

# 用英文歌曲增進英語發音能力：運用任務型語言學習強化學生對超音段特徵的敏銳度

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## 摘要

本研究探討任務型語言學習如何強化學生對超音段特徵的敏銳度。在進階英語發音練習課程中，學生在學習超音段特徵後，被要求挑選一首個人喜愛的英文流行歌曲來完成標註歌詞中超音段特徵的個人報告，隨後透過小組討論及教師的回饋修改報告。研究結果顯示，大多數學生能夠準確標註歌詞中超音段特徵；此外，教師隨機訪談及報告反思中發現，學生在完成報告的過程中反覆參照教材中的弱音及連音規則，小組討論及教師的回饋也有助於提升報告的準確性，學生對於唱英文歌曲也更具信心。整體而言，任務型語言學習強化學生對超音段特徵的敏銳度有正面的影響。文末提供任務型語言學習在英語發音教學的應用建議，以及未來進一步的研究方向。

**關鍵詞：**英語發音、英語教學、超音段、任務型語言學習

# **Improving English Pronunciation Skills with English Songs: Enhancing Students' Sensitivity to Suprasegmental Features through Task-Based Language Learning**

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## **Abstract**

This study explored how explicit pronunciation instruction and task-based language learning enhanced students' sensitivity to suprasegmental features. In an advanced English pronunciation practice course, after explicit instruction of suprasegmental features, students were required to select a favorite English pop song and subsequently complete an individual report marking suprasegmental features in the song's lyrics. Students revised their reports, incorporating feedback received during group discussions and guidance from the instructor. The research results indicate that the majority of students could accurately mark suprasegmental features in the lyrics. Additionally, following random interviews conducted by the researcher with the students and a review of student reflections, it was observed that students consistently referred to the rules related to reduction and linking in the course materials during the process of report writing. Additionally, it was evident that the feedback from group discussions and the instructor's guidance played a significant role in improving the accuracy of the reports. Furthermore, students exhibited increased confidence in singing English songs. Overall, task-based language learning had a positive impact on enhancing students' sensitivity to suprasegmental features. The study concludes with pedagogical implications for applying task-based language learning in English pronunciation instruction and suggests directions for future research.

**Keywords:** English pronunciation, EFL/ESL, Suprasegmentals, Task-Based Language Learning

## Introduction

Segmental features pertain to individual speech sounds (phonetics), such as vowels and consonants, and their characteristics, including phonemes and their phonetic qualities, while suprasegmental features encompass aspects of speech that influence syllables, words, phrases, or sentences, rather than individual phonetic segments. Both features play a pivotal role in conveying meaning and enhancing comprehension in spoken English.

In Taiwan, suprasegmental features are seldom explicitly and systematically instructed in English courses. While English pronunciation practice courses are available in diverse English and applied foreign language departments (under different course titles), due to time constraint, these courses usually prioritize individual phonetic segments (phonetics) over suprasegmental features (e.g., reduction and linking). There are, however, certain departments that provide a two-course sequence dedicated to English pronunciation. The Department of Applied Foreign Languages at Cheng Shiu University is one such department, offering both English pronunciation practice and advanced English pronunciation practice courses in its curriculum, providing the researcher with an opportunity to incorporate suprasegmental features systematically into the advanced English pronunciation practice course.

English pronunciation instruction in Taiwan typically follows the traditional present-practice-produce (PPP) paradigm. In this approach, the teacher introduces the targeted pronunciation elements, provides demonstrations to the students, and then calls on the students to produce these elements. However, the researcher has been in search of an effective approach to assist students consolidate their comprehension of the segmental and suprasegmental features introduced in class. Given the widespread adoption of task-based language learning (TBLL) for improving students' production of segmentals and suprasegmentals in ESL/EFL contexts (e.g., Gordon, 2021; Waluyo, 2019), the researcher recognized its potential to provide an effective approach for enhancing students' sensitivity to English suprasegmental features and decided to adopt it in the advanced English pronunciation practice course.

Furthermore, utilizing English pop songs stands out as one of the most effective methods for establishing a comfortable learning environment and actively engaging ESL/EFL students in enjoyable activities to enhance their pronunciation skills. Previous research has demonstrated that participants tend to retain lyrics

more effectively when presented with songs as opposed to spoken versions of the lyrics (e.g., McElhinney & Annett, 1996). Additionally, the integration of pop songs has proven to be effective in addressing students' challenges in both segmental and suprasegmental pronunciation (e.g., Nazara, 2017).

Having served as an EFL teacher in Taiwan for 28 years, the researcher observed that numerous Taiwanese learners encounter challenges in producing both segmental and suprasegmental features. The scarcity of research in the existing literature concerning the application of task-based language learning for pronunciation instruction, particularly in suprasegmental features within EFL contexts in Taiwan, motivated this pilot study. In this study, the researcher designed a pop song lyrics-marking task to assist students enhance their sensitivity to targeted suprasegmental features. The aim is that this study could contribute insights for curriculum design and EFL pronunciation pedagogy in Taiwan.

## Review of the Literature

The roots of task-based language learning (TBLL) can be traced back to the communicative language teaching (CLT) movement. Since then the concept of task-based language teaching has gained more prominence, especially within the domains of ESL/EFL education. Many textbooks currently incorporate task-based activities as a central component of their curricula. These tasks are specifically designed to motivate learners to utilize language for practical and real-life purposes.

Task-based language learning has been regarded as appropriate for language learning because it fosters interaction and the negotiation of meaning in the target language. Long (1991) asserted that interaction and negotiation of meaning through communicative tasks not only contribute to the learners' ability to recognize and understand linguistic forms within the input but also promotes the development of communicative competence.

Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT, as exemplified by Waluyo, 2019), or Task-Based Instruction (TBI, as demonstrated by Gordon, 2021) has been shown to be effective in fostering EFL learners' communicative competence (Waluyo, 2019) and improving EFL learners' abilities in both perceiving and producing segmental and suprasegmental features (Gordon, 2021).

In EFL classroom settings in Thailand, Waluyo (2019) conducted a large-scale quantitative study involving 782 participants, in which task-based language teaching was incorporated with role-play tasks centered around different themes. In the pre-task phase, teachers introduced the target language features relevant to the theme from the textbook and provided detailed guidance for students' role-play performances. Students, organized in groups of four to five, were required to compose a script outside the classroom and submit it before each role-play task. Subsequently, each group performed their script in front of the class using props. Following each group's performance, teachers provided feedback on various aspects, including pronunciation, word choice, grammar, and more. In the post-task phase, students reflected on the challenges they faced during the role-play performance and discussed strategies to enhance their subsequent performances. The results of students' role-play scores and the final speaking test scores revealed that theme-based role-play tasks had a significant positive impact on students' pronunciation and improved their communicative competence.

It seems that the primary goal of the English in Cultural Diversity course in the aforementioned study was to enhance students' speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. Besides, it appears that the feedback on pronunciation mainly focused on segmental aspects. Additionally, while the study featured a substantial sample size (N=782), it could have been further strengthened by incorporating a control group. This would have allowed for a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of task-based language teaching within this specific context.

With respect to pronunciation instruction, explicit pronunciation instruction has demonstrated its effectiveness in improving the perception and production of both segmentals and suprasegmentals in ESL (Gordon & Darcy, 2016) and EFL (Gordon, 2021; Gordon & Darcy, 2022) classroom settings, even with short-term interventions.

Gordon and Darcy (2016) conducted a study to explore the impacts of short-term explicit and nonexplicit pronunciation instruction on the development of comprehensible speech in ESL learners. They divided three high-intermediate communication classes into different groups. The first experimental group (N=12) received explicit pronunciation instruction on suprasegmentals. The second experimental group (N=8) received explicit pronunciation instruction concerning four English vowels. The third class (N=10) served as

a control group and did not receive any explicit instruction. All three classes underwent nine 25-minute sessions over three weeks. The results of the pre-test and post-test revealed that the group focusing on suprasegmentals significantly improved their comprehensibility. In contrast, the group that focused on the four vowels showed the most improvement in the pronunciation of those specific vowels. As for the control group, the slight improvement observed was not statistically significant. Although the sample size was small, the study shows the effectiveness of explicit pronunciation instruction.

In an effort to enhance learners' proficiency in both perceiving and producing suprasegmental features, Gordon (2021) combined task-based instruction and explicit pronunciation instruction within an EFL classroom at a university in Costa Rica. Participants in three classes received explicit instruction on suprasegmentals. The first class completed simple communicative activities, the second class engaged in simple decision-making tasks, and the third class tackled more complex decision-making tasks. These activities were conducted over a span of just six 30-minute sessions within three weeks. All participants' pre-test and post-test speech samples were assessed for comprehensibility, fluency, and accentedness. The results indicated that the experimental group, which undertook more complex tasks, significantly improved their comprehensibility during the post-test, though their fluency and accentedness did not show significant improvements.

The intervention in Gordon (2021) spanned only a total of three hours. While it did not lead to improvements in the participants' fluency and accentedness, it did significantly enhance their comprehensibility. I believe that if the intervention had been extended over a longer duration, it might have yielded different results. The study also emphasized the significance of explicit pronunciation instruction, which centers on enhancing sensitivity and awareness of phonetic and phonological characteristics, in ESL/EFL classroom settings.

In a recent study, Gordon and Darcy (2022) replicated their prior experimental study that examined the impacts of explicit pronunciation instruction and communicative tasks on comprehensibility, fluency, and accentedness, as outlined in their previous study (Gordon & Darcy, 2016). The results of the recent study align with their earlier findings. Specifically, only the group that concentrated on suprasegmentals displayed a significant improvement in both comprehensibility and fluency. However, None

of the groups exhibited significant improvements in accentedness.

Songs can be utilized to enhance language learning, with a particular focus on pronunciation improvement, which is one of the most effective ways to create a comfortable learning environment and engage students in fun activities to improve pronunciation. Previous studies showed that lyrics were retained better when participants were presented with the songs rather than spoken versions of the lyrics (e.g., McElhinney & Annett, 1996). Besson et al. (1998) studied how music and lyrics of songs are cognitively integrated in the human brain. That explains why we can still remember lyrics to songs from long time ago. Importantly, songs often incorporate simple spoken English that is abundant in suprasegmental features, including intonation, thought groups, contractions, reductions, and linking. Therefore, English pop songs prove to be an ideal resource for pronunciation instruction.

In a classroom action research conducted in Indonesia, Nazara (2017) employed four songs by Westlife to address students' segmental and suprasegmental pronunciation difficulties. Alongside traditional face-to-face instruction in the classroom, an educational technology platform, Edmodo, was integrated into half of the sessions, which allowed students to engage in project-related activities outside of the classroom. The results of the two post-tests indicated that the use of English pop songs was effective in enhancing students' pronunciation skills, particularly in segmental and suprasegmental features where they had encountered difficulties. The post-action questionnaire further revealed that students found it fun to work on their pronunciation skills with familiar pop songs. This motivated the researcher to incorporate English pop songs within a task-based language learning approach in the present study. Moreover, the blended learning environment in the study prompted the researcher to contemplate the utilization of educational technology platforms in pronunciation instruction. With the aid of modern technology, students have the opportunity to enhance their English pronunciation skills outside the classroom.

The previous studies mentioned above employed a range of tasks, progressing from simple to complex, to effectively enhance students' pronunciation and comprehensibility. In contrast, the present pilot study assigned a single task to students with the specific aim of enhancing their sensitivity to suprasegmental features, serving to reinforce what they had learned throughout the advanced English

pronunciation practice course, in combination with explicit pronunciation instruction as in Gordon and Darcy (2016, 2022).

In the upcoming section, the researcher will introduce the research site and participants, outline the teaching materials employed in the advanced English pronunciation practice course, elucidate the execution of the teaching process, and provide a comprehensive account of how explicit pronunciation instruction and task-based language learning were incorporated through the use of pop songs within the EFL classroom setting.

## Method

### The Research Site and Participants

The participants in this study were first-year Taiwanese students enrolled in the Department of Applied Foreign Languages at Cheng Shiu University in southern Taiwan. They were selected because they were currently enrolled in the advanced English pronunciation practice course, which was taught by the researcher, making them a convenient sample. The participant group comprised 34 students, consisting of 12 females and 22 males, with ages ranging from 18 to 22 years. Most of them possessed a basic level of English proficiency, typically within the CEFR A2 range, as determined by their English placement test during orientation. Mandarin Chinese served as the first language (L1) for all participants. In the previous semester, the researcher had instructed them in English pronunciation practice, focusing mainly on segmentals (vowels and consonants). At the time of the study, the researcher held a Ph.D. degree and a master's degree in TESOL, with 26 years of EFL teaching experience in Taiwan.

### Course Materials for Advanced English Pronunciation Practice

The teaching materials, in the form of PowerPoint (PPT) slides, were created bilingually in both English and Mandarin Chinese by the researcher. During the first session, the researcher covered the course syllabus and provided an introduction. In the second session, a comprehensive review of the segmentals (vowels and consonants) that the students had previously learned in the preceding semester was undertaken. Subsequently, the students were provided with explicit instruction encompassing perception, practice, and production of the following materials before they were assigned a report to complete. The units were structured as follows:

#### Unit 1 Same Vowels, Different Lengths

Following the conventional present-practice-produce (PPP) paradigm, the researcher initially directed the students' focus towards recognizing the varying vowel lengths in combination with voiceless and voiced consonant endings as shown in Figure 1. Given that American English serves as the standard in English language education and testing in Taiwan, the researcher utilized audio samples of American English sourced mainly from Cambridge Dictionary Online. These audio samples illustrated that a vowel is pronounced for a longer duration with a descending pitch when it is followed by a voiced consonant ending, and for a shorter duration when followed by a voiceless consonant ending. This is a segmental feature that most of the students had not previously observed. Given the fact that in conversational English word-final stops (e.g., /t/, /d/) are frequently unreleased (Flege, 1995), it is imperative to train EFL students to identify vowel durations before final stop endings.

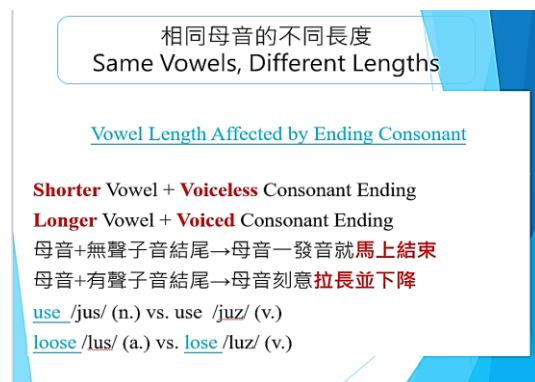


Figure 1 Unit 1 PPT Slide 1  
Note. Rules for vowel length with different consonant endings

Subsequently, the students engaged in a practice activity during which the researcher played additional audio samples from Cambridge Dictionary Online. Each word was linked to Cambridge Dictionary Online, as depicted in Figure 2. Occasionally, the researcher also incorporated American pronunciations from the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online when he found the pronunciations in the Cambridge Dictionary unsatisfactory. Additionally, the researcher resorted to using the online Merriam-Webster dictionary when he was not satisfied with the audio samples from the former two dictionaries.

Furthermore, when there were distinct pronunciation differences between American English and British English (e.g. weekend), the researcher would play British pronunciations, recognizing that some students might require this for their preparation for the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC).

Following the practice session, the researcher would individually call on students to produce the words from the PPT slides as shown in Figure 2. This was the point at which error correction took place. Immediate feedback was offered after each student's pronunciation attempt, with the researcher providing explicit explanations about whether certain words had been pronounced correctly. Additionally, the researcher utilized gestures to convey the duration and pitch falling when demonstrating the pronunciation of specific words.

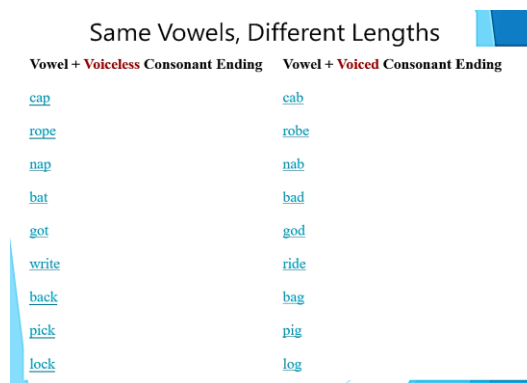


Figure 2 Unit 1 PPT Slide 2  
Note. Words for the practice and production activities

The unit concluded with a Q&A session, during which students had the opportunity to volunteer to answer questions and earn extra points. The questions and answers are presented in Figure 3. This session was designed to reinforce the content learned in the unit. Supplementary materials were also provided at the end for students to engage in self-study.

All the other units employed the same present-practice-produce (PPP) procedure with a review session at the end.

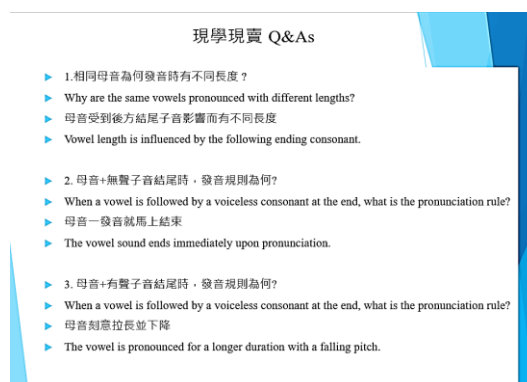


Figure 3 Unit 1 PPT Slide 3  
Note. Q&A session

## Unit 2 Words That Are Both Nouns and Verbs

Certain nouns and verbs share the same form (spelling) but have distinct pronunciations. For example, when "record" is used as a verb, the

stress is on the second syllable. However, when used as a noun, the stress shifts to the first syllable. The researcher provided several examples of words that students might mispronounce, such as the noun forms of “export,” “import,” and “discount.”

### **Unit 3 Compound Nouns**

Stress is a key component of suprasegmental features, and it plays a significant role in the pronunciation and meaning of compound nouns. The stress pattern in compound nouns influences their prosody and meaning, as it involves the rhythm and melody of spoken language. Under the influence of their first language (Mandarin Chinese), most students typically stressed both words in a compound noun, often unaware that there should only be one stressed syllable in a compound noun (e.g., “post office,” “blackboard”).

### **Unit 4 Intonation**

Intonation, a significant suprasegmental feature in English, possesses the ability to modify the meaning of a sentence or phrase. For instance, employing rising intonation at the end of a statement can transform it into a question. Proficiency in comprehending and employing intonation accurately empowers learners to effectively convey their intended meanings. Furthermore, intonation patterns in tag questions play a crucial role in distinguishing between genuine inquiries aimed at acquiring information and statements intended to elicit confirmation. This distinction is pivotal for facilitating effective communication, where rising intonation typically signals an inquiry, while falling intonation generally signifies a confirmation-seeking statement.

### **Unit 5 Content Words vs. Function Words**

The concept of content words (e.g., nouns and verbs) and function words (e.g., articles and prepositions) was introduced to the students due to its significance in reduced pronunciation and connected speech. It's worth noting that, while some students were familiar with the idea that function words like prepositions are typically reduced in speech, they had not previously encountered the distinction between function words and content words. Students were tasked with identifying content words and function words within sentences and then pronouncing those sentences.

### **Unit 6 Contractions**

Contractions represent a significant element of spoken English contributing to its natural rhythm, which is particularly important in fast

speech. Students found it relatively easy to produce simple contractions such as “I’m (I am) sick” and “They’re (They are) sick.” However, it was not surprising that students encountered challenges when practicing contractions like “He couldn’t’ve (could not have) done it.” and “It mustn’t’ve (must not have) happened yesterday.” The researcher provided detailed, step-by-step demonstrations of how to pronounce contractions syllable by syllable.

### **Unit 7 Thought Groups**

Thought groups, a suprasegmental feature, are an essential concept in English pronunciation for they help learners understand the natural rhythm of spoken English and allow speakers to express themselves more fluently and listeners to process the information more easily. When words within thought groups are linked together, they often undergo changes in pronunciation, such as elision (not pronounced), assimilation, and reduction. After the researcher’s explicit instruction, the students were assigned a simple task to complete in groups of three during the class. They were provided with a sentence and instructed to analyze and segment the sentence into thought groups. For example, “I’m going to/ watch a basketball game/ in Taipei/ tomorrow morning.” After completing the task, they were required to present their findings to the entire class.

### **Unit 8 Reduction**

Reduction assists learners articulate words more quickly and smoothly in connected speech. It also plays a vital role in achieving the rhythm and melody of spoken English, contributing to natural and effective communication. Understanding and correctly implementing these reductions is essential for students, as it enhances comprehension and makes their speech sound more native-like. This unit revisits the concept of content words and function words. For instance, the pronoun “you” is often reduced to /jə/ in a sentence and the word “are” is usually reduced to /ə/, /ə/, or even silent. The tricky part is that some words can serve as either a content word or a function word. For example, the word “that” is usually reduced to /ðət/ or even omitted when it is a function word (conjunction), as in “She said (that) she’d be back soon.” However, the word “that” can also function as a content word (determiner), as in “I can’t walk **that** far,” and in this case, it cannot be reduced.

### **Unit 9 Linking**

Linking refers to the practice of connecting words in spoken language by smoothly transitioning from the final sound of one word to

the initial sound of the following word. Aside from Consonant-to-Vowel linking, the following phonological rules were taught:

- **Reduced /p/ /k/ /f/:** Word-final /p/ /k/ /f/ are reduced to /b/ /g/ /v/ when they are followed by vowels, as in “Stop it.”
- **Stop Consonant + the Same Stop Consonant:** When a word-final stop consonant is followed by the same stop consonant, say the consonant once. Stop the air to signify the first stop consonant, and then release the stop into the next word, as in “last time.”
- **Continuous Consonant + the Same Consonant:** When a word-final continuous consonant (e.g., /s/) is followed by the same consonant, say the consonant once, but make it longer, as in “bus stop.”
- **Stop Consonant + Different Consonant:** When a word-final stop consonant (e.g., /t/) is followed by a different consonant, the word-final stop consonant is silent. Stop the air to signify the stop consonant, and then pronounce the next word, as in “next month.”
- **Word-final /t/ /d/ /s/ /z/+ /j/ → /tʃ/ /dʒ/ /ʃ/ /ʒ/:** For example, in “last year”, /t/ should be changed to either /tʃ/ or a silent/t/.
- **Vowel + Vowel:** (1)When /e/ or /i/ links with a vowel, the final sound is /j/, as in “Say it!” (2)When /o/ or /aʊ/ links with a vowel, the final sound is /w/, as in “Go on.”
- **Silent H:** Pronouns and words that begin with /h/ are usually reduced so much that words like “he,” “his,” and “him” lose the beginning sound /h/, except at the beginning of sentences. For example, “I miss him.”

Given the limited length of this article, the introduction of the remaining linking rules is not covered here.

In summary, throughout this advanced English pronunciation practice course, students received explicit instruction on perceiving and producing vowel durations in different linguistic environments, along with suprasegmental features such as stresses in compound nouns, intonation, contractions, thought groups, reduction, and linking. Now, let’s move on to the task.

## The Task

After having learned targeted suprasegmental features in the course, the students were assigned a task of completing an individual report about their favorite English pop songs. This report was assigned to students during

the 16th week of the 18-week semester and accounted for 10% of the final grade. The phases of the task followed the framework of task-based language teaching as outlined by Long (1985).

## The Pre-Task

The researcher supplied a detailed report template for the students to refer to. The students were instructed to independently identify segmental features in the song’s lyrics based on the provided template. Different symbols and colors were to be used for marking these features, such as using a symbol which connects two words to denote linking (e.g., colors on), using blue for reductions (e.g., loving hand), using italics for sound changes (e.g., tried to), and using red for silent letters, as exemplified in Figure 4. Subsequently, the researcher provided a detailed line-by-line explanation of the segmental and suprasegmental features present in the song lyrics within the report template. Following that, the researcher proceeded to play the guitar and sing the song in the report template, demonstrating how the segmental and suprasegmental features could contribute to smooth singing of English songs.

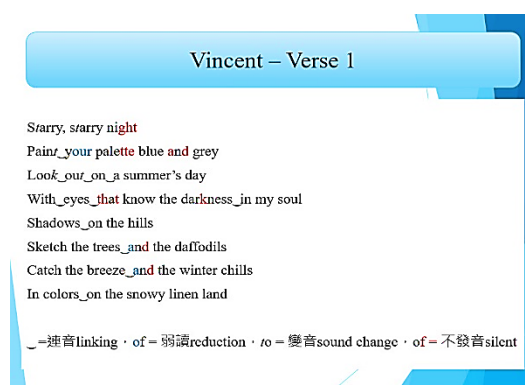


Figure 4 Report template

## The Task: Lyrics-Marking

After the researcher presented a model of the task by providing a report template, the students were asked to decide on their favorite songs. Once they had selected their favorite songs, they were tasked with finding a YouTube video that displayed the song’s lyrics on the screen. Additionally, they were required to retrieve lyrics from the internet and paste them in a Word document for the marking phase of the task. Students had to independently watch the video, identify and mark targeted suprasegmental features in the song’s lyrics based on the provided template using different symbols and colors outside the classroom.

## The Post-Task: Group Discussion and Revision



Following the completion of their first drafts, students participated in group discussions conducted in English only in groups of three, enabling them to collaboratively analyze the song lyrics for suprasegmental features, including contractions, stresses, thought groups, pauses, linking, reductions, sound changes, and silent letters. As the rules in the PowerPoint (PPT) slides were presented bilingually in both English and Mandarin Chinese, it did not overwhelm the students when they engaged in group discussions in English. After students completed their second drafts after the first discussion, they reviewed each other's drafts and offered constructive feedback in class. This approach created opportunities for peer feedback and enabled students to learn from each other. Peer interaction can enhance students' awareness of pronunciation issues and allow them to collectively enhance their skills. With respect to the teacher's role, the teacher supervised the group discussions and also provided feedback on students' drafts to assist them in the revision process. Students concentrated on targeted suprasegmental features, engaging in discussions about these elements. This process allowed students to review their reports and make necessary corrections, thereby strengthening their understanding and acquisition of both segmental and suprasegmental features. Throughout the process, the researcher took on the role of a counselor, addressing students' questions and directing them to discover the answers themselves, thereby adopting a student-centered approach.

### Reflection

In the reflection section of their reports, students were required to contemplate what they had learned from the task and share their perspectives on it. The reflections served as narratives to gain insights into their opinions and to understand the challenges they encountered during the task. To save time and ensure that it was not too overwhelming, students were permitted to write their reflections in Mandarin Chinese.

### Data collection

The students were instructed to upload their reports to the Eclass 2.0 educational platform by the date of the final exam, and in the end, 27 out of the 34 students successfully submitted their reports, and shown in Figure 5. One of the reports was initially rejected because it did not adhere to the report template, but the student revised and resubmitted it. The researcher graded the reports on the educational platform.

The Lazy Song

Today I don't feel like doing anything. I just wanna lay in my bed.  
 Don't feel like picking up my phone. So leave a message at the tone.  
 'Cause today I swear I'm not doing anything.

Uh! I'm gonna kick my feet up then stare at the fan.  
 Turn the TV on, throw my hand in my pants. Nobody's gonna tell me I can't.

I'll be lounging on the couch, just chillin' in my Snuggie.  
 Click to MTV, so they can teach me how to Dougie.  
 'Cause in my castle I'm the freaking man.

Oh, yes I said it. I said it. I said it 'cause I can.\*

Figure 5 Student report

Furthermore, the researcher conducted random interviews with a portion of the students to elicit their opinions and insights regarding the task.

## Results

Out of the 34 students, 27 successfully submitted their reports. After the researcher graded the reports on the educational platform, the scores are as follows. As shown in Table 1, the majority of students fell in the score range of 96-100 (55.55%), which accounts for more than half of the students.

Table 1 Score Range of Participants (N = 27)

Score Range	n	%
96-100	15	55.55
91-95	8	29.62
86-90	2	7.40
80-85	2	7.40

Furthermore, the scores were exported to Excel for a descriptive analysis, as shown in Figure 6. Out of the 34 students, five students received a perfect score (100%) on their reports.

A	B	C	D	E
#	gender	score	score	
1	1	96		
2	1	85	Average	95.2962963
3	2	80	Standard error	0.919579389
4	2	90	Median value	96
5	2	98	Mode	98
6	1	95	Standard deviation	4.778274671
7	1	98	Variance	22.83190883
8	2	95	Kurtosis	3.192260712
9	2	96	Skewed	-1.664770188
10	2	98	Range	20
11	1	92	Minimum	80
12	1	95	Maximum	100
13	2	98	Sum	2573
14	1	100	Number	27
15	1	98	Kth Maximum(1)	100
16	2	98	Kth Minimum(1)	80
17	2	95	Reliability (95.0%)	1.890222506
18	2	98		
19	2	98		
20	2	100		
21	1	90		
22	2	95		
23	2	100		
24	2	99		
25	1	100		
26	2	92		
27	2	100		

Figure 6 Report scores

With respect to the reflections, some students noted pauses between thought groups in the lyrics and most students consistently referred to the rules related to reduction and linking in the course materials during the process of report writing. One student expressed frustration about the process of searching for specific linking rules, highlighting the time-consuming nature of dealing with numerous rules. Several students mentioned that they used dictionaries to look up unfamiliar words in the lyrics, which proved to be beneficial for expanding their vocabulary. They also liked the idea to relearn their favorite English pop songs and said that it was more fun than reading articles from the textbook. In general, most students acknowledged that both group discussions and the researcher's feedback were instrumental in enhancing the accuracy of their reports.

Regarding the random interviews, the majority of students exhibited a positive attitude towards the task and increased confidence in singing English songs. For instance, one student mentioned that she was good at singing Chinese songs, but felt less confident when it came to English songs. However, after learning the suprasegmental features in class, she gained more confidence in singing English songs.

## Discussion

This pilot study incorporated explicit pronunciation instruction and task-based language learning using English pop songs in an advanced English pronunciation practice course. The results indicate that the majority of students could accurately mark suprasegmental features in the lyrics.

The overall high scores can be attributed to the peer review and feedback provided during group discussions, as well as the researcher's assistance in class, which allowed students to revise their reports. This was acknowledged by most students in their reflections.

In their reflections, students also identified other suprasegmental features, including thought groups and stresses, in the lyrics and it was observed that students consistently referred to the rules related to reduction and linking in the course materials during the process of report writing. When combined with the high scores they received for marking the lyrics, it can be inferred that the task successfully enhanced students' sensitivity to suprasegmental features.

Regarding one student's complaint about the time-consuming nature of dealing with numerous rules, it has prompted the researcher to consider

developing tasks that focus on one suprasegmental feature at a time. For instance, after the instruction of contractions, the task could center on asking students to identify contractions in the lyrics. A series of tasks should be designed with increasing levels of difficulty, as demonstrated in previous studies (e.g., Gordon, 2021; Waluyo, 2019).

Furthermore, the students' practice of looking up unfamiliar words in the dictionary and expanding their vocabulary highlights the potential of using songs to enhance vocabulary acquisition. This is one of the reasons why songs are popular in ESL/EFL classroom settings (e.g., Nazara, 2017). It appears that students enjoyed relearning their favorite English pop songs as part of their pronunciation practice report. Using songs in language learning can make the process more engaging and enjoyable, especially when compared to more traditional methods like reading articles in a textbook. This positive attitude and enthusiasm can enhance the learning experience and motivate students to further improve their pronunciation skills.

The students' comments about increased confidence in singing English songs in the random interviews suggests that increased awareness and sensitivity to suprasegmental features can positively influence students' confidence in singing English songs. This observation raises the potential for a transfer of these suprasegmental pronunciation skills into actual production, although this aspect was not investigated in the present study.

In sum, task-based language learning and explicit pronunciation instruction in this advanced English pronunciation practice course had a positive impact on enhancing students' sensitivity to targeted suprasegmental features. Task-based language learning can be an effective approach to teaching English pronunciation as it can direct students' attention to specific segmental and suprasegmental features and improves students' production and makes them more comprehensible. Moreover, the incorporation of songs into pronunciation learning can greatly enhance the educational experience by rendering it more engaging and enjoyable. The findings of this study suggest that task-based language learning can effectively direct students' attention to suprasegmental features, such as reduction and linking. This is consistent with the findings of previous studies (e.g., Gordon, 2021; Gordon & Darcy, 2016, 2022; Nazara, 2017).

## Conclusion

This study explored how explicit pronunciation instruction and task-based language learning enhanced students' sensitivity to suprasegmental features in an EFL classroom setting. The results indicate that the majority of students could accurately mark suprasegmental features in the song lyrics and the task enhanced their sensitivity to suprasegmental features during the process of report writing. Furthermore, the researcher's consideration of one student's negative response to the assigned task has led to the contemplation of developing multiple tasks, each focusing on one suprasegmental feature at a time.

All in all, the combination of explicit pronunciation instruction and task-based language learning proved to be an effective approach for teaching suprasegmental features in an EFL classroom setting. Additionally, integrating songs into pronunciation learning in ESL/EFL classroom settings can significantly enhance the educational experience by making it more engaging and enjoyable.

#### ***Pedagogical Implications for Teachers***

It is challenging to teach both segmentals and suprasegmentals in just one English pronunciation practice course. Therefore, the researcher recommends that an advanced English pronunciation practice course be included in the curriculum so that teachers could have enough time to teach suprasegmentals systematically, as exemplified in the present study. An alternative would be that suprasegmental features could be taught explicitly and systematically in speaking or communication classes, as implemented in Gordon and Darcy (2016).

As demonstrated in previous studies, the combination of explicit pronunciation instruction and task-based language learning proved to be an effective approach for teaching suprasegmental features in an EFL classroom setting. The researcher recommends that EFL teachers in Taiwan consider implementing this approach in pronunciation instruction.

#### ***Suggestion for Further Research***

Since the present study serves as a pilot exploration of how explicit pronunciation instruction and task-based language learning enhance students' sensitivity to suprasegmental features, further quantitative research is warranted to investigate whether the effect of task-based language learning on identifying suprasegmental features can be transferred to production, as indicated by previous studies (e.g., Gordon, 2021; Gordon & Darcy, 2016).

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English through movies and songs, English-Chinese translation,  
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