

A Study on Learning Pronunciation Strategies Used by English-Majored Students at the Ho Chi Minh City University of Food Industry

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ABSTRACT

English pronunciation is very important for everybody. The English-majored students don't have much time for English practice or improved pronunciation. So, this article is to find reality the best way to Learn English Pronunciation (LEP) for English-majored students with the hope of improving students' pronunciation. In this research paper, the author will do a study on the learning of English pronunciation for English-majored HUFI college students. This article was made in many forms such as interviews, form collection, and data collection of more than 75 undergraduate English-majored students at the Ho Chi Minh City University of Food Industry. The research paper was conducted in April 2022. This research paper finds out that the student's pronunciation reality is very weak. The student doesn't have much time to practice and improve English pronunciation in college, and the way a teacher teaches English pronunciation is relevant to the student's way and the difficulty of English pronunciation learning. This article finds out that, in teaching English pronunciation, the teacher may be uncomfortable with the student's way of learning English. Based on the research paper find out, some of the best ways for teaching and learning English pronunciation for English-majored students.

Keywords: English pronunciation, English-majored students, the weak, uncomfortable, learning pronunciation strategies.

1 Introduction

English is a common language, it is used in most nations throughout the world, including Vietnam. English has become the second language in Vietnam. Also, English pronunciation is very important for everybody. When the students are learning English pronunciation, the learners have to face a lot of problems, especially English-majored Students. Most English-majored students often don't pay attention to learning pronunciation and correct pronunciation but only focus on grammar, reading, and writing. Many students don't think that to communicate well and speak English properly, it is necessary to have good pronunciation skills.

The ability to pronounce words correctly is thought to be a sign of education (Akram & Qureshi, 2012). According to general observation, persons who begin learning English after high school have the greatest difficulty achieving understandable pronunciation, with the degree of difficulty growing dramatically with age (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). Many students, although majoring in English and learning the language for many years, have a low level of English language competency. Moreover, Some students who have a strong accent have trouble pronouncing English words (Thinh & Thao, 2020).

This article research the way to teach and learn about English pronunciation for English-majored students at the Ho Chi Minh City University of Food Industry and then points out the situation of teaching English pronunciation for English-majored students at HUFI.



The author of this research paper investigates "How the best way to teach English pronunciation for English-majored students at HUF1" and demonstrates several effective methods for students to acquire English pronunciation.

- + English pronunciation needs to be practised every day, talk with teachers, friends or native speakers.
- + Using App or Website to learn English pronunciation.
- + Learning and practice with International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).
- + Listening to and trying to copy native speakers will really improve pronunciation. Find a video or sound recording of a native speaker and try to copy their accent as accurately as possible.

2 Literature review

To be a global citizen, one must be fluent in English. English majors, in particular, who are acquiring the language as a tool for their future employment. English communication becomes one of their success factors (Nghị & Khuong, 2021). Furthermore, students with strong English abilities will benefit in a competitive job market following graduation. As in other Asian nations, English is not a strong suit of Vietnamese high school students, therefore college students confront several challenges in properly expressing themselves. As a result, many graduate students are unable to complete recruiting requirements as a sequence.

Pronunciation has a favourable impact on learning a second language, and students can obtain the abilities they need to communicate effectively in English (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). In addition, Pronunciation has a positive effect on learning a second language and learners can learn the techniques or skills necessary, they need for effective communication in English (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). Although English pronunciation is one of the most difficult skills to acquire and learners should spend lots of time to improve (Aliaga-García, 2007). The majority of students have difficulty learning to pronounce English correctly (Akram & Qureshi, 2012). The trainees' pronunciation is dramatically impacted in the short term by phonetic training (Aliaga-García, 2007). As we know, pronunciation is an integrated and integral part of language learning. In addition, learning a language involves learning how to pronounce words correctly. It is made up of parts that go much beyond only consonant and vowel sounds. It has intonation and rhythm components that help in communication. Therefore, Learning English Pronunciation (LEP) is a very important and need for everybody who wishes to improve their communication abilities.

Speaking a foreign language is difficult for non-native (NN) learners because oral communication necessitates various aspects in social interactions (Nghị & Khuong, 2021). Due to their lack of pronunciation skills, students face several challenges while communicating in English with native English speakers. They may be unfamiliar with language norms and how to use language skills in a real-world communication context.

(Wong, 1987) noted that they are unable to communicate successfully if their pronunciation is below a specific standard, even if non-native speakers have outstanding vocabulary and grammar. Wong contends that the significance of pronunciation becomes even more clear, when the relationship between pronunciation and listening comprehension is taken into account. Speakers must use these patterns to successfully communicate because listeners anticipate specific rhythmic and intonation patterns in spoken English. Listeners can't understand what's being said if the rhythm and intonation are off. Similar to this, for listeners to correctly perceive speech, they must understand how speech is structured and what intonation patterns signify. Learning about pronunciation helps students improve their ability to understand spoken English. Wong also demonstrated that a lack of knowledge of pronunciation could even affect students' reading and spelling.

(Thinh & Thao, 2020) contends that some pupils struggle to pronounce English words when they have a strong accent from their native tongue. It is thought to have a big influence on students' ability to pronounce words correctly.

However, learning pronunciation has some problems for the learners. This is a subject very boring for the learners, especially with students at Ho Chi Minh City University Of Food Industry. Therefore, the learner have no motivation to learn or practice English pronunciation every day or every time. So this article will find out that the solution to solve this problem was creating the comfortable environment to learn pronunciation and changed the way of teaching like creating quiz, video,.. to make the learners felt excitement to learn pronunciation. And using the shadowing method for Learn English Pronunciation (LEP) it is mean, listening to and trying to copy native speakers will really improve pronunciation.

3 Materials and Methods/ Methodology

3.1. Participants:

This study was an empirical study. The participants were 75 undergraduate English-majored students from Ho Chi Minh City University of Food Industry, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam on a voluntary basis. They were from freshmen to seniors at Ho Chi Minh City University of Food Industry, involving 63 juniors, 6 freshmen, 3 sophomores and 3 seniors. They all come from the Central part and Southern part of Vietnam. The table 1 showed that the number of freshmen have 8%, sophomores with 4%, Junior with 82,7% and the last seniors with 5,3% including a total of 75 participants.

Table 1: *The Participants' background information*

No.	Academic year	Number	Per cent
1	Freshmen	6	8%
2	Sophomore	3	4%
3	Junior	63	82,7%
4	Senior	3	5,3%
Total		75	100%

3.2 Instrumentation

The survey was created by using Google Form and separately delivered to the participants to collect data.

3.3. Procedure

Step 1: The questionnaire was handout via the link: <https://forms.gle/NHb4H9DBeuf2auK6A>

Step 2: Data were recorded and analyzed, basing on their responses. The author used the Google Form for recorded and analysis.

Step 3: the author generalizes some difficulties that participants faced during their learning English pronunciation.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 The factors affecting learning English Pronunciation skill (LEPS).

English pronunciation skill is very important for everybody. Most of the students, especially the English-majored students must have the correct pronunciation. So what happens when the student learns English Pronunciation Skill (LEPS)? In a survey with English-majored students at Ho Chi Minh City University Of Food Industry. There are some students who believe that "learning English pronunciation is really hard". More specific, *Figure 1* shows that there are 33 students out of 75 participants said that Learning English Pronunciation Skill (LEPS) is pretty hard, the equivalent of this number 43% in total 100% of a surveyed person. 21% of participants believe that the Learning English Pronunciation Skill is very hard and 16% claim that it is extremely hard. However, there are 9% equivalent to 5 participants who think it is very easy.

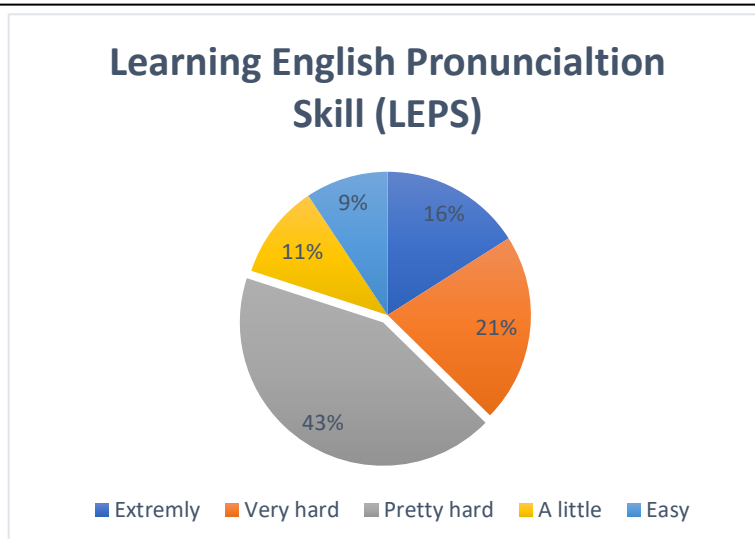


Figure 1. Difficult with Learning English Pronunciation Skill (LEPS).

Figure 1 showed that there are also a lot of students who have difficulty with English pronunciation skill. There are 43% of participants said that “Learning English Pronunciation is pretty hard”, it means that the students have more and more difficulties when learning pronunciation and they can see the importance of pronunciation in Speaking Skills (SS). So Learning English Pronunciation Skill (LEPS) is very necessary for students and especially for English-majored Students at Ho Chi Minh City University Of Food Industry. However, when learning a foreign language, there will be many difficulties, especially with English pronunciation. But “What are difficulties when practising English pronunciation”. According to a survey related to difficulties in practising English pronunciation with English-majored students at HUFI. This has shown some problems that the students have when practising English pronunciation.

Table 2 showed that there are 25 students who suppose “no motivation” when practising English pronunciation. The equivalent of this number is 33,3% and also this number describes the students who have “no partner” for practising English pronunciation. And there are 21 participants who said that they have “no guider” to support them when they practising English pronunciation equivalent to 28% of this number. 30 in total 75 participants believe that learning English pronunciation is extremely boring, there is most of number a large participant.

Table 2: The difficulties when practising English pronunciation

No.	Problem	Number	Per cent
1	<i>No motivation</i>	25	33,3%
2	<i>No partner</i>	25	33,3%
3	<i>No guider</i>	21	28%
4	<i>Boring</i>	30	40%
5	<i>No specific route</i>	26	34,7%
6	<i>Other</i>	9	12%

Table 2 has shown that there are many problems that learner of English pronunciation has experienced, especially with English-majored students at HUFI. The students don’t have a good or specific environment for practising and modifying English pronunciation of them for example they have “no partner, no guider, no specific route, etc.” Most of the participants believe that “Practising English Pronunciation is extremely boring”, there are 40% of comments in total participants. Meanwhile, Figure 1 showed that “learning English pronunciation is pretty hard, and it is really important with speaking skills”, table 2 points out that

“learner has many difficulties for practice English pronunciation and the practising English pronunciation really boring” this showed that even though it's difficult to learn the English skills to pronounce, but practice and improvement of them, it's not really obvious with English-majored students at HUFI.

However, it also stated that learning or practising English pronunciation is extremely boring. So need to change the way and the environment of teaching and learning English pronunciation for learners especially the English-majored students at HUFI.

4.2 The main learning way to practice pronunciation skills

Cause English pronunciation skills are very important and extremely hard for everybody. So many students felt that Practising English Pronunciation is really boring. And the author focuses on learning and study about the time students spend practising English pronunciation, especially the frequency of practising English pronunciation of English-majored students at Ho Chi Minh City University Of Food Industry.

The result of the data collection with 75 participant showed that there are 27 participant said that “they often practice English pronunciation”, 24 participant told that “they sometime practice English pronunciation”, 14 people “usually practice English pronunciation”, 9 people always practice English pronunciation and just only one people said that “they never practice English pronunciation”. This means, the above results are in turn equivalent to 36% of participants “often practice English pronunciation”, 32% “sometime practice” 19% people “usually practice English pronunciation”, 12% said that they “always practice English pronunciation” and just 1% “never practice English pronunciation”. This is the result of the research paper that the author carried out on the English-majored students at the Faculty of Foreign Language in HUFI.

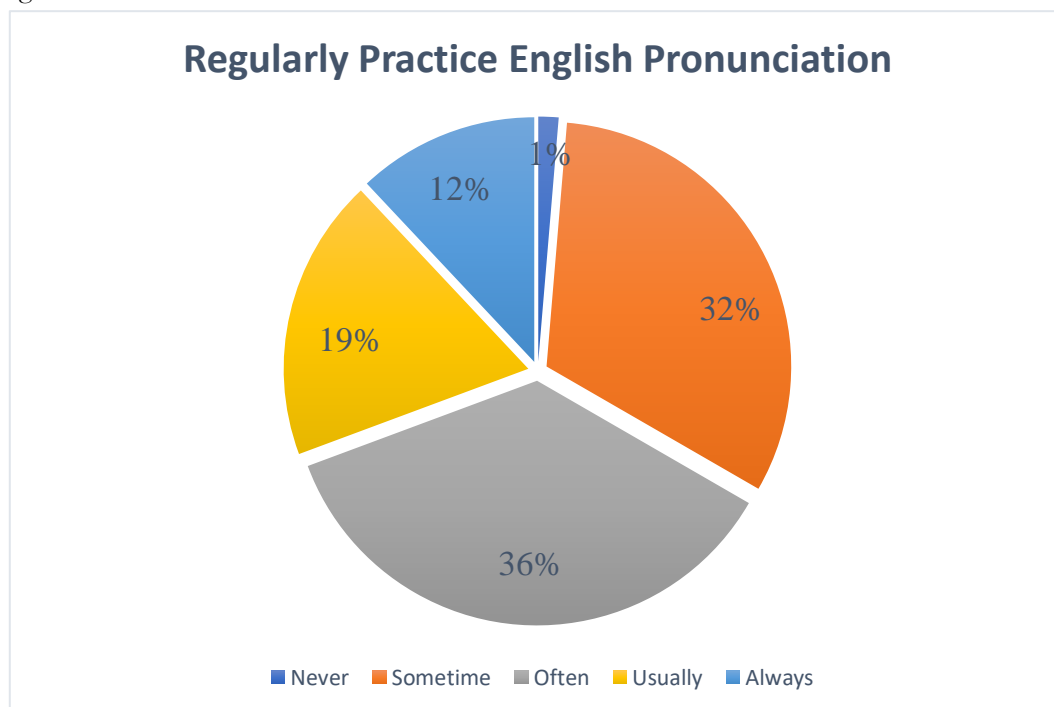


Figure 2 The English pronunciation practice frequency of students.

The result of survey showed that the students just spend a little time of day for practice English pronunciation. This has about 32% participant “sometime learn and practice English pronunciation” and 36% of participant “often learn and practice English pronunciation”. So “how to the ways that they learn and practice English pronunciation”. To clarify this issue, the author has got in to find out the main ways to practice pronunciation skills that students are using to improve their pronunciation.

The first way is to use technology to support and fix their pronunciation mistakes like some App or Website. This way has 45 participants who believed that “they often use to technology practice English pronunciation” this number is equivalent to 60%, higher more than another way.

The second way is reading books, some people said that “reading books can help improve their pronunciation anymore”. This way has 34 equivalent to 45,3% of people using.

The third way is to practice with friends in extra classes at school. Some student told that “they and their friends practice pronunciation in extra classes at school”. There are 26 participants using this way, this is equivalent 34,6%, and this method ranks in the top 3 among the methods surveyed. And then, learning at the English Education Center also has some participant choices. This has 18,6% of people improving English pronunciation at the English Education Center.

And finally, using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) improve English pronunciation skill. As most school books and dictionaries include phonetic transcriptions of vocabulary, it can be very helpful to be able to read these letters. This way has 20 people using it for improving English pronunciation. A survey revealed that 26,6% of English-majored students are choosing this method for improving pronunciation. On the other hand, some peoples has other ways to learn and practice English pronunciation. This has 17 people choosing another way.

Table 3: The main learning ways to practice pronunciation skills in students

No.	Main ways	Number	Per cent
1	Technology: Website or App	45	60%
2	Reading books	34	45,3%
3	Classes at school	26	34,6%
4	English education center	14	18,6%
5	International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)	20	26,6%
6	Other	17	22,6%

Although, practice English pronunciation is really boring but figure 2 points out that the number of often practising English pronunciation is also higher, this number is a high percentage.

4.3 The teachers are focused on the difficulties of the students from other regions.

English pronunciation skill are also one of the difficulties for some students who come from other regions. To clarify this issue, the author has got in to find out if students have ever thought that the region affects English pronunciation skills.

So, the survey showed that most of the students believed “region affects English pronunciation skill”. There are 44 participants who think that the students who come from another region are affected by their mother tongue. So English pronunciation skill are not good for them. Anyways, there are 10 people are not agree with this, and 21 participants also think that the region can affect English pronunciation skill. This means, the above results are in turn equivalent to 59% agree that “region affect English pronunciation skill”, 13% are not agreed, and 28% the region can affect English pronunciation skill.

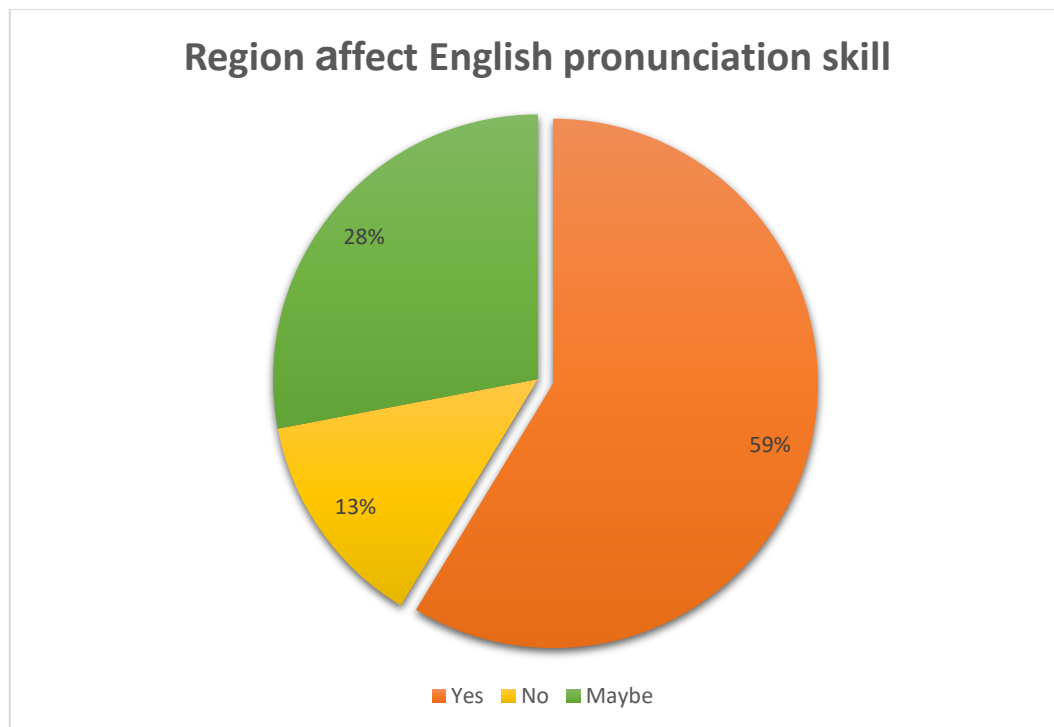


Figure 3 The region affect English pronunciation skill in students

Students from different regions have varying degrees of difficulty learning proper pronunciation. The difficulty depends on how different their native language is from English. Phonemes are different in each, as well as the way the mouth, teeth and tongue are used. So, the teachers really focused on the pronunciation of students from other regions in classes? To answer for this question, the author focuses on studying relative to the frequency of the teacher's focus on the pronunciation of students in their classes. Table 4 showed that the teacher does not really take care of the English pronunciation of their students. There are 6 participants said that "the teacher never take care of their pronunciation in classes", 8 participants also believed that "the teacher takes care of their pronunciation in the lesson is a little bit", 25 participants in total 75 participants said that "sometimes teacher also focus on their pronunciation", and just only 23 participants said that "the teacher often focus on their pronunciation". This means, the above results are in turn equivalent to 8% for the teacher who never focuses on the pronunciation, 10,7% for the teacher who focuses on pronunciation a little bit, 33,3% for sometimes also takes care of pronunciation, and 30,7% for the teacher often focus on their student's pronunciation. This number points out that the teacher sometimes take care of the English pronunciation of their students, but they weren't as proactive as they probably should have been.

However, there are 13 students said that "their teacher always takes care of English pronunciation" this number is equivalent to about 17,3% but the rate isn't high enough.

Table 4: The teacher focus on the pronunciation of students

No.	Frequency	Number	Per cent
1	Always	13	17,3%
2	Often	23	30,7%
3	Sometime	25	33,3%
4	A little	8	10,7%
5	Never	6	8%

Although figure 3 showed that most of the students said that the students come from another region and their pronunciation is also different, but the survey at table 4 point out that, the teacher dose not really take care of the English pronunciation of their students, tt was supposed to they should not to do that.

The practice of English pronunciation is really boring, but the teacher don't have the best ways to change the environment or motivation for their students, help them to overcome the mistake in English pronunciation skill. The teacher can use the technology to teach their pronunciation or use to International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) in their class anytime.

However, the students also take care of their pronunciation by themselves, they can change the environment of learning or practising, they can go to the club or garden meet some native speaker talk and practice with them.

5 Conclusions

In this study, the author searched the learning pronunciation strategies used by English-majored students at the Ho Chi Minh City University of Food Industry. First, most of the students are not spending much time and have no motivation for learning pronunciation. Second, the environment is not good for English practice pronunciation. Third, the students do not good ways of learning and have no partner to have correct when they have mistakes. Final, when the students learn English in class, some teachers are not really taken care of the pronunciation of students. The solution to solve this problem was to create a comfortable environment to learn pronunciation and changed the way of teaching like creating quiz, video,.. to make the learners felt excitement to learn pronunciation.

This article finds out some best ways to learn pronunciation strategies for English- majored students such as learning the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), trying to talk with the teacher and friends in the classroom, watching the video and copying the accent of native speakers in the social media by shadowing method.

To answer the remaining issues on how to teach pronunciation more practically and realistically, additional research seems needed on the investigation of which features of English pronunciation are important to learn and which of these functions require the learner's attention. Teachers can't teach pronunciation in English language classrooms if they do not know which features of English pronunciation are important and how to teach them. Therefore, further research on the influencing factors of intelligible pronunciation among English-majored students in HUFV is highly needed.

6. Acknowledgements

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire:

Part 1: Participant's information

1. Your Email
2. Which year are you in HUF^{I*}
 - Freshmen
 - Sophomore
 - Junior
 - Senior

Part 2: Time for used and learned English.

1. Do you often use English?^{*}
 - Sometime
 - Usually
 - Often
 - Always
 - Never
2. How much time do you spend learning English every day?^{*}
 - Hours/day
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
 - 6
 - 7
 - 8
 - 9
 - 10
 - Hours/day
3. Do you think you can pronounce English correctly?^{*}
 - Yes, I do
 - No, I don't
4. When you speak English, the listener understand clearly what you say?^{*}
 - ambiguously
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
 - clearly
5. Are you afraid when your English pronunciation is wrong?^{*}
 - Yes.
 - No.

Part 3: The way for Learning English Pronunciation (LEP)

- 6 . Do you regularly practice English pronunciation?*
- Often
 - Usually
 - Sometime
 - Never
 - Always
7. How much time do you spend practising English pronunciation?*
- Hours/day
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
 - Hours/day
8. What is your main learning way to practice pronunciation skills?*
- Apps such as ELSA, Doulingo, etc
 - Reading books
 - Practice with friend extra classes at school
 - Learning at the English Education Center
 - Learn International Phonetic Alphabet
 - Other
9. Does your teacher usually focus on your pronunciation? *
- Never
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
 - Always
10. What difficulties do you have when practising English pronunciation?*
- No motivation
 - No partner
 - No guider
 - practice English pronuciation really boring
 - No specific route
 - Other
11. Do you think the region will affect your English pronunciation skill?*
- Yes, I do
 - No, I don't
 - Maybe
12. Do you think English pronunciation skill very hard?
- Hard
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
 - Easy

Interview: 1 Quesiton.

Can you list some a best way to improve pronunciation?