

## REMEDIATION IN PRONUNCIATION FOR ORAL DEFICIENCY

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**Abstract:** Speaking was viewed in the larger context of communication with the focus on the speaker's ability to take in messages, negotiate meaning, and produce comprehensible output. The case study focused on analyzing the specific oral deficiency of a third year college level student of Lyceum of Cebu for the second semester of school year 2016-2017. Specifically, it answered the questions of the case profile (age, address, years of learning English and pre-speaking test performance), her specific oral language deficiency, causes of her deficiency, post-speaking test performance after three-week remediation. It made use of the theories of Jennifer Jenkins' The Lingua Franca Core, Martin Bygate's Theory of Speaking, and Horwitz, Horwitz and Krashen's Theory of Input and Affective Filter Hypotheses. The research made use of experimental research in both quantitative-qualitative methods. The findings showed the results of her pre-oral proficiency test which was an average of 1.4 which was described as Orally Deficient. The phonetic, phonological, and substitution were the specific oral deficiencies of the learner. She mispronounced the IPAs such as /e/, /i/, /ae/, /th/, /θ/, /ð/, /i/, /f/, and /p/. Language anxieties, lack of practice, teachers' lack of supervision were the causes of this deficiency. Her post-test performance after the conduct of the remediation was 1.85 described as Least Proficient. Based on the findings of the study, conversation exercises were designed. The remediation in pronunciation was significant in at least increasing the oral language proficiency of the case learner and so it was recommended to continue the remedial sessions in order to eradicate her oral deficiency and monitor her oral skills practice.

**Keyword:** Oral Deficiency, Remediation, Pronunciation, Lyceum of Cebu, Martin Bygate

### Introduction

Speaking was viewed in the larger context of communication with the focus on the speaker's ability to take in messages, negotiate meaning, and produce comprehensible output. Richards and Willy (2002) emphasized the fact that the output of elements in communication was the acquisition of language through speaking. Thornbury (2005) attested that speaking was a production of speech that made up the everyday conversations.

When one spoke English very well, this language became a bridge towards social interaction in order to convey messages and information and eventually acquire other information as well. It was an undeniable fact that communication coexisted with speech. English language was a tool for good communication as this was a necessity in work places,

schools, classrooms, and all over places. Hence, a language proficient individual was someone whose communication skill was at par, excellent, was a requirement for survival in a competitive world. Any gap in English communication resulted in misunderstandings and problems such that of foreigners talking in English with different stresses, intonations, and accents. Oral proficiency comprised of pronunciation, speed, accuracy, grammar, communicative strategies, spontaneity, and diction. Among these areas, pronunciation was perceived as one of the most difficult areas by teachers and learners as said by the study of Hassan (2014). Pronunciation was considered to be an obstacle in speaking for most of the students because of its complexity. During communicative activities, the various deficiencies the students experienced in the class involved how to express themselves fluently and clearly, and how to pronounce and use words correctly (Saygili, 2014). It had a long and distinguished history in English language teaching and Seidlhofer(2001) pointed out that pronunciation was neglected in favor of reading and writing because of its pressure in national examinations.

Needless to say, pronunciation contributed to the oral language proficiency of a student yet was not at the top of the teacher's list. It was pointless to study the English language if speaking it in situational context was just a dramatic simulation. One must learn how to pronounce it in a way that was understood various audiences. In Sahatsathatsana's study (2017), it was found out that Thai had problems of phonetics due to poor instruction of teachers, bad habits, and different system of Thai and English in which they thought that even if they mastered the rules of grammars, a complete communication breakdown occurred when the person he/she talked to committed pronunciation errors.

It was the intention of this study to prioritize and fill the existing gap that hindered the learner to speak English very well. The remediation exercises for three (3) consecutive weeks which was equivalent to twenty (24) hours total were the action interventions for the said research subject to improve on her speaking ability. The aim of remedial education according to Huang (2010) was to give opportunities to students who had low speaking test scores to reach to the standards set to be proficient in oral and written language. It was the remedial teacher's challenge to prove that this intervention worked on this case.

Thus, this study was an addendum of knowledge to solve the problems of miscommunication and barriers towards speaking English and this would serve as a guide to English teachers to give priority to stimulating students' English oral proficiency through remediation in pronunciation.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study focused on analyzing the specific oral deficiency of a third year college level student of Lyceum of Cebu for the second semester of school year 2016-2017. Specifically, it answered the questions of the case profile (age, address, years of learning English and pre-

speaking test performance), her oral language deficiency, causes of her deficiency, post-speaking test performance after three-week remediation, and conversational English exercises design based on the findings of the study. Any second English language learner was expected to enhance his/her English speech sounds and sound patterns with few unnatural pauses and stuttering in order to achieve spontaneity and fluency, and pronunciation was the basic ingredient.

## **Review of Literature**

The related literature was used to strengthen the foundation of the study.

Richards (2002) emphasized that speaking was fundamental and instrumental activity. Speakers talked in order to have some effect on their listeners. They asserted things to change their state of knowledge. They asked questions to get them to provide information. They requested things to get them to do things for them. The seven principles for designing speaking techniques focused on accuracy, meaning, fluency, authentic language in contexts, and pronunciation drills for development in speaking. Richards (2002) added that when students aimed for a proficient level, they had a hard time memorizing phrasal verbs and pronunciation.

Harmer's theory (2001) talked about the components of speaking which were important for fluency. These were connected speech, expressive devices, lexis and grammar, and negotiation language. The connected speech conveyed assimilation, elision, linking 'r', contractions and stress patterning – weakened sounds; expressive devices involve pitch, stress, speed, volume, non-verbal communication, suprasegmental features, lexis and grammar.

Hudson's journal (2015) enumerated five difficulties of pronunciation such as confusing bits of silent letters (r, l, b, h, k, n, p, s, t & w), 's' pronounced as /z/, 't', pronounced in at least 5 ways, and an 'n' pronounced as /m/ or /ŋ/, the vowel sounds covering the entire range of mouth positions, consonant sounds such as 'th' sounds /θ/ & /ð/, 'r', /h/, /w/ and /ŋ/, joining of words and assimilation of two sounds, elision (one sound disappears), vowel joining and schwa sound /ə/, and intonation. Studying the key aspects of speech could alter their accent better.

Gilakjani (2011) found out in his study that pronunciation was regarded with little importance by the teachers in his study. The accent, stress, intonation, rhythm, attitude, exposure, personality and teacher factors made up much of students' oral deficiency. The learners needed expert guidance, drilling, conversation engagements, critical listening, increased research on pronunciation and methodology so that the difficulties in learning pronunciation would be addressed.

Khamkein's study of 2010 assessed English pronunciation of Thai learners whose ability in pronunciation was limited. They needed to study it through their teachers as the resource person for their improvement. It was found out that the difficulties of studying English were more of lack of exposure to the English native speakers. Kosasih (2017) showed the problems of Indonesians in learning pronunciation because of their native tongues significant similarities and differences in terms of their phonemes and phonological features. They pronounced English words incorrectly as they were accustomed to Indonesian phonemic system so teacher's drills and intensive trainings on word stress and intonation would alleviate their pronunciation errors. Hassan's (2014) findings exposed Sudanese problems of English vowels that had more than one way of pronunciation in addition to the consonant sound contrasts e.g. /z/ and /ð/, /s/ and /θ/, /b/ and /p/, /f/ and /tʃ/ which were caused by lack of practice, native tongue interference, language anxiety, and inconsistencies of English sounds. They substituted sounds incorrectly in the place of articulation such as replacing /p/ with /b/.

In the study of Tergujeff (2012), there were various teaching methods applied by the teachers to teaching pronunciation of English in Finland. The imitation tasks, feedbacks, sound discrimination and tactile reinforcement dominated and produced significant positive effects on pronunciation of segmental and supra segmental levels of the Finnish students. Their speaking skills were improved and they could distinguish the difference of pronunciation of their native tongue and of English.

Baker (2013) from University of Wollongong, Australia, used content-based instruction for ESL instruction for fluent pronunciation and it was found out that among five pronunciation activities (language, awareness, controlled practice, guided practice, fluency development, and free practice), fluency development was least taught by the teachers. Teachers themselves experienced difficulty in facilitating pronunciation drills.

Gatbonton et.al. (2005) stressed that communicative activities in the classroom included pronunciation exercises as important remediation tools that were used in every day conversations such as asking a boss for a day off, or inquiring in bank in order to solve the problem of pronunciation. Pitt (2009) supported that orientation to conversations exposed the learners to a variety of English accent to pronunciation would increase the communicative competence through using audio and video tapes of speakers with different English varieties and minimized stage fear and stuttering of speech.

To sum it up, the related readings produced strong relationships to establish the premise of the study.

## **Methodology**

This research employed an experimental type of study which involved one subject only in order to address the problems. The purposive sampling was used in the study as there were only four

students in the class and this was the only student whose level was marked as beginner level in the conduct of the diagnostic exam in English particularly in the pronunciation competency. The pre-test and post-test oral language proficiency tests of one learner or subject from Lyceum of Cebu were gathered through TOEIC (Teaching of English for International Communication) a standardized assessment instrument for speaking. Her speaking test responses were digitally recorded, sent, and checked by certified ETS raters. The study also used interviews and observation sheets. The subject also underwent three-week intensive remediation in pronunciation before she took up the post-test of TOEIC. The mean, frequencies, and scoring range procedures were used to interpret the data results. Based on the findings, remediation conversation exercises were designed to continue the remediation.

### Findings

The Table 1 showed the case profile of the learner. She was R.M, (pseudonym), a student of Bachelor of Secondary Education whose major was English and enrolled for the second semester of 2016-2017. She lived in Capitol Hills, Cebu City. She was a returnee after being out of school year for two years because of financial matter. English was her weakest link and she did not have much background way back. She was exposed to minimal pair drills and hearing people speaking American English (standard accent) was native for her. She had studied English language for 15 years.

The results of her oral proficiency pre-test score showed an average of 1.4 described as **Orally Deficient**. Her pronunciation was 0.07 which was **Very Orally Deficient**. Her fluency was 1.57; Grammar was 1.53; and Diction was 1.8 described as **Orally Deficient**. Her *communicative strategies' score was 2.04 which meant as Least Proficient*. This meant that the learner needed

Table: 1  
Oral Proficiency Pre-Test Score of the Case Profile

Case Profile	Pronunciation	Fluency	Grammar	Diction	Communicative Strategies	AVERAGE	Description
R.M. (Pseudonym),24,F, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Year BSED- English, 15 years of studying English, Sitio Ponce Capitol Hills, Cebu City	0.07	1.57	1.53	1.8	2.04	<b>1.4</b>	<i>Orally Deficient</i>

3.21 – 4.00 as Proficient

2.41 – 3.20 as Moderately Proficient

1.61 – 2.40 as Least Proficient

0.81 – 1.60 Orally Deficient

0.00 – 0.80 Very Orally Deficient

to work out on her pronunciation of vowels a,e,i,o, and schwa sound. She stuttered and used fillers such as “*kuan*”, “*kanang*”, and “*ammmm*.” She used fragmented and erroneous subject-verb sentences. She could converse but her diction and vocabulary are limited. She had a hard time formulating her thoughts and was unable to respond to number 9 question in the TOEIC examination. This implied that pronunciation was the lowest in score and needed close attention as this affected other factors of oral proficiency. Khamkein (2010) affirmed that Thai learners’ pronunciation got a low score and Kosasih (2017) showed the problems of Indonesians in learning pronunciation as they pronounced English words incorrectly.

Indeed, it affirmed the Bygate’s Theory of Speaking (1991) that oral language proficiency needed to have two conditions: processing and reciprocity. The subject was not able to create a proper processing of oral production which made her get a low score in oral proficiency test.

The Table 2 described the types of pronunciation deficiency present in the learner, the error that she committed and the causes of her error. The answers of her oral proficiency test were transcribed. She had a difficulty producing specific speech sounds (most often certain consonants, such as /s/ or /r/), and were subdivided into articulation disorders (also called phonetic disorders) and phonemic disorders. The subject carried over the phonological habits of their language into the target language and used the wrong phonemes. She committed errors of

Table:2

Specific Oral Deficiency, Errors, and its Causes

Oral Deficiency	Errors Committed	Causes
<i>Phonological</i>	s,r – Sarah, /e/- miraculous,bit,lived /i/-essential	Language Anxiety Teacher’s Lack of Supervision
<i>Phonetic</i>	/e/- articulate /æ/point, speech /e/-jails, eight,intellectual /e/ discovery	Lack of Practice Language was non-native
<i>Substitution</i>	/æ/, substitute, /æ/ eloquence, /th/ worth,thing, without th, θ] and [ð] thought , /i/ essence, /f/-p/ -flavor, friend, feel, fell, fill, bad-bed, late-let	

**flavor, friend**, such as it was pronounced as /p/ instead of f. **Substitution disorder** was present when a learner interchanged the pronunciation of the vowel or the consonant sounds. The minimal pairs such as **feel, fell-fill** was interchanged. The **late** and **let, bad, and bed** were mispronounced interchangeably. The [θ] and [ð] sounds in all words were also absent in her words such as **thought**. They were pronounced [t] and [d] instead as a sign of th-stopping. She mispronounced **street** as she pronounced it straight instead of /e/ and she pronounced speech

with an /æ/ sound. The words, **eloquence**, **essence**, were mispronounced using the /i/. The words **lived**, **bit**, **believe**, were mispronounced using the phonetic /e/. The words, **point**, **jails**, **discovery**, **articulate**, **intellectual**, **miraculous**, were mispronounced using the /e/ and sometimes /i/. And the words **worth**, **thought**, and **thing** were pronounced without a voiceless /th/. She had some articulation problems with the s and r, like **Sarah**. She was conscious of her pronunciation sounds even when there was only 1 person listening to her. Hassan's (2014) findings were affirmed in this problem as this exposed Sudanese problems of English vowels that had more than one way of pronunciation in addition to the consonant sound contrasts e.g. /z/ and /ð/, /s/ and /θ/, /b/ and /p/, /ʃ/ and /tʃ/ which were caused by lack of practice, native tongue interference, language anxiety, and inconsistencies of English sounds. In her answers to the interview conducted, she enumerated causes of her oral deficiencies.

The primary source of her error was on the fact that the language was non-native. The articulators were mostly only used to pronouncing those sounds, which were being used in the native tongue. The learner had a hard time pronouncing the words as her brain hardly dissociated the pronunciation of Cebuano from English language. The learner also felt inhibited to speak in the classroom and was conscious to pronounce some words because she thought of what other people would think of her. She felt that she was being assessed and being reprimanded by her teacher every now and then. Her anxiety of language grew every day until she became a college student. This negative psychological factor obstructed her to learn English smoothly as she had a paranoia that the people would laugh at her when she pronounced the words. She constantly trembled and got nervous every time she spoke in a small or a large group. Eventually, she stopped practicing pronunciation drills. She also said that her teachers way back, did not provide her enough exposures to English. The teacher lacked supervision on her pronunciation aspect and the teacher focused solely on reading and lecture styles. The first language that she was to speaking was Cebuano and it was also used at home. She lacked English exposure to technology as well as they did not have television and she did not know much English movies or read English books. There was no exposure to native speakers in English as well. So, in the study of Pitt (2009) needed to orient learners to conversations to a variety of English accent to pronunciation would increase the communicative competence through using audio and video tapes of speakers with different English varieties and minimized stage fear and stuttering of speech.

The Table 3 presented the 3-week remediation intervention and the results of the post-test scores of Oral Proficiency after the said conduct of remediation. The results of her oral proficiency post-test score showed an average of 1.85 described as **Least Proficient**. Her pronunciation was 1.7 which was **Least Proficient from Oral Deficient**. Her fluency was 1.60 described as **Orally Deficient**; Grammar was 1.61; and Diction was 1.9; and *communicative strategies' score was 2.42 described as Moderately Proficient*. The scores showed a significant increase of pronunciation aspect from 0.7 to 1.7. Her phonological, phonetic, and substitution

errors were minimized after series of pronunciation drills. Her grammar and diction increased from three-week remediation. There was a minimal error on stuttering; and she was able to formulate at least straight simple sentences and responded to questions with few pauses but with domineering Cebuano accent.

**Table:3**  
**Oral Proficiency Post-Test Score of the Case Profile after the 3-week remediation**

<i>Remedial Activities on Pronunciation</i>	Pronunciation	Fluency	Grammar	Diction	Communicative Strategies	AVERAGE	Description
Pronunciation Drills Minimal Pairs Audio Listening of American English words Conversations on Survival English Film Watching Oral Reading	1.7	1.60	1.61	1.9	2.42	<b>1.85</b>	<b>Least Proficient</b>

*3.21 – 4.00 as Proficient*

*2.41 – 3.20 as Moderately Proficient*

*1.61 – 2.40 as Least Proficient*

*0.81 – 1.60 Orally Deficient*

*0.00 – 0.80 Very Orally Deficient*

She had a hard time answering higher order thinking questions. Despite the significant increase from pre-test to post-test, the scores still reflected low level of proficiency test as described above so the student needed to continue the remediation program. This case study gave credence to the study of Gatbonton et.al. (2005) that a communicative activity in the classroom such as pronunciation exercises were important remediation tools for every day conversations.

In solving the problem of the learner’s language anxiety, the teacher’s strict supervision was a contributing factor in increasing or decreasing her fear and anxiety. The teacher constantly corrected the student but with encouraging words every time she mispronounced the words. The teacher recorded the drills and constantly counted the errors until such time that the errors were not repeated during pronunciation and minimal pair drills based on the phonological and phonetic problems of the learner. The teacher had audio listening exercises for the learner to distinguish the difference of the sounds and asked the student to imitate the speaker in the audio for at least 15 minutes every session. The student was asked to have an oral reading after listening to the American CD pronunciation for 10 minutes. The audio enabled the learner to listen to the conversations and practiced daily conversations without looking at her notes until she became confident in doing the task independently for 30 minutes. The teacher asked conversation questions with a topic to practice her spontaneity in question and answer portion.

The results affirmed the study of Tergujeff (2012) that the imitation tasks, feedbacks, sound discrimination and tactile reinforcement dominated and produced significant positive effects on pronunciation and they could distinguish the difference of pronunciation of their native tongue and of English.

### Conclusion

The case profile of Lyceum of Cebu learner identified oral deficiencies such as phonological, phonetic, and substitution in which language anxieties, English as non-native, and lack of exposure and practice, and teacher's lack of supervision caused the 1.4 Pre-test Oral Deficiency Scores of TOEIC. The case learner underwent three-week session of remediation on pronunciation before taking a post-test oral proficiency with an average of 1.85 described as *Least Proficient* of TOEIC. Based on the findings of the study, the conversation exercises were designed for the continuity of the remediation of speaking. The teacher played a significant role in the intensive conduct of the remediation on pronunciation that would lessen, if not, improve the language proficiency of the learner.

### Recommendation

The remediation on speaking would continue for the next weeks of the learner and further studies be conducted comprising large respondents.

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