

Teaching Difficulties in Pronunciation: The Case of Oral Communication Teachers

Ranec A. Azarias^{1*} & Femarie M. Capistrano²

¹Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College-, Santiago Campus, Santiago, Ilocos Sur, Philippines

²Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College- Tagudin Campus, Tagudin, Ilocos Sur, Philippines

Corresponding Author: Ranec A. Azarias, E-mail: ranecaz@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Pronunciation is one of the vital aspects of speaking the English language; however, literatures reveal that little is known on the difficulties of teachers in teaching pronunciation. In such light, this qualitative case study identified the teaching difficulties and coping strategies of oral communication teachers. Through the conducted interviews, class observations, and focus group discussion with students, L1 interference, lack of exposure to English language, learners' language anxiety, and lack of teaching materials were the difficulties of the teachers. In dealing with the identified difficulties, the participants employ audio-lingual method as a coping strategy. Nonetheless, the findings reveal important issues that need to be addressed in the name of quality and excellent pronunciation instruction.

1. INTRODUCTION

In a society where English is either its foreign or second language, people are generally judged by the way they speak. Learners with good English pronunciation may be judged as competent and knowledgeable while learners with poor pronunciation may be judged as incompetent, uneducated or lacking in knowledge. This means that pronunciation is an important factor in effective communication (Pi-hua, 2015) because poor pronunciation may cause misunderstanding and therefore can become a barrier to communication (Pi-hua, 2015).

Though knowing the great significance of good pronunciation, still many learners find English pronunciation one of the most difficult aspects of English language learning. Courses, like speech courses, were crucial to learn about the sound system of English and make learners aware of the correct pronunciation of sounds and words, as also, the intonation and sound clusters (Hameed & Aslam, 2015). However, pronunciation instruction has long been ignored (Chun, 2012; Neri, Cucchiari, & Strik, 2006; Breitreutz, Derwing, & Rossiter, 2001; Brown, 1991).

In fact, pronunciation tends to take a back seat in both

second language acquisition research and secondary and higher education all over the world (Underhill, 2013). When learners study English at university, however, they generally receive proper pronunciation coaching, which can help them acquire a more native-like pronunciation (Brekemans, 2017). Pronunciation, especially foreign language pronunciation, gained new meaning after 1980's due to its fruitfulness to a broad group of international people in both ESL and EFL settings (Derwing & Munro, 2005; Gatbonton, 2005). Academic professionals, other professionals all over the world and students needed to develop their pronunciation because they left their native countries to accommodate in or visit English speaking countries to embrace cultural, financial, and economic opportunities (Derwing & Munro, 2009).

In particular, increased interest in pronunciation has generated a number of teaching-related questions, most of which have sought to determine effective strategies for teaching pronunciation in the communicative classroom. As a result, research has emphasized the communicative importance of training in both segmental and suprasegmental features, allowing language learners to practice isolated sounds as well as combinations of sounds and suprasegmental

features in meaningful and continuous speech (Chun, 2002; Derwing & Munro, 1997; Munro & Derwing, 1995; Brazil, Pennington & Richards, 1986; Brown & Yule, 1983; Coulthard, & Johns, 1980). Also, Yang (2017) revealed that the participants showed a great improvement in the mastery of segmental and suprasegmental features, as for the non-intellectual factors, the participants presented a stronger interest and lower anxiety level in practicing English pronunciation after experiment, though there was only a little change in their motivation.

In addition, many language teachers have begun to employ technology as an aid to English pronunciation teaching recently (van den Doel, 2007; Neri, Cucchiari, & Strik, 2006). Media, cell phones and computer programs are becoming more widely infused into pronunciation classrooms as tools for fostering English pronunciation (Haslam, 2010). The number of applications available to both the teacher and the individual learner is increasing rapidly due to advances in research into language and speech, increased computer capabilities and lower computer costs (Zaki & Al-Qudah, 2012). In this vein, automatic speech recognition and speech synthesis, two of the most common applications in speech technology, present the basic technology for the improvement of applications for pronunciation teaching (Busa, 2008). As a result, many studies on pronunciation highlighted the effectiveness of modern technology and programs in teaching pronunciation. One of these technology and programs is Computer Assisted Pronunciation Training (CAPT).

In many studies, CAPT was found effective in improving English vowel production. In fact, CAPT program resulted in improved intelligibility scores not only in response to English vowel productions elicited using a voice that had previously been heard in training. The results suggest that the program helped learners isolate relevant phonetic cues to vowel identity that were then generalizable to new speakers (Gao & Hanna, 2016; Pi-Hua, 2015; Zaki & Al-Qudah, 2012; Thomson, 2011). It was also confirmed that combination of human and computer-assisted instruction particularly suits the learners (Gao & Hanna, 2016; Pi-Hua, 2015; Zaki & Al-Qudah, 2012; Thomson, 2011).

Furthermore, teaching English pronunciation can be likewise a challenging task. The analysis of learner

accounts, however, suggests that teaching approaches based on philosophy of pronunciation-in-isolation are still present in classroom environments, potentially inhibiting learners from embracing and capitalizing on their positions as multilingual speakers due to feeling of inferior and unintelligent because of their nonnative accents (Muller, 2013). There was also a demonstration of role of pronunciation in the language teaching greatly depends on the kind of methodology used (Gilakjani, 2017). In the analysis of learning the proper pronunciation, the study reveals that trainee translators view pronunciation as an important element of their speaking proficiency, highlighting the issue of intelligibility as an essential component of communicative competence (Hirci, 2017).

With the abovementioned studies, it can be noted that most of the studies mainly presented quantitative results of the learners' practice with pronunciation software and the effects of pronunciation software and other technology to the pronunciation of learners. However, little studies have been conducted the difficulties in teaching pronunciation. In such light, this study was conceptualized to answer the following question:

1. What difficulties in teaching do teachers encounter in teaching pronunciation?
2. What is the coping strategy of teachers in dealing with their teaching difficulties in pronunciation?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Deterding (2013) and Thir (2016) stated that the reason for teaching pronunciation is that it has been found to be the main cause of communication breakdowns or misunderstandings in English as Lingua Franca (ELF) interactions which makes its instruction an area where the necessity for a stronger orientation towards ELF communication is very important. Hismanoglu (2006) said that pronunciation instruction has a key role in oral communication. Despite decades of advocacy for greater attention, research into pronunciation instruction in English language teaching continues to be restricted (2017). As such various researches were conducted in terms of pronunciation. Some of these researches were discussed below.

Asyrafi and Jambi (2018) conducted a phenomenological study to document Indonesian English as Foreign Language (EFL) student teachers'

experiences in speaking English at one public university in Jambi, Indonesia. Data came from demographic questionnaires and semi-structured interviews obtained from eight participants. Analysis and discussion were taken from Indonesian EFL student teachers' perspectives and the contexts in which experiences they encountered. The following overarching themes and sub-themes emerged (1) language barriers (vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and fluency); (2) psychological factors (anxiety, attitude, and lack of motivation); (3) learning environment (lecturers, peers, and topics of speaking modules), and (4) practicing the language (self-practice, practicing the language with tutors and peers, practicing the language with media and technology, and maintaining a positive motivation).

Bodorík (2017) stated that there are several problems encountered by non-native English teachers in teaching pronunciation. First, Slovak teachers see that the problem of English pronunciation among Slovak learners is linked to both segmental and suprasegmental phonology. The most troublesome area is the incorrect placement of stress. Learners have the tendency to follow the stress pattern in their mother tongue and therefore when applying it the whole appropriate pronunciation effect is corrupted. According to the research results, the most audible issues of segmental phonology are the substitution of phoneme /ð/ for /d/, /tʃ/ and substitution of phoneme /θ/ for /f/, /t/ as well as pronunciation of silent letters. Slovaks also have trouble to properly differentiate between /v/ and /w/ sounds. In the matter of these features it is necessary to point out that Slovak sound inventory does not contain phonemes /ð/ and /θ/. In terms of phoneme /w/ Slovak language may have a sound similar to the English version. Second, Slovak teachers consider teaching English pronunciation an important feature of language acquisition. Majority of them claimed that they worked with learners on English pronunciation regularly in almost every class and they did not depend only on students' book pronunciation offer. Furthermore, when selecting activities from student's books and materials of their own selection, they based on the needs of learners. Third, to teach English pronunciation, Slovak teachers use quite a limited range of teaching activities. Furthermore, they tend to prefer activities based on mechanical modelling (repeating sound models) with low level of creativity and communicative openness.

In a study conducted by Hayati (2010) among Iranian

High School students, it was found out that there are two factors causing difficulty for an English teacher to teach pronunciation: direct and indirect factors. Direct factors refer to the inadequacy of knowledge of some teachers of English about linguistics and methodology. Indirect factors on the other hand refer to the short time assigned time for English classes through an academic year in which the teachers may not even be able to cover the whole textbook. Another is the presence of a large number of students in class does not allow the teacher to control the class effectively. Last, it has something to do with factors related to the school environment – the lack of facilities like a speech laboratory, textbooks, and other teaching devices such as such as video-players, computers, DVD players among others.

Vasarin (2007) mentioned that in order to meet a demand of modern society, English teachers are supposed to pay more attention to learners' development in their competence and focus on a more effective and successful method. However, it is obvious that the traditional approaches to English language teaching still dominate most classrooms. Language teachers should not focus reciting anymore, but focus on teaching learners from their own understanding of language learning to increase confidence and competence. Among her recommendations in the research are the following: work out the qualifications for learners and require the minimal level at least in a period of given time and provide learners with various types of courses to enhance their English proficiency and promote familiarity with good approaches in the teaching of phonetics.

Above all, most studies were conducted in the context of EFL. As such this study was conducted with the hope of elucidating the plights of English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers. This study hopes to shed light on ESL teachers' difficulties and coping in the Philippine setting.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Design

This qualitative study employed case study as its research design. Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and

documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes (Creswell, 2007). Also, the focus of case study is to develop an in-depth description and analysis of a case or multiple cases [teaching difficulties and coping strategy in this study] (Creswell, 2007). In as much as the study described the teaching difficulties and coping strategy of teachers in teaching pronunciation, the researchers found the design most appropriate.

3.2. Subject and Study Site

The study was conducted in one state college in Ilocos Sur, Philippines. The key informants of the study were chosen using criterion sampling will be employed in which four criteria are set. First, the teachers have been teaching the Oral Communication or Speech Communication for at least five years. Second, they are holding permanent appointment. Third, they consider English as their second language. Fourth, they are willing to be interviewed and observed. With these criteria, three teachers were considered in the study.

3.3. Procedure

In gathering the data, the researcher constructed first the interview guide. After that, the researchers identified the key informants using the set criteria. After identifying the key informants, they were informed of the nature of the study. Also, they were asked for their consent in participating in the study through an observation and interview consent form.

Furthermore, schedules for the interviews and observations were set. In order to aid the researchers and further encapsulate the experiences and views of the key informants, the researchers used an *aide memoir* and audio recording. Their sharing revolved around their difficulties and coping strategies in teaching pronunciation. Then, observation using observation guide and focus group discussion with the students were done to triangulate and substantiate the gathered data from the interviews.

Finally, the audio recordings were transcribed and were subjected to spot-checking avoid the transcriptionist effect. Then, member checking procedures were done to ensure the truthfulness and trustworthiness of the data (de Guzman & Tan, 2007). Last, cool and warm analyses were done.

3.3. Mode of Analysis

Interview recordings were transcribed to arrive at an extended text that will be subjected to cool and warm analyses. During the cool analysis, anchors and phenomenal referents were marked to facilitate the identification of themes within the text (de Guzman & Tan, 2007). In the warm analysis, highlighted words or phrases were proof-read and analyzed to formulate categories and themes (Valdez *et al.*, 2012). To establish the validity, truthfulness and trustworthiness of the emerging patterns, member checking procedures were done to ensure the truthfulness and trustworthiness of the data (de Guzman & Tan, 2007).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Cool and warm analyses of the responses of the select teachers yielded the 4Ls as the difficulties in teaching pronunciation, and the 1U as their coping strategy (Fig. 1). The 4Ls refers to L1 interference or first language interference, lack of exposure to English language, lack of teaching materials, and learners' language anxiety. On the other hand, 1U refers to the use of audio-lingual method as a coping strategy of the teachers. Although the identified difficulties and coping strategy occur in the pronunciation classes, they represent the simultaneous phenomena which commenced one after the other as a response to the diversity among learners and the changes in the curricula.

L1 Interference. In teaching pronunciation, features of the first language of both the teachers and the students are evident. This situation characterized the first theme which is first language (L1) interference. As verbalized:

"... there are some sounds in their native language which ah that we cannot find in the English language, and they have the tendency to carry that over to English language. For example, in the Ilokano, we only have the [t] sound, we do not have that 'th' sound. So, the tendency would be, when they say Thank You, they do not actually sa /θenk/ you, follow the soft 'th', but rather they say /tenk/ you, simply 't'." (P1)

"There are sounds in the English language which are not found in the Ilokano language. This creates confusion and uneasy production of the sounds." (P2)

"Second [referring to difficulty] is the first language or mother tongue of my students

which somewhat fossilized their pronunciation no matter how hard I try to train them. Even I cannot go away from the phonetic inventory of my first language which is Ilokano.” (P3)

In the interview conducted with the students, they affirmed the abovementioned statements. As stated:

“I think sir, our first language or mother tongue is the major barrier. It is because we cannot remove the traces of our mother tongue. Sometimes we find it difficult to articulate sounds correctly.”(S1)

Furthermore, the classroom observations revealed that Ilokano phonetic inventory is present every time they read words even if they were taught the correct sounds. Notably, regional accents are evident among students. Students carry their mother tongue’s suprasegmental and segmental features. In most case, [ɛ] is mispronounced instead it is pronounced as [i]. The same is the case between [o] and [u] in which they were articulated interchangeably.

These findings find congruency with that of Seefa (2017) who mentioned that learning a second language is considered as a difficult process due to the influential role played by the mother tongue. When learning a second language, a learner usually thinks about the target language in terms of the first language without realizing the fact that a language should be learnt in that language.

Relatively, when learners of second language want to write or speak in the target language, they tend to rely on their first language structures. If the structures are different, then a lot of errors occur in L1 thus this indicates an interference of first language on second language (Decherts & Dllis, as cited in Bhela, 1999).

Khan (2011) identified that the major challenge for students to learn English arises due to the difference in English and Tamil syntax, pronunciation, vocabulary etc. This means the linguistic structure is the barrier.

Meanwhile, Beardsmore (1982) suggests that many of the difficulties a second language learner has with the phonology, vocabulary and grammar of L2 are due to the interference of habits from L1.

The formal elements of L1 are used within the context of L2, resulting in errors in L2, as the structures of the languages, L1 and L2 are different.

Furthermore, mother tongue interference can be seen as a transfer that affects learning both negatively and positively. According to Mede et al. (2014), there is high probability of cross-linguistic influence in second language acquisition and this influence may cause some errors, which are caused by negative transfer. In fact, Manrique (2013) stated that mispronunciation and grammatical errors are the most common types of interference between the mother tongue and the target language.

On the other hand, the participants also compared the structure of the English and Philippine languages while highlighting the background of students. As presented by the following verbalizations:

“Background of learners is one barrier because of the fact that learners come from different linguistic background, this affects their production of sounds ... Another is on the structure of the native language and that of English which is different in some ways. Because of this it seems hard to make adjustments in the production of some sounds in the English sound system.” (P2)

“Actually, it’s [English language] a tricky subject; it’s a crazy language. First, because it does not have a consistent rule not unlike in the Filipino. Say for example, in the pronunciation alone, we do not follow specific rules such as same spelling with ah same spelling and different pronunciation.” (P1)

The above statements manifest Hashemi’s (2011) claimed that students’ weakness in English language learning is due to the differences of social contexts, cultural environments. Similarly, Khan (2011) has identified that the major challenge for students to learn English arises due to the difference in syntax, pronunciation, vocabulary etc. Hence, linguistic structure of both English and the first language creates confusion among learners; thus, impedes the delivery and absorption

of knowledge on pronunciation and of good pronunciation as a language skill.

Finally, the relationship between the two languages must then be considered. Albert and Opler (1978) claimed that people show more lexical interference on similar items. So it may follow that languages with more similar structures (eg English and French) are more susceptible to mutual interference than languages with fewer similar features (eg English and Japanese). Nonetheless, more learning difficulties are expected, and thus more likelihood of performance interference at those points in L2 which are more distant from L1, as the learner would find it difficult to learn and understand a completely new and different usage.

Lack of Exposure to English Language. In this study, it is interesting to note how teachers and students revealed their lack of exposure to the English language. This is evident in the following statements:

“Another would be, I believe my students do have a limited exposure on the English language. We have to accept it’s not their first language, and it is not even their second. So, I suppose it’s their third maybe, and of course they do not usually use it very often...So students’ pronunciation largely depends on the pronunciation they hear in a daily basis. So, the pronunciation that they hear around them, the environment, that would be the pronunciation that they would carry or they would practice.” (P1)

“Duration of instruction maybe a barrier. This is due to the fact that lessons in pronunciation is not devoted to the whole semester but rather only a few weeks at the start of the semester. So, there is no intensive and long-term teaching of pronunciation.” (P2)

“Another barrier is on the lack of exposure of learners to the English language.” (P2)

“... we do not have much exposure to the English language. You know, my students only use the target language during their

classes and in writing. In their class, they don’t even use straight English. They like watching Filipino movies or shows. So what do you expect diba [isn’t it]? Even I, I do not use English outside the classroom context.”(P3)

In the conducted observation, students spoke using their mother tongue when asking questions and doing class activities, Sometimes the teacher used Ilokano or Filipino in explaining the lessons and in giving instructions. In some instances, students were not familiar with some English words. They do not know the meaning and pronunciation of the words so they tend to read words according to the words’ syllables. These observations are substantiated by students. As stated:

“...we are not exposed to environment or situation where we use English. The time allotted for pronunciation class is not enough. We lack really exposure.” (S3)

Mullick and Riyaz (2013) stated that since English is a language and learning a language is time consuming, more time should be allocated to teach and learn English unlike other subjects. However, in the school system only a limited time is allocated to teach English. According to 83 students number of periods allocated per week is 5 and each period is conducted for 45 minutes and 17 students stated that 6 periods are allocated per week for English. However, allocation of time for English is not enough because it is only during English period that the students get opportunity to learn English and since these students have less exposure to English outside school and the majority of the students do not attend private classes, limited time allocation is indeed a challenge.

Learners’ Language Anxiety. Through the interviews and class observations, language anxiety of students is evident. Their anxiety comes in the form of fear in speaking or reciting because of being afraid to be laughed at, ridiculed or teased by their classmates. As a result, teachers have difficulty in motivating and getting the enthusiasm of their students all throughout the class discussions. This finding can be seen in the following verbalizations:

“Siguro [perhaps] first we have anxiety, or the students have this fear that when they say this English word, they would mispronounce it, and they would get negative feedback from their classmates and from the students.” (P1)

“On the part of the learners, fear of being ridiculed and corrected is a barrier. Sometimes, students cannot help but feel bad if they get ridiculed whenever they mispronounce a word. Because of this, they are afraid to recite – they are afraid to take risks in trying out using the language.” (P2)

“Last factor is my students are afraid or reluctant to speak using English. As per observation, they are afraid to be teased by their classmates, or they are afraid to commit mistakes while speaking.” (P3)

In the class observations, students were reluctant to recite when they were asked to recite or perform activities. Also, students made fun of their classmates every time they commit mistakes. As a result, some students did not like to recite or do the assigned activities. As evidently stated during the focus group discussion with the students:

“...sometimes or most of the time we are afraid to commit mistakes kasi we are being teased or bullied. I myself have fear of speaking because I cannot produce the sounds well...” (S4)

“If kwan sir ahm if I am reciting, it’s as if I am afraid to commit mistakes that I may say different word...” (S6)

Fear and anxiety are two psychological factors that make the process of learning difficult; hence, making teaching difficult. Fear is created by several reasons such as the bitter learning experiences associated with English language learning, non-conducive classroom experiences and bad exam results. Anxiety occurs in the classroom learning environment. Krashen (1982) stated that low anxiety appears to be conducive for second language acquisition, whether measured as personal or classroom anxiety.

Besides, a survey into the causes of English language learning anxiety in students also found

that students were afraid of making mistakes in the classes, failing the exams, as well as the poor socioeconomic background cause of the poor performance in learning languages (Khattak *et al.*, 2011).

During the abovementioned situations, the teachers intervene. In fact, they even try to divert situation into jokes and make some explanation which were evident in the series of observations conducted. During the interviews and follow up interviews, one of the participants verbalized:

“Well I explain to them that of course it’s not their first language. It’s not their native language ... I also explain to them that there are many varieties, and we are exposed to Philippine English variety, which is you know, we have our distinct pronunciation or distinct pronunciation for each of this sounds.” (P1)

“Well, as you observed, I crack jokes and make some explanations to divert or lessen the tension or should say the anxiety of the students.” (P2)

“If students are getting teased or bullied because of their pronunciation, I just try to divert the attention of my students by cracking jokes and letting my students read again and again. I don’t usually do direct feedback because my students may feel bullied at the same time inferior.”(P3)

With the statements of the teachers, it can be said that teachers play a major role in mitigating problems on language anxiety. The role they play lies on either breaking learning or facilitating learning. The ways they address students’ language anxiety adversely affect the teaching and learning of pronunciation. Hence, teachers must be equipped with imperative skills of addressing language anxiety in order for teaching and learning to take place.

Lack of Teaching Materials. In the teaching learning process, teaching materials are imperative in order to better facilitate instruction. However, the lack of materials impedes the delivery of better if not quality instruction as verbalized:

“... I don't have enough materials provided by the school... See, we only have one LCD projector. Our audio-visual room lacks the facility and equipment that we need in teaching and learning pronunciation. The lack of materials affects the quality of learning that my students should have.” (P1)

“Well there are a lot of barriers which I can name based on my experience. One is lack of teaching materials and resources that aid teaching. We all know that books and other learning worksheets are very useful in drill exercises because they help facilitate instruction.” (P2)

“First difficulty or problem is lack of materials or let's say scarcity of materials provided by the school. You know how scarce our resources are such that we buy our own or we spend our money.” (P3)

The abovementioned statements are supported by the following verbalization:

“I think lack of materials is one of the barriers. You see sir we do not use some technology that other universities use. In fact we only have one projector. We also bring our own Bluetooth speakers. We also do not have books. That's all. I think.” (S2)

Similarly, learning materials in the classroom were not enough during the class observations. The teacher used a book and had its pages be reproduced by some students. There was no speaker in the room, so students brought their Bluetooth speaker. Some resources were downloaded from the net.

Souvannasy, Masashi, and Yukiko (2008) identified that teaching and learning English implementation still has shortages of textbooks, unqualified English teachers and also unstandardized curriculum. Hence, lack of teaching materials impedes the quality of teaching that teachers can give and the quality of learning that students may have.

Use of Audio-Lingual Method as Coping Strategy

In terms of the difficulties in teaching pronunciation, the teachers identified different coping strategies. These coping strategies belong to one method which is Audio-lingual Method. This method refers to the use of drills, models, and multimedia materials as manifested by the participants:

“I also make use of visuals of course IPA flashcards would help. It's a great help. I also encourage them to use dictionary often because in the dictionary we could find in there the correct pronunciation of a certain word, the one in brackets. Okay, and then of course, games, I do have games in my class which they really enjoy. But of course, general recommendation would be I would let them to listen and expose them to English movies, English TV shows, and English songs.” (P1)

“I try to give more repetition drills to my learners so they can be more proficient in their pronunciation. Using trial and error technique is also used. I also encourage them to use dictionaries to locate the proper pronunciation of words. I also encourage them to speak in English in class and even outside of the classroom. I tell them to watch English movies and programs on t.v. in which English is used as medium. Moreover, I try to give more oral communication language activities to them for more opportunities to use the language. I also tried to download pronunciation videos from the internet and had it be viewed in class. Then the students listened carefully to the video and afterwards they engage in repetition drills.” (P2)

“Usually, I used multimedia materials like videos, songs, powerpoint presentations and movies. You know, they love it. I also use drills or the repeat after me technique. Most of all, I use games.” (P3)

Mart (2013) discovered that the Audio-Lingual method aims to develop communicative competence of students through dialogues. Dialogues and pattern drills that students need to repeat are used to form habits in learners that

will allow them to develop quick and automatic responses. Drills are useful in foreign language teaching in that they give students the opportunity to perform what they have learnt.

Similarly, Richards and Rodgers (2001) stressed that foreign language learning is basically a process of mechanical habit formation, and good habits are formed by giving correct responses rather than by making mistakes.

Meanwhile, the teachers incorporated jokes in their class discussions especially in times when students have difficulties in learning pronunciation and when they are afraid to recite. Games and drills were observed to be one of the effective ways of lessening the pressure and letting students enjoy the lessons. In fact, one of the participants highlighted:

"...I suppose, is exposing them to highly structured, low-pressure practicing class. In other words, games. I believe they really enjoy that." (P1)

"These multimedia materials, games and drills somewhat ease their anxiety and boost their confidence."(P3)

Repetition drills are the most that were utilized inside the classroom to master the sounds of the English language. Though traditional, the students enjoyed this kind of exercise. Through the repetition drills and trial and error method, the teacher modeled the proper pronunciation of sounds.

In addition, the teachers showed video clips and movies for students to hear the correct pronunciation of words during class discussions and reviews. In some instances, songs are being used. In such case, the use of multimedia materials is also for modeling.

Nevertheless, dialogues and pattern drills that students need to repeat are often used to form habits. Larsen-Freeman (2000) said that the more often something is repeated, the stronger the habit and the greater the learning. Teachers should expose students to learning activities that shall make teaching and learning a natural occurrence in their English language classroom. Through these activities, pronunciation instruction may come as

unconscious process to both the teachers and students. Hence, habit formation is the key to better pronunciation instruction.

Simulacrum of the Study

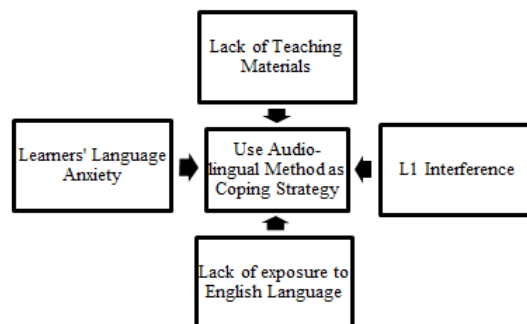


Figure 1: 4Ls and 1U in Teaching Pronunciation

In figure 1, the outside boxes contain the identified teaching difficulties of oral communication teachers while the inside box is their coping strategy. In the teaching of pronunciation, the study surfaced four difficulties of oral communication teachers: L1 interference, lack of exposure to English language, learners' language anxiety, and lack of teaching materials. As indicated by the arrows, teachers use the audio-lingual method which includes the use of drills, games, repetition, modeling and use of multimedia materials in coping with their identified difficulties.

5. CONCLUSION

In the second language learning context, pronunciation instruction is a challenging task for teachers. Factors such as learners' first language, teaching materials and among others cannot be undermined because they are contributory factors to the success of pronunciation teaching. However, creativity and resourcefulness of teachers are activated as they face the difficulties in pronunciation instruction.

For a language learner, pronunciation can be one of the most difficult skills to master while for the language teacher, one of his/her goals is to help students become proficient in their pronunciation especially that of the second language. For quite some time, the teaching of pronunciation is less than optimally effective and many factors can be attributed to this phenomenon. Since then, second language pronunciation is a topic of great theoretical interest and practical. More than the correct production of individual sounds or isolated words, pronunciation is crucial in integral in any communication which should be incorporated in classroom activities. The teaching then of pronunciation under careful preparation and

integration leads to the learners' overall communicative power.

From this study, it can be said that organized methods to activate pronunciation teaching should be investigated and promoted. Teachers should learn more from their strategies and devise methods to do so. Further, it would be important for teachers to set the learning environment as an avenue in which learners are encouraged and supported to learn and practice English pronunciation spontaneously. On the one hand, because teachers can be an external stimulus to learners, they always serve to model the correct means on how to conduct pronunciation lessons. Teachers should pay more attention to their own English pronunciation skills, which will lead some of us to reconsider our own professional role as an English teacher. Teachers are not necessarily required to pronounce like a native speaker of English, but at least they are required to teach intelligible pronunciation to students because, at the threshold level, it is important for students to learn pronunciation that enables them to make themselves understood in English.

Finally, further research on the teaching of pronunciation would be necessary in order to discover the factors that can contribute to learning a second language. These factors could be beneficial in changing English pronunciation teaching in Philippine classrooms. Last, researches on developing pronunciation software or programs are encouraged in order to bridge instruction and the kind of learners that this century has.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Ranec Asuncion Azarias was born on January 1, 1993 in Cervantes, Ilocos Sur, Philippines. He finished his elementary education at Cervantes Central School, Cervantes, Ilocos Sur, Philippines in 2005. He also finished his secondary education at Saint Agnes School Inc., Concepcion, Cervantes, Ilocos Sur, Philippines in 2009. He pursued his tertiary education at Benguet State University, La Trinidad, Benguet, and successfully graduated with the degree Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English in 2013. Then, he graduated from the Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College (ISPSC)-Graduate School in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur, Philippines with degree Masters of Science in Education major in English in 2016. Finally, he is in his dissertation writing for his Doctor of Philosophy in Language major in English at Benguet State University, La Trinidad, Benguet. He is a language and research instructor at ISPSC-Santiago campus, Santiago, Ilocos Sur, Philippines. He is presently the adviser of the school organ. He has been coaching students in journalism and research writing. Finally, Mr. Azarias is a member of the Linguistic Society of Philippines and the Association of Regional Campus Paper Advisers in Region 1 of the Philippines.



Femarie Manglapus Capistrano was born in Tagudin, Ilocos Sur in January 28, 1971. She earned her degree Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in English Cum Laude at Saint Louis University Baguio City in 1991. In addition, she finished Master of Arts in Language and Literature as a CHED Scholar at the University of the Philippines - Baguio in 2009. Teaching is indeed her passion that is why she has been in the service for 21 years now at the Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College- Tagudin, Ilocos Sur Philippines where she is tasked to teach both high school and English major college students. She is currently the Laboratory High School Principal of the said institution. Finally, she has attended several lectures and seminars relative to language and literature teaching including that of administration and leadership which has helped

her enhance her teaching and empower her as a school leader.

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