

WEBSITE REVIEW

Manythings.org

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INTRODUCTION

ManyThings.org (<http://www.manythings.org/>) is designed for L2 learners of English to self-study several aspects of English outside classroom. It was developed by American ESL teachers at Aichi Institute of Technology in Japan, namely Charles Kelly and Lawrence Kelly. This teacher-made website explicitly states that it is intended for people learning English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Also, it is non-commercial and free for users. The website provides multiple sections, such as *English Sentences Focusing on Words and Their Word Families*, *Jokes*, *Vocabulary Lists with Games and Puzzles*, *Matching Quizzes*, *Pronunciation*, *Daily Listen & Repeat*, *Grammar*, and *Listen & Read Along*. Each section prefers a certain device (e.g. mobile, tablet), and the website lists the preferable device for every section. According to the description, out of 100 sections available as of December 2016, 58 are promised to work in mobile, 38 in tablet, two in computer with Flash, two in computer with Java, and there are no sections that work in computer with RealAudio. The website says that those that work in mobile and tablet will work on standard computers. Among such variety, the platform that is reviewed in this paper is the section for pronunciation learning (<http://www.manythings.org/pp/>). Henceforth, the term website in this paper refers to the pronunciation section.

OVERVIEW

To begin with, the title being *American English Pronunciation Practice (For ESL/EFL)*, it is obvious that English adopted for the website is American English, though we cannot tell which varieties of American English are adopted. When you click on the link, you will see the page shown in Figure 1:

www.ManyThings.org ▾ Vocabulary ▾ Reading (with Audio) ▾ Grammar ▾ Listening & Speaking ▾ Other ▾ iPad ▾

American English Pronunciation Practice (For ESL/EFL)

Game-like Minimal Pair Practice using Flash and MP3 Files

You can do a 4-minute review first, if you like.
Video with Minimal Pairs from Lesson 2 to Lesson 13

Minimal Pair Practice & Quizzes

Each file has four MP3-encoded minimal pairs and is about 40Kb

Minimal Pairs - Lesson 1: 13-30, ... (84Kb - the largest file)

Minimal Pairs - Lesson 2: ferry-very, ... (40Kb)

Minimal Pairs - Lesson 3: late-let, ... (37Kb)

Minimal Pairs - Lesson 4: lake-rake, ... (40Kb)

Minimal Pairs - Lesson 5: fond-found, ... (40Kb)

Minimal Pairs - Lesson 6: these-Z's, ...

Minimal Pairs - Lesson 7: said-sad, ...
There is also a Video of Lesson 7.

Minimal Pairs - Lesson 8: best-vest, ...

Minimal Pairs - Lesson 9: not-note, ...

Minimal Pairs - Lesson 10: thick-sick, ...

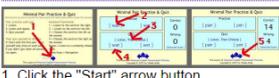
Minimal Pairs - Lesson 11: bus-boss, ...

Minimal Pairs - Lesson 12: see-she, ...

Minimal Pairs - Lesson 13: made-mad, ...

Minimal Pairs - Lesson 14: run-rung, ...
Task View

How to Use These Pages



1. Click the "Start" arrow button.
2. Click the words at the top to practice.
3. Click "Listen, Then Choose."
4. Click the answer.
5. Click the arrow button to go to the next one.

"Listen and Repeat" Videos

Focusing on Accents

Two-Syllable Words Accented on the First Syllable

Two-Syllable Words Accented on the Second Syllable

"L" and "R"

Listen & Repeat: 145 Words with "L" /l/

Listen & Repeat: 68 Words with "R" /r/

R-controlled Vowels (Also called R-colored Vowels)

Listen & Repeat: 62 Words with "R" /ɜ-/ /ə/ were, her, other, ...

Figure 1. The main page of the pronunciation section

The section is further divided into sub-sections, namely *Minimal Pair Practice & Quizzes*, *How to Use These Pages*, *"Listen and Repeat" Videos*, *Songs & Poems*, and *Tongue Twisters*. Due to space limitation, this review introduces and discusses only *Minimal Pair Practice & Quizzes*.

This section consists of 24 lessons with a single minimal pair shown in each. Table 1 is the list of minimal pairs available:

Table 1

Minimal pairs available in the section.

Lesson	Minimal pair	Lesson	Minimal pair
1	teen – ty (e.g. 13 - 30)	13	made - mad
2	ferry - very	14	run - rung
3	late - let	15	look - luck
4	lake - rake	16	climb - crime
5	fond - found	17	hot - hat
6	these - Z's	18	they - day
7	said - sad	19	run - ran
8	best - vest	20	lugs - lungs
9	not - note	21	not - nut
10	thick - sick	22	thought - taught
11	bus - boss	23	eat - it
12	see - she	24	few - hue

For each minimal pair, learners can listen to a single word (but sentence for lesson 1) as many times as they like in *Practice*. In *Quiz*, when learners click on *Listen, Then Choose*, the audio is played randomly, and learners choose which word they think is played by clicking on the word icon in *Quiz* (see Figure 2):

The screenshot shows a web browser window with a navigation menu at the top: www.ManyThings.org, Vocabulary, Reading (with Audio), Grammar, Listening & Speaking, Other, iPad. The main heading is "Minimal Pair Practice & Quiz". Below this are two boxes: "Practice" containing "[ferry]" and "[very]", and "Quiz" containing "[Listen, Then Choose]", "[ferry]", and "[very]". To the right is a score box with "Correct 0", "Wrong 0", and a "[Reset the Score]" link. Below the boxes is a blue double-headed arrow icon and the text: "This is part of American English Pronunciation Practice. Copyright © 2001 by Charles Kelly". At the bottom right, there is a small error message: "If something on our web site doesn't load properly, try clicking your 'reload' button. If it still doesn't work, please send a bug report."

Figure 2. Minimal pair practice & quiz

If the user gets the correct answer, s/he gets one point under *Correct* (see Figure 3); otherwise, s/he gets one point under *Wrong* (see Figure 4):

This screenshot is identical in layout to Figure 2, but the score box on the right now shows "Correct 1" and "Wrong 0". The rest of the page content, including the navigation menu, practice/quiz boxes, and footer text, remains the same.

Figure 3. The page shown when the answer is correct

www.ManyThings.org - Vocabulary - Reading (with Audio) - Grammar - Listening & Speaking - Other - iPad

Minimal Pair Practice & Quiz

<p>Practice</p> <p>[ferry] [very]</p>	<p>Correct</p> <p>0</p> <p>Wrong</p> <p>1</p> <p>[Reset the Score]</p>
<p>Quiz</p> <p>[Listen, Then Choose]</p> <p>[ferry] [very]</p>	


 This is part of [American English Pronunciation Practice](#).
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If something on our web site doesn't load properly, try clicking your "reload" button. If it still doesn't work, please send a bug report.

Figure 4. The page shown when the answer is wrong

EVALUATION

Following other research that has evaluated computer-assisted language learning (CALL), this review is also based on Chapelle's oft-cited work (Chapelle, 1997; Chapelle, 1998; Chapelle, 2001; Chapelle, 2003; Chapelle, 2005; Chapelle, 2009). One of her pioneering arguments is an appeal for approaches to CALL that are theoretically grounded in instructed SLA (Chapelle, 1997). Her argument is primarily supported by interactionist theory (Long, 1996), where the sequence of input, output, feedback, and modification drive L2 learning. From this perspective, the website may contribute to L2 learning but to a limited extent on the ground of the following pros and cons.

One of the pros about this website is the provision of feedback for learners (see Figures 3 and 4). Feedback is pivotal in SLA in that it provides what is possible in the target language (i.e. positive evidence) and what is not possible (i.e. negative evidence) for learners (Long, 1996). For this website, learners are given aural stimuli (input), demonstrate their current recognition of the stimuli, and receive either positive or negative evidence (feedback). Through this process, learners' interlanguage is gradually restructured and becomes closer to the target language.

The second pro is the way that minimal pairs are provided; learners can play a certain word in *Practice* repeatedly before working on *Quiz*, and, in both *Practice* and *Quiz*, each word is played in isolation. As for the benefit of repetition, Chapelle (2003), discussing vocabulary and grammar learning, indicated that it is beneficial for those who have some linguistic knowledge. In fact, a number of L2 pronunciation studies employ repetition of a certain word as instruction (Saito, 2012). Regarding isolation, it lets learners focus only on aural input without having them associate it with meaning. In fact, some studies have shown that learners

of low proficiency have not automated sound-script and word-referent processing (Goh, 2000). Furthermore, since the answer is randomized, learners cannot rely on any patterns of answers, which is another encouraged operationalization of CALL (Nakata, 2011 for vocabulary learning).

Despite these pros, there are several cons as well. First, learners do not have an opportunity to produce a word. Therefore, though his argument is about morphosyntax, following DeKeyser's (1997) Skill Acquisition Theory, the website is not as expected to improve learners' productive knowledge (i.e. automatized differentiation in production) as it is to improve their receptive knowledge (i.e. automatized differentiation in recognition) through the repetitive training. On the other hand, this recognition-centered nature is friendly for learners of low proficiency. Accordingly, the lack of production may not be satisfying for intermediate or advanced learners though it might be for beginning learners.

The second con is that the website is extremely mechanical where learners merely focus on aural input without paying attention to meaning or form. Though this factor was taken as an advantage in the previous discussion, recent studies in L2 pronunciation have criticized such mechanical drills in the form of repetition (Gooch, Saito, & Lyster, 2016; Saito, 2012; Saito & Lyster, 2012). However, such criticism originates mainly from the apprehension of teachers that such laboratory-like repetition is not authentic or applicable to classroom teaching where meaning should be the focus. Therefore, when learners use this website outside classroom for the purpose of self-study, this disadvantage might be mitigated. In conclusion, the website is not fully satisfying in terms of ideal conditions for SLA, but as long as learners utilize it merely for improving their receptive differentiation of minimal pairs, it would be beneficial for them.

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