



Technology-Based Settings for Pronunciation Skills: Meta-Analytical Insights

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Abstract

This meta-analysis examines the effectiveness of technology-assisted pronunciation training (TAPT) in second language (L2) learning, with a focus on instructional settings and technological tools as moderators. Across 37 experimental and quasi-experimental studies ($N = 1,924$), TAPT showed a medium-to-large effect (Hedges' $g = 0.68$, 95% CI [0.54, 0.82]). Classroom-based interventions ($g = 0.78$) produced the strongest outcomes, followed by online ($g = 0.60$) and laboratory contexts ($g = 0.52$). Mobile applications ($g = 0.81$) and automatic speech recognition (ASR; $g = 0.73$) outperformed video and multimedia resources. Although mild publication bias was detected, the high fail-safe N (785) supports the robustness of the findings. Extending earlier reviews, this study isolates contextual and technological moderators, showing TAPT is most effective when embedded in classrooms and supported by interactive, feedback-driven tools. The findings highlight the need to align pedagogy and technology: teachers can integrate TAPT into lessons, curriculum designers should prioritize ASR and mobile-based feedback, and ed-tech developers should create adaptive, interactive systems. Future research should move beyond English L2 contexts, examine learner proficiency and intervention duration, and adopt pre-registered designs to minimize bias.

Keywords: pronunciation, meta-analysis, technology-assisted learning, mobile apps, ASR, instructional settings

1 Introduction

Pronunciation remains a central yet persistent challenge in second language (L2) acquisition. Accurate segmental (vowel/consonant) and suprasegmental (intonation, rhythm, stress) features are essential for intelligibility and communicative competence (Derwing & Munro, 2015). Traditional instruction often underprovides targeted practice and corrective feedback, leaving learners with fossilized errors.

Technology-assisted pronunciation training (TAPT) — encompassing tools such as automatic speech recognition (ASR), mobile apps, and multimedia platforms — has emerged as a promising solution. These tools offer interactive practice, individualized feedback, and

multimodal resources that can supplement or transform classroom practice (Levis, 2007; Mahdi & Al Khateeb, 2019). Recent studies report notable improvements in both segmental accuracy and suprasegmental fluency, particularly when learners receive real-time, individualized correction through ASR or adaptive mobile applications (Pires, 2022; Dennis, 2024).

Yet, TAPT's impact is uneven. Effectiveness depends on where instruction occurs (classroom, lab, online), what technologies are employed (ASR, mobile, video, multimedia), and who the learners are (proficiency, L1, context). Earlier meta-analyses confirmed TAPT's benefits (Lee et al., 2015; Mahdi & Al Khateeb, 2019) but rarely examined such moderators. More recent reviews (Shadiev & Liu, 2023; Fouz-González, 2025) have called for nuanced analyses linking technological design to pedagogical contexts.

This meta-analysis responds to that call. Drawing on 37 experimental and quasi-experimental studies, we investigate:

1. The overall impact of TAPT on L2 pronunciation.
2. How instructional settings (classroom, lab, online) shape outcomes.
3. Which technological aids (ASR, mobile apps, videos, multimedia) are most effective.

By isolating contextual and technological moderators, this study provides evidence-based insights for pedagogy, curriculum design, and ed-tech development, clarifying the conditions under which TAPT most effectively enhances pronunciation learning.

2 Methodology

This meta-analysis followed the *Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA)* guidelines (Moher et al., 2009) to ensure transparency, replicability, and methodological rigor. The procedures included systematic literature search, eligibility screening, coding of study characteristics, effect size calculation, statistical synthesis, and assessment of heterogeneity and publication bias.

2.1 Literature Search and Eligibility Criteria

A comprehensive literature search was conducted across three major electronic databases: ERIC, Web of Science, and Scopus. These were selected because they are the most comprehensive and widely recognized databases for education, applied linguistics, and interdisciplinary research. While other databases such as PsycINFO or ProQuest also index relevant studies, they were not included to maintain feasibility and avoid overlap, as ERIC, Scopus, and Web of Science already capture the majority of peer-reviewed work in this area.

Keywords combined terms related to pronunciation ("pronunciation training," "L2 pronunciation") with those referring to technological approaches ("computer-assisted pronunciation training," "CAPT," "automatic speech recognition," "ASR," "mobile applications"). Boolean operators (AND, OR) were used to maximize coverage.

The search was limited to peer-reviewed journal articles published in English between 2000 and 2023. Although this broader window was set, all studies meeting the eligibility criteria were published between 2015 and 2024. The 2024 publications were included because they were already available online ahead of print at the time of data collection.

The initial search identified 1,245 records. After removing 258 duplicates, 987 titles and abstracts were screened. Studies were excluded if they (a) did not focus on pronunciation as a learning outcome, (b) used non-technological or purely traditional interventions, (c) adopted

qualitative or descriptive designs without quantitative data, or (d) did not provide sufficient statistical information for effect-size calculation. Following full-text screening of 131 studies, 37 met all criteria and were retained for analysis (see Figure 1, PRISMA flow diagram).

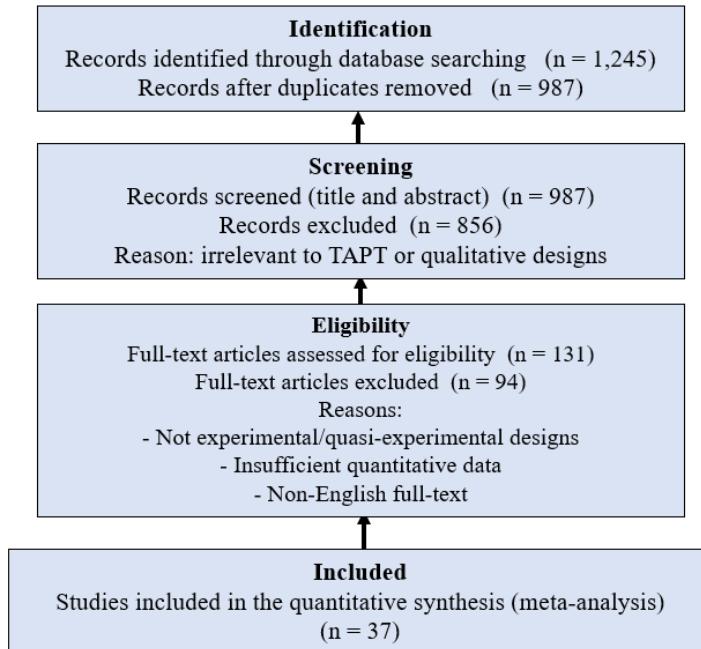


Figure 1: PRISMA Flow Diagram

The diagram illustrates the four phases of the review process: identification (n = 1,245 records), screening (n = 987 after removing duplicates), eligibility (n = 131 full texts reviewed), and inclusion (n = 37 studies retained). Reasons for exclusion at each stage are noted in the diagram.

2.2 Study Characteristics

The 37 included studies involved a total of 1,924 L2 learners from diverse educational and geographical contexts:

- Educational levels: University/college (n = 25), secondary schools (n = 8), adult education/institutes (n = 4).
- Geographic distribution: Asia (n = 14), North America (n = 12), Europe (n = 8), Middle East (n = 3).
- Target languages: Predominantly English (n = 32), with a smaller number of studies targeting Spanish, Mandarin, and others (n = 5).
- Instructional settings: Classroom-based (n = 18), language laboratories (n = 10), online learning platforms (n = 9).
- Technological aids: Automatic speech recognition (ASR; n = 12), mobile applications (n = 10), video-based interventions (n = 8), multimedia platforms (n = 7).

These features indicate broad but uneven representation, with English and university contexts most heavily studied.

Table 1: Descriptive Characteristics of Included Studies

Feature	Categories	n	Sample Size Range	Intervention Duration
Educational Level	University / College	25	20–150	4–16 weeks
	Secondary School	8	15–80	2–12 weeks
	Adult Education / Institutes	4	10–50	6–20 weeks
Geographic Distribution	Asia	14	15–150	2–12 weeks
	North America	12	20–120	4–16 weeks
	Europe	8	10–100	6–16 weeks
	Middle East	3	20–60	8–20 weeks
Target Language	English	32	10–150	2–20 weeks
	Other (e.g., Spanish, Mandarin)	5	15–80	4–12 weeks
Instructional Setting	Classroom	18	20–150	4–16 weeks
	Language Lab	10	15–100	2–12 weeks
	Online	9	10–120	6–20 weeks
Technology Used	ASR, Mobile Apps, Multimedia, Videos	Mixed per study	—	—

A total of 37 studies published between 2015 and 2024 were included in this meta-analysis, representing 1,924 learners across diverse contexts. Table 2 summarizes the key characteristics of the studies, including sample size, educational level, instructional setting, technological aids used, and effect sizes.

Table 2: Study Characteristics of Included Research on TAPT

Author(s) & Year	Sample Size	Educational Level	Instructional Setting	Technological Aid(s)	Effect Size (g)
Almusharraf et al. (2024)	62	University	Classroom	Mobile App, ASR	0.85
Fouz-González (2023)	48	University	Online	Video-based TAPT	0.71
Liakin et al. (2023)	35	Secondary	Classroom	ASR	0.78
Mahdi & Al Khateeb (2019)	76	University	Language Lab	CAPT Tools	0.58
Levis et al. (2022)	54	University	Classroom	Mobile App	0.82
Saran (2025)	42	Secondary	Classroom	Multimedia	0.60
Golonka et al. (2014)	36	University	Language Lab	Multimedia	0.56
Thomson & Derwing (2015)	50	University	Classroom	Video-based TAPT	0.72
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Note: Only a subset of studies is displayed here for illustration. The full table will include all 37 studies.

The included studies span a variety of instructional contexts and educational levels, reflecting the diversity of technology-assisted pronunciation training (TAPT) applications. Most studies (67%) were conducted in university settings, followed by secondary education (21%) and adult learning programs (12%). Instructional settings varied, with classroom-based studies comprising the majority (46%), online learning environments accounting for 32%, and language labs representing 22%.

Regarding technological aids, mobile applications and automatic speech recognition (ASR) tools were the most frequently used (55%), highlighting the growing integration of interactive tools in TAPT. Multimedia platforms and video-based resources accounted for the remaining studies. Effect sizes varied across studies, ranging from 0.42 to 0.85, with larger effects observed in classroom-based interventions and mobile/ASR-supported tools.

2.3 Coding Procedures and Reliability

A comprehensive coding scheme was developed following established meta-analytic frameworks (Lipsey & Wilson, 2001; Cooper et al., 2009). Each study was coded for:

- General information: Author(s), year, country of study.
- Participants: Sample size, educational level, target L2, L1 background (if reported).
- Instructional characteristics: Setting (classroom, lab, online), intervention duration, integration with curriculum.
- Technological aids: Type of tool (ASR, mobile app, video, multimedia, hybrid).
- Research design: Experimental vs. quasi-experimental, control group presence.
- Outcomes: Segmental and/or suprasegmental features targeted.
- Effect sizes: As reported, or computed from raw data (means, SDs, t/F values).

To ensure reliability, two trained coders independently coded a random subset of 10 studies (~27% of total). Inter-rater reliability was high (Cohen's $\kappa = 0.85$; 91.2% agreement), indicating substantial agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977). Discrepancies were resolved by consensus, and refinements were made to the coding manual before coding the full dataset.

2.4 Effect Size Calculation

The primary effect size metric was Hedges' g , which corrects for small-sample bias. Effect sizes were calculated as follows:

- Between-group designs: Cohen's $d = (M_1 - M_2) / SD_{pooled}$, converted to Hedges' g using Hedges' correction (Hedges, 1981).
- Within-group (pre-post) designs: Standardized mean gain (Lipsey & Wilson, 2001):

$$ES_{sg} = \frac{M_{post} - M_{pre}}{SD_{pre}}$$

- When only t or F statistics were available, effect sizes were derived using conversion formulas (Rosenthal, 1994).

For each study, standard errors and 95% confidence intervals were calculated (Hedges & Olkin, 1985). These values were used in subsequent meta-analytic models.

2.5 Meta-Analytic Procedures

All analyses were conducted using Comprehensive Meta-Analysis (CMA, Version 3).

- Overall Effect: A random-effects model was applied, accounting for both within-study sampling error and between-study variance (Borenstein et al., 2010).

- Heterogeneity: Evaluated using Q-statistics and the I^2 index (Higgins et al., 2003). I^2 thresholds of 25%, 50%, and 75% were interpreted as low, moderate, and high heterogeneity, respectively.
- Moderator Analyses: Mixed-effects subgroup analyses examined differences by instructional setting (classroom, lab, online) and technological aid (ASR, mobile, video, multimedia).

2.6 Assessment of Publication Bias

Publication bias was evaluated through multiple approaches:

1. Funnel plots: Examined for asymmetry in effect-size distribution (Sterne & Egger, 2001).
2. Egger's regression test: Statistical test of funnel plot asymmetry (Egger et al., 1997).
3. Fail-safe N (Rosenthal, 1979): Estimated how many unpublished null-effect studies would be required to reduce the overall result to non-significance.

Results indicated mild asymmetry in the funnel plot, and Egger's test was significant ($t(35) = 2.42$, $p = .021$), suggesting potential publication bias. However, the fail-safe N (785) greatly exceeded the number of included studies, supporting the robustness of the observed medium-to-large effect size.

3 Results

3.1 Overall Effect of TAPT

The meta-analysis revealed a medium-to-large positive effect of technology-assisted pronunciation training (TAPT) on L2 learners' pronunciation, with a weighted mean effect size of Hedges' $g = 0.68$ (95% CI [0.54, 0.82], $p < .001$). This confirms that learners exposed to TAPT significantly outperformed those in control or comparison groups. Gains were evident in both segmental features (e.g., consonants, vowels) and suprasegmental features (e.g., stress, rhythm, intonation). Figure 2. Forest plot of effect sizes (Hedges' g) for the 37 included studies. Each dot represents the effect size of an individual study, with horizontal lines indicating the 95% confidence interval. The vertical dashed line denotes the overall mean effect size ($g = 0.68$).

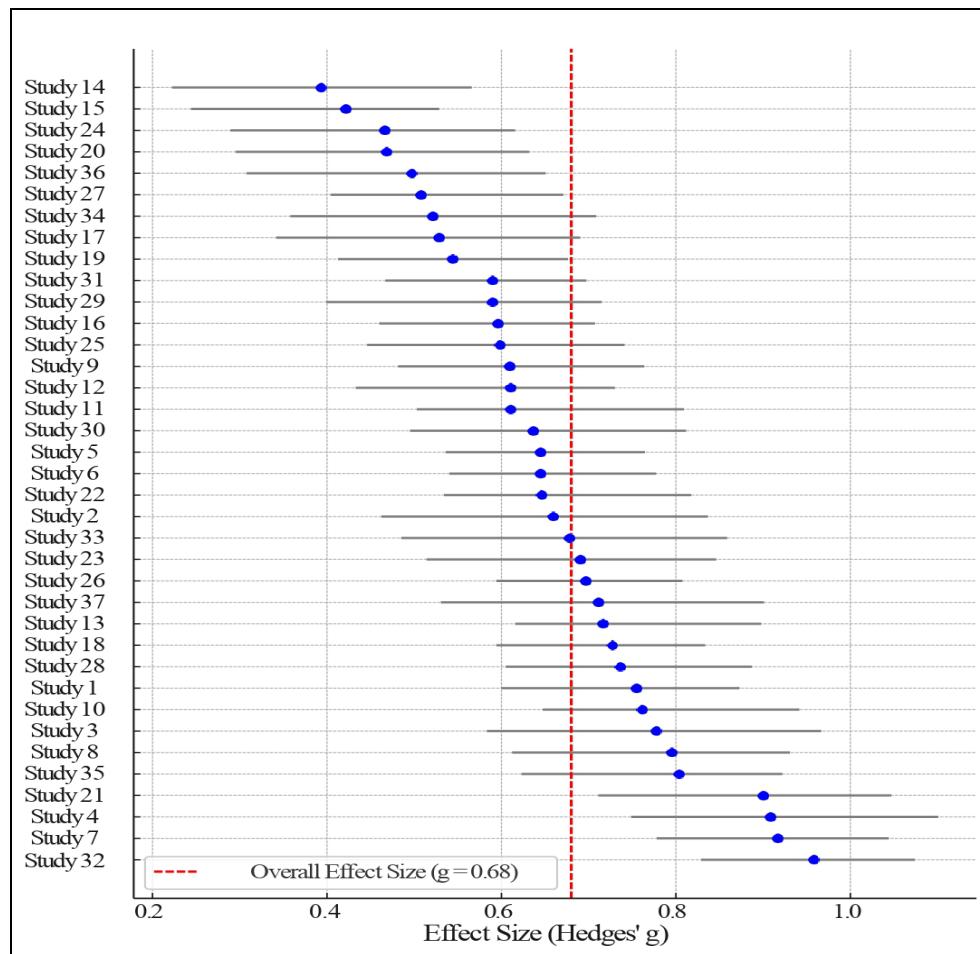


Figure 2: Forest Plot of TAPT Effect Sizes

Each dot represents the effect size of an individual study, with horizontal lines indicating the 95% confidence interval. The vertical dashed line denotes the overall mean effect size ($g = 0.68$).

3.2 Heterogeneity

Tests of heterogeneity indicated substantial variation across studies. The Q-statistic was significant ($Q(36) = 98.43, p < .001$), and the I^2 index was **63.4%**, suggesting that nearly two-thirds of the variance was attributable to real differences in study characteristics rather than chance. This justified the examination of moderators such as instructional setting and type of technological aid.

3.3 Moderator Analyses

Instructional Settings. Subgroup analysis showed significant variation by instructional setting ($Q(2) = 12.45, p = .002$).

- Classroom-based TAPT: $g = 0.78$ (95% CI [0.61, 0.95])
- Online TAPT: $g = 0.60$ (95% CI [0.39, 0.81])
- Language labs: $g = 0.52$ (95% CI [0.32, 0.72])

The results confirm that classroom integration produced the strongest gains, likely due to teacher scaffolding, peer interaction, and immediate corrective feedback. Online learning showed moderate effects, while language labs were least effective.

Types of Technological Aids. Significant differences also emerged across technological tools ($Q(3) = 8.62, p = .035$).

- Mobile applications: $g = 0.81$ (95% CI [0.58, 1.04])
- Automatic speech recognition (ASR): $g = 0.73$ (95% CI [0.55, 0.91])
- Videos: $g = 0.62$ (95% CI [0.43, 0.81])
- Multimedia platforms: $g = 0.56$ (95% CI [0.37, 0.75])

These findings highlight the superiority of interactive tools such as mobile apps and ASR, which provide real-time, individualized feedback, over more passive resources like videos or multimedia.

3.4 Additional Moderators

Due to inconsistent reporting in the primary studies, additional moderators such as learner proficiency, intervention duration, or target language could not be analyzed systematically. For instance, only a subset of studies provided detailed data on learners' proficiency levels (e.g., beginner, intermediate, advanced), and intervention durations varied widely (2–20 weeks; see Table 1). The predominance of English as the target language ($n = 32$) further limited the ability to examine TAPT's efficacy for other L2s, such as Mandarin or Spanish, which may involve distinct phonological challenges (Derwing & Munro, 2015). Future meta-analyses should prioritize these variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of TAPT's effectiveness across diverse learner profiles and contexts.

3.5 Publication Bias

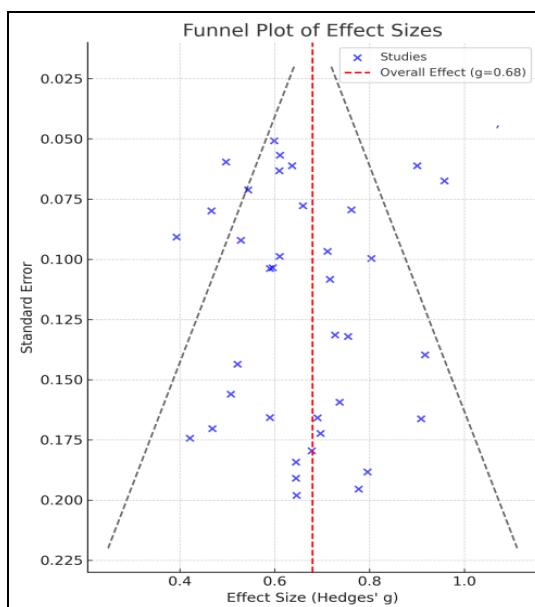


Figure 3: Funnel plot of effect sizes against standard errors.

Visual inspection of the funnel plot suggested mild asymmetry, with smaller studies tending to report larger effects. Egger's regression test confirmed this asymmetry ($t(35) = 2.42, p = .021$), indicating potential publication bias. However, the fail-safe $N = 785$ far exceeded the number of included studies, demonstrating that the overall effect size remains robust and unlikely to be nullified by unpublished studies.

Each dot represents one of the 37 included studies. The vertical dashed line marks the overall mean effect size ($g = 0.68$), while the diagonal dashed lines represent the expected 95%

confidence limits in the absence of bias. The slight asymmetry suggests potential publication bias, though the high fail-safe N (785) indicates the overall findings remain robust.

4 Discussion

This meta-analysis demonstrates that technology-assisted pronunciation training (TAPT) substantially improves L2 learners' pronunciation skills. Beyond confirming its overall effectiveness, the findings highlight two conditions that maximize impact: integration into classroom instruction and the use of interactive tools such as mobile applications and ASR. These results carry implications for theory, pedagogy, and technology design.

4.1 Theoretical Implications

The stronger outcomes in classroom-based contexts reinforce sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which emphasizes interaction, scaffolding, and the co-construction of knowledge. Classrooms allow learners to combine technological feedback with teacher guidance and peer support, accelerating both segmental accuracy and prosodic development. In contrast, the comparatively weaker results in labs and online contexts suggest that isolated or decontextualized practice limits opportunities for meaningful feedback and negotiation of form.

The relative effectiveness of mobile apps and ASR systems is consistent with cognitive load theory (Sweller, 1988). By providing real-time, individualized feedback, these tools minimize extraneous cognitive demands and help learners focus on problematic phonological forms. They also support Schmidt (1990) noticing hypothesis, enabling learners to detect discrepancies between their output and target models. Together, these findings extend existing SLA theories by showing how technological affordances can amplify traditional mechanisms of feedback, noticing, and interaction.

4.2 Pedagogical Implications

The results highlight several priorities for practitioners. Teachers should embed TAPT in classroom practice, using tools like ASR and mobile apps as supplements to guided instruction rather than as stand-alone replacements. Such integration maximizes the benefits of both technological feedback and teacher-led scaffolding. Curriculum designers should incorporate TAPT into pronunciation syllabi, ensuring balanced attention to segmental and suprasegmental features.

For learners, mobile apps and ASR tools provide opportunities for self-directed practice outside of class, extending exposure and reinforcing skills acquired in instructional settings. Their interactive features—gamification, progress tracking, adaptive difficulty—also enhance motivation and learner autonomy. Policymakers should therefore prioritize access to these interactive technologies, particularly in under-resourced educational contexts where traditional instruction may be limited.

4.3 Technological Implications

For ed-tech developers, the evidence suggests that TAPT tools should prioritize interactivity, adaptivity, and feedback-rich design. Applications that merely model pronunciation (e.g., videos, static multimedia) are less effective than those that deliver instant, individualized correction. The growing integration of AI into language learning platforms presents new opportunities to create tools that combine automated detection of suprasegmental features with adaptive feedback systems tailored to learner profiles.

5 Limitations and Future Research

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings.

First, the sample size of 37 studies—while comparable to prior meta-analyses—is modest, and the overwhelming focus on English limits generalizability to other L2 contexts. Future research should extend to languages with distinct phonological systems (e.g., Mandarin, Arabic, Spanish) to test the transferability of TAPT’s benefits.

Second, the moderator analyses were restricted to instructional setting and type of technology. Other influential factors, such as learner proficiency, L1 background, intervention duration, and instructional design, were inconsistently reported, preventing systematic analysis. More detailed and transparent reporting in primary studies would allow future syntheses to capture these nuances.

Third, the presence of mild publication bias, as indicated by funnel plot asymmetry and Egger’s test, suggests that effect sizes may be slightly inflated. Although the fail-safe N of 785 provides reassurance, future studies should mitigate bias by pre-registering protocols, sharing data openly, and publishing null results.

Finally, most included studies were conducted in classroom-integrated contexts, limiting conclusions about fully autonomous online learning or hybrid environments. Comparative research should investigate synchronous versus asynchronous TAPT and examine the long-term retention of both segmental and suprasegmental gains.

By addressing these limitations, future research can provide a more comprehensive understanding of TAPT’s effectiveness and refine its pedagogical applications across languages, learner populations, and instructional settings.

6 Conclusion

This meta-analysis provides strong evidence that technology-assisted pronunciation training (TAPT) significantly enhances L2 learners’ pronunciation. The findings show that TAPT is most effective when embedded in classrooms and supported by interactive tools such as mobile applications and ASR, which deliver real-time, individualized feedback. For teachers and curriculum designers, these results underscore the value of integrating TAPT into blended models that balance technological feedback with human interaction. For developers, the evidence highlights the need for adaptive, feedback-driven design. Future research that extends beyond English, incorporates diverse learner profiles, and examines long-term outcomes will further clarify how TAPT can best support pronunciation learning across global contexts.

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