be used with shy students who are afraid to talk for the teaching of speaking.

Voki could provide us with dialogues ready to use

It is worth browsing similar programmes or their developed versions.

Very useful tool

It is very motivating for young learners who love being engaged with technology and role-simulation.

All of my students thought that Voki and Speechace is fun and easy to use and I couldn't agree more, as it was really effective in improving my students' pronunciation skills.

ICT can indeed contribute to education in an effective manner. The particular pronunciation tools can be innovative teaching approaches in the EFL classroom

The tools were good in improving speech and listening skills.

Using them can be implemented in higher levels when and where there are specific issues concerning pronunciation.

learners have the chance to explore any subject area through an efficient and free source which is available at any time and anywhere.

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learners have the chance to explore any subject area through an efficient and free source which is available at any time and anywhere.

kids loved the avatars in Voki whereas Speechace created a competition among students and made them become engaged in the lesson

30. In your opinion, what was the most important contribution of Voki and Speechace to you as a teacher?

15 απαντήσεις

I learned about a new tool that I can use on a regular basis to make the teaching of pronunciation more fun.

the use of technology makes everything easier

I feel more confident when I teach pronunciation

I have learnt something new.

Helped me teach pronunciation in a more fun way

Fostering deep learning and motivating my learners to keep practicing outside the classroom environment

Variation. Students want to be exposed to a variety of different activities, as repetition results to boredom.

Both Voki and Speechace are powerful tools that show exactly how Technology should be used in education.

These educational tools provided me the ability to work more confidently having explained all the pronunciation difficulties which might have occurred directly.

It is user-friendly and provides a great input.

I realized the importance of teaching pronunciation to young learners of English

Listening and speaking skills are easily developed

30. In your opinion, what was the most important contribution of Voki and Speechace to you as a teacher?

15 απαντήσεις

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I realized the importance of teaching pronunciation to young learners of English

Listening and speaking skills are easily developed.

They made me feel much more comfortable when teaching pronunciation and offered an opportunity to expose myself and my students to different accents.

I learned how to use two new extremely useful and interesting tools and I could say that I overcame my doubts whether technology should be integrated into English lessons.

I even realized that some words are pronounced differently than I used to pronounce them

31. In your opinion, what was the most important contribution of Voki and Speechace to your learners?

15 απαντήσεις

- That the students became aware of pronunciation, a skill which was quite neglected the previous years.
- new tools mean no boredom
- They are taught pronunciation playing with their Avatar
- Especially with Speechace the competitive spirit.
- Very practical as it improved their speaking skills
- They had a fun lesson while practising real English skills
- They had control over their avatars and were given the opportunity to assume responsibility of the teaching/learning process. They love being 'in power' and their motivation increases.
- My students were happier and more willing to participate in the lesson.
- the learners exposed to these tools were benefit by the authentic pronunciation which was heard without wondering the right way to pronounce the unknown words.
- They had the chance to practice and improve their pronunciation.
- Students were extremely active and engaged while practising Past Simple sentences via Voki and Speechace. I loved the competition among them

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- They had the chance to practice and improve their pronunciation.
- Students were extremely active and engaged while practising Past Simple sentences via Voki and Speechace. I loved the competition among them
- It gave them a point of reference when correcting their pronunciation
- They were learning through gamification, they didn,t even realise it was part of the lesson.
- they got excited with these new tools and online lessons became even more interesting and effective.
- kids worked independently and took initiative creating their avatar while I was an instructor providing assistance to them when needed

32. Did you integrate Voki and Speechace in your lessons in correlation with any specific coursebook/grammar phenomenon/syntax or vocabulary?

15 απαντήσεις

I integrated it in correlation with grammar, and especially with tenses, as a way of revision.

we practised countable and uncountable nouns

With our daily vocabulary

Yes.

Yes

No, we tried it out as freer practice

The programs were used in correlation with different materials based on the needs of different groups of students (in terms of language level and age). They proved very successful in supplementing my lessons and serving the learning objectives set, as far as teaching vocabulary and pronunciation are concerned.

No

The tools were used in correlation with webkids 1 coursebook and companion.

I mostly used it with A senior students, while we were practicing some "Everyday English" dialogues from the I5 1 coursebook by Express Publishing.

Yes. Past Simple (regular and irregular verbs) - Young Stars & Portal 1

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15 απαντήσεις

yes

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Yes. Past Simple (regular and irregular verbs) - Young Stars & Portal 1

Yes and especially in comprehension reading.

We mainly practised vocabulary

no. freely practice various topics - especially everyday dialogues, when practicing speaking skills.

yes, we practiced Present Simple based on the coursebook "Off the wall" - level A1 by Hillside Press.

33. You reached the end of your questionnaire. Please feel free to share any comments, thoughts or concerns that were not covered in the aforementioned questions. Thank you for participating!

6 απαντήσεις

Great initiative to touch pronunciation through these exciting tools! My students loved it, because it looked more like a game to them.

Let us share any new tools and see you at Brunel University.

Thank you

I really enjoyed applying Voki and Speechace to my English lesson and I am glad that I managed to teach Past Simple in a more fun way!

The use of Voki and Speechace in teaching vocabulary.

good luck Zoi! thanks

Appendix C: Snapshots from Facebook Groups – Addressing to EFL Teachers

TEACH ENGLISH ABROAD

https://www.facebook.com/groups/teflcommunity/permalink/10155140800697706/?comment_tracking

British Council Ελλά... AlfaVita - Εκπαιδευ... Ειδήσεις, επικαιρότ... English Language (... Games for Learning...

TEACH ENGLISH ABROAD

Closed group

About
Discussion
Your post
Announcements
Members
Events
Videos
Photos
Files
Recommendations

Search this group

Shortcuts
ΞΕΝΟΓΛΩΣΣΟΙ ΚΑ... [20+]
TEACH ENGLISH ABR...
TEFL, TESOL & E...

Zoi Samolada
15 February

hello everyone! I am an English Teacher in Greece and I am attending a M.Sc. in Education and now I am working on my thesis. I am conducting a research on English Pronunciation Development in EFL classroom. I need a sample of EFL teachers to apply 2 pronunciation web tools during their english lessons (really easy to apply and also fun) so that I can send them a questionnaire at the end of the research and get the results. if you are so kind as to help me conduct my research, pm for further details. I would really appreciate your response!

5 4 comments

Like Comment

Liam Day ★ Ok. PM me
Like · Reply · 4w

Babangida Musa Ok
Like · Reply · 4w

Rodrick Penjani Longwe OK
Like · Reply · 4w

Kirubakar Boomirajan Ok pinch me
Like · Reply · 4w

Write a comment...

TEFL, TESOL & English Teachers: Resources & Jobs

https://www.facebook.com/groups/1583546091866900/permalink/2251712828383553/?comment_tracking

British Council Ελλά... AlfaVita - Εκπαιδευ... Ειδήσεις, επικαιρότ... English Language (... Games for Learning...

TEFL, TESOL & English Teachers: Resources & Jobs

Public group

About
Discussion
Your post
Members
Events
Videos
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Files
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Search this group

Shortcuts
ΞΕΝΟΓΛΩΣΣΟΙ ΚΑΘΗΓ...
TEACH ENGLISH ABR...
TEFL, TESOL & Englis...
How to do this whole 'o...
ΠΡΟΚΗΡΥΞΕΙΣ ΑΣ... [20+]

Joined Notifications Share More

Zoi Samolada
15 February · Add topics

hello everyone! I am an English Teacher in Greece and I am attending a M.Sc. in Education and now I am working on my thesis. I am conducting a research on English Pronunciation Development in EFL classroom. I need a sample of EFL teachers to apply 2 pronunciation web tools during their english lessons (really easy to apply and also fun) so that I can send them a questionnaire at the end of the research and get the results. if you are so kind as to help me conduct my research, pm for further details. I would really appreciate your response!

Vicky Pehlivani, Yoko Nami and 5 others 2 comments

Like Comment Share

Trudie Jowett Are online teachers also able to help with this? 😊
Like · Reply · 4w

Zoi Samolada Trudie Jowett sure !!
Like · Reply · 4w

Write a reply...

Facebook browser window showing a group page for "ΞΕΝΟΓΛΩΣΣΟΙ ΚΑΘΗΓΗΤΕΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΕΛΛΑΔΑ". The browser address bar shows the URL: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/212484332104984/permalink/2364688096884586/>. The browser tabs include "British Council Ελλά...", "AlfaVita - Εκπαιδευ...", "Ειδήσεις, επικαιρότ...", "English Language (...)", and "Games for Learning".

The Facebook group header shows the name "ΞΕΝΟΓΛΩΣΣΟΙ ΚΑΘΗΓΗΤΕΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΕΛΛΑΔΑ" and a search icon. The group cover image features a blue background with a yellow smiley face, a red speech bubble, a green exclamation mark, a pink brain, and a white card with "Aa".

The group navigation menu on the left includes: About, Discussion, **Your post**, Announcements, Members, Events, Videos, Photos, and Files. A search bar for the group is also present.

Shortcuts for other groups are listed below the search bar:

- ΞΕΝΟΓΛΩΣΣΟΙ ΚΑΘΗΓ...
- TEACH ENGLISH ABR...
- TEFL, TESOL & E... (20+)
- How to do this whole 'o...
- ΠΡΟΚΗΡΥΞΕΙΣ ΑΣ... (20+)

The main post is by **Zoi Samolada**, dated 15 February. The text of the post is:

#english Καλησπέρα. Στα πλαίσια της διπλωματικής μου εργασίας για το μεταπτυχιακό το οποίο παρακολουθώ, διεξάγω έρευνα σχετικά με το "ICT and English pronunciation development in EFL classroom". Αυτό που χρειάζομαι είναι ένα δείγμα καθηγητών αγγλικής να αφιερώσουν λίγο χρόνο και να εφαρμόσουν 2 pronunciation tools (διασκεδαστικά και πολύ εύκολα στη χρήση) στην τάξη τους. Εάν έχετε τη διάθεση και την καλοσύνη να συνεισφέρετε στην έρευνα θα το εκτιμούσα πολύ. μπορείτε να μου στείλετε pm για details. Thank you in advance! 😊

The post has received reactions from Evi Saiti, Avra Papanastasiou and 1 other. Interaction buttons for "Like" and "Comment" are visible below the post.

At the bottom, there is a comment input field with the placeholder text "Write a comment..." and icons for emojis, photos, GIFs, and stickers.

Appendix D: Snapshots from Facebook

Emery, Trudie, Rodrick Penjani
 Ο χρήστης Zoi Samolada δημιούργησε αυτή την ομάδα
 Είστε φίλοι με 1 άτομο σε αυτή την ομάδα
ΠΡΟΣΘΕΣΤΕ ΑΤΟΜΑ
 28 ΦΕΒ ΣΤΙΣ 11:35
 Δημιουργήσατε την ομάδα. Ορίστε ένα όνομα για την ομάδα

Hi ! I welcome you in this group for the purposes of my research! here we can

Okay thanks

Let me deeply thank you for contributing and your willingness to participate in my research!

μεχρι στιγμής ποια είναι η γνώμη σας για τα 2 εργαλεία voki και sreechace ? είχατε καμία δυσκολία / πρόβλημα ?

Οχι κανενα προβλημα!! Εγώ το δοκίμασα με μικράκια (από junior έως Α2 επίπεδο) και τους άρεσε πολύ!! Επέλεξαν όλες τις «δύσκολες» λέξεις και επαναλάμβαναν πολύ πρόθυμα!! Γέλασα πολύ με τα juniors. Χρησιμοποιήσαμε το εργαλείο στην ενότητα με τα φαγητά και όλα είχαν κολλήσει με το vegetables !! Ήταν η πιο δημοφιλής λέξη με διαφορά

You are welcome

Great

Happy to be here!

Avra, Evi, Georgia, +7
 Ο χρήστης Zoi Samolada δημιούργησε αυτή την ομάδα
 Είστε φίλοι με 9 άτομα σε αυτή την ομάδα
ΠΡΟΣΘΕΣΤΕ ΑΤΟΜΑ
 28 ΦΕΒ ΣΤΙΣ 10:37
 Δημιουργήσατε την ομάδα. Ορίστε ένα όνομα για την ομάδα

καλησπέρα σε όλους! αυτή είναι μια κοινή συνομιλία για τους σκοπούς της έρευνάς μου!!

You are welcome

The two tools were used in the I school where I teach English. It is a Presbyterian primary school. All of my classes had access to these programs. There were 4, 5, 7 and 8 grades. Every class is mixed, that means students' levels are really different. Those who have better skills enjoyed speechace better than the other program. Voki was used to give them instructions and for listening exercises. In our language lab there is only one computer. Better students made accounts for Voki at home and they liked to create their talking avata. ry much. Their fantasy is infinite.

Καλημέρα!! Εγώ σήμερα θα το ξεκινήσω!! Φαίνονται πραγματικά πολύ ωραία και πιστεύω θα ενθουσιαστούν όπως κι εγώ!! Θα σας στείλω τις εντυπώσεις σου σύντομα!! Καλή επιτυχία σε όλες!!

Hi...!!No problem..polu eukhrsta , fun kai easily applicable tha elega...!!

Καλημέρα σε όλους!!

Appendix E: Qualitative Research Method Data

Extracts from the participating EFL teachers' unstructured discussions

1. Have you used any other pronunciation tools, similar to Voki and Speechace in your lessons? If yes, what are these and how have you used them in your lesson?
2. In your opinion, do you believe that these tools helped students of different learning types to better acquire concrete English sounds?
3. To what extent do you believe that these tools assisted you as a teacher and your learners in improving? Are there any particular skills that enhanced through practicing Voki and Speechace?
4. Is there any specific context – vocabulary or grammar, that you applied these two tools? Did they help learners to better understand the particular phenomenon?
5. To what extent did Voki and Speechace contribute in your professional development as an EFL teacher? Do you feel that they contributed in becoming more confident when teaching pronunciation in class?

Teacher 1: *“The two tools were used in the school where I teach English. It is a Presbyterian primary school. All of my classes had access to these programs. There were 4, 5, 7 and 8 grades. Every class is mixed, that means students’ levels are really different. Those who have better skills enjoyed Speechace better than the other program. Voki was used to give them instructions and for listening exercises. In our language lab there is only one computer. Better students made accounts for Voki at home and they liked to create their talking avatars very much. Their fantasy is infinite. Speechace was liked by everybody. It raised the competitive spirit and it motivated them to try the pronunciation again and again. We used this program*

both on word and sentence level. In conclusion even the limited free versions had a great extent of motivation and they proved to be useful elements of a digital English lesson. I am keen on using technology in my classroom and I am used to trying “Natural Reader”. Specifically, I use it for making listening exercises for upper primary class when there is no audio. It is a separate website which I use to create audio files. You just need to copy and paste your text into the site and then choose the voice and the speed. It is quite fun! Concerning my personal development, the tools helped me realize that although correct pronunciation fosters communication and conveyance of messages, general English (EFL) teachers are not trained in teaching pronunciation (as it is not covered on most CELTA or TEFL teacher training courses). It motivated me to search for relevant online seminars (about teaching English pronunciation to young learners) and grow as a teacher and as an English speaker.

Teacher 2: *“My students loved Voki! They were keen on creating their own avatar and playing with it. When I asked them what they liked most, they said that they felt independent since they had the chance to practice English sounds via this particular tool on their own. I was more like an instructor to them and helped them when they needed me. In general, I believe that presenting such digital pronunciation tools in the classroom gives learners the opportunity to get exposed to different accents of English language and therefore, acquire native-like sounds. It is a well-known fact that many of the English teachers do not have, let’s say a “perfect” or native-like accent – and yes, ok we were not born in the USA or UK! - so why should learners lack the opportunity to be exposed to a native-like one, since there is a great deal of digital tools, such as Voki that can actually benefit learners and help them improve their English pronunciation? Despite the fact that ICT in education is a controversial issue and there are various educators who object to using technology in classroom, I tend to strongly believe that ICT can actually be beneficial to learning English and assist teachers in conducting a more*

interesting and effective lesson which ensures that students do not get bored! Moreover, I have always been interested in English pronunciation teaching but I wasn't confident about teaching it. Thank you for recommending them as they helped us develop professionally and make pronunciation teaching part of the school curriculum."

Teacher 3: *"I used both tools in my C senior class and I have to admit that they were really amazing! I used Voki for vocabulary and Speechace for grammar! In Voki, I entered derivatives in order for them to better understand the changes in pronunciation between verbs and nouns, such as inform-information, advertise-advertisement etc. In the next two lessons, I used Speechace and I selected "Level 1" to practice irregular verbs and Simple Past! Especially the section with the sentences where they had to think of the correct answer and then record their voice was really challenging! They were so motivated that their scores were really high! Both tools are very easy to use and helpful in teaching pronunciation! My students and I saw this experience as a game and not as a task that has to be completed. We all enjoyed it very much and I will absolutely integrate it in my teaching practices. I think that all teachers should give it a go since it's something new and a great way for both parts to relax!! Thank you for reminding us that teaching can be fun!!"*

Apart from my learners, I should mention that the two pronunciation tools helped me see the teaching of pronunciation from another perspective. First of all, I didn't know of any pronunciation tool before using them and I used to teach pronunciation through the activities of the coursebook that most of the times are repetitive. I realized that they can be easily integrated in all levels and even in the smaller ones as a game, thus from now on I am definitely going to connect the pronunciation phenomenon of the book with Speechace and Voki!

However, I should mention that teaching English pronunciation is very important and sometimes challenging so I think that every teacher should be trained regularly in order to become more confident when teaching it. Voki and Speechace are great tools and did help me as a teacher to motivate my students and make my lesson more effective and fun but in order to be fully confident, more training should be offered to teachers exclusively.”

Teacher 4: *“My students were enthusiastic about these tools! They saw our lesson as a game – especially when they played with the avatar. I applied the tools as free practice in the class, usually at the end of each lesson. At my foreign language school my classroom is equipped with an interactive board so this worked well with my students who were really engaged in the lesson! I would try to integrate these tools in the future since I realized how beneficial technology can be in education!*

As an English teacher, I have always been interested in pronunciation teaching. But I tended to focus on more traditional methods such as drills. However, the latter’s repetitive use had made my students bored and the teaching tools I found online did not seem to be effective, as the learners were not interested in them. This was not the case with Voki though. Voki’s game-like environment not only attracted but also sustained my students’ interest and resulted in Implicit Learning. I enjoyed the tools very much but in order to become more confident when we have to teach pronunciation I think that much more time and specific training – seminars or whatever, should be provided to us that focus on ways to teach pronunciation to learners. Thanks for sharing the tools, Zoi; it was great to contribute to your research!”

Teacher 5: *“I love using technology in my lesson and I am always looking forward to revealing innovative methods of teaching. I have also used “YouGlish”. It’s an online resource. It’s a*

search engine that helps you learn the pronunciation of a word or phrase. It helps you find videos in which the speakers use the particular word or phrase in question and pronounce it in context. They are similar to Voki and Speechace in the sense their focal point is pronunciation teaching. But, “YouGlish” emphasizes on contextual language. Therefore, it is more appropriate for older learners whose language level is more advanced, while Voki especially, is also suitable for young beginners. Both pronunciation tools have helped my students a lot because they motivated them to pronounce words correctly. It goes without saying that young children are attracted by speaking animated characters. As far as my own students are concerned, they even identified with their avatars and did their best to imitate them or follow their example.

Therefore, I could say that these tools helped all learners in spite of their learning style. For instance, visual learners loved the appearance of the avatars and wanted to imitate their facial expressions and mouth movements, while aural learners also tried to imitate their intonation, rhythm, etc. My students’ listening skills were enhanced the most. As I am not a native speaker myself, they were benefited from the extra exposure to native-like pronunciation. Moreover, I have to admit that I also corrected minor pronunciation mistakes I tended to make. We used Voki across a wide range of newly introduced vocabulary, concerning FOOD, CLOTHES, the DAYS of the WEEK and the teaching of the Simple Past Tense. It was proven extremely helpful for teaching the pronunciation of ‘complex’ words such as ‘vegetables’, ‘clothes’, etc. where there is a huge gap between spelling and pronunciation.

Generally speaking, Greek learners of English have a difficulty pronouncing complex English words, due to the fact that their mother-tongue is a transparent language and cannot understand all the underlying phonological rules and patterns. Moreover, I used these tools in teaching the Simple Past and the differences in pronouncing the –ed suffix. (played VS worked

VS ended VS laughed etc.) The tools made it much easier for the students to classify the past tense- verbs under the categories: /t/, /d/, unvoiced and voiced.”

To be honest, I have never emphasized in pronunciation teaching so much before. I only corrected students if their “bad” pronunciation caused communication problems. But the suggested teaching tools made me realize that pronunciation teaching improves not only learners’ speaking but also their listening skills. When they know how to pronounce a word correctly, they seem to be able to hear it more clearly and easily. This motivated me to develop professionally and start finding ways to improve my teaching methods in order to cater for pronunciation teaching.

Appendix F: Summary of the dissertation in Greek

Το θέμα της εργασίας αφορά στη χρήση διαδικτυακών εργαλείων τα οποία μπορούν να βοηθήσουν στη βελτίωση της Αγγλικής προφοράς Ελλήνων μαθητών που διδάσκονται την Αγγλική ως ξένη γλώσσα. Μαθαίνοντας μια δεύτερη ξένη γλώσσα και συγκεκριμένα την Αγγλική, είναι πολύ σημαντικό για τους μαθητές να προφέρουν σωστά τις λέξεις ώστε να μπορούν να αναπτύξουν τον προφορικό τους λόγο και κατά επέκταση να είναι σε θέση να επικοινωνούν. Σε προσωπικό επίπεδο, εργαζόμενη ως καθηγήτρια Αγγλικής γλώσσας στον ιδιωτικό τομέα, παρατηρώ ότι η προφορά είναι κάτι στο οποίο συνήθως δεν δίνεται ιδιαίτερη έμφαση, οι μαθητές δεν αισθάνονται μεγάλη αυτοπεποίθηση όταν διαβάζουν, από φόβο μήπως κάνουν λάθος και αυτό έχει ως συνέπεια να επηρεάζει αρνητικά τον προφορικό τους λόγο και κατά επέκταση τις επικοινωνιακές τους δεξιότητες. Προσωπικά, πιστεύω ότι η προφορά θα πρέπει να διδάσκεται περαιτέρω στο μάθημα ώστε οι μαθητές να αποκτήσουν μεγαλύτερη σιγουριά ως προς τη χρήση του προφορικού λόγου. Συνεπώς, αποφάσισα να εντρυφήσω στο θέμα της διδασκαλίας της προφοράς και να προτείνω έναν τρόπο με τον οποίο οι καθηγητές της Αγγλικής γλώσσας θα μπορούσαν να εντάξουν την προφορά στο μάθημά τους και να κάνουν το μάθημά τους πιο αποτελεσματικό αλλά και ελκυστικό για τους μαθητές. Θα πρέπει να αναφερθεί επιπλέον, πως η πλειοψηφία των καθηγητών δεν είναι αρκετά ενήμερη για το ότι η τεχνολογία και συγκεκριμένα η χρήση του ηλεκτρονικού υπολογιστή μπορεί να βοηθήσει στο κομμάτι βελτίωσης της προφοράς και να επιφέρει μια νέα διάσταση στη μορφή διδασκαλίας της ξένης γλώσσας. Επομένως, ένα θεμελιώδες ερώτημα που προκύπτει είναι το εάν μπορεί να ενταχθεί ως ένα βαθμό η διδασκαλία της προφοράς στο μάθημα με έναν ελκυστικό και αποτελεσματικό τρόπο για τους μαθητές και συνάμα εάν η χρήση της τεχνολογίας μπορεί να προσφέρει έναν τέτοιο τρόπο μέσα από σχετικά εργαλεία.

«Δηλώνω ρητά και ανεπιφύλακτα ότι, σύμφωνα με το άρθρο 8 του Ν. 1599/1986 και τα άρθρα 2,4,6 παρ. 3 του Ν. 1256/1982, η παρούσα εργασία αποτελεί αποκλειστικά προϊόν προσωπικής εργασίας και δεν προσβάλλει κάθε μορφής πνευματικά δικαιώματα τρίτων και δεν είναι προϊόν μερικής ή ολικής αντιγραφής, οι πηγές δε που χρησιμοποιήθηκαν περιορίζονται στις βιβλιογραφικές αναφορές και μόνον.»

Υπογραφή:

