This paper reported on a college English course which utilized *EnglishCentral*, a web-based English teaching application to teach English pronunciation skills. The approach of the course was *blended learning*, which combined web-based learning and traditional classroom learning.

The students in this course were 26 students (ages from 19 to 22; 2 males and 24 females) without extensive overseas experiences. Some of them had early exposure to English in their childhood by attending private English conversation classes, watching English videos at home, or listening to English songs, but all of them started learning English formerly in their junior high schools (age 12). The participants’ majors included voice, piano, music education, flute, and percussion. Many of them, especially voice majors, were interested in improving their English pronunciation because they wanted to sing English songs with good pronunciation.

The teaching material, *EnglishCentral*, is an online application which can be used with both a mobile device and a computer by installing its application from the Internet. It is designed to provide English learners with a wide variety of English practices with short video clips from movies, TV programs, commercials, news, famous speeches, and documentaries. Each video clip includes three types of practices: 1) students watch a video, 2) they practice the vocabulary in the video by filling out gaps, and 3) they read aloud the lines from the video, repeating after the model native speaker. The topics of the videos were varied: business, media, daily life, trips, academics, and kids. Besides, there were videos specially made to teach English pronunciation. Students were able to choose the right level of the materials for their English proficiency from the seven levels (Level 1 = Beginner, Level 2 = High Beginner, Level 3 = Intermediate, Level 4 = High Intermediate, Level 5 = Low Advanced, Level 6 = Advanced, and Level 7 = High Advanced).

A special feature of *EnglishCentral* was that it produced two types of records: student’s pronunciation ratings and the percentage of their overall completion of the assignments during the semester. The former indicated that students’ ratings for their recorded speeches ranged from A+ (> 99%) of the Japanese speakers of...
English) to C (3% - 23% of the Japanese speakers of English). Therefore, students were able to see how much progress they were making as they practiced their pronunciation over the semester.

Although the students’ improvements in pronunciation were varied, it was clear that those who practiced frequently and repeatedly improved their pronunciation proficiency. The top two students practiced much harder than the other students; as a result, their final pronunciation ratings got better and in the end they received “A”. At the same time, those who did not practice remained at the low level, “C”. Therefore, it was obvious that practicing with the model speaker was beneficial for pronunciation improvement.

Students’ reflections on the course showed that although EnglishCentral was useful and effective as a pronunciation practice material, some felt demotivated when they received low ratings from its rating system repeatedly and this prevented them from trying harder. This automatic feedback system seems to be one of the problems of the application.

In conclusion, this paper described the effects of blended learning with the web-based English learning application. There were many advantages for both students and teachers; however, from motivational perspectives, some considerations should be given in the way its feedback is given.

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