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A Critical Evaluation of CALL and MALL Products for Learning and Teaching American English

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Abstract

Research conducted in diverse contexts revealed a general tendency among language learners and teachers toward mainstream English varieties. There is even a scientific foundation for this personal preference, suggesting that these varieties (particularly American English) are understood better. Besides, computer- and mobile-assisted technologies have fostered language education in general and the learning and teaching of these varieties. Accordingly, this study evaluated the CALL and MALL products (i.e., three websites, one mobile application, and one corpus) about American English using the adapted frameworks of Baya'a et al. (2009) and Reinders and Pegrum (2017). With a particular focus on the technical and pedagogical features and concerns, the analyses indicated potential advantages to language learners and teachers in grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, listening, reading, intercultural awareness/competence, and pragmatic awareness at varying degrees. The evaluated products' shortcomings (e.g., insufficient assessment and feedback) were also cited. The study revealed its limitations and made recommendations for further research. It further bridged the gap in the related literature and contributed to our understanding by providing insights.

Keywords: American English, digital learning, English varieties, learning resource, mobile apps, websites

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Introduction

It is well-established that the English language originated in England (Crystal & Potter, 2022). However, it has not remained the same both linguistically (i.e., morphologically and phonologically) and geographically. It has undergone some changes throughout its development until its current state in the modern era (Al-Kadi & Ahmed, 2018). Before the emergence of the British Empire, the language had been exposed to various linguistic and cultural influences. With the ascent of the British Empire to power, the English language started to propagate. One such propagation was the settlement of the first British colony in North America. The continent was also invaded at the time by other colonist countries, including Spain, the Netherlands, Portugal, and France (Borucki et al., 2015). The extended stay of these countries undoubtedly contributed to the linguistic diversity of the English spoken in North America at the time. Toward the 19th century, the United States (US) launched a nationalist movement to eliminate the foreign impacts and establish a uniform American English (AmE) (Fishman, 1991). The late-19th century heralded the birth of a new global power – the US – and marked the beginning of the dissemination of Americanism as an ideology worldwide (Watson, 2019).

From then on, the domination of English (particularly AmE) has been established in almost every sphere of life, ranging from science (Al-Kadi & Ahmed, 2018; Elnathan, 2021) to academia (Di Bitetti & Ferreras, 2017). Even today, the number of English language speakers has reached up to 1.35 billion people, including both native and non-native speakers (Statista Research Department, 2022). A similar statistic might be given regarding English language learners (ELLs) worldwide. The British Council, a prominent state-governed organization that pursues creating international cultural and educational opportunities, holds that there are currently 1.13m ELLs (Beare, 2019). The dominion of the English language might also be observed in published language teaching materials (Rose & Galloway, 2019), especially in AmE and British English (BrE). These two English varieties have become prominent and manifested themselves in the academic realm despite the presence of others. It is reported that 14 dialects are spoken in the U.S. (Wolfram & Schilling, 2015), and 24 are prevalent in the United Kingdom (U.K.) (Hughes et al., 2013). Of these dialects, AmE is spoken by an estimated 329 million speakers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019), whereas BrE speakers are about 67 million (Office for National Statistics, 2021).

In addition to the prominence of these two mainstream English varieties, they are regarded as the standard forms of the English language, or traditional English, referring to "a prestige variety of language used within a speech community" (Crystal, 2008, p. 450). Considering the large number of English dialects available (Grieve et al., 2019), the standardization becomes particularly significant because "standard languages/dialects/varieties cut across regional differences, providing a unified means of communication, and thus an institutionalized norm which can be used in the mass media, in teaching the language to foreigners, and so on" (Crystal, 2008, p. 450). Despite the position of the English language as a lingua franca (ELF), native English varieties, particularly AmE and BrE, are favored by language learners and teachers in diverse educational contexts (Galloway, 2014; Kung & Wang, 2019). Between these two varieties, the better and easier understandability of the AmE was vouchsafed in earlier studies (Carrie, 2017; Choe, 2016; Kang, 2015). The easiness of understandability of a speech is also referred to as comprehensibility, which pertains to "the listener's perception of the degree of difficulty encountered when trying to understand an utterance" (Munro et al., 2006, p. 112). This construct is essential for mutual intelligibility in verbal interactions. Given that (i) the ultimate goal of language learning is effective communication in the target language (Cook, 2007), (ii) comprehensible and intelligible speech (i.e., pronunciation) is essential to achieve this goal (Pennington & Rogerson-Revell, 2019), (iii) the majority of published materials for language learning and teaching is in either English variety (i.e., AmE and BrE) (Rose & Galloway, 2019), the prevalence of AmE on social media, movies, and series (Statista Research Department, 2021), and (iv) the constant demand and desire for the emulation of AmE accent by language learners and teachers (Galloway, 2014; Kung & Wang, 2019), any research conducted in this regard becomes worthy.

Concerning language teaching, technology has expedited the dissemination of materials in AmE and diversified their content and scope. With the emergence of computer and mobile technologies, such concepts as computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) have entered the language teaching pedagogy (Al-Kadi & Ahmed, 2018). These modern-day pedagogies refer respectively to “the search for and study of applications of the computer in language

teaching and learning" (Levy, 1997, p.1) and language learning aided or accelerated by portable mobile devices (Chinnery, 2006). Computer software, mobile applications, websites, and other technological tools have become popular in language education. Given the so-far-held discussion, this study reviewed the CALL and MALL products, explicitly focusing on AmE. Using the adapted versions of Baya'a et al. (2009) frameworks for web-based learning environments and Reinders and Pegrum's (2017) for mobile learning resources, the acquired digital tools were evaluated, their potential pedagogical benefits were outlined, and possible pedagogical concerns were voiced. No such academic venture, to the best knowledge of the researcher, has been undertaken. This study intends to bridge this literature gap and contribute to the teaching of AmE in practical terms.

Literature Review

CALL and MALL

According to Levy (2010), language learners and teachers might interact with technology at five levels: physical, management, applications, resource, and component technology. Advancements in computer and mobile technologies have brought about the concepts of CALL and MALL, which describe the processes of using computers and mobile devices in language learning and teaching. Warscahuer (1996) divides the development of CALL into three phases: behavioristic (when computers were mainly used as tutors or delivery systems for instructional materials), communicative (when skill practice was still done via computers with increased opportunities for learner interaction and choice), and integrative (during which the internet and use of multimedia were prevalent). The evolution of technologies has also made them reduced in size (Chinnery, 2006), and "other technologies that hold the capacity for language learning include PDAs, multimedia cellular phones, MP3 players, DVD players, and digital dictionaries" (Zhao, 2005, p.447) have come into our academic lives. Portable, handheld devices have trumpeted the birth of another pedagogy called MALL within the context of mobile learning. Undoubtedly, these pedagogies have emerged in parallel with the exponential increases in the ownership of mobile and computer devices (Topal, 2021).

It is generally acknowledged that such CALL and MALL technologies benefit learners, including broader exposure to English, authentic interaction, flexible and audiovisual learning, promoting the practice of various skills, encouraging learner autonomy, providing access to engaging materials, and opportunities for different types of feedback (Bahari, 2021; Daly, 2022; Karakaya & Bozkurt, 2022; Kartal, 2024; Mihaylova et al., 2022; Richards, 2015). Teachers can also derive pedagogical gains from these technologies by creating more learner-centered teaching, taking control of mixed-level classes, expanding the learning to real life, enhancing the curriculum, increasing opportunities for monitoring, and administering assessment via learning management systems (Richards, 2015; Roh & Kim, 2019; Turnbull et al., 2021). The academic gains that might be reaped from such technologies are also valid for institutions; they can improve the school's reputation, support individualized learning, achieve better learning outcomes, allow for curricular flexibility, and facilitate administration (Collins & Halverson, 2018; Pegrum et al., 2013; Richard, 2015).

Previous studies have yielded supporting evidence for the pedagogical benefits that mobile and computer technologies offer. For instance, Golonka et al. (2014) examined the types of technology and their effectiveness. They revealed that course management systems, interactive whiteboards, e-portfolios, corpora, e-dictionaries, intelligent tutoring systems, grammar checkers, automatic speech recognition and pronunciation programs, virtual games, chats, social networking sites, blogs, internet forums, Wikis, mobile and portable devices, and smartphones were effective in language education (e.g., vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, listening, writing, assessment) to varying degrees. In another study, Stockwell (2007) reviewed the technologies for specific language skills and found that the following tools were used in skills teaching: authoring software, courseware applications, concordancing, and chat systems for grammar; intelligent tutoring systems, hypermedia-enhanced learning environments, e-dictionaries, online activities, free/commercial software, chats, and mobile phones for vocabulary; courseware, online activities, and activities based on computer-mediated communication (CMC) for pronunciation; courseware and online activities for reading; online activities, corpora/concordancing, word processors, online dictionaries, applications, and CMC activities for writing; courseware and video texts for listening; and CMC technologies, corpora/concordancing, and courseware for speaking.

Following Stockwell's (2007) review, numerous studies were conducted on the potential impacts of CALL and MALL tools on language learning and teaching in local and international contexts. For instance, Dashtestani (2013) explored and revealed the positive effects of a MALL product on Iranian EFL learners' grammar performance. Al Qasim and Al Fadda (2013) examined and indicated the significant impact of podcasts on listening comprehension. In another study, Fouz-González (2020) reported the beneficial influence of a mobile app on improving target pronunciation features. Similarly, Çakmak et al. (2021) imparted the favorable effect of computer-enhanced flashcard programs on vocabulary retention. In a recent study, Kartal (2024) revealed the potential affordances of Whatsapp-supported curriculum for speaking improvement among EFL students. Other studies explored the perceptions of teachers and students toward CALL and MALL (Dağdeler & Demiröz, 2022; Garib, 2023; Hafour, 2022; Hoi & Mu, 2021; Kic-Drgas et al., 2023; Pérez-Paredes et al., 2018). Some studies reviewed the evolution of these two fields by incorporating recent research (Al-Kadi, 2018; Burston, 2015; Burston & Giannakou, 2022; Gillespie, 2020; Karakaya & Bozkurt, 2022; Yang, 2013; Zain & Bowles, 2021).

Recent years have witnessed the advent of artificial intelligence (AI), resulting in innovations in language education. For instance, OpenAI's ChatGPT, an advanced conversational AI specifically designed to understand and generate human-like text in response to various prompts (Topal, 2024), has been one of the most studied computer- and mobile-supported tools for language learning and teaching (Kohnke et al., 2023). Relevant research has revealed its advantages in second language writing (Barrot, 2023), vocabulary (Yüzlü, 2024), interactive language practice (Zhang, 2024), pronunciation guidance (Daungsupawong & Wiwanitkit, 2024), designing test items (Shin & Lee, 2023), reading practice (Anh et al., 2024), translation support (Fields, 2024), feedback (Teng, 2024), and assessment (Kooli & Yusuf, 2024). Similarly, Google's Bard and Microsoft's Bing Chat have been other AI-supported conversational models that have impacted language education (Meniado, 2023; Obaidoon & Wei, 2024).

American English Variety: A Succinct Description

AmE refers to "the English language as spoken in the U.S. —used especially with the implication that it is distinguishable from British English yet not so divergent as to be a separate language" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). One of the popular mainstream English varieties, it is spoken by an estimated 329 million people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). The variety has distinctive characteristics. For instance, there are 43 sounds in AmE, and the full rhoticity, unrounded /ɑ/ vowel, the strut vowel in particular words, vowel mergers before intervocalic /r/, r-colored vowels, the /hw/ and /w/ merger, Yod-dropping, T-glottalization, flapping, L-velarization, conditioned /æ/ raising, and short /o/ before /r/ before a vowel (Trudgill, 2004; Becker, 2014; Boberg, 2015), are some phonological peculiarities to the AmE (or North American English).

Lexical variations are also present within the North American dialects (Boberg, 2005) and AmE and BrE (Topal, 2022). The vocabulary of AmE has less to do with apparently authoritative wordlists and more to do with the country's cultural, historical, regional, and social life, as evidenced by specialist dictionaries (Kretzschmar Jr., 1996). Various cultural interactions occurred in the history of the English language in North America, resulting in borrowing many words from different languages, such as Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese, and French (Blake, 2019). More vocabulary items (e.g., ravioli from Italian, burrito from Mexican Spanish, dim sum from Cantonese) were added to the AmE lexicon with the immigration to English-speaking countries (e.g., USA) (Blake, 2019). Enthusiasts might refer to the book published by Algeo (2006) for further details about vocabulary differences (i.e., parts of speech).

Grammatical variations can also be seen in AmE (Topal, 2022) and BrE, as well as other varieties. Algeo (2006) gave a finer description of the grammatical differences between AmE and BrE concerning syntactic constructions (i.e., complementation, mandative constructions, expanded predicates, concord, pro predicates, tag questions, and miscellaneous), determiners, pronouns, qualifiers, prepositions, and conjunctions. Greenbaum (1996) asserts that AmE "is more homogeneous than British English in vocabulary and grammar because of its shorter history and because of past migrations across the American continent and present easy mobility" (p.7). A typical grammatical idiosyncrasy of AmE can be observed in collective nouns, which tend to be perceived as a single entity and thus take a singular verb inflection (Greenbaum, 1996).

One of the most well-known characteristics of AmE is its orthographic variation from BrE. Following the nationalist movement in the 19th century, the US assumed the duty of 'Americanizing' the English language. Spelling reform has been one of the consequences of this movement (Hodges, 1964). Hodges (1964) adds that "today, spelling is probably more rigid than any other aspect of language. Any success in altering the present system will most likely be achieved from a linguistic analysis of spelling, in which phonemic principles are applied" (Hodges, 1964, p. 332). Some common spelling variations are o-ou (color-colour), er-re (center-centre), ize-ise (organize-organise), yze-yse (analyze-analyse) l-ll (traveled-travelled), e-oe (esophagus-oesaphagous), e-ae (anemia-anaemia), e-ea (likable-likeable), se-ce (defense-defence) og-ogue (dialog-dialogue) dg-dge (judgment-judgement), and one-letter difference (mom-mum) (Topal, 2022).

Previous studies have suggested an inclination toward AmE in various educational contexts. For instance, Honna and Takeshita (2014) reported that English language teaching (ELT) in Japan is predisposed toward AmE. Elyas and Picard (2010) noted that most Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia, adopted mainly American university curricula. Another study revealed that Malaysian students and lecturers held positive attitudes toward inner-circle Englishes, including AmE (Crismore et al., 1996). Rezai et al. (2019) found that Iranian learners rated AmE and BrE accents positively. In a study investigating the listener judgments of speaker and speech traits of Asian Englishes and AmE, AmE was rated more positively (Hansen Edwards et al., 2019). Native English varieties, including AmE, were found to be correct/norm among prospective Turkish teachers of English as well (Coskun, 2011). Without handling the appropriateness of the argument about the English language norm, it is manifest that native varieties, especially AmE, are still preferred by learners and teachers across diverse educational contexts.

Given (i) the prevalent preference toward AmE, (ii) the perceived easiness of learning and teaching this English variety, and (iii) the availability of various CALL and MALL tools, this study intended to evaluate critically computer- and mobile-assisted tools explicitly designed for learning and teaching AmE.

Method

This study employs a corpus-driven approach. Corpus linguistics is used primarily to investigate language variations and change empirically and is a methodological approach (and) "… utilizes a large and principled collection of natural texts, known as a corpus, as the basis for analysis" (Biber et al., 2010, p.548). Flowerdew (2012) defines a corpus as "a collection of authentic language, either written or spoken, which has been compiled for a particular purpose" (p.3). In addition to being used for descriptive linguistic studies and descriptions of varieties, corpora might also be employed in language learning and teaching to present ideas and discuss their possible pedagogical benefits (Biber et al., 2010). That was the reason for choosing a corpus-driven approach in this study. In line with the research objectives, the following research questions were addressed in this study:

RQ (1): What CALL tools are available to learn and teach AmE?

RQ (2): What MALL tools are available to learn and teach AmE?

Criteria for Corpus Selection

This study adopted Sinclair's (2004) recommendations for corpus design: (i) text mode (spoken and written), (ii) text type (computer and mobile technologies), (iii) text domain (academic), (iv) text language (English), and (v) representativeness (AmE) and Flowerdew's (2004) guidelines for building a specialized corpus that considers the purpose for building a specialized corpus, genre to be investigated, size of the corpus, representativeness of the genre, data collection method, corpus tagging, and the suitability of reference corpus to contrast with the specialized corpus.

The reason for building this small corpus (comprising five products) is to critically evaluate the technological resources to determine the potential pedagogical benefits of teaching and learning AmE. In all the resources, additional criteria were sought: pertinence to AmE, being a CALL and MALL product, and having potential pedagogical benefits for language education. The corpus analysis revealed four categories in which the resources were grouped: websites, mobile applications, digital textbook

components, and corpora. These resources refer to the utilization of technology at the applications and resource levels (Levy, 2010).

A quick online search revealed 16 relevant tools. Pronunciation (https://pronuncian.com/), Sounds: The Pronunciation App, English accent coach (https://www.englishaccentcoach.com/), ELSA Speak (https://elsaspeak.com/en/), Merriam-Webster dictionary (https://www.merriam-webster.com/), Vocabulary.com (https://www.vocabulary.com/), Grammarly (https://www.grammarly.com/), ReadTheory (https://readtheory.org/), Newsela (https://newsela.com/), Rosetta Stone (https://eu.rosettastone.com/), FluentU (https://www.fluentu.com/), Sounds American YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/c/SoundsAmerican) and website (https://soundsamerican.net/), Voice of America (VOA) News Learning English (https://learningenglish.voanews.com/), Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) (https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/), American English podcast on Spotify (https://open.spotify.com/show/4hlKt74aPrqA03YQNVgpdX?si=2320048a0c1b4855), American English File (2nd ed.) (Latham-Koenig et al., 2013)

Out of these resources available, the selected samples were included in each group (i.e., three websites, one mobile app, one digital textbook component, and one corpus) for practicality and usability. In this respect, the selected resources were the Sounds American YouTube channel and website, Voice of America (VOA) News Learning English for web-based resources, American English podcast on Spotify for mobile apps, American English File (2nd ed.) (Latham-Koenig et al., 2013) for digital textbook component, and Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) for corpus.

Evaluation Criteria for CALL and MALL Products

The adapted versions of Baya'a et al. (2009) framework (i.e., usability, content, educational value, and vividness) for evaluating web-based learning environments and Reinders and Pegrum's (2017) framework (i.e., educational affordances, general pedagogical design, L2 pedagogical design, SLA design, and affective design) for evaluating mobile learning resources were utilized in this study. The first framework comprises usability (i.e., purpose, homepage, navigation, design, enjoyment, and readability), content (i.e., authority, accuracy, relevance, sufficiency, and appropriateness), educational value (i.e., learning activities, activity plan, resources, communication, feedback, rubric, and help tools), and vividness (i.e., links and updating). The second framework, on the other hand, consists of five criteria: educational affordances, general pedagogical design, L2 pedagogical design, SLA design, and affective design. Since the two cited frameworks are too sophisticated, they were simplified. Both mobile and web-based resources were reviewed in terms of technical and pedagogical features and concerns. In other words, the technological tools were assessed based on the pedagogical gains they offered, their technical features, and their technical/pedagogical limitations.

Data Analysis

The CALL and MALL products selected according to the cited criteria were evaluated by three experts using the two evaluation frameworks. The raters were all English language instructors working at the College of Foreign Languages of a major state university in Türkiye. All raters held their Ph.D in English language teaching, with a minimum of 10 years of working experience. The raters gathered before and after the evaluation process for cross-checking. Agreement on the nature of the evaluation was established before the procedure. The raters were asked to evaluate the selected tools using the web and mobile tool evaluation rubrics developed by Baya'a et al. (2009) and Reinders and Pegrum (2017). They were also asked to list the evaluated tools' potential pedagogical affordances, technical features, and pedagogical/technical concerns. Later, they convened for a second time for peer debriefing since it enhanced validity/reliability and increased reflexivity in qualitative research (Spall, 1998). Findings were reported after complete agreement was established between the raters.

Findings and Discussion

The findings were presented in the following order: VOA news site, Sounds American website and YouTube channel, podcast, digital textbook component, and corpus.

VOA News Learning English

The *VOA News Learning English* (given this title in 2014), continuing as the VOA Special English, was founded in 1959. The purpose, benefit, and importance of the website were clearly defined on the

website (see About). It is manifest that the website provides multimedia news broadcasts and information at beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels for language learners worldwide. The homepage has a clear table of contents (i.e., test your English, beginning level, intermediate level, advanced level, and US history), with an easy-to-use interface for navigation. The sections were displayed on the website with appropriate multimedia, making it suitable for design, enjoyment, and readability.

Concerning content, the beginning level includes *Let's Learn English* (Levels 1 and 2) for beginning-level learners of English. The course follows a schedule (52 weeks for Level 1, 30 weeks for Level 2) designed by certified teachers. Such skills as vocabulary, pronunciation, speaking, and writing are addressed in this course through videos. The lessons are shareable and printable on manifold social media platforms. Printable worksheets, lesson plans, and assessments are available for English learners and teachers. The beginning level also has features like *Ask a Teacher*, which includes teacher answers to various learner questions in audio and text forms, and *News Words*, which introduces a word in an authentic news broadcast highlighting the target word. The intermediate level presents news stories on diverse topics in audio and text forms, with a list of target vocabulary at the end of each story. This level also houses such programs as English in *A Minute, English @ the Movies, Everyday Grammar TV*, and *Learning English TV*. These programs are captioned videos that might help strengthen learners' vocabulary, listening, grammar, and pronunciation. The advanced level provides classic literature pieces in American Stories, idioms and expressions in W*ords and Their Stories*, study materials in *Everyday Grammar,* and online training materials for advanced learners and teachers of *English in News Literacy* and *Let's Teach English*.

The website also allows users to interact with community members through *TALK2US*, scheduled on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Learners might join and talk to the VOA News Learning English program specialists. Additionally, informative texts and audio about American culture are available on the websites of A*merica's National Parks and America's Presidents*. The news stories are also accessible in categories such as *Arts & Culture, As It Is, Education, Health & Lifestyle,* and *Science & Technology*. Users might also find listening materials such as *Learning English Broadcast*, which uses limited vocabulary at a slower pace, and W*hat It Takes*, a podcast presenting conversations with people from diverse backgrounds. In addition, *How to Pronounce* provides learners with a series of videos teaching AmE pronunciation.

Overall, it is manifest that the *VOA News Learning English* website might contribute to language learners' reading, listening, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar development through the authentic and multimedia materials available. This website mainly focuses on news stories, the benefits of which were reported in previous research. For instance, Park (2011) found that news articles from the New Yorker contributed to developing critical literacy in Korean EFL learners. In another study, Hsu (2019) revealed that the VOA news provided adequate input for learning mid-frequency words. Gómez-Rodríguez (2018) reported that EFL learners might enhance their intercultural competence through international news. The contribution of reading aloud through news stories to increasing self-confidence in verbal utterances was also reported (Chong, 2021). The positive impact of news stories (e.g., VOA) was also narrated in previous research (Bayani et al., 2018). Barella and Linarshi (2022) suggested that news websites might help improve pronunciation through extensive listening practice. In another study, Berardo (2006) recommended that newspapers might assist with developing reading skills in EFL learners. Lastly, online news articles were shown to promote grammar learning (Khodabandeh & Tahririan, 2020). Given the support from previous research, it is plausible to assert that *VOA News Learning English* might offer academic gains at variable degrees concerning grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, reading, speaking, and listening. However, the website does not adequately assess the mentioned language areas. Due to this shortcoming, the website might address mostly autonomous learners and teachers of English.

Sounds American Website and YouTube Channel

The YouTube channel of *Sounds American* has been in service since 2015. The channel tackles AmE pronunciation and shares related videos. The created playlists allow users to navigate the channel quickly. The channel provides such playlists as consonants, vowels, diphthongs, r-colored sounds, IPA illustrated, AmE pronunciation for Spanish speakers of English, contrastive sounds/pronunciation

exercises, most common words, and places of articulation (i.e., affricate, nasal, stop, fricative, glide, and liquid). The videos usually follow the same course: introduction to the target sound, how to make the target sound, pronunciation exercises about it, and spelling for the target sound. The videos resemble interactive and virtual pronunciation lessons for autonomous learners or self-paced learning. All videos include captions, along with audiovisual material. It is manifest that the channel focuses solely on pronunciation's segmental features, thus excluding suprasegmentals. The literature provides evidence about the effectiveness of both features for comprehensibility and intelligibility (Levis, 2018; Suzukida & Saito, 2021). However, the lack of suprasegmental features might be understandable since these features pertain to one variety of English and the English language. Hence, the channel might be deemed satisfactory in terms of segmental pronunciation.

The website, on the other hand, was launched in 2022. It is easy for users to navigate the website thanks to a clear table of contents (i.e., IPA chart, vowels, consonants, and blog). The website has interactive buttons for the American IPA chart that displays all consonants, vowels, and diphthongs in this variety. There is also the visual of a fictional character that shows the place of articulation for the selected sounds. The sections for the vowels and consonants present example words with the target sound in different word positions (initial, medial, and final). The articulation diagram with further details on the mouth, lips, and tongue positions follows this. Next, the most common spelling for the target sound is shown, supported by an interactive diagram and examples. Subsequently, a list of the most common words, including the target sound, is provided. A YouTube video including a mnemonic phrase (i.e., contextualized use of the target sound) is presented afterward. Finally, the video lesson about the target sound can be accessed. The videos on the website are retrieved from the community's YouTube channel. Users can log in to the website, comment, and share the content on numerous social media platforms. In the blog section, users might find additional and valuable information on various topics, such as the number of words required for fluency and the catch between the pronunciations of apple and maple.

Overall, it is reasonable to claim that the website and the channel offer much for AmE pronunciation self-study. Both sites' interactive and multimedia materials make them valuable pronunciation resources. Phonemes are the most significant sounds that might cause semantic shifts (Carley & Mees, 2020). Both resources for self-study attend to the phonemes in AmE. The differences between specific sounds matter more than those between others (Carley & Mees, 2020). In this sense, providing videos about the contrasting phonemes on the channel is an advantage to this learning resource. Comprehending abstract sounds might be challenging for learners. These sounds are visualized in phonemic/transcription through the symbols in the IPA chart, which is available in both learning resources. Given the relationship between spelling and pronunciation (Brown, 2014), the presence of the IPA chart and the most common spelling for the target sounds might be beneficial to raising learners' awareness. Introducing pronunciation features through multimodal means (e.g., texts, images, diagrams, and audio incorporated in videos) on these learning websites might be promising and constructive for pronunciation improvement (Brinton, 2014; Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). Ultimately, the presentation of target sounds in mnemonic phrases embedded in videos is another advantage of these resources, considering the positive impact of mnemonics on recall (Samuel, 2010).

Additionally, a recent study suggested the effectiveness of YouTube videos for self-regulated pronunciation practice (Al-Jarf, 2022), implying the potential benefits that might be reaped from the YouTube channel Sounds American. Also, autonomous pronunciation learning might help increase learners' confidence and motivation, thus resulting in pronunciation improvement (Ou et al., 2020). The examined pronunciation resources for self-study might yield promising benefits for segmental pronunciation features, spelling, phonemic transcription, and phonemic awareness. However, the two websites need more assessment despite being self-study materials. More feedback and assessment methods might be included in the websites.

American English Podcast

Created by Shana Thompson, this podcast series appeals to intermediate-advanced learners of English interested in AmE and US history and culture. It comprises such playlists as *Culture and History, Expressions, Chats with Shana, 5-minute English, Conversations, and Pronunciation*. The series takes listeners on a cultural journey through common expressions, pronunciation tips, and exciting stories and excerpts. The length of the podcasts varies from 6 to 50 minutes. The podcast also comes in premium

content at $119. The premium content includes four courses (60 lessons) based on the podcast episodes (currently 128). Listening and pronunciation practice and assessment are also available in the premium content. Premium users can further access downloadable transcripts and MP3s. The first three courses pertain to US culture and history and comprise 15 weeks each, whereas the fourth course is about the 5-minute English audio presented in 12 lessons.

McBride (2009) argues that podcasts might foster listening comprehension and intercultural competence. The benefits of podcasting projects for improving language skills were also reported by Lord (2008). In this regard, the cultural and historical stories about the US might help develop intercultural awareness and competence. Podcasts are omnipresent and authentic extracurricular learning resources (Thorne & Payne, 2005) that might enhance learner autonomy (Yaman, 2016). In his study conducted with Saudi EFL students, Al-Ahdal (2020) found that podcasts contributed considerably to pronunciation improvement. In another study, Kafes and Caner (2020) revealed the positive attitudes of Turkish-speaking teacher trainees of English toward learner-created pronunciation podcasts due to the spatial-temporal convenience they provided. Similar findings were reported in Ducate and Lomicka's (2009) study conducted with German- and French-speaking learners of English. Fouz-González (2019) maintained that podcast-based pronunciation instruction might assist with enhancing segmental phonemes in Spanish EFL learners. All these findings suggest the potential benefits of pronunciation podcasts for learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Despite the advantages, mere dependence on podcasting projects might result in passive learning (Palmer & Devitt, 2007). Nevertheless, it is crystal clear that podcasts provide rich and authentic aural input and thus carry critical importance for language learning. In this sense, the American English podcast series might offer potential concerning listening, pronunciation, vocabulary, and intercultural awareness and competence.

American English File Course Book Series

The second edition of the course book series (Latham-Koenig et al., 2013) by Oxford University Press comprises six levels (A1-C1). It includes resources, such as audio, video, classroom presentation tools, online practice, and worksheets. Within the scope of the research, only digital components of the course book series were examined. The audio pertains to the exercises in the student's book and workbook and contains AmE pronunciation. The videos in the Starter level are comprised of practical English videos—and short movies. The videos in the Level 1-3 course books consist of three parts: on the street, short film, and practical English. The first part (i.e., on the street) reveals videos, including English speakers' authentic use of textbook expressions on the street. The second part involves short movies about various themes, including American culture and history. The third part includes excerpts from the real lives of American characters, although the venues might be in the UK. The Level 4 course book videos comprise *Colloquial English- Interviews*, *Colloquial English- On the Street*, and short movies. Finally, the Level 5 course book videos also have *Colloquial English- Interviews Colloquial English- On the Street.* All videos are captioned and supported by additional practice. The course book series also grants students online practice (mostly grammar and vocabulary in the form of progress checks) about the units in each book.

The digital book components are easy to access and use. Learners are exposed to authentic language input through audio and videos from real life. However, the course book series analysis revealed that AmE was only thematically and partially handled since some audio and videos include articulation in other varieties. Nonetheless, the digital components of the series are believed to foster vocabulary (e.g., colloquial expressions), grammar, pronunciation, and listening to varying degrees. Sufficient practice and immersion in these language skills are claimed to establish a solid foundation for speaking. This claim was supported by Haghverdi and Ghasemi (2013), who analyzed the series and found that the classroom activities in the books promoted learner involvement and encouraged them to use the language.

Additionally, visuals (e.g., images and captions) contributed to listening comprehension (Hsieh & Huang, 2020). However, Park and Lee (2021) found the superiority of printed textbooks over digital ones concerning reading comprehension and grammatical knowledge. That suggests the impact of contextual factors on the effectiveness of digital course books. The course book series does not entirely reflect American culture or AmE.

Corpus of Contemporary American English

Comprising one billion words in 485,202 texts (https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/), The COCA is one of the most extensive and representative corpora of AmE across such genres as blogs (125m), web pages (130m), TV/Movie subtitles (128m), spoken (127m), fiction (120m), popular magazines (127m), newspapers (123m), and academic journals (121m). Registration is required to use the corpora. The website allows users to do queries and customize their search according to list, chart, word, browse, collocate, and compare keywords in context. There is even an academic vocabulary list (AVL) (Gardner & Davies, 2014) compiled from the COCA. The AVL contains 3,000 top lemmas and differs from the Academic Word List (AWL) (Coxhead, 2000). Some differences pertain to corpus size and novelty, coverage of academic English, usability, and the amount of information about meaning/use. The AVL is accessible from another website (https://www.academicvocabulary.info/). The COCA allows users to search for phrases and strings, a frequency list, individual words, and random words, enter whole texts, and browse through the AVL. Using COCA might assist learners with vocabulary, grammar, and pragmatics, particularly AmE.

Corpora was endorsed in language education contexts for data-driven learning and an enriched understanding of authentic language use (Huang, 2011). Yusu (2011) showed that the COCA might be utilized to teach and learn parts of speech, collocations, morphology, and word comparison. In another study, Rafatbakhsh and Ahmadi (2020) designed lists of frequent idioms in five genres using the COCA. One of the critical uses of corpora is vocabulary teaching. Hou (2014) demonstrated that specialized corpora incorporated into vocabulary teaching might improve content and linguistic knowledge. Similar findings were also reported by Lee et al. (2019), who found an impact of corpora on in-depth lexical expertise with a large effect size. The use of corpora for teaching grammatical structures was also endorsed in previous research (Godwin-Jones, 2017). Overall, the COCA might be useful in teaching specific lexical, orthographic, and grammatical differences in AmE.

Conclusion

This study evaluated CALL and MALL products designed explicitly for AmE. As a result of the corpus-driven analysis, three websites, one mobile app, one textbook series, and one corpus were evaluated in terms of technical and pedagogical features and concerns. The findings revealed that VOA News Learning English might be proper for reading, listening, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar, thanks to the authentic and multimedia materials on the website. However, the website was found to need more assessment options. Similarly, the Sounds American YouTube channel and website included interactive and multimedia materials. Therefore, they were considered beneficial for learning and teaching segmental pronunciation features, spelling, phonemic transcription, and phonemic awareness. Like the VOA website, the Sounds American website needed more assessment despite being a self-study resource. Another product that was reviewed was the American English podcast on Spotify. The rich and authentic aural and cultural input enhanced listening, pronunciation, vocabulary, and intercultural awareness/competence. The American English File course book series was another evaluated product. The study revealed that the course book series might help improve grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and listening. However, the series was found to handle AmE thematically and partially. The last product evaluated was the COCA. The corpus was claimed to differ in size, novelty, coverage of academic English, usability, extensive information about meaning/use, and the AVL. Given these qualities, the corpus might assist with improving vocabulary, grammar, and pragmatic use of lexical/grammatical structures.

Limitations and Further Research

Since this study introduced selective CALL and MALL products about AmE, the selection might reflect the researcher's intuition despite using a corpus-driven approach and frameworks for evaluation. For this reason, future studies are recommended to examine other products using a more objective method. Also, the study only presented and evaluated the products above. However, due to its focus, the analysis did not delve into an experimental examination. Prospective studies might investigate the effectiveness of these products in the claimed language areas. Despite the references to a few such studies in the present study, more research might be necessary for generalization. Consequently, the present study might lay the foundation for future studies about AmE, particularly within the context of computer- and mobile-assisted products.

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Ethics statement: In this study, we declare that the rules stated in the "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" are complied with and that we do not take any of the actions based on "Actions Against Scientific Research and Publication Ethics".

Conflict of interest

I declare that there is no conflict of interest between the authors, which all authors contribute to the study, and that all the responsibility belongs to the article authors in case of all ethical violations.

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