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## LIVED EXPERIENCES OF PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN TEACHING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION

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### ABSTRACT

The teaching of pronunciation is one integral component in English instruction. This phenomenological inquiry, anchored on Blumer's theory of Symbolic Interactionism, explored the elementary teachers' lived experiences on the teaching of English pronunciation. Results of the interview and focus group discussion showed that the pupils have difficulty in pronouncing the words, poor attention and retention span, lack of interest and participation of children and negative behavior in the discussion, and teaching is a challenging experience. Further, strategies used in teaching pronunciation are Listen and Imitate Strategy, Dolch Sight Words Presentation, Claveria Method, among others. Based on the findings, it is recommended that teachers use varied materials in teaching to make it engaging. They should also be adequately equipped with necessary trainings in teaching English pronunciation to be able to use different strategies. Strategies in the classroom must be specific and relevant to the learners.

**Keywords:** Pronunciation, English Pronunciation, Phenomenological Inquiry, Teaching Strategies.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the important skills a man has to be good about. It is essential for a man to have good speaking skills. Speaking becomes good if the words are properly pronounced. Good pronunciation results to higher intelligibility level. Intelligibility is the technical term for understandability of speech sounds and words. This is used to quantitatively describe pronunciation accuracy. Whole word and speech sound intelligibility tell how easy it is for people to understand your pronunciation (ClearTalk Mastery, 2018).

According to Boonkit (2010), speaking is one of the four macro skills needed for effective communication in any language, specifically when speakers are not using their native language. As English is globally used for communication, English speaking skills should be developed along with the other skills so that these integrated skills will enhance communication achievement both with native speakers of English and other members of the international community.

The decline on the proficiency in English by Filipino graduates implies that the education system in the Philippines must be reviewed. Specifically, classroom instructions and curriculum implementation must be reviewed to be able to determine what areas to be given emphasis. English instruction and pronunciation instruction need to be focused by teachers and this will happen if there is appropriate delivery of lessons of the curriculum.

In a classroom, a student who speaks well become participative, and higher participation results to higher performance. But in Filipino classrooms, students with good pronunciation skills are just few, especially in English pronunciation. Students become hesitant to speak and participate in the classroom because of low confidence to pronounce the words and also to avoid criticisms. Teachers, on the other hand, have been dealing with this every day. They encounter a lot of learners with this kind of case. Their job, however, is to teach them overcome the challenge using their skills in teaching, using their methods in teaching.

Language teaching cannot depend on technology alone. The teacher has to use her knowledge and skills to guide the learners towards the nuances of the English language for better teaching experience. He has to be a model to language learning, he should possess good linguistic competence, great degree of accuracy in grammar and good understanding of phonetic knowledge. His proficiency in pronunciation should be ideal as a model for imitation (Words Worth, 2016).

Furthermore, as cited in De Veyra (2012), English is one of the learning areas found difficult to teach by elementary school teachers especially those skills related to speaking since they are teaching a second language. The researchers believe that there is a need to give more focus and apply more enhanced strategies in teaching the speaking skills such as the use of interactive activities.

In the Philippines, teaching pronunciation is not a separate subject. It is a competency embedded in the English subject alongside with the other macro skills. And this is one of the reasons why the skill is not being focused. Teachers become uncomfortable to teach the skill. According to the Department of Education Curriculum Guide, the areas of language learning – the receptive skills, the productive skills, and grammar and vocabulary are taught in an integrated way, together with the use of relevant print and non-print resources, to provide multiple perspectives and meaningful connections. Integration may come in different types either implicitly or explicitly (skills, content, theme, topic, and values integration).

The goal of teaching pronunciation is not to ask learners to speak like native speakers. Instead, intelligible pronunciation should be the main purpose of oral communication. If learners want to change the way of pronouncing English words, they have to change the way they think about the sounds of those words. This is true both for individual sounds and the bigger parts of speech such as syllables, stress patterns, and rhythm. Unfortunately, pronunciation instruction is sometimes ignored in English language teaching (Gilakjani, 2016).

Teachers who are non-native speakers of English language do not focus on teaching pronunciation as with the native speakers of the language. As what Checklin (2012) cited, pronunciation teaching has become more focused on increasing intelligibility rather than emulating a ‘native-like’ accent. Experiences of teachers in teaching pronunciation in the elementary level vary. The teachers have different first-hand experiences when it comes to teaching children to be intelligible and to learn how to pronounce English terms appropriately. And these variations become the bases of this study.

There is a need to study on the lived experiences of teachers in teaching pronunciation to be able to see the underlying practices and developments in the area of providing the appropriate methods and strategies in teaching pronunciation. The experiences of teachers to

be shared will be the bases of identifying the theory behind teaching pronunciation in the elementary level. This will be a good addition to the body of knowledge.

## **2.STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The researcher explored on the lived experiences of teachers in teaching English pronunciation to elementary grade learners.

Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of the teachers in teaching English pronunciation?
2. What are the strategies or methods used by the teachers in teaching English pronunciation?
3. What suggestions do the teachers offer to improve the teaching of English pronunciation?

## **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Lived experience, as it is explored and understood in qualitative research, is a representation and understanding of a researcher or research subject's human experiences, choices, and options and how those factors influence one's perception of knowledge (Given, 2008). In teaching English pronunciation in the Elementary level, teachers have varied experiences. These experiences are their sources of learning and their means of knowing what to do in the classroom. This can also be a way of choosing the best strategy to use in the classroom.

In the study conducted by Moedjito (2016), which aimed to explore teachers' and students' perception of pronunciation teaching in Indonesian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, particularly on the difficulty of English pronunciation, and the reasons for the difficulty. The results of the study revealed that almost all of the respondents perceived English pronunciation as one of the most difficult areas in English learning. The participants also agreed that two most significant reasons for the difficulty were related to students' first language (L1) or the mother tongue.

One of the reasons for the lack of interests on the teachers' side to include teaching pronunciation in their classes could be that there is no scientific and empirical research in this discipline, one that can present an applicable approach to achieving the goal. In fact, there are many good and acceptable research studies but the findings are usually inapplicable to the educational system. Therefore, doing the research that examines the phonological problems of the learners inside the country is of considerably high importance (Khanbeiki, 2015).

According to the study of Oyzon, et. al. (2010), the repertoire of sounds in one's native language affects how one learns a second language. Teachers should know the inventory of sounds in both the learner's native tongue and in the target language to appropriately teach the learner how to bridge the acoustic barriers between two languages. As presented in the study, the confusion stems from the fact that Waray Language does not contain the long vowels sound such as /a/ sound as in hay, /ɛ/ sound in egg with the more familiar /i/ in "see"; or /o/ in hole with /u/ in shampoo.

On the other hand, on the study conducted by Martin (2015) on students' and teachers' perceptions of pronunciation. Specifically, on investigating the attitudes towards the place of pronunciation in the EFL classroom and examines teaching and learning goals in this area. The results showed that pronunciation instruction is important to students and teachers. However, beyond this there are significant differences in their perceptions, specifically on what constitutes pronunciation practice. Furthermore, while most students would like to aim for native-like pronunciation, most teachers consider 'intelligibility' as the main goal of pronunciation teaching.

There are various experiences that a teacher may experience within a classroom teaching English pronunciation and using English as a second language. The varied experiences will uncover the different areas and facets in teaching the language. This is the reason why there is a need to explore on the lived experiences of teachers teaching English pronunciation in the elementary level. The result of the study is a good addition to the body of knowledge.

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

This is a phenomenological study because it explored on the teacher's experiences in teaching pronunciation in English. A phenomenological methodology was suited for this study because the researcher was able to understand the meaning that participants attribute to their thoughts and feelings, about teaching pronunciation in English in the elementary grade.

The participants of this study were 24 teachers of Sta. Rita I District, Sta. Rita, Samar. Twelve schools were randomly selected, and two teachers were chosen from each selected school. The participants were those who taught English in the public elementary school, with training related to content and curriculum, and taught in either mono grade or multi-grade classes. Specifically, there were 10 Teacher I, 4 Teacher II, 7 Teacher III, and 3 Master Teachers of the district. 10 teachers were handling the primary grades, and 14 were handling the intermediate grades. Most of them had experiences ranging from three years to twenty years in public service. However, there were selected schools with only one teacher having teaching experiences more than three years, but still, the others were selected as participants to complete the number of needed respondents of the interview. During the focus group discussion, 10 participants were selected to join the in-depth discussion.

Prior to the data collection, the researcher asked permission from the District In-Charge of Sta. Rita I District. Upon approval of the letter request, the researcher randomly selected twelve schools in the district. The researcher asked permission from school heads through a letter request approved by the District In-Charge. The school head accompanied the researcher to the chosen participants of the study. A short meeting was done with the teacher participants about the purpose of the researcher. The school head left the participants and the researcher afterwards. Before interviewing the participants, the researcher explained the flow of the activity and interview. He also discussed important matters such as confidentiality, the signing of the consent form, and validation of transcripts with the participants. Then, the researcher asked the participants to sign the consent form. Days after the interview, the transcriptions were printed and the transcripts were validated through the signature of the participants on the final transcripts. During the interview, the following questions were asked:

1. How is it like to teach English pronunciation? What difficulties did you encounter relative to teaching English pronunciation?
2. What strategies do you use to teach English pronunciation? And why do you use such a method?
3. What do you suggest to help improve the teaching of English pronunciation?

As part of ethical practice, the researcher protected the participant's identity using pseudonyms. The interview and focus group discussion lasted for two days considering the availability of the participants, and the details are the following.

**Day 1.** The researcher went to the office of the school head of the upland schools and carline schools (schools located nearby national road). The purpose was discussed with the letter request shown for reference. The permission to conduct the interview was asked and followed with an approval. The school head identified the teachers as the respondents and directed the researcher to the classrooms of the respondents. The school head conducted a brief orientation with the help of the researcher explaining the flow of the study and interview. The researcher and the participants were directed to an area conducive for interview. They were given more or less thirty minutes to conduct the interview. The researcher explained the purpose of the interview and discussed important details such as the signing of the consent form and the validation of the transcripts before commencing. Then, with the use of the voice recorder, the researcher started the interview. Afterwards, the researcher thanked and congratulated the participants. The researcher only finished six schools on this day and the remaining schools for the following day.

**Day 2.** The researcher went to the office of the school head of the coastal schools (schools located nearby the sea). The purpose was also discussed with the letter request shown for reference. The permission to conduct the interview was also asked and followed with an approval. The school head identified the teachers as the respondents and directed the researcher to the classrooms of the respondents. The school head conducted a brief orientation with the help of the researcher explaining the flow of the study and interview. The researcher and the participants were directed to an area conducive for interview. They were given twenty minutes to conduct the interview. The researcher explained the purpose of the interview and discussed important details such as the signing of the consent form and the validation of the transcripts before commencing. Then, with the use of the voice recorder, the researcher started the interview.

The researcher also conducted the focus group discussion among the 10 selected participants to gain more data. The data obtained were included for analysis alongside the interview data. The transcript of the focus group discussion was validated by the participants through their signatures on the final transcript.

The researcher recorded the responses of the oral interview and focus group discussion through a digital voice recorder. The data were transcribed. Transcripts from the interviews were analyzed for codes and themes, and specific procedures for analysis followed as described by Moustakas (1994). The following are the steps in analyzing phenomenological data according to Moustakas which he termed as "intuitive integration": (1) describing own experiences with the phenomenon (epoche); (2) identifying significant statements in the database from participants, clustering these statements into meaningful units and themes; (3) synthesizing the themes into a description of the experiences of the individuals; and (4) constructing a composite description of the meanings and the essences of the experience.

## 5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the teachers' experiences in teaching English pronunciation, strategies or methods in teaching English pronunciation, and suggestions to improve the teaching of English pronunciation

### Teachers' Experiences in Teaching English Pronunciation

From the participants' narration of their experiences, the themes that emerged relative to their experiences in teaching English pronunciation were: (1) the pupils have difficulty in pronouncing the word introduced to them, (2) pupils have poor attention and retention span, (3) lack of interest and participation of children and negative behavior in the discussion, and (4) teaching is a challenging experience.

**Difficulty in pronouncing the words.** One of the experiences revealed by the participants in relation to teaching pronunciation is that most of the pupils had difficulty in pronouncing the English words introduced to them. The participants attributed this difficulty to the fact that English is not the first language of most Filipinos. In the K to 12 curriculum, particularly in Grade I, English is not used as a medium of instruction nor a subject. English is only introduced in Grade 2.

Most of the pupils encountered speech difficulty in producing the sound.  
(Transcript 1, Line 12, page 1)

Mostly, the pronunciation of pupils (difficulty encountered in teaching).  
(Transcript 4, Line 12, Page 4)

(*Ahhmm*), lack of knowledge on letter sounds on the part of learners. (Transcript 5, Line 18, Page 5)

I think, some children cannot say the word correctly, some are stuttering.  
(Transcript 19, Line 8, Page 22)

Further, the participants revealed in the discussions that Waray as a language and the learners' mother tongue affect how the child pronounces an English word. Interference of the native language in learning a second language has also been cited as one of the reasons why there is a difficulty in pronouncing a word. They have also revealed that one of the reasons why children have difficulty in pronouncing the English word is that learners are not speakers of the language and they do not often use the English language at home. They also added that lack of follow-up of parents at home could also be one of the reasons why children do not easily learn a second language.

One of the basics and most common reasons why these children have difficulty in the, in . . . pronouncing since they are not speakers of the language, they are not native speakers of the language they do not use it at home often, and secondly, perhaps the parents as well, they have difficulty in teaching, in pronouncing the words properly since follow-up is very important . . .  
(FGDL114)

Interference on the use of mother tongue in the classroom . . . (FGDL118)

The familiarity of the English terms was also mentioned by the participants. It was explained that learners' difficulty in pronouncing the word could also be traced back to how well they are familiar with the term. It was also added that a teacher factor could also be a



reason. If a teacher does not pronounce well, the learners may imitate. The two can be linked together. If the teacher cannot use the words well or if they cannot pronounce the words in English well, the exposure of learners on the target language can be affected. Teacher's competence on the use of English language was explained by the participants as one of the contributing factors of learners' pronunciation in English.

I think . . . they have difficulty in pronouncing the words because they are not, some of them are not familiar to the word, they don't know the sound . . . (FGDL124)

So, aside from those mentioned regarding the (*ahh*) family or parents, whatever the background or status in life, yes, or nutritional factors . . . I think . . . teacher factor because if the teachers cannot really pronounce the words right, do not expect your children or pupils to pronounce the words correctly. (FGDL159)

Yes, it matters also teachers, the teacher competency, right? Teachers' competence . . . (FGDL162)

To be able to influence the learners, teachers must demonstrate good command in pronunciation. If teachers are not good at pronouncing the English words, the learners will imitate, and pronunciation learning will be affected. Teachers are considered masters of their craft, and they are expected to speak well, so it has to be practiced to be able to adequately teach learners how to speak well.

Yes, modelling and you as a teacher we also see to it that we are masters of what we are teaching. So if we are teaching pronunciation, we, too, have to be proficient. We have to pronounce it properly so we can teach them the proper pronunciation . . . (FGDL58)

The physiological factor such as the abnormality of the structures in the mouth, as what the participants termed, or the formation of the tongue and other similar reasons were also cited as one of the causes why there is a difficulty in pronouncing a word. The development of learners was also cited to be a cause. If the learner has a difficulty to grasp the skill, the ability to pronounce can be affected. It was added that resources at home must be used and the parents must also take part such as doing follow-up activities.

. . . Although they can read, they have difficulty in pronouncing it well because perhaps they say not, would it be proper to say the abnormality? (FGDL50)

Yes. And the development also of the child but that doesn't mean that they can't pronounce. Only that they cannot due to some physical abnormalities, physical problems . . . (FGDL52)

It was also revealed that socio-economic status could not be a reason for the problem in pronunciation. If the child has problems on nutrition, the effect on learning a language could not be noted on his pronunciation. Although it could have effects on learning, according to them, this could not be the prime reason why a child does not pronounce well. They have explained that there are those learners who are not well-off and are not well-nourished but they can pronounce a word well. But they still believe that nutrition can also affect the pace of learning, and they have shared that the government has a solution to this kind of problem which is the feeding program for the children.

Some students are excellent even if they have not yet eaten. But, actually, it also has . . . effect because they cannot focus if their tummy is empty. So, that's it. (FGDL134)

We have a feeding program in school for those children who are severely wasted. (FGDL137)

The government has an intervention for those children who have not met those nutritional (*requirements*). (FGDL143)

Because other children are not really rich but are good in pronunciation. It's the comprehension that is affected, not the pronunciation. (FGDL146)

Educational background of elementary teachers has also been uncovered and discussed. It was revealed that teachers in the elementary, as generalists and non-specializers of English, could be one of the reasons why teachers have difficulty teaching English pronunciation. But it was also contrasted that this may not apply to all teachers because there are others who are good and efficient in teaching and can pronounce an English word very well.

It could be but not all. It is (*ahhh*), what I mean is, what I'm trying to say is it could be the reason, but it's not always the reason. (FGDL164)

All teachers are competent only that we have not enough of that aspect- on trainings, okay? Because we are qualified teachers, meaning to say, we are competent . . . (FGDL168)

Lack of follow-up at home could also be a factor especially if the parents of a certain learner are considered illiterate. It was also mentioned that it can be one of the reasons why a child has difficulties doing the tasks at school. It was also discussed that this kind of case, intellectual incapacity, of people surrounding the learner especially if parents are one of this kind, could also be a hindering factor why a child is unable to learn. The hereditary cause was cited.

As what I heard from them (*ahhh*)-hereditary. (*Ahhh*) Some of their parents are not educated . . . They could not teach their children at home. It's one reason why they have difficulty . . . yes. (FGDL148)

**Poor attention and retention span.** This is another experience of the teachers as regards teaching pronunciation. Pupils have a very short attention span and poor retention as revealed by the participants.

The . . . attention of the pupils. They have . . . short attention span. (Transcript 6, Line 10, Page 6)

Okay, so far the difficulties that I am encountering is that the children have poor retention. (Transcript 7, Line 24, Page 8)

Children are normally short of attention span, especially children in the primary grades. Goldberg (2017) stated that children's attention spans are naturally shorter than adult attention spans. The participants shared that the children's nature is to play and explore the world through their hands. The sense of touch is mostly used in early stage of life to learn. They are also easily distracted. It was revealed in this study that teachers find the pupils attend less especially during discussions when the learners are not fully engaged in the activity or when they are not attracted



to the kind of activities given. Lack of materials was also identified a problem since it causes lower interest level on the part of learners. The teacher's kind of teaching was also mentioned as a factor especially when the teacher is boring and is not able to arouse the interest of learners.

They are not attracted of the lesson. (FGDL188)

Maybe lack of materials, lack of visual materials you use during your lesson. (FGDL194)

Maybe the teacher is boring? And the activities, I guess the activities are boring, they find it difficult, should I say ah I guess it's the interest. (FGDL198)

Additional statement regarding children with low attention span supported that these learners in the elementary should get the appropriate and varied techniques and activities to arouse their interest. Learners in the elementary naturally have a short attention span and that teachers should provide activities that will boost the interest of the learner. It was mentioned that it is tantamount to say that teachers should not be boring (FGDL200).

The development of the ch- children so let's say if you are talking about children aging 6-7 don't expect them to give their one-hour, 100% attention because based on their development normally children are they just have 2-3 minutes of attention span so that's why . . . it's tantamount to say that teachers should not be boring and should have prepared a lot of activities. . . (FGDL200)

According to Goldberg (2017), children's attention spans also can be impacted by their daily routines and diets. Participants of the study revealed that poor attention and retention level of learners could also be affected by nutrition. If the learner did not take his breakfast or meal before going to school, the result will be low participation and attention level and will easily forget the skills being taught. According to the participants, the engagement of the learner in any activity will be affected if a meal is not taken before going to school. But it was explained that the participation level is the most affected not so much on the child's ability to pronounce a word.

Because, maybe they are out of focus, they are not focusing on pronouncing or in the lesson because they are hungry or something. They go to school without eating. (FGDL208)

**Lack of interest and participation in classroom activities and negative behavior in the discussion.** This is the third theme that emerged as regards their experiences in the teaching of English pronunciation. Participants of the study responded that learners usually lack in interest and participation and are negatively behaving in class. They have shared that these are the factors that make them feel pronunciation teaching difficult. It was discussed that those learners are not interested in listening especially if they don't understand whatever is being presented by the teacher. Learners tend to be noisy and whenever this happens, they become non-participative. This was explained to be the leading factors to the child misbehaving inside the classroom and lesser engagement in drills and other activities.

Yes, on the part of the learners, they are not interested, they do really not love books. (Transcript 8, Line 22, Page 9)

Yeah, they don't show interest in reading. (Transcript 8, Line 28, Page 10)

In teaching pronunciation? (*Hmm*), difficulties, (*hmm*) it depends on the interest of the pupils, it will vary in their interest. (Transcript 10, Line 18, Page 13)

Some of the pupils are not interested listening especially those who are slow. Some are noisy because they don't understand and what I am teaching to them. (Transcript 14, Line 8, Page 17)

Usually, the pupils, ah other pupils don't pay attention and they don't participate during the reading drill of the words. (Transcript 17, Line 8, Page 20)

Their behavior and attitudes (*during discussions*). (Transcript 2, Lines 14 and 16, Page 2)

The pupils are not interested to listen, sometimes, pupils are noisy. (Transcript 11, Line 8, Page 14)

Some, some children really are still immature. They need more to develop. (Transcript 19, Line 8, Page 22)

Lack of interest in the discussion and even the negative behaviors during activities can also be traced back to the reasons why children have poor attention level. If the activities are not varied and if the teacher is boring, the learners will easily get unengaged to the activities, and they will be noisy. The noise is the result of their play which is considered normal in their stage. Once other learners misbehave or make unnecessary noise after losing interest in the activities, other learners will be distracted and will also lose their interest doing their tasks. This kind of event normally happens if there are no enough activities given or if the technique does not arouse the interest of learners.

I can't say 100% because there are learners who are participative and there are learners who are not yes because the (*ahm*) the environment also because they are distracted by the other class who are loud. . . (FGDL212)

They are not attracted of the lesson. (FGDL188)

Maybe lack of materials, lack of visual materials you use during your lesson. (FGDL194)

Maybe the teacher is boring? And the activities, I guess the activities are boring, they find it difficult, should I say ah I guess it's the interest. (FGDL198)

**Teaching is a challenging experience.** This theme emerged in the focus group discussion. The participants expressed that teaching pronunciation is difficult. Teaching was also explained to be never easy. Pronunciation teaching is not an easy job, also. It was mentioned that in all aspects of teaching, there is always difficulty. In the elementary in particular, there are various subjects to focus on aside from teaching pronunciation. Pronunciation is integrated in the competencies in English not a separate subject. This becomes one of the difficulties the teachers encounter and this affects the pronunciation instruction in particular.

It's never easy. Teaching has never been easy. In all times in all fields, it's not easy. (*Ahmm*), why? Because you are not just focusing on one subject? You're not just focusing on one student. Teaching pronunciation is not separate; it's integrated into reading or in all subjects, right? (FGDL60)

It was also mentioned that teaching is a challenging task because it requires time, patience and effort. Considering that learners in the classroom are diverse, teaching and the preparation to teach is difficult. Difficulties in correcting the mispronunciation and the

difficulty to introduce English after the use of mother tongue have also been cited to be experienced.

We have diverse learners. (FGDL61)

We'll, teaching pronunciation for me is a challenging job or a task because it requires patience, effort and time. (FGDL68)

I think I have difficulty in correcting that mispronunciation since they've got it in their foundations like in Grade I to Grade III. Let's say Grade III? The transition? (FGDL12)

### Strategies or Methods in Teaching English Pronunciation

The themes that emerged from the interview were (1) Listen and Imitate Strategy, (2) Use of Dolch sight words, (3) Claveria Method, (3) Marungko Approach, (4) Phonemic Awareness, (5) Phonic Visual Oral Sound Blending Meaning or PVOSBM Approach, (6) Fuller Approach, and (7) Word Bank Strategy.

**Listen and imitate strategy.** This was revealed in the interview to have been used by the teachers. This strategy is commonly used by the teachers in the elementary where learners are asked to follow or imitate the pronunciation of the words. This strategy is usually done with the teacher demonstrating and the learners following. But this could also be done through the use of recorders. The use of a tape recorder or the activity itself on using the strategy should be done depending on the need of learners. Learners with very poor pronunciation level should be exposed to this strategy more than those who can easily grasp the pronunciation. It is common in the classroom in a public elementary school to have kinds of learners who cannot easily grasp the exact pronunciation of the word, and it is suggested that the recorder should be played several times in a day. Teachers in the elementary repetitively play and expose the learner to the word to gain higher retention level.

My strategy is the pupils should listen and imitate the sound of the word. The pupil will give the sound of the word and they will write the word on the board. (Transcript 1, Line 8, Page 1)

It's really hard to teach them in that case. (*Ahm*), especially in the part of pronouncing the words yes in pronouncing the words so as a teacher I have this tape recorder, tape recorder and the words are recorded there, say for example I am teaching them how to pronounce or how for example teaching them the primary colors for example saying "red" even just "red" it's, it's hard for them to imitate the word "red", yes, so for me I have this tape recorder and . . . I'll just play the "red" and it's (*ahm*) the word "red" is associated with a picture yes like for example an "apple" that is color red, okay so in my case tape recorder is really important. (FGDL84)

I guess some teachers are not aware of this so as much as possible the word red (*sample word*) should be played 750 times a day. FGDL86

Listening and imitating a sound can also be a difficult task for children with speech defects. There are children who can listen to a word but encounter difficulty in pronouncing it. Teachers in the lower grades and the participants suggested that, if they have a training on using a tongue depressor to let the slow learners move their tongue, activity like this can be helpful. It was shared that a popsicle stick, with a mayonnaise or a peanut butter, can be used

as an improvised tool to help a learner move his tongue as an exercise and eventually produce the appropriate sounds of letters.

It's actually for those of us who have training in speech pathology. We are allowed to use that technique using a tongue depressor, but it is just improvised one. Say, for example, I have this popsicle stick; we will have this tongue movement. Yes, but you should have this peanut butter or mayonnaise for the child to move his her tongue. (FGDL96)

**Use of Dolch sight words.** The Dolch Sight Words list is the most commonly used set of sight words used by the participants.

(Ah), I use Dolch words, phrases and sentences. (Transcript 4, Line 8, Page 4)

It was revealed by the teachers during the FGD that they use it for drills and exercises before they start their discussions. However, it was also mentioned that this has also its drawback which is that learners tend to memorize the sequence of words especially if the teacher flashes the words in the same order every day. The learners begin to be confused on the pronunciation once the words are disarranged.

(Ah), using Dolch (ah) I think . . . at the beginning it is okay for them because they are not so familiar- familiarize on the word but sometimes they memorize that the words the sequence of the words. (FGDL258)

They memorize the, the pattern, the sequence or the arrangement of the words. (FGDL264)

**Claveria method.** This is another technique in reading and pronunciation which also emerged as a theme during the interview.

Then the second strategy that I am using is the Claveria method wherein the pupils are using the ma-me-mi-mo-mu or we call the syllable method. (Transcript 7, Line 10, Page 7)

Claveria was revealed to have been used not by most of the teachers in the elementary. This technique is said to be similar to PECS or Picture Exchange System where a conversation is accompanied by pictures. This method targets the vocabulary development, comprehension, and retention level of learners.

I was not able to use it in my in my classroom yes but as I see to it it's actually helpful because it it has pictures of the words oo so we build ah the target I think the target of that technique is to build the vocabulary and the picture what's this the retention and the comprehension of the child so it's like hitting two birds with one stone. (FGDL277)

I think that approach is similar to PECS in SPED . . . picture exchange system. (FGDL300)

**Marungko approach.** Marungko approach in reading is a technique by which instead of the usual arrangement or order of letters, Marungko starts with m, s, a, i, and so forth. The alphabets are rather pronounced than read. This was revealed to be also used by teachers in teaching

pronunciation. Teachers anchor on this approach when introducing the sounds of the letters. They have shared that this approach is effective in teaching the sounds of letters.

Familiarize the sounds first then (*ahm*) for me the effective (*ahm*) strategy (*ah*) strategy I use is the Marungko, Marungko (*ahm*) begins with letter (*ah*) . . . the, the vowel /a/ will be paired with different consonants oo then I give also pre-reading materials (*ahm*) then a pair of consonants then vowels next then words then after the words, phrases, after phrases, sentences. (Transcript 8, Line 16, Page 9)

Marungko Approach emerged as a theme during the interview, but during the focus group discussions, there was a contrasting idea raised. It was revealed that Marungko is only suited for Filipino and Fuller Approach is more appropriate. However, there are still teachers who use this approach to teach sounds.

Maybe Marungko is only good for Filipino. Kaysa English, it's not applicable. That for me I-I observe that ah I'd like to use when I'm teaching English is the sounds, the English sounds. The Fuller. (FGDL322)

**Phonemic awareness.** Teachers in the elementary usually give activities to develop phonemic awareness. The two most important phonemic awareness skills are segmenting and blending. Segmenting is breaking a word apart into its sounds. Blending is saying a word after each of its sounds are heard (Oswalt, 2017). Teachers in the primary levels do this activity by demonstrating the blending sounds of letters. Teachers usually do this by pairing the sound of the consonant letter and a vowel sound. Teachers also give activities on blending the sounds of letters to be able to read a word.

I will give activities on phonemic awareness. (Transcript 9, Line 8, Page 11)

You will not, you will not teach them the sounds separately kay that's why when we read we say ba-a ba-a you will not say ba so you have to blend it softly, smoothly and slowly. (FGDL348)

**Phonic Visual Oral Sound Blending Meaning (PVOSBM) approach.** The use of this approach in teaching pronunciation also emerged as a theme. This approach was explained to be done by introducing the sounds of letters first. The sounds will also be associated with pictures. The name of whatever is in the picture will also be given for vocabulary development. The combined sounds which have turned to be a complete word will be mastered. The teacher will then use the word in phrases and, if possible, in sentences.

I also use PVO-SBM Approach where I demonstrate the pronunciation of words. (Transcript 11, Line 1, Page 14)

I use pictures for them to understand easily and pair it with words. (Transcript 14, Line 10, Page 17)

This approach is commonly used in the elementary since using pictures and pairing them with words is commonly done by teachers teaching pronunciation. If there is a difficulty in using this approach, teachers only pointed-out that it is the attitude of learners or the kind of engagement the learners give towards the activities.

For the hard-headed pupils those are my difficulties those children which are not yet mature . . . I think they are not yet ready. (FGDL356)

They do not listen to you; they do not pay attention. And many are still playful. It seems like they have not overcome the stage of being playful. (FGDL358)

**Fuller approach.** The sixth strategy used in teaching English pronunciation is the Fuller approach. This approach is done by teachers by introducing the different sounds of vowels. This is presented by using the words with the target vowel sound. The only difficulty they encounter while using this approach is that learners tend to memorize the words presented. Learners do not care whether they read the word on an instructional material or not whenever they can memorize the words. They describe this as mimicking. They suggested that whenever using this approach, teachers should use pictures and pair with words. Let the learners realize the meaning of the words and let them relate the words in their lives.

In English pronunciation, I use in the class I try to use the Fuller approach. (Transcript 15, Line 8, Page 18)

In using the Fuller approach, pupils tend to memorize the words that you are using. So if you are going to give them words that are repeated they tend to memorize them all they do not anymore care if they were able to read it they were just merely memorizing the words. (Transcript 15, Line 12, Page 15)

**Word bank strategy.** This is the last strategy used in teaching pronunciation. This strategy emerged as a theme as it is being used to teach pronunciation and to build vocabulary. Each learner takes part in this kind of activity as an exercise before the lessons of the day begin. Each of them is given a word to bring home. Learners are allowed to find out the meaning of the word at home. The following day, learners will write the word on meta strips and will present the words to the class by letting them pronounce the word as well as its meaning. A spelling exercise will also be done using the words presented by the learners. Afterwards, meta strips will be posted on the word wall for familiarization. This activity is repetitively done until the learners come up with a word bank.

Okay (*ahm*), since I handle Grade V I call it word bank strategy. (FGDL250)

I give my students one word each. And then, and then by tomorrow (*aw*) in their assignment, they will, they will write it in a in a meta strips. And then, by, by, by next day (*ah*) since I (*ah*) I have spelling exercise before I start my lesson. And then they will (*ano*) they will (flash or show) yes and they will let them pronounce as well as well as the meaning of the particular word. And then, for that day they will post post it in the I have a word wall then after a week that word wall will be (*madamo na hehe*) and then after a week I will again (will post another word hehe) so in whole week I have (plenty of words) twenty words that they will be familiar. (FGDL252)

### Suggestions to Improve the Teaching of English Pronunciation

According to the participants, the following should best be done in the classroom: (1) Use of ICT in the classroom, (2) Conduct spelling and pronunciation drills, (3) Use Dolch words, (4) Complete the manipulative materials, (5) More training, (6) Use varied strategies and instructional materials, and (7) Conduct Remedial Instruction.



**Use of ICT in the classroom.** This was revealed during the interview that teachers suggest the use of ICT in the classroom.

Okay, the most important is to use ICT in the classroom. (Transcript 1, Line 16, Page 1)

Have televisions, speakers. (Transcript 7, Line 30, 32, and 37, Page 8)

The transition of learners from Grade III to Grade IV is also a transition from the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction to English. Teachers disclosed that they have difficulty correcting mispronunciation of learners in English. To address the problem, they have shared that the use of technology must be incorporated. Spelling and pronunciation can be best done with the use of relevant videos downloaded from the internet.

Okay, for my part I'm actually teaching Grade V. English. I'm handling English for all Grade V students. For my part. I think I have difficulty in correcting that mispronunciation since they've got it in their foundations like in Grade I to Grade III. Let's say Grade III? The transition? (FGDL12)

Since I have ICT during my class, I bought my own projector. I have downloaded videos. Sometimes I use the powerpoint presentation. And through spellings, I flash it. I let them imitate how to pronounce if they have mispronunciations. (FGDL18)

Public elementary schools in the Philippines are required to use or integrate technology in the classroom. It has its advantages for both learners and teachers. The use of this helps learners to be fully engaged in activities. And teachers believe that learners can easily relate to any activity once a technology is used. Learners can develop wider concepts and easily learn to pronounce a word if materials like videos, pictures, and recorders are used.

The children are participative because maybe because they can relate. (FGDL402)

There are a lot of advantages because the children try to see the pictures, the videos, the pronunciation, the sounds. (FGDL404)

Despite its advantages, the participants also narrated that the use of technology could also have its disadvantages. Commonly, the teachers face failures like the occasional brownout, the time consumed for setting-up the equipment, the internet connectivity in the school and some other technical failures that make the teachers go back to the conventional method of teaching such as the use of manila papers and even chalk. Teachers also confessed that there are times that they only use technology if there is an evaluation of teaching or monitoring activity from the Department. Most teachers also encounter difficulty in using computers and integrating ICT in the activities due to lack of knowledge on using it. It was also mentioned that if the school has no electricity the Department will not provide computers to the schools since electricity, and adequate source of it are included on the list of requirements. But they have noted that once technology is used, a better learning outcome occurs.

No signal, most often brownout. (FGDL387)

Of course, once you do not have the electricity, the Department of Education will not provide computers because one of the requirements is electricity. The problem is you do not know how to operate. (FGDL391)

ICT in the classroom, the difficulty I have encountered is that it's time-consuming, the set-up, and then. (FGDL395)

You should have plan B. Go back to the conventional method of teaching. (FGDL406)

**Conduct spelling and pronunciation drills.** This is the second theme that emerged as a suggestion from the participants. The participants shared that before the teacher starts a lesson, a spelling test must be done. Learners should also read the words after to get familiarized on the pronunciation. It was also revealed by the participants that spelling drills can be a good way to remind the learners on the pronunciation of the word. In lower grades, it can be a way to let the young learners be aware of the sounds of letters as well as the pronunciation of words. It was also mentioned that teachers in the lower grades use Dolch sight words as their tool or source of words in conducting spelling drills. Spelling drills were also revealed to be a good way to improve vocabulary and the pronunciation of learners as well. It could only be ineffective to learners who neglect this kind of exercise and those cannot read.

Yes, because there are students who are not really good at spelling. Sometimes, they neglect the, the exercises. Yes. (FGDL28)

Actually, spelling, spelling exercise is difficult for the non-reader pupils. They cannot spell correctly; they cannot write what they hear. If they do not know the sounds and still they can't read the word because it finds hard for them to spell the words and write it. It is difficult for them to spell the word for the non-reader pupils. (FGDL34)

. . . Just like the other teachers who are using like drills; actually, I'm also using spelling because it's a good way also to remind the students, the pupils, awareness of the sounds. (*Ahh*) In my case since I'm handling Grade I, we use the basic Dolch words so like in English /a/ has a different kind of sounds . . . (FGDL58)

Rote learning was suggested to be one of the ways to effectively make learners learn. Consistency of pronunciation drills for higher grades and consistency in demonstrating the production and pronunciation of different sounds can be a good way to improve pronunciation instruction. Consistency means doing it every day, every morning before starting the formal lessons. They have revealed that it is important to know the sounds to be able to read and do spelling exercise and eventually improve the pronunciation.

Familiarity of the sounds first; because they don't know the sounds that's why they cannot spell the word. (FGDL40)

(*Rote*) Learning. (FGDL44)

Everyday, I used to teach them the sounds. Before beginning the class, like it's a drill for them. In the morning before the class begins I teach first the sounds of the alphabet. (FGDL46)

Exercises were considered useful according to the participants and that includes the use of tongue twisters. If the teachers want to target a mastery of a certain sound or word, he can

refer to giving exercises and drills on tongue twisters. They have shared that learners enjoy this kind of activity.

For them to let the, (*ah*), to practice their tongues to the for example if the focus is on the/s/ sound so they will practice their tongue (*If the focus is on letter /s/ sound, (tongue twisters) with most /s/ sounds will be practiced*). (FGDL242)

**Use Dolch words.** This is the third theme that emerged as shared by the participants. Dolch words are used in conducting pronunciation drills. Rote learning or memorization is applied in this kind of activity. Teachers in the elementary believe that it is also effective. It was revealed that this is effective to the learners in teaching pronunciation. Even without comprehension, rote learning or pure imitation of the pronunciation of words can be done. But this has to be consistently done if the teacher wants better outcomes. The participants believe that this is useful since they said this has already been widely used and is a product of studies and researches. Dolch words are also used by teachers in conducting spelling drills and other activities that involve memorization and familiarization of words.

Use Dolch words and phrases. Use Dolch words to at least pronounce or recognize the word even without comprehension. (Transcript 4, Line 14, Page 4)

I suggest consistency of teaching pronunciation. (Transcript 5, Line 22, Page 5)

. . . (*Ahh*) In my case since I'm handling Grade I, we use the basic Dolch words so like in English /a/ has a different kind of sounds. So, we focus on the sound first then jump to another but as much as possible we try to master each of the sounds. (FGDL58)

Maybe useful for the slow learners and . . .slow readers o-okay they are able to remind. (FGDL425)

**Complete the manipulative materials.** Participants of the study especially those who are handling the lower grades shared that they lack manipulative materials. It was mentioned that learners should have activities in the language with the use of materials they can touch in which their senses are being satisfied. Learners in the elementary are naturally imaginative, explorative, and playful and that they need the integration of play in the activities and they need objects to touch without imagining.

Complete the manipulative materials . . . (Transcript 7, Line 30, 32, and 37, Page 8)

Manipulative are useful be since that children are playful. They use to, they like to touch something, objects, play, something they could a touch, manipulate . . . they don't want to imagine. (FGDL437)

**More training.** This is another theme that emerged during the interview. Teachers in the elementary suggest that there must be training focusing on strategies in teaching pronunciation. The participants shared that they have not attended any training focusing on teaching

pronunciation in English. They also shared that they have not heard training on pronunciation teaching in English. They have expressed that if training on language teaching will be offered, it has to be offered by the central or regional offices with trainers who are competent in doing the activities. They also have shared that in the long years of their stay in the Department, they have not attended any training focusing on teaching English pronunciation but rather they usually attend training in reading.

(*Ahm*) more trainings, you have to deal with the strategies. More technologies or apparatuses should be used in teaching pronunciation. (Transcript 8, Line 50, Page 10)

I think if there is training for pronunciation, ah they have to put us not only in the district but to in other places? International? . . . trainers of trainers (laughing). (FGDL439)  
Haven't attended any (asked if there's a training on pronunciation teaching). (FGDL443)

**Use varied strategies and materials.** This is another theme that emerged from the interview as a suggestion for improving teaching pronunciation.

There are many roads to learning. People bring different talents and preferences for learning. Students need opportunities to show their talents and learn in ways that work for them. Then they can be pushed to learn in new ways that do not come so easily (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Using varied strategies in teaching is not new to the teachers. In fact, they are required to use varied strategies, and they are also required to differentiate the instruction. Teachers, according to the participants of this study, must experiment on the strategies they know and choose the best ones that fit the kind of learners they have. Strategies and techniques must be paired with technology such as the use of pictures and audios. Games that are relevant to the activities can be done to boost interest and participation. They also added that incentives could also be a good way to motivate and reinforce learning.

At least, they need to experiment or to use varied instructional materials. They don't need to, they don't need to stick to one. (Transcript 10, Line 20, Page 13)

So I suggest to the beginners to use different strategies. (Transcript 11, Line 10, Page 14)

I suggest the use of incentives and different activities for the pupils not to be bored. (Transcript 14, Line 12, Page 17)

Use games, pictures and audios. (Transcript 2, Line 22, 26, and 28, Page 2)

**Conduct remedial instruction.** This theme also emerged in the interview as one of their suggestions for improving the teaching of English pronunciation.

Remedial instruction is usually done after class sessions. Or it could be in between classes; it has its time allotment every day. However, it was revealed that teachers conduct remedial instruction while having a class. This act can be a cause of teachers having ancillary works that they devote most of their time to it and less to remedial instructions. Participants also confessed that sometimes they do not hold remedial instructions in a day. But for teachers

who conduct the remedial instruction, they maximize the time by letting those who can hardly pronounce to practice the words and do tutorials and activities.

I suggest that the pupil who are not paying attention to remain in the class and have the remediation, have a special time for them to practice the words. (Transcript 17, Line 10, Page 20)

While the others, while the others are busy doing the activity I've given then the (identified learners receive remedial instruction). (FGDL459)

Follow-up activities are usually offered during remedial instructions. These are additional activities given to the learners who have not acquired the necessary skills taught. One-on-one instruction is done in this kind of set-up to be able to focus on the learner. Teachers are encouraged to do this since this is always a part of the class program. Activities missed during the remedial sessions can be extended at home with the help of the guardian or the parents. And follow-up at home is also suggested by the participants especially that it is important to consistently practice pronunciation.

Extension, follow-up at home, not just because they are not, they are not speaking English at home they cannot practice. (FGDL60)

## 6.COCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Teachers have difficulty teaching English pronunciation due to the difficulty of children pronouncing the word. Interference of the first language is considered a factor that affects pronunciation. Other factors affect the learning of English pronunciation such as physiological factors, teachers' proficiency, materials and strategies used. Varied strategies are used in teaching English pronunciation, and these strategies are useful to the nature of learners the teachers are handling. Follow-up at home can improve learning outcomes and will help the learner get more exposures to the language. Teachers use the strategy in reading as their means of teaching pronunciation as it was revealed during the interview. However, they made it useful and related to teaching English pronunciation. Learners' participation and behavior can also be affected by the materials the teacher uses. Materials must be varied, leveled, and enjoyable to avoid learners losing their interest in the activities.

Technology is a good partner of teachers so ICT integration can be done to improve learning outcomes. The use of speakers and other audio materials for listening activities can be used. Multimedia presentations can also be a good addition, with motion pictures and audio materials. However, if failures in using ICT are encountered, teachers can go back to a conventional way of teaching. It is also suggested that during free time, the learners should have spelling drills to familiarize the word and to be able to memorize its pronunciation. Dolch words and other word sources can be used to make pronunciation teaching at hand even during free time. A classroom should also have manipulative materials that can be paired with teaching English pronunciation especially in the primary grades where proper sensation and sensory activities are essential in the learning process.

Parents must also take part in the learning process. They have to support their children doing activities extended at home. Teachers should also use varied materials in teaching to

make it engaging. Teachers should also be adequately equipped with necessary training in teaching English pronunciation to be able to use different strategies. Strategies in the classroom must be varied, specific and relevant to the learners. It should not be just about reading, as much as possible use a strategy or method for teaching pronunciation alone.

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