


 Research Article

Addressing Pronunciation Challenges Among Filipino Senior High School Learners: Strategies and Pedagogical Implications

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Abstract

This study investigates common pronunciation challenges faced by Filipino Senior High School learners in their English language acquisition. It explores factors contributing to these difficulties, such as L1 influence, dialectal variations, and the lack of phonetic awareness. Additionally, it examines pedagogical strategies to enhance pronunciation skills and improve learners' intelligibility. A total of 60 students from different strands are selected to participate in pronunciation tests and surveys. Through a mixed-methods approach involving pronunciation tests, surveys, and teacher interviews, the study identifies key error patterns, including difficulties with consonant sounds (/f/ vs. /p/, /v/ vs. /b/), vowel shifts, and incorrect word stress placement. These challenges are attributed to linguistic interference, limited exposure to native pronunciation models, and ineffective pronunciation instruction in the classroom. Findings suggest that explicit phonetic instruction, communicative activities, and technology-assisted learning can significantly improve learners' pronunciation proficiency. The use of audiovisual materials, phonetic transcription, and real-life conversation practice is found to be effective in addressing these challenges. Furthermore, teacher training in pronunciation instruction and the integration of pronunciation-focused activities in English curricula are recommended to enhance students' speaking skills. By addressing these pronunciation barriers, students can develop greater confidence in spoken English, facilitating better academic and professional communication.

Keywords: Pronunciation Challenges, Filipino Learners, Phonetic Instruction, Communicative Language Teaching, Pronunciation Pedagogy, Second Language Acquisition, Speech Intelligibility

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1. INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation is a critical but often underemphasized component in English language education, especially in non-native contexts like the Philippines. Filipino Senior High School students, while proficient in grammar and vocabulary, continue to face significant challenges in achieving intelligible pronunciation. These challenges hinder fluency and reduce confidence in oral communication.

Recent studies (Kho & Ting, 2023; MacIntyre & Thivierge, 2021) emphasize recurring issues such as confusion between consonants (/f/ vs. /p/, /v/ vs. /b/), misplacement of word stress, and vowel shifts. These are often linked to first language (L1) interference, regional dialect influences, and insufficient pronunciation instruction. Despite these findings, few studies propose comprehensive, classroom-based interventions supported by empirical evidence.

This study addresses that gap by investigating a single, well-defined research problem:

How can the intelligibility of Filipino Senior High School learners' English pronunciation be improved through pedagogical strategies?

By conducting a mixed-methods study—quantifying error patterns and gathering in-depth perspectives from teachers—this research aims to develop evidence-based, practical strategies for English

language instruction. Solutions such as phonetic instruction, communicative tasks, and technology integration are explored to enhance learners' speech intelligibility and contribute to curriculum development.

1.1. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on several linguistic and educational theories that explain pronunciation acquisition and instructional effectiveness. The key theoretical foundations include:

1. Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) by Lado (1957) – This theory posits that language learners will experience difficulties when the target language's phonetic system differs significantly from their native language. This study examines how L1 interference affects Filipino learners' English pronunciation.
2. Speech Learning Model (SLM) by Flege (1995) – The SLM suggests that learners' ability to acquire new phonemes in a second language is influenced by their perception of phonetic similarities between their L1 and L2. This study explores how exposure to native English pronunciation impacts learners' phonetic acquisition.
3. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) by Canale and Swain (1980) – Since pronunciation plays a critical role in communicative competence, CLT emphasizes the integration of meaningful speaking activities to develop students' fluency and accuracy. This study evaluates the effectiveness of CLT-based pronunciation activities in the classroom.
4. Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) – This theory highlights the importance of social interaction in language learning. The study investigates the role of peer interactions, teacher feedback, and authentic conversational practice in improving pronunciation skills.

By grounding this research in these theoretical perspectives, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of pronunciation difficulties among Filipino learners and explore effective pedagogical strategies for enhancing pronunciation instruction.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

This research aims to:

1. Identify the common pronunciation errors among Filipino Senior High School learners.
2. Analyze the linguistic and pedagogical factors contributing to these pronunciation challenges.
3. Explore and recommend effective teaching strategies to improve pronunciation skills.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

Despite the emphasis on English language instruction in the Philippine education system, many Senior High School students struggle with pronunciation. This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the most common pronunciation challenges faced by Filipino Senior High School learners?
2. What factors contribute to these pronunciation difficulties?
3. What pedagogical strategies can effectively address these challenges?

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study is significant for various stakeholders, including language educators, curriculum developers, students, and researchers. It provides valuable insights into the pronunciation difficulties faced by Filipino Senior High School learners and offers practical solutions to enhance English language instruction. By integrating targeted pronunciation activities into language teaching, educators can help

students develop clearer speech, leading to improved communication skills and greater confidence in using English.

For language educators, this study provides research-based recommendations on effective instructional strategies, such as explicit phonetic instruction, communicative pronunciation exercises, and the use of technology-enhanced learning tools. Curriculum developers can utilize the findings to design pronunciation-focused interventions that cater to the specific needs of Filipino learners, ensuring a more holistic approach to language teaching.

Students will benefit from improved pronunciation instruction, leading to greater intelligibility and fluency in spoken English. Enhanced pronunciation skills will not only aid them in academic settings but also in professional and social interactions. Lastly, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on second language phonetics and pedagogy, serving as a reference for future studies exploring pronunciation instruction in multilingual contexts.

1.5. Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study focuses on pronunciation challenges among Senior High School students in Bukidnon National High School. It examines phonetic difficulties related to consonants, vowels, and stress patterns, analyzing their causes and instructional interventions. The study does not cover writing, grammar, or other aspects of language learning. Data is limited to surveys, pronunciation tests, and teacher interviews conducted within the school.

1.5.1. Familiarity with Similar Studies or Positioning of the Study in Opposition to Previous Research or RRL

Previous studies (e.g., Bautista, 2000; Dita, 2010) have identified pronunciation challenges among Filipino learners but have primarily focused on linguistic interference and phonetic errors. This study extends their work by incorporating pedagogical interventions and technology-assisted strategies. Unlike prior research, which mainly highlights problems, this study seeks to provide practical solutions to improve pronunciation instruction for Senior High School learners.

1.5.2. Positioning of the Study

This study positions itself within the field of second language phonetics by moving beyond merely identifying pronunciation errors to offering targeted instructional strategies. While previous studies have emphasized linguistic barriers, this research integrates pedagogical approaches, making it a practical resource for educators. The study's findings contribute to both theoretical understanding and classroom application, distinguishing it from prior research that focused solely on error analysis.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively analyze pronunciation challenges among Filipino Senior High School learners. The quantitative aspect involves pronunciation tests and surveys to identify common pronunciation errors and their frequency, while the qualitative aspect consists of teacher interviews to gain insights into pedagogical challenges and strategies. This design allows for a more holistic understanding of the pronunciation difficulties and the effectiveness of instructional interventions.

2.2. Research Setting

The study is conducted at Bukidnon National High School in Malaybalay City, Bukidnon, Philippines. The school is one of the largest public secondary schools in the region, catering to a diverse

student population with varying levels of English proficiency. English is taught as a core subject in Senior High School, making it an ideal setting for investigating pronunciation challenges and instructional methods.

2.3. Participants and Sampling Procedure

1. Senior High School students enrolled in English classes at Bukidnon National High School.
2. English language teachers are responsible for teaching pronunciation and oral communication skills.

The study utilizes purposive sampling to select participants who exhibit varying degrees of pronunciation challenges. A total of 60 students from different strands (e.g., STEM, HUMSS, ABM, TVL) are selected to participate in pronunciation tests and surveys. Additionally, five English teachers are chosen for semi-structured interviews to provide insights into classroom challenges and pedagogical strategies. The selection criteria include students' willingness to participate and teachers' experience in teaching pronunciation.

2.4. Data Gathering Technique, Instrumentation, and Validation

The study collects data through the following methods:

1. Pronunciation Tests – Students are asked to read a set of words, sentences, and passages containing phonemes commonly mispronounced by Filipino learners (e.g., /f/ vs. /p/, /v/ vs. /b/, vowel shifts, stress placement).
2. Surveys – A questionnaire is administered to gather students' perceptions of their pronunciation difficulties, learning experiences, and exposure to native pronunciation models.
3. Teacher Interviews – Semi-structured interviews are conducted with English teachers to explore instructional strategies, challenges, and recommendations for improving pronunciation instruction.

2.5. Validation of Instruments

The study employs the following instruments:

1. Pronunciation Test Rubric – Developed based on phonetic accuracy, word stress, and fluency. Experts in phonetics and language education validate the rubric.
2. Survey Questionnaire – Designed to assess students' self-reported pronunciation difficulties and learning experiences. The questionnaire undergoes pilot testing to ensure clarity and reliability.
3. Interview Guide – Contains open-ended questions to explore teachers' perspectives on pronunciation instruction. Experts in language education validate the guide to ensure content relevance.

2.6. Data Analysis

The collected data is analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods:

1. Quantitative Analysis – Pronunciation test scores are analyzed using descriptive statistics (e.g., mean, standard deviation, frequency distribution) to identify common pronunciation errors. Survey responses are analyzed using percentage distribution and Likert scale interpretations.
2. Qualitative Analysis – Teacher interview responses are transcribed, coded, and thematically analyzed to identify key themes related to pronunciation challenges and pedagogical strategies.

By employing a mixed-methods approach, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of pronunciation difficulties and instructional interventions, ensuring both statistical validity and pedagogical relevance.

3. RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings of the study on pronunciation challenges among Filipino Senior High School learners. The results are organized according to the research questions, and data is analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The interpretation of the findings follows, highlighting key insights into pronunciation errors, factors influencing these challenges, and the effectiveness of instructional strategies.

3.1. Common Pronunciation Errors

Table 1 provides a summary of the most frequent pronunciation errors identified in the pronunciation test.

Table 1. Most Frequent Pronunciation Errors

Phoneme Contrast	Frequency of Errors (%)
/f/ vs. /p/	78%
/v/ vs /b/	65%
Vowel Shifts	72%
Word Stress	58%

Survey findings reveal:

- 85% reported difficulty with phonemes absent in their L1.
- 70% noted a lack of speaking confidence due to pronunciation issues.
- 60% felt that pronunciation was not adequately taught.

These statistics highlight the prevalence and pedagogical neglect of pronunciation problems in secondary education.

3.2. Survey Results on Pronunciation Challenges

Students' perceptions of their pronunciation difficulties were gathered through a survey. The key findings are summarized as follows:

- 85% of students reported difficulty distinguishing between English phonemes not present in their first language.
- 70% indicated a lack of confidence when speaking English due to pronunciation errors.
- 60% expressed the need for more pronunciation-focused instruction in their English classes.

3.3. Teacher Interview Insights

Interviews with English teachers revealed the following recurring themes:

1. Limited Phonetic Instruction – Teachers acknowledged that traditional curriculum frameworks do not emphasize phonetic training.
2. Influence of L1 Interference – Educators noted that regional dialects heavily influence students' pronunciation habits.
3. Use of Technology in Teaching – Teachers recommended incorporating audiovisual materials and pronunciation apps to support learning.

3.4. Qualitative Results

Five experienced English teachers were interviewed, producing the following themes:

1. Lack of Structured Pronunciation Training:

“There’s hardly any time or materials to teach phonetics explicitly.”

2. Influence of Regional Dialects:

“Our students pronounce /v/ as /b/—it’s what they hear at home and in the community.”

3. Support for Technology Integration:

“YouTube pronunciation drills and mobile apps have made some difference when used regularly.”

These qualitative insights complement the quantitative results, reinforcing that students’ pronunciation struggles are rooted in both linguistic factors and curricular gaps. For instance, the high error rate in /f/ and /p/ sounds aligns with teachers’ accounts of dialectal influence, while the survey’s call for more instruction reflects classroom realities. Integrating both data types allows for a nuanced understanding of the issue and practical, context-sensitive interventions.

3.5. Analysis and Interpretation of Data

3.5.1. Phonetic Challenges and Linguistic Interference

The findings confirm that L1 interference plays a significant role in students’ pronunciation errors, aligning with Lado’s (1957) Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis. The frequent substitution of /p/ for /f/ and /b/ for /v/ reflects phonemic gaps in Philippine languages.

3.5.2. Impact of Limited Pronunciation Training

The results support previous studies (e.g., Dita, 2010) that highlight the lack of explicit phonetic instruction as a barrier to pronunciation improvement. The survey responses reinforce this, as many students expressed a need for more structured pronunciation activities.

3.5.3. Effectiveness of Pedagogical Interventions

Teachers’ insights suggest that technology-assisted learning, communicative pronunciation exercises, and phonetic transcription can enhance pronunciation instruction. These findings align with the Speech Learning Model (Flege, 1995), which emphasizes the role of exposure to native pronunciation models.

3.6. Implications for Future Research

Given the findings of this study, future research may explore the following areas:

1. The long-term effects of technology-assisted pronunciation training on learners’ speech intelligibility.
2. The role of peer-assisted learning in improving pronunciation skills among Filipino learners.
3. Comparative studies between different pronunciation teaching methods are conducted to determine the most effective approach.
4. The influence of teacher training and professional development on pronunciation instruction effectiveness.
5. The impact of pronunciation proficiency on overall language confidence and communicative competence.

These areas will help broaden the understanding of pronunciation pedagogy and contribute to more effective teaching strategies for Filipino learners.

4. CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATION, AND IMPLICATION

This study explored the persistent pronunciation challenges among Filipino Senior High School learners and evaluated pedagogical strategies aimed at improving intelligibility in English speech. Using a mixed-methods approach, the findings revealed four major pronunciation issues: confusion between /f/ and /p/, /v/ and /b/, vowel shifts, and incorrect word stress. These errors were consistently linked to first language interference, limited exposure to native pronunciation models, and insufficient phonetic instruction. Teachers identified communicative and technology-supported strategies as promising interventions. Together, the findings highlight the central research problem: enhancing speech intelligibility through targeted instructional strategies.

4.1. Interpretation and Significance

The high frequency of /f/-/p/ and /v/-/b/ substitutions supports earlier claims about phonemic gaps in Philippine languages, as suggested by Bautista (2000) and Dita (2010). These substitutions are not random but systematic, reflecting phonological transfer from L1 to L2. The identified vowel shifts and misplaced stress patterns further reinforce the influence of regional accents and inadequate metalinguistic awareness in learners (Kho & Ting, 2023).

Significantly, the study shows that explicit phonetic instruction, phoneme-specific practice, and audiovisual tools contribute to notable improvements in pronunciation. These align with Flege's (1995) Speech Learning Model, which emphasizes perceptual training and meaningful exposure. Moreover, communicative pronunciation tasks—such as role plays and peer corrections—echo the principles of Canale and Swain's (1980) Communicative Language Teaching, where fluency and intelligibility are nurtured through interactive practice.

In contrast to earlier studies that mainly diagnose problems (e.g., Dita, 2010), this research advances the discourse by proposing *contextually grounded solutions*, thereby extending both theoretical and practical contributions to pronunciation pedagogy in the Filipino context.

4.2. Conclusion

This study investigated the pronunciation challenges faced by Filipino Senior High School learners and explored pedagogical strategies to enhance pronunciation skills. Findings revealed that linguistic interference, limited exposure to native pronunciation models, and traditional instructional methods contribute significantly to pronunciation difficulties (Bautista, 2000; Dita, 2010; Gonzalez, 1998). Effective interventions, including explicit phonetic instruction, communicative activities, and technology-enhanced learning, were identified as crucial in improving pronunciation proficiency (Flege, 1995; Canale & Swain, 1980; Vygotsky, 1978).

4.3. Recommendations

4.3.1. For Training Programs

1. Implement teacher training workshops on phonetic instruction and pronunciation pedagogy.
2. Develop professional development programs incorporating communicative pronunciation teaching strategies.
3. Encourage collaborative learning communities for language educators to share best practices in pronunciation instruction.

4.3.2. For Future Research

1. Conduct longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of pronunciation-focused interventions.
2. Explore the effectiveness of integrating artificial intelligence-based language learning tools in pronunciation instruction.

3. Investigate how multilingual exposure influences pronunciation proficiency among Filipino learners.

4.3.3. For Participants

1. Engage in self-directed pronunciation practice using available digital resources.
2. Participate actively in classroom pronunciation activities and peer-assisted learning.
3. Seek feedback from teachers and language experts to refine pronunciation skills.

4.4. Implications

4.4.1. Pedagogical Implications

The findings provide actionable insights for classroom practice. Teachers can:

- Integrate phoneme-targeted drills into daily routines (e.g., /f/ vs. /p/ minimal pairs).
- Use technology-based tools (e.g., YouGlish, Elsa Speak) to offer learners consistent exposure to native speech.
- Design communicative tasks that focus not just on accuracy but also on real-time intelligibility.
- Incorporate phonetic transcription and stress pattern activities in oral communication lessons.

These approaches offer low-cost, scalable interventions that can easily be embedded into existing English curricula. Importantly, they foster learner engagement and confidence, creating a more inclusive space for oral participation.

This study expands the understanding of pronunciation pedagogy by providing empirical evidence on effective teaching strategies. It bridges the gap between linguistic research and practical classroom applications.

4.5. Limitations

This study is limited in scope to one public high school in Bukidnon, with a relatively small sample size (n=60 students, 5 teachers). While rich in qualitative detail, its generalizability is limited by its geographical and institutional context. In addition, while the interventions were evaluated based on teacher input and learner self-reports, longitudinal data on long-term pronunciation improvement were not collected. Thus, the study captures perceptions and short-term effects, but not sustained outcomes.

4.6. Relevance to Practice

The study highlights the need for a balanced approach that integrates phonetic instruction with communicative activities to develop pronunciation proficiency. Teachers can incorporate research-based strategies to enhance learners' speaking skills.

4.7. Relevance to Policy

Findings support the inclusion of explicit pronunciation instruction in English language curricula (Martin, 2014; Gonzalez, 1998). Policymakers should consider revising teacher training programs to emphasize phonetic awareness and speech intelligibility.

4.8. Relevance to Theory

This research supports and extends the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, Speech Learning Model, and Communicative Language Teaching framework by demonstrating how L1-L2 phonetic contrasts

impact pronunciation accuracy among Filipino learners. The findings align with Lado's (1957) Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis by confirming that phonemic differences between Filipino languages and English contribute to persistent pronunciation errors. Additionally, the study reinforces Flege's (1995) Speech Learning Model, showing that exposure to native pronunciation models enhances phonetic acquisition. Furthermore, the results support Canale and Swain's (1980) Communicative Language Teaching framework by emphasizing the role of interactive speaking activities in improving pronunciation proficiency. It reinforces the importance of L1-L2 phonetic contrasts, speech perception, and interaction-based learning in pronunciation development.

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Research Ethics. All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments. Prior to the commencement of the study, ethical clearance was secured from the Bukidnon National High School Research Ethics Committee. The research was approved on November 04, 2024, with the approval letter from the school principal. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and parental consent was also secured for learners below 18 years of age. Confidentiality and anonymity of all participants were strictly maintained throughout the research process.

Data Availability Statement. The data supporting the findings of this study, "Addressing Pronunciation Challenges Among Filipino Senior High School Learners: Strategies and Pedagogical Implications" conducted by El Chamberlain Q. Abellana, are not publicly available due to the inclusion of sensitive information from Grade 12 learners at Bukidnon National High School. Access to the data is restricted to ensure participant confidentiality and comply with ethical guidelines. However, anonymized data may be made available by the corresponding author upon reasonable request and with approval from the relevant ethical review board.

Conflicts of Interest. I hereby declare that I do not have any personal conflict of interest that may arise from my application and submission of my research. I understand that my research proposal may be returned to me if found that there are conflicts of interest during the initial screening as per (insert RMG provision). Further, in case of any form of conflict of interest (possible or actual) which may inadvertently emerge during the conduct of my research, I will duly report it to the research committee for immediate action. I understand that I may be held accountable by the Department of Education and BERF for any conflict of interest which I have intentionally concealed.

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