

Focus on Oral Fluency: A Case Study on the Production of Segmentals among Preservice English Teachers

Kimberly Rose L. Diaz

Student, Iloilo State University of Fisheries Science and Technology

ABSTRACT

This exploratory case study was conducted to analyze the oral fluency of preservice English teachers through observations about their previous personal experiences and challenges with segmentals. This was conducted in a public university at Iloilo. The subjects of the study were the three fourth-year preservice English teachers taking up Bachelor of Secondary Education of the College of Education Iloilo State University of Fisheries Science and Technology - Dingle Campus of the school year 2022-2023. The data were analyzed using axial coding techniques to reveal codes, categories, and sub-categories within the participants' voices within one's collected data. The results revealed that the oral fluency of preservice English teachers segmentals has many discrepancies based on the research's observation. The schwa sound /ə/ and the front vowels /i/ and /ε/. The oral fluency of the preservice English teachers is undeniably a problem that needs to be given importance because it is essential and builds a bridge between word recognition and comprehension.

Keywords: Oral fluency, segmental, preservice, case study

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Oral fluency is one the most significant markers of proficiency in a second language, but undeniably it is a neglected component in a communicative classroom. A learner's most outstanding achievement is proficiency in a language, as communication is part of everyday life. Language is more than an external expression; it is also an exchange of internal thoughts through formulated presentations ranging from independent verbalization to non-verbalization (Villegas, 2021). Sirbu (2015) posits that language is a means of communication among the members of society. Indeed, through language, people understand each other in social interaction.

In a country like the Philippines, which aims to participate meaningfully in international affairs, learning English has a special place (Ong, 2017). Alongside Filipino, English is used as an official language mainly in publications, media, and the academe. Knowing the language increases people's chances of getting a good job. However, according to Ella (2018), learning a language is a complex task involving several imperative processes. It requires learning grammar structures, acquiring vocabulary, and developing communication skills. However, Oberg (2013) strongly believes that oral fluency can be taught by providing communicative activities.

It is important that our preservice teachers can communicate accurately, clearly, and as intended; this is a vital life skill in the teaching profession that should not be overlooked (Dungca et al., 2019). As such, training in speech communication is necessary (Hunt et al., 2010) to provide enough opportunities for preservice teachers to hone their communication skills before teaching practice.

According to Bactan (2019), with the advent of Republic Act 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, which includes the Senior High School (SHS) program, with additional English-related subjects of different and higher-level skills and competencies mandated by the Department of Education and based on observations and interviews conducted, further supported by teachers' journals and learners' low scores in first grading English subjects, teachers and learners have difficulty in adjusting their teaching and learning strategies to cope with the demands and pressures brought about by the change of the curriculum.

Along this line, the researcher found it essential to analyze the oral fluency of the preservice teachers in segmentals to discover the teaching and learning strategies used because these strategies enable and empower preservice teachers to expand their knowledge and skills to continue to easily cope with the demands and pressures and help them develop their communication skills inside and even outside the classroom.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

This study is anchored to the linguistic theory of Wise (2017), which was formed by Noam Chomsky, who described language as having a grammar that is largely independent of language use. Unlike Behavioral Theory, Linguistic Theory argues that language acquisition is governed by universal, underlying grammatical rules common to all typically developing humans. Across many different cultures, there are several linguistic developmental similarities. Chomsky argues that these similarities are due to an innate language-acquisition mechanism housed in the brain called the Language Acquisition Device (LAD). According to Chomsky (1950), the LAD is a specialized language processor that contains universal underlying linguistic principles that provide children with the innate knowledge to speak and learn a language. The environment only serves to activate the maturation of the LAD. Chomsky believed that only humans were born with the LAD and that language was species-specific and unique to humans.

Phonetics is defined in many ways. Generally, it is the science of vocal sounds. Specifically, it is a science primarily concerned with the correct production or formation of speech sounds by the speech mechanism and its apprehension by the ear. It is also a study of the speech sounds used separately or in combination as they occur in the speech of a native speaker of a given language. Phonetics also encompasses living, connected speech, as a language is spoken by its native speakers (Haguisan, 2010).

According to Blumstein et al. (1988), phonetic theories, like all scientific theories, depend on a particular database and the research techniques that are used to derive that database. Phonetic theories relate the physical attributes of sounds with their linguistic function. Thus, the linguistic relevance of sounds must be considered, as well as acoustical and articulatory data.

According to Haguisan et al. (2010), when words are transcribed, a unique alphabet is used called the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). The International Phonetic Alphabet is a set of symbols designed to represent pronunciations, with 24 consonant sounds and 20 vowel sounds without respelling and diacritical marks. It uses the principle of letting one symbol represent one sound or phoneme. It aims to provide a medium for representing speech sounds and to enable the students to identify them, thereby assisting them in mastering the sounds of the English language.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to analyze the oral fluency of preservice English teachers in segmentals.

Specifically, this study sought answers to the following questions:

1. How is the oral fluency of preservice English teachers in segmentals?
2. What causes the difficulties of preservice English teachers in segmentals?

Definition of Terms

The following terms are conceptually and operationally defined to understand this study better.

Case study. According to Venngage (2019, as cited in Corner, 2023), a case study is a research method to understand a subject or process better. Case studies involve in-depth research into a subject to understand its functionality and successes.

This term is defined in this study as the approach that generates an in-depth, multi-faceted study through observations, interviews, and focus group discussion on the issues by the three (3) fourth-year preservice teachers in segmentals.

Oral fluency. It is defined as a productive sub-skill that focuses on content rather than form (Brown, 2003).

This study refers to the ability to speak efficiently and effectively of the three (3) fourth-year preservice English teachers.

Preservice Teachers. It is defined as the student enrolled in a teacher preparation program who must successfully complete degree requirements, including coursework and field experience, before being awarded a teaching license (Ryan et al., 2017).

In this study, preservice teachers are the bonafide students who are completing the degree requirements, and they are now having their practice teaching internship.

Segmentals. It is a process of isolation of sound units or syllables, as usually, phonological units of the language, such as vowels and consonants, are of concise duration.

This study defines it as the vocalic segments of words and the phonemic utterances of the three (3) fourth-year preservice teachers at the College of Education of Iloilo State University of Fisheries Science and Technology.

Significance of the Study

This study sought to analyze the oral fluency of preservice English teachers in segmentals. To benefit from the study are the various sectors as follows:

The English Teachers. Through this research, they can make some strategies in preparation for English language teaching. They can create teaching strategies to anticipate and address learners' difficulties in segmentals.

The Preservice Teachers. They will be encouraged to conduct phonological assessments of themselves that will eventually lead to their language improvement and readiness for actual classroom teaching.

The Language Advocates and Researchers. This study will help language advocates and researchers research language, specifically on segmentals, as this study will help them assess and verify Filipino English teachers' language deficiency.

The Learners. The study's recommendation will improve the student's language learning. They will be more aware of segmentals as one of the elements in English language learning and teaching.

The Parents. The findings will foster parents' awareness of the difficulty of speaking a second language and thus become more patient and helpful in their children's English language learning.

The Future Researchers. This study may serve as a guide and reference for learners, English teachers, and advocates undertaking similar studies.

Scope and Delimitations of the Study

The participants of the study are three (3) fourth-year preservice English teachers taking a Bachelor in Secondary Education of the College of Education of Iloilo State University of Fisheries Science and Technology - Dingle Campus, school year 2022-2023.

This study focused on the preservice teachers' oral fluency, specifically on their articulation of segmentals. The researcher used a research-made questionnaire and online focus group discussion to gather data.

This research used a case study design because it tackles the experiences and difficulties of preservice English teachers in segmentals. This has to be about how narratives can be a source of data for a case study.

CHAPTER II REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

Preservice English Teachers

Preservice teachers are expected to have good oral communication skills in English, for this is the medium of instruction. They are expected to develop their language skills so they can deliver their lessons smoothly and process students' answers with fluency in the language (Jaca & Javines, 2020). There are even studies that identified communication strategies used by preservice English teachers that either facilitate or hinder the development of communicative skills (Garces & Olivera, 2013;) and the importance of providing speech communication training to pre-service teachers (Hunt et al., 2010). Though studies on pre-service teachers' language and communication skills competence (Kana, 2015; Vassallo et al., 2017) vary in scope and dimensions, emphasize fluency and accuracy in language skills development.

Also known as initial teacher education or initial teacher training are the 'recognized and organized, private and public education programs designed to train future teachers to formally enter the profession at a specified level of education. Graduates receive a government-recognized teaching qualification. Pre-service training does not cover teachers who do not meet officially recognized training standards and are enrolled in a teacher training course to earn accreditation concurrent to their work as a teacher (UIS-UNESCO, n.d.).

Preservice teacher training varies widely from country to country, yet components that appear in most initial training programs include subject content; pedagogic content knowledge; education studies; and teaching practice (Lewin, 2004).

To be effective, preservice teacher training should address the practical challenges teachers face in the classroom (instead of being purely theoretical). Evidence suggests that teacher training 'must aim at developing class leadership competencies and pupil-centered practices, such as group work, for example, feedback or the flipped classroom. Social competency also proves decisive (Attakorn et al., 2014; Hattie, 2008; Cornelius-White, 2007; Evertson, 2006; Marzano et al., 2003; Walberg, 1990)' (IIEP-UNESCO, n.d.). Preservice teacher training effectiveness will also depend on factors such as the duration of the training and program content (Bernard et al., 2004, cited by IIEP-UNESCO, n.d.).

Preservice teaching is a period of guided and supervised instruction. Undergraduates are gradually introduced to the role of teacher for a particular class by a mentor or co-teacher. Collaborative teachers work with preparatory teachers to encourage them to assume greater responsibility in classroom management and instruction as their experience progresses. Preparatory teachers start as observers and finish their preparatory teaching experience as competent professionals.

Preservice training is an essential experience in a vocational education program. While other college courses, activities, and internships provide future teachers with knowledge and experience, preparatory education services offer the opportunity to experience the demanding and challenging roles of assuming significant educational responsibilities. The preliminary teaching experience is designed to provide a controlled learning environment so that future teachers can practice the principles and methods learned in the Philippine Higher Education and State Universities and Colleges as part of the curriculum in the college teacher training program. The goal of a preparatory teacher is to acquire the skills necessary for a teaching career.

According to Kibler (2018), though teacher educators nationwide are considering ways to provide urban placements for pre-service teachers (PSTs), little research has examined how pre-service teachers experience placements in schools operated by charter management organizations (CMOs). This study considers charter management organizations—which often hold instructional and classroom management philosophies—as a specific type of school-based learning environment. We draw from a discourse analytic theoretical framework using qualitative methodology to study how three English education focal pre-service teachers experience disconnections between student-teaching placements at charter management organizations schools and their teacher education program. Findings suggest three ways teacher educators can support pre-service teachers in navigating school-based learning. Pre-service teachers in this study experienced contexts and philosophies that varied greatly between their schools and teacher education programs. Implications include: (1) Preservice teachers must feel that others in their schools value their learning; (2) Preservice teachers in cohorts must feel they belong to learning communities; and (3) Preservice teachers need support in confronting paradoxes they face between theory and practice.

Preservice Teachers' Interventions and Guides How to Correct, Check, and Understand the Proper Pronunciation of the Vowel Sounds

How vowels are pronounced in American English is influenced by your native language's vowel system. The Speech Modification Accent Reduction Technique (SMART) labels American vowels to make them easier to understand, but it also uses the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols so that any vowels in native and American can be checked if they are the same. English is different. Many languages have the following vowels:

Vowel ee, /i/, vowel ay, /e/, vowel ah, /a/, vowel oo, /u/, vowel o, /o/. Less common in other languages are the vowel ɪ, /ɪ/, vowel eh, /ɛ/, vowel A, /æ/, vowel U, /ʊ/, vowel schwa /ə, ʌ/, and vowels er /ɪ/. These are often mispronounced in English because they do not exist in the native language's vowel list. Even if some of the vowels do not have error patterns, practice will pay off. Even vowels used in other languages are pronounced differently in American English. Many other languages simply say one sound for these vowels, but Americans use multiple sounds and change the pitch. This requires holding the vowels a little longer. Typically, they use two sounds per vowel and two pitches ranging from high to low. So, the vowel ee not only sounds like /i/, but it sounds like ee-uh starting with /i/ and sliding to /ʌ/. Start with a higher pitch and slide to a lower pitch. Well, it is not easy if you do not get used to it. But with

smart practice, you can change the usual patterns and start forming American vowels in common words and phrases. Try out the most common vowels in languages other than English. Remember, we are talking about vowels, not letters (Denmark, 2015).

Mc McLellan (2019) articulated the six top tips for us to practice and perfect our pronunciation. First, listen. Listening to examples of authentic speech is the most obvious way to improve your own pronunciation. Second, record yourself. Once you have practiced shadowing, you could record yourself speaking - either repeating a short phrase that you have listened to or doing a longer speaking task from a coursebook, like describing a picture. Listen back and make a note of any sounds that you have problems with - practice these words/sounds slowly and then record yourself again. Can you notice an improvement? Third, get to know the phonemic chart. The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) is a visual representation of different sounds. It might look strange, and it might feel like you are learning a whole new language, but it can really help you with pronunciation. All dictionaries have a phonetic transcription of words so that you know how to pronounce them. This is helpful with English because, as we have already seen, English spelling doesn't always correspond with its pronunciation. Think about the letters 'ough' in words 'though,' 'through,' 'tough,' and 'ought'. It would be impossible to guess how to say those words without some help. Fourth, use a dictionary. As well as printed dictionaries that will give you a phonetic transcription of a word, there are lots of online dictionaries where you can click and listen to the word being spoken. Fifth, do some exercise. Different languages have different sounds, and our mouths adapt to those sounds. Some sounds are physically very difficult for us to make, as they don't exist in our native language. Just like when you are learning a new sport or dance move, it's important that you train your mouth to know how to form new sounds - the more you practice, the easier it gets. For example, lots of Spanish speakers have problems with the difference between the /b/ and /v/ sounds. We make the /b/ sound by joining our lips together and then letting go. The /v/ sound is similar, but your top teeth should touch your bottom lip before you let go. The more you practice this, the easier it gets - try saying, "I'd like a very big beverage, please!" Sixth, get to know you're your minimal pairs. Minimal pairs are words that have almost the exact same pronunciation but with one sound that is different - for example, ship and sheep. The difference between the /I/ in 'ship' and the /I :/ in 'sheep' is the length of the vowel. This can be difficult to hear for many language learners and comes up in lots of different words. The first step is to be able to tell the difference between the sounds when you hear them, them.

Generally speaking, if unsure of the pronunciation of the words naturally, someone must ask the experts, research the Internet since everything is accessible on the web, and read literature like the dictionary and other related texts that would help to cure your ignorance and educate oneself. As a teacher, perse one must sound correct for better understanding, and meaning-making must be addressed.

Pronunciation improves listening. The mouth teaches the ear. Learning pronunciation "in the mouth" improves discrimination "in the ear ."According to a behaviorist's view of language learning, the ear teaches the mouth so that listening comes before speaking, but the reverse is also true. Emma (2016) explained that it is a mistake to think that pronunciation is any less important than reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. Pronunciation is the bridge between you and a native English speaker. It is the first thing that anybody notices about you when you start to speak. It connects you. Without clear pronunciation, messages can get lost or confused. The listener might even start to feel frustrated because they don't understand what is being said. Pronunciation is not about removing your accent. It is about making your English sound clear and distinct so there is no confusion about what you are saying.

Practice makes perfect. Doing it constantly gives you the power to master the craft. According to Azari (2019), in their book “Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching,” Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers provided a list of 12 exercises applied to the Audiolingual method. The book originally appearing in Brooks (1964, pp. 56-61) included several examples for each drill type. These drills include repetition, inflection, replacement, restatement, completion, transposition, expansion, contraction, transformation, integration, rejoinder, and restoration. You probably won’t need some of them could especially prove beneficial in improving accuracy and helping learners develop those ‘neural pathways.’ to use all these drills in your teaching.

In terms of accessibility, everything is easily done online. Accessibility is about making your website available to as many people as possible. During the time of the pandemic, online platforms were popularly used and accessible to all. This platform is widely used by everyone. The term "online platform" includes marketplaces, search engines, social media, creative content outlets, app stores, communication services, payment systems, the "collaboration" or "gig" economy, and much more. In this report, an online platform is defined as a digital service that enables interaction between two or more interdependent user groups (companies or individuals) interacting with the service via the Internet. In the advent of a new era, many technologies have been used by educational institutions, such as Zoom, google meets, YouTube, Google, and other technology platforms using internet connectivity. So, if you are unsure of the pronunciation of the words, try to click your computer and check because everything is done online as one of the powerful tools for learning and teaching. In the modern world, the Internet has become a powerful tool that people use to facilitate their daily activities. The Internet has become more accessible to people around the world and offers unprecedented opportunities. increase. As more people gain access to the Internet, so does its power in building businesses. The Internet has changed the way people live and interact with each other. It has become an invaluable tool that most of us cannot live without. The Internet has made life easier and expanded the world to an unprecedented degree, and it has many advantages. One of the greatest advantages of the Internet is that it facilitates communication. Until now, people only communicated by phone, email, or face-to-face. However, the Internet has revolutionized the way people communicate. There was a time when it was difficult to communicate with people overseas because telephone bills were too high, and the infrastructure was not well developed.

Independent learning and self-discovery can also be beneficial in learning new things. Discovery learning is an inquiry-based learning method that takes a constructivist approach to education. In this method, students are encouraged to build their own knowledge through a self-directed learning process. Discovery learning was introduced by Jerome Bruner (1961) and is a method of Inquiry-Based Instruction. This popular theory encourages learners to build on past experiences and knowledge, use their intuition, imagination, and creativity, and search for new information to discover facts, correlations, and new truths. Learning does not equal absorbing what was said or read but actively seeking answers and solutions. Also, it pays to ask experts in the field to clarify, understand, evaluate, and triangulate the facts, especially in the problems encountered in learning a language.

Implications of Oral Fluency of Preservice English Teachers

English language, as in the case of any other language, is always changing, evolving, and adapting to the needs of its users and the demands of a given social structure. Accordingly, such a changing and demanding social structure has always been effective in bringing foreign language teachers into the spotlight since it is proposed that the emerging needs of language learners be met promptly. For this very

simple reason, the World English Speaking (WES) pre-service teachers (i.e., students enrolled in university-based teacher education programs) have a vital function in transmitting knowledge from a native language to a foreign/second language and vice versa.

Lasi (2020) asserted that many students have problems learning English, especially in the spoken English language. They are mentioned in the following order: first, what students can hear; some students have great difficulty hearing pronunciation features that we want them to reproduce. Oftentimes, speakers of different first languages have problems with sounds. Second is what students can say; learning a foreign language often presents us with the problem of physical unfamiliarity; for example, it is physically challenging to make the sound using parts of the mouth, uvula, or nasal cavity. The third is the intonation problems; some of us, especially our students, still find it difficult to hear tunes or identify the different patterns of rising and falling tones.

Preservice English teachers are believed to be generally incompetent in speaking English fluently, particularly in classroom discourse, since they are considered as they lack academic oral practice (Gibbons, 2002). According to Schulz, a major weakness in foreign language education is that numerous foreign language teachers in schools have neither the communicative competence nor the confidence to use the target language as means of classroom communication (2002, 291). Several studies are also conducted to find out the weaknesses of ELT students in speaking English for communicative purposes. These weaknesses are as such: lack of opportunities to use English and incompetency in linking speaking situations to real-world English (Nunan, 2006); lack of governmental testing speaking skills (Farooqui, 2007); spending less than two percent of students' school day in oral language development (August 2002); scarcity of more complex issues, topics, and structures in speaking English (Zhang & Alex, 1995); incompetency in speech production sub-skills such as vocabulary retrieval and choice of grammatical patterns, and sociocultural competence (Celce-Murcia & Olhstain, 2000); insufficiency of practice, participation and exposure (Songsiri, 2007); inappropriate syllabus designs, principles of teaching, types of tasks and materials, and speaking assessment (Bailey, 2005; Goh, 2007).

The importance of oral communication skills for teachers and future teachers cannot be underestimated (Bee, 12; McCarthy & Carter, 2001) as they are essential skills in every profession, especially in teaching and learning. There are even studies that identified communication strategies used by pre-service English teachers that either facilitate or hinder the development of communicative skills (Garces & Olivera, 2013) and the importance of providing speech communication training to pre-service teachers (Hunt et al., 2010).

Ganal and Andaya (2015) state that student teachers go through different problems in preparing themselves for teaching because they did not have any experience teaching in the classroom before they were fielded to their cooperating schools.

Learning to be a teacher is a complex and very personal matter that involves a transformation from "students of teaching" to "teachers of students" (Ganser, 2002). The professional life of a teacher is accompanied by a set of expectations such as professional behavior, the ability to communicate, teamworking, reflection, and learning (Denby, 2012). As such, there is often a mismatch between theoretical methods and reality (Miller & Aldred, 2000). These are the challenges that teachers encounter in their teaching practice. Student-teachers' experience during their practicum reflects the school and classroom complexity of place, ideology, knowledge, pedagogy, and student-teacher assessment that lead them to question, modify, or abandon what they have learned in their higher education initial teacher education courses and light of what often seems to be a different philosophy and practice (Russell, 2000;

Sinclair et al., 2005, as cited by Sinclair, 2007). Educators need to be proficient in the language of instruction, for they also help their students develop oral language skills both directly through linguistic interaction with them and indirectly by creating an environment that is rich in learning stimuli (Mousena & Sidiripoulou, 2017).

Segmentals

Speaking is a gift from God that everyone must have to appreciate, propagate, use, and deliberately maximize its essence to live in a civilized society. In reality, all “parts of the speech mechanism independently work but are in harmony with each other like an orchestra, synchronizing together to produce distinct, clear and well-articulated sounds and words” (Haguisan, 2003, p. 4).

There are four stages in voice production: respiration, phonation, resonance, and articulation.

Respiration is made up of two sub-stages: inhalation and exhalation. At the same time, phonation is the production of basic sounds by the vibration of the vocal cords. Resonance simply means the amplification of sounds, and articulation is the process by which vocal sounds become sounds, syllables, and words. Articulation, when refined to meet the demands of a particular language, is known as pronunciation. Pronunciation is the utterance of any unit of language in its broadcast sense. It refers to the selection of sounds and to the location of the syllable accent (Misajon et al., 2002).

Haguisan (2006) said that according to Clifford Prator, there are five vowels that are basically present in almost all languages. These are the vowels /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, and /u/. The relationship of these vowels to each other can be graphically shown by a device known as the Vietor Triangle.

The vowel pronounced farthest to the front of the mouth is /I/. There are two important changes in the position of the organs of speech when moving from the vowel /I/ to /e/. The jaw is lowered, and the spot where the tongue approaches the roof of the mouth most closely is shifted away from the front teeth toward the throat. The same changes occur when pronouncing /e/ to /a/. When pronouncing from /a/ to /o/, the movement from the front to back continues, but the jaw begins to rise or close again. These two movements also happen as the pronunciation shifts from /o/ to /u/.

Haguisan (2006) explains further that all vowels are produced by tongue movement. However, certain parts of the tongue are active for certain vowels. The 11 vowels are located in different parts of the tongue. /I/ /i/ /ε/ /e/ /æ/ and /a/. The /ə/ is produced at the central part, and the /o/ /u/ /ɔ/ /o/ is produced at the back part of the tongue.

For the front vowels, the vowel /i/ is spelled as ee, ei, ie, e. The manner of production for /i/ is as follows: Raise the front of the tongue high, keeping the tip behind the lower front teeth. Spread the lips in a long, thin opening. Tight both lips and tongue. Raise the soft palate. Send a long sound out through the mouth. The vowel /I/ is spelled as I, ia, e. The manners of production are as follows: Raise the front of the tongue, but not as high as for /i/. Place the tip of the tongue behind the lower front teeth. Relax the lips and tongue. Raise the soft palate. Release sound through the mouth, producing a voiced sound. The vowel /e/ is spelled as a, ia. The manners of production are as follows: The jaw drops to mid-height, and the lips are unrounded. The front of the tongue takes a lower position than that for /I/, making the oral passage wider. The tongue rises forward and upward toward /i/ from the mid position, causing slight diphthongization. Muscles of both tongue and jaw are tense, and a long sound is made. The vowel sound /ε/ is spelled as e. The manners of production are the following “Raise the front tongue to a half-high position, keeping the tip behind the lower teeth, raise the soft palate, and send a short sound through the

mouth” (Haguisan, 2003). The sample words with the vowel /ɛ/ are bed [bɛd], bell, [bɛl], pet [pɛt], and hell [hɛl].

The vowel /æ/ is spelled as a. The manners of production are as follows: Position the tongue–tip behind the lower front teeth. Position the front of the tongue below, relax, and only slightly raise toward the roof of the mouth, and position the teeth and the lips much farther apart than for /ɛ/. The vowel /a/ is spelled as a, o, e. The manner of production is as follows: Keep the mouth relaxed and wide open. Keep the tongue lax, almost flat, with the back slightly raised; this is a long sound (Haguisan, 2016).

The central vowel, first, the vowel /ə/, is spelled as u, e, a, v. The manners of production are raising the tongue to the middle position and flattening the tongue as the back part is tensed (Haguisan, 2016). It can be inferred that the /ə/ sound or a schwa sound is difficult to pronounce. The central vowel schwa sound is spelled as u, e, a, v. The manners of production are the following: raise tongue to middle position and flatten tongue as back part is tensed.

Long /i/ words include the long /i/ vowel sound. This can sometimes be expressed with the letter "igh," but has more to do with the phonetic sound of the syllable. Some examples of words including the short /i/ sound are: beach [bɪtʃ], eel, [il], receive [rɪcɪv], and seated [sɪtəd]. The vowel /i/ sound is spelled as: ee, ei, ie, ea. The manners of production for (i) are the following: raise the front of the tongue high, keep the tip behind the lower front teeth, spread the lips in a long thin opening, tense both lips and tongue and send a long sound out through the mouth. This is one of the central vowels. We make this long sound with the mouth spread, just like if we were smiling. That is because it forces us to smile. This vowel sound /i/ is usually spelled “ee” or “ea.” Words like feet [fi:t] and eager [ɪgər] are only a few English words with a long /i/ sound.

What is a schwa? A schwa is a vowel sound in an unstressed syllable, where a vowel does not make its long or short vowel sound. It usually sounds like the short /u/ sound but is softer and weaker. The schwa sound is the most common vowel sound (the only speech sound with its unique name). Examples of a schwa: the words like but [bət], fur [fər], sir [sər], and stir [stər]. It is produced at the central part.

The vowel /ɔ/ is spelled as au, aw, a, o, oa for the back vowels. The manners of production are as follows: The jaw drops to a lower position with the lips slightly protruded and round. The back of the tongue rises slightly toward the soft palate. The tongue and jaw muscles are slightly tense, and the sound is short. The vowel /o/ is spelled as o, oa, oe. The manner of production is as follows: The jaw drops to mid-position, and the lips are protruded and rounded. The back of the tongue rises toward the soft palate. The tongue and jaw muscles are tense, and the sound is prolonged. The vowel /u/ is spelled as oo, ou, u. The manner of production is as follows: The jaw is high but slightly lower than for /o/ the lips are slightly rounded and protruding. The tongue is relaxed with the back, lower than for /u/, and the sound is short. The vowel /u/ is spelled as ou, oo, o, ue, ew, u. The manner of production is as follows: The jaw is as close to the roof of the mouth as possible. The lips are rounded and protrude more than any other vowel in American English speech. The tongue is tense, with the back raised high toward the soft palate, and the sound is long (Haguisan, 2016).

Summary

The literature review on preservice English teachers, preservice teachers’ interventions, and guides on how to correct, check, and understand the proper pronunciation of vowel sounds, implications of oral fluency of pre-service English teachers, and segmentals points to the following general concepts:

According to Jaca and Javines (2020), preservice teachers are expected to have good oral communication skills in English, which is the medium of instruction used in their teaching.

Mc McLellan (2019) articulated the six top tips for practicing and perfecting pronunciation. It shows speaking if you need clarification on the pronunciation of the words. Naturally, someone must ask the experts, research the Internet since everything is accessible online, and read literature like dictionaries and other related texts to help cure their ignorance and educate themselves.

The study of Kana (2015) revealed that preservice teachers' language and communication skills competence through vary in scope and dimensions but emphasizes fluency and accuracy in language skills development.

As to segmentals, according to Clifford Prator, five vowels are present in almost all languages. These are the vowels /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, and /u/. The relationship of these vowels can be graphically shown by a device known as the Vietor Triangle.

The previous studies revealed different results concerning the analysis included in this present investigation.

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This exploratory case study was conducted to analyze the oral fluency of pre-service English teachers through narratives about their previous personal experiences and challenges with segmentals. Moghadam (2018) asserted that "a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident, and the investigator has little control over events" (Yin, 1989, 1994, 2009).

In essence, Yin viewed the goal of case studies as understanding complex social phenomena and real-life events such as organizational and managerial processes.

Sampling Techniques

Purposive sampling was used to determine the study participants. Purposive sampling occurs when the researcher selects individuals and locations for a study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research (Creswell, 2007).

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study are three (3) fourth-year preservice English teachers taking up Bachelor of Secondary Education of the College of Education at Iloilo State University of Fisheries Science and Technology - Dingle Campus, school year 2022-2023.

Participant A is 22 years old. She finished her preservice practice teaching at Rufino G. Palabrica Sr., National High School.

Participant B is 27 years old. She finished her preservice practice teaching at the Dingle National High School for the school year 2023-2024.

Participant C is 22 years old. She finished her pre-service practice teaching at the Rufino G. Palabrica Sr., National High School.

The researcher utilized the following criteria in choosing the respondents of the study:

1. He or she must be a bonafide student at the Iloilo State University of Fisheries Science and Technology - Dingle Campus, currently on internship or practice teaching.
2. He or she is an English major preservice teacher.
3. He or she can be of any age; and
4. He or she is literate, willing to be observed, and can provide information about the study.

The researcher wrote a letter to the Campus Administrator to identify the participants for approval. Then, the Dean of the College of Education identified and wrote a referral letter with the names of the respondents. Then, the researcher did the following steps:

The researcher wrote a letter to each respondent inviting her or him to be a respondent. Once they accepted the invite, the researcher oriented them on the mechanics of the study. Once they agreed to participate, the researcher conducted the interviews and observations of each respondent as scheduled.

Data Gathering Instrument

The semi-structured interview content questions (Appendix A. A) were developed to gather data in this study, and the researcher employed an online focus group discussion (Appendix A. B).

Data Gathering Procedure

Permission to conduct the study was secured by the Campus Administrator (Appendix C). The approved letter was presented to the Dean of the College of Education and Program Chair of the Bachelor of Secondary Education in order to permit the 3 participants of the study.

In gathering the qualitative data, 3 participants were referred by the College of Education program chair. The data from the identified participants were gathered through in-depth interview and online focus group discussions.

Prior to the in-depth interview and online focus group discussion, the researcher required the participants to sign a waiver or consent form (Appendix D) relative to the conduct of the study.

Data Analysis Procedure

Thematic Analysis was used and employed for data analysis. Thematic Analysis is a method for analyzing qualitative data that involves reading through a set of data and looking for patterns in the meaning of the data to find themes. It is an active process of reflexivity in which the researcher's subjective experience is at the center of making sense of the data (Villegas, 2022).

Data was gathered through in-depth interviews and online focus group discussions with the chosen pre-service English teachers. First-level coding was then based on their answers and on the observations by the researcher. The researcher carefully and manually transcribed verbatim all the responses of the preservice English teachers. In addition, second-level coding included a close reading of their answers and responses through observation by the researcher. Next, third-level coding and determining the contents of their responses and information were done. Finally, fourth-level coding was done to connect the contents of their responses and to identify their difficulties and problems with segmentals.

Thematic Analysis is a type of qualitative Analysis. It is used to analyze classifications and present themes (patterns) that relate to the data. It illustrates the data in detail and deals with diverse subjects via interpretations (Boyatzis, 1998).

Ethical Issues

This research observed the ethical procedures in the conduct of the study. Empirically, good research should be well-adjusted, well-planned, appropriately designed, and ethically approved. To conduct research to a lower standard may constitute misconduct. According to Verdeflor (2021), “However, the researcher included informed consent and requested the parents and the participants before they were allowed to be interviewed.” This research observed the ethical procedures in the conduct of the study. The researcher accomplished letters of approval to the Campus Administrator, Dean, Program Chair, and Principal, and letter of consent to the participants who were referred by the program chair before they were allowed to be observed and interviewed. All these steps were done before the study began, during the collection of data, data analysis, and interpretation of the data.

The researcher followed the proper health protocols set by the Commission on Higher Education, Department of Health, Department of Education, and Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) when face-to-face interviews were needed. The following things and actions were observed: wearing of face mask and face shield, physical/social distancing, and proper hand washing.

The confidentiality and anonymity of the participants throughout the study were ensured by the researcher. In addition, the respondents were given the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time.

The data collected was stored on a password-protected laptop. A softcopy of the data will be deleted two years after the completion of the study. Likewise, hard copies are to be shredded.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Oral fluency of preservice teachers in segmentals

Difficulty in pronouncing the segmentals

When asked, all of the participants said that they mispronounced some vowel sounds, Participant A asserts that:

“But when I encounter that I think the most hard words to pronounce are those with the /ə/ sounds since once say them repeatedly it becomes difficult and I think that’s where I find most words that those words how those sounds have are what I have difficulties most of the time once I’m considered once I’m saying things repeatedly.” lines 6-9

Participant B articulated that:

“Even though I have a problem in pronouncing the long /i/ sound because I have the tendency to quicken some words.” lines 5-6

Admittedly, Participant C assented:

“You know I sometimes mispronounce words in my discussion especially the long /i/ you know I sometimes said the short /ε/.” lines 5-7

The first theme that emerged from the online discussion with the participants was the pronunciation in segmentals. It asserts that the /ə/, the most frequently English short vowel, is the most wrongly used short vowel occurring among non-native English speakers. Vowel length is unimportant to them, so most short vowels have pronunciations similar to their counterparts. English /i/ is unlike any vowels in non-native English speakers because it is unavailable in the languages concerned.

According to Muhammed and Taha (2014), pronunciation is demonstrated as a vital component of speaking English non-native students should work harder to achieve improvement. Through a total-learning process, anyone can achieve better pronunciation.

According to Syed *et al.*, (2020), the /ə/, the most frequently English short vowel, is the most wrongly used short vowel occurring among non-native English speakers. Vowel length is unimportant to them, so most short vowels have pronunciations similar to their counterparts. English /i/ is unlike any vowels in non-native English speakers because it is unavailable in the languages concerned.

Self-efficacy and preparation

Participant A concurred that:

“Facing hundreds of students everyday since there is a lot of enrollees. Facing a hundred of students is a very difficult challenge. Since you’ll have to adjust to every section or every person every student that you encounter. (lines 12-15) And if you are not prepared or you’re not you don’t have a strong foundation. Since it’s very toxic for my mind to actually accommodate all of the students especially if they have attitude problems or if they can’t actually cope with the speed of their classmates can understand the lesson since there will always be some who are slower than others.”

So, the diversity of students in multiple language orientations and the fact that “Hiligaynon” is their mother tongue affect the oral fluency of the preservice English teachers. To be understood, they tend to code-switch to let the students capture, grasp, and internalize the meanings of the difficult English words. Preservice English teachers must adjust and adopt the students’ way of articulating and resonating without correcting them because of their poor foundation of speech development and exposure. This is also because of the poor English language policy inside the classroom and limited contact with English teachers caused by the pandemic. The participating preservice English teachers also have poor speech and communication skills. It can be inferred that the pandemic hampered the preservice English teachers’ speech and communication skills development. As a result, their articulation and pronunciation of segmentals are affected. Another factor could be their limited exposure and contact with the English teachers during speech classes without a speech laboratory.

Participant B revealed that:

“That it is very challenging and facing different uh diverse students in comes in teaching and also the lack of time preparations in doing daily lesson plans and also the different instructional materials because you really need to exert more effort in making instructional material in order for you to have an enjoyable class discussions.” lines 9-14

Another empirical issue confronting the preservice English teachers is that most lessons are literature with embedded grammar practice lessons. The researcher attests that English subjects focus more on the comprehension skills of the students. Speech should be given more importance. Students are appreciated even without correct pronunciation and articulation as long as they can comprehend well.

Participant C asserts that:

“Maybe the naughtiness of some of my diverse students because actually I’m handling 5 sections so we have different personalities so for me it’s a least because sometimes some of the students are not paying attention especially when you are discussing on them so that’s all.” lines 10-14

The second theme that emerged speaks on self-efficacy and preparation. Preservice teachers’ verbal communication ability during classroom discussions is still limited, and they fall short of the oral communication skills expected of them as future teachers (Delfin, 2009). The ability of student teachers to use English in the classroom is not enough to sustain them in their lesson presentations and class discussions. It thus affects how they answer students’ questions and how they ask questions and process students’ answers during classroom interaction.

Causes of difficulties of preservice teachers in segmentals

Preservice English Teachers’ Difficulties in Segmentals

From the in-depth interview, participant A articulated that:

“Out of all the vowels I think I would have a problem pronouncing the sound /ə/ or the vowel sound. Since /ə/ once it is put into words you can’t really identify easily the vowels that have the /ə/ sound, because some vowels /ə/ it could be the letter A or it could be the letter U. I have a difficulty in determining whether those vowels would have the /ə/ sound. So sometimes I mispronounce some words.” lines 19-25

When asked about the same sentiment from participant B about her difficulty in pronouncing the vowel /i/ sound, she admitted that:

“Okay. So, in my perceptions, the vowel I find difficult to pronounce is the long /i/ sound. Because sometimes, I forgot to pronounce it correctly and tend to cut it or quicken it.” lines 17-20

Participant C asserted that the vowel /ɛ/ is a difficult vowel to pronounce. She articulated that:

“Okay among the vowels I have the difficulty pronouncing the vowel /ɛ/ , it’s because sometimes I mispronounce words especially those words that supposedly a long sound words but sometimes, I pronounce the words in a short sound.” lines 17-21

It is about more than just being able to pronounce a few problematic English words and sounds. It is about training and strengthening someone’s jaw muscles over time until, eventually, one can put those sounds together to speak English with more ease and fluency.

Participant A said:

“I think that front vowels are much easier to pronounce because they are very direct or they are as you see them. For example, the /a/ sound the /I/, they are much very easy because you know once you see the letter and that is how they are normally taught to sound like. So mostly those are what easy for me.” lines 29-34

The front vowels are included /æ/, /a/, /ɛ/, /I/, /e/, and /i/. They are produced at the tip of the tongue (Haguisan, 2010). It is evident that /a/ and /I/ are easily pronounceable.

The vowel /a/ is spelled as a, o, e. The manners of production of /a/ are the following: keep the

mouth relaxed and wide open, keep the tongue lax, with the back slightly raised, which is a long sound (Misajon, 2003). Furthermore, these front vowels in American English are /i/, /ɪ/, /e/, /ɛ/, and /æ/, and are made with the front of the tongue arched. Practice going from high to low by saying the following words. Your tongue, and possibly jaw, should drop slightly for each vowel. The example, English words have /a/ sounds like art [art], top [tap], psalm [sam], car [kar], cop [kap], and trod [trad].

In contrast, participant B asserted that the back vowels are challenging to pronounce. To prove the claim, she said:

“Okay, for me the easiest vowels to pronounce are in the back position of the tongue because I often used that in speaking and also it seems natural and it doesn’t need to exert more effort in terms of speaking.” lines 24-27

Participant C argued that the central vowel is easy to pronounce. Justifiably, she articulated that:

“Among these vowels, I think it’s easy to pronounce the central position ones since the tongue central is more relax and I do not have that much trouble pronouncing it. Words with central vowels are also what I’m exposed and used quite frequently so I am more used to them.” lines 22-26

The only central vowel is the schwa sound. The vowel /ə/ is spelled as: u, e, a, v. The manner of production of the schwa sound /ə/: raise tongue to middle position and flatten tongue as back part is tensed. The words with vowel /ə/ are *but* [bət], *fir*, [fɛr], *firm* [fɜrm], *girl* [gɜrl], and *kirk* [kɜrk]. According to Hudson (2018) the schwa sound [ə] is the most common vowel sound in English; about one in three vowels, a native speaker pronounces. It has a neutral mouth position, it only appears on unstressed syllables, and it can be spelled with any vowel letter.

The preservice English teachers at the Iloilo State University of Fisheries Science and Technology have their own ways of mastering the craft of pronunciations of the difficult words in the English language.

Participant B said:

“Okay so first of all, I researched especially with difficult words and then after that I try to read as much of it as I can. I read literature that have apparent vowel sounds so that I will find it much easier if I can encounter one in the future. And of course, reading orally. You speak what you read that makes it very easy to get used to the sounds.” lines 37-41

Generally speaking, if unsure of the pronunciation of the words, people naturally ask the experts, research on the internet, or consult the dictionary and other related texts. A teacher must sound correct for modeling, and avoidance of communication breakdown during classroom engagement.

Participant B asserted that:

“So, in order to pronounce difficult vowels, I should practice it frequently with a guidance of an expert or a person who is more knowledgeable enough in terms of pronunciation.” lines 30-33

Participant A revealed that:

“Okay so most of the time, but then since well I have very accommodating teachers here. I asked my teachers or those who know better than me. Also, another is I try to read it and then try to determine which one sounds right or which one that I have heard some people say before. In that case, I try to learn by myself so that I will be able to memorize or actually remember

easier. But if I really can't do it then that's when I do research and then asked those who knows much." lines 43-47

Also, participant C articulated that:

"In order for me to perfectly pronounce the difficult words, I made research on the internet or I used app such as English pronunciation. Also, I seek help to those people who are knowledgeable than me in order for me to be aware to pronounce such words." lines 29-33

Admittedly, she articulated further that:

"As what I said earlier, if I encountered confusing vowels sounds, I go to Google and search the proper pronunciation of those confusing words and then I practice it several times until I finally pronounce it correctly." lines 37-40

Based on the narratives articulated by the preservice English teachers, they have encountered many, if not some, difficulties in segmentals that would hinder their oral fluency, like pronunciations, resonations, and articulations of some vowel sounds. So, the oral fluency of the pre-service teachers in segmentals can be improved and developed through constant practice and daily learning experiences dealing with students, colleagues, and others.

On the other hand, participant A pleaded that:

"Actually, I am very willing to join speech lessons even if I don't have any speech difficulties because I think that it's very interesting to learn or practice how you speak. Since I am very much interested in listening to other people speak, and I would like to actually be able to speak in front of a whole audience or a large group of people without having difficulty. So, I think joining speech lessons would actually very nice." lines 50-57

Willingly, participant B also expressly submitted by saying:

"Yes, of course. Because I know that it can help me to improve and enhance my speaking skills well and also to boost my confidence as well in terms of speaking." lines 44-46

Also, participant C affirmed it by articulating that:

"Yes, I would love to. With or without speech difficulties, if I give a chance to undergo speech lesson, I will surely be joining it because as an English teacher I believe it's our responsibility to become an effective English speaker to the people around us." lines 43-47

Therefore, the room for language development and improvement in terms of oral fluency of the pre-service English teachers is "no longer a matter left to chance, but a goal that can be achieved by a systematic and sustained oral communication program (Haguisan, 2006).

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATION

Summary of the Different Themes from the Responses by the Preservice English Teachers

This exploratory case study focused on discovering the oral fluency in segmentals of preservice English teachers and the causes of their difficulties in the production of such sounds.

In view of the preceding questions, the following answers were obtained:

1. The oral fluency of the pre-service English teachers in segmentals has many discrepancies based on the researcher's observation, with the concurrence by the participants' narratives and admissions that English is difficult even if it is their most loved language. The participants have difficulties with the central vowel, the schwa sound /ə/, and the front vowels /i/ and /ε/.

Lasi (2020) asserted that many students have problems in learning English especially in spoken English language. They are mentioned in the following order: first, what students can hear; some students have great difficulty hearing pronunciation features that we want them to reproduce. Oftentimes, speakers of different first languages have problems with sounds. Second is what students can say, learning a foreign language often presents us with the problem of physical unfamiliarity, for example, it is physically difficult to make the sound using parts of the mouth, uvula, or nasal cavity. The third is the intonation problems; some of us, especially our students, still find it extremely difficult to hear tunes or to identify the different patterns of rising and falling tones.

It is not just about being able to pronounce a few difficult English words and sounds. It is about training and strengthening someone's jaw muscles over time until, eventually, one can put those sounds together to speak English with more ease and fluency.

Today, English is constitutionally named as one of the Philippines' official languages. It continues to be an integral part of local life and culture. It is the language of business, science, technology, government, education, and international communication.

So, the oral fluency of the preservice English teachers is undeniably a problem that needs to be given importance because it builds a bridge between word recognition and comprehension.

2. The reason why pre-service English teachers have pronunciation difficulties is that many particular syllables in English do not exist in other languages. Because English is our second language, Filipino listeners will quickly understand the speaker's meaning if these sounds are pronounced correctly. Remember, Filipinos try to lose their accent because it depends on their origins. Additionally, they are getting longer, and short vowels sound wrong. In reality, preservice teachers have difficulties in segmentals because of phonological deafness; insufficient input; the absence of explicit instruction because of the pandemic; and their attitudes toward learning English as a second language.

Conclusions

Based on the preceding themes, the following conclusions are drawn:

The oral fluency of pre-service English teachers has many discrepancies in the central vowel, the shwa sound /ə/, and the front vowels /i/ and /ε/. The rest of the vowel sounds are productively and well-articulated and resonated with the preservice English teachers of the Iloilo State University of Fisheries Science and Technology – Dingle campus.

The implementation of English language use needs to be firmly implemented. Thus, English is seen as a foreign language, not a second language. Such an approach among language classes hinders the development of proficiency of the learners in the English language.

Implications

The results of the present study have important implications for theory and practice.

Theory. The present results pertaining to discrepancies in oral fluency confirm Wise's Linguistic Theory as formed by Noam Chomsky who described language as having a grammar that is largely independent of language use. Wise's theory argues that language acquisition is governed by universal,

underlying grammatical rules that are common to all typically developing humans. Across many different cultures, there are several linguistic developmental similarities. Chomsky argues that these similarities are due to the presence of an innate language-acquisition mechanism housed in the brain called the Language Acquisition Device (LAD). According to Chomsky (1950), the LAD is a specialized language processor that contains universal underlying linguistic principles that provide children with the innate knowledge to speak and learn a language. The environment only serves to activate the maturation of the LAD. Chomsky believed that only humans were born with the LAD and that believed that language was species-specific and unique to humans.

Practice. One beneficial implication is the utility of the theory in the discrepancies of oral fluency of preservice English teachers on segmentals. This is an essential input for the preservice English teachers to look into.

If the school administrators/presidents consider the discrepancies, proper planning may be conducted considering all the factors relevant to enhancing pre-service English teachers' oral fluency, and the proposed enhancement program based on the present study may be adopted.

Recommendation

The following recommendations are advanced in consideration of the findings presented:

Language Teachers. The teachers who are the prime movers of education may encourage them to develop themselves the current trends in language teaching or teaching English as a second language. Learning never stops, and a teacher's job is a life-long pledge towards nation-building; thus, he may arm himself with appropriate communicative skills and strategies to adapt to the trends in language teaching continuously.

Preservice English Students. Students are the center of new learning. They are the primary stakeholders of educational institutions. As the future of this generation, they may nurture their love for learning any language and embrace that English is one of the official languages in the Philippines. As the predominant social agent in language education, the school should capacitate the young by addressing their language learning needs via all possible platforms, by capacitating themselves using different platforms to address their English language learning needs. The teaching of speaking, among the macro skills, should take center stage in light of this study's findings.

Commission on Higher Education. Commission on Higher Education may craft language workbooks, libraries, and knowledge hubs effectively and hire qualified English teachers to teach with compassion, confidence, and high respect. It may continue to stand by its principles of continuing language enhancement and development activities as an entity. It may also continue to provide training, seminars, research activities, and other related language conferences to address the language gaps and difficulties in teaching in the emerging demands of the new learning language current trends for Filipino students. The language program of CHED for higher education institutions may be revisited.

School Administrators. School leaders may have a clearly defined role in crisis response, for they feel strongly responsible for ensuring the welfare of their teachers and students in terms of language enhancement and development. They have a critical perspective on the challenges faced by their communities, and their voices should also be incorporated when defining their role in addressing whatever gaps exist in teaching and learning the English language. They may be tasked with inspiring, coordinating, and empowering their language teachers to have a collective action to address the issues in English language learning and teaching effectively.

There is a need for enhancement and development of English language seminars, workshops. Support structures for instruction such as speech laboratories may also be prioritized. Co-curricular activities that promote speaking skills of learners may also be encouraged. Most importantly, school administrators may translate into policy an effective language program in Teacher Education courses.

Future Researchers. Future researchers may conduct further studies on the oral fluency of preservice English teachers in segmentals. Many areas of concern in language education programs need to be investigated. The findings of such investigations will become a rich reference for future studies.

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Appendix A

Research Instrument

A. Interview Content Questions (In-depth Interview)

1. Which among the vowels you have the difficulty in pronouncing? And why?
2. There are three vowels by tongue position. These are back, central and front. Which among these vowels is easy to pronounce? And why?
3. What should you do to perfectly pronounce the difficult vowels?
4. If you have encountered, the words which have confusing vowel sounds. What will you do to locate and know the correct pronunciations of those confusing words?
5. Are you willing to undergo speech lesson if you think you have the speech difficulties?

B. Guide Questions (Online Discussion)

1. What was your favorite part of being an English pre-service teacher?
2. Do you have some least part of being a pre-service teacher? What was it?
3. How many of you have parents wanting you to become a teacher while you were still a child?
4. Do you think covid 19 is considered a barrier in your early college years?

5. How about now, we are still experiencing covid 19 right? In your practice teaching how was it?
6. How about difficulties in segmentals? Do you have some problems encountered? How did you overcome those problems?
7. How did the program or student practice teaching change you/some aspects of your life?

Appendix B

Letter to Request Validation of Instrument

April 3, 2023

DR. JOANNE A. ALADA

Faculty, College of Education

Iloilo State University of Fisheries Science and Technology-Dingle Campus

San Matias, Dingle, Iloilo

Dear Madam:

I am currently writing my thesis in partial fulfillment of my requirement for the degree, Master in Instructional Leadership major in English at Iloilo State University of Fisheries Science and Technology-Main Tiwi Campus with my approved title “Focus on Fluency: A Case Study on the Production of Segmentals Among Pre-service English Teachers”.

In this connection, I am respectfully requesting your professional assistance as validator of the attached instrument.

Your favorable action in this regard is highly appreciated.

Thank you very much.

Very truly yours,

SGD. KIMBERLY ROSE L. DIAZ

Graduate Student

Noted:

SGD. JINKY D. PEREZ, Ph. D

Dean, CoEd

April 3, 2023

JONARD V. VERDEFLOR

Instructor, College of Education

Iloilo State University of Fisheries Science and Technology-Dingle Campus

San Matias, Dingle, Iloilo

Dear Sir:

I am currently writing my thesis in partial fulfillment of my requirement for the degree, Master in Instructional Leadership major in English at Iloilo State University of Fisheries Science and Technology - Main Tiwi Campus with my approved title “Focus on Fluency: A Case Study on the Production of Segmentals Among Pre-service English Teachers”.

In this connection, I am respectfully requesting your professional assistance as validator of the attached instrument.

Your favorable action in this regard is highly appreciated.

Thank you very much.

Very truly yours,

SGD. KIMBERLY ROSE L. DIAZ

Graduate Student

Noted:

SGD. JINKY D. PEREZ, Ph. D

Dean, CoEd

Appendix C

Letters to Conduct the Study

March 29, 2023

ENGR. REX D. DIAZ

Campus Administrator

Iloilo State University of Fisheries Science and Technology-Dingle Campus

San Matias, Dingle, Iloilo

Sir:

The undersigned is presently conducting a research entitled “**Focus on Fluency: A Case Study on the Production of Segmentals Among Pre-service English Teachers**” as a course requirement for the

degree **Master in Instructional Leadership (MILe) - English** at the Iloilo State University of Fisheries Science and Technology, Tiwi, Main Campus.

In this regard, permission from your good office is sought for the conduct of covert observations and focus group discussion (FGD) with three (3) fourth year pre-service English teachers upon referral by the Area Chair. The observations and interview of the pre-service English teachers will be the primary sources of data to determine the subject's oral fluency and the related variables for the research.

Please be assured that all information gathered will be dealt with utmost integrity and confidentiality.

Your approval of this request will surely contribute to the success of this academic endeavor.

Thank you very much and more power!

Respectfully yours,

SGD. KIMBERLY ROSE L. DIAZ

Researcher

Noted:

SGD. PROF. JOMEL B. GUINTIVANO

Research Adviser

March 30, 2023

DR. JINKY D. PEREZ

Dean, College of Education

Iloilo State University of Fisheries Science and Technology-Dingle Campus

San Matias, Dingle, Iloilo

Madam:

The undersigned is presently conducting a research entitled “**Focus on Fluency: A Case Study on the Production of Segmentals Among Pre-service English Teachers**” as a course requirement for the degree **Master in Instructional Leadership (MILe) - English** at the Iloilo State University of Fisheries Science and Technology, Tiwi, Main Campus.

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Please be assured that all information gathered will be dealt with utmost integrity and confidentiality.

Your approval of this request will surely contribute to the success of this academic endeavor.

Thank you very much and more power!

Respectfully yours,

SGD. KIMBERLY ROSE L. DIAZ

Researcher

Noted:

SGD. PROF. JOMEL B. GUINTIVANO

Research Adviser

March 30, 2023

DR. ELAINE H. ANZURES

Program Chair – Bachelor of Secondary Education, College of Education
Iloilo State University of Fisheries Science and Technology-Dingle Campus
San Matias, Dingle, Iloilo

Madam:

The undersigned is presently conducting a research entitled “**Focus on Fluency: A Case Study on the Production of Segmentals Among Pre-service English Teachers**” as a course requirement for the degree **Master in Instructional Leadership (MILe) - English** at the Iloilo State University of Fisheries Science and Technology, Tiwi, Main Campus.

In this regard, permission from your good office is sought for the conduct of covert observations and focus group discussion (FGD) with three (3) fourth year pre-service English teachers upon referral by the Area Chair. The observations and interview of the pre-service English teachers will be the primary sources of data to determine the subject’s oral fluency and the related variables for the research.

Please be assured that all information gathered will be dealt with utmost integrity and confidentiality.

Your approval of this request will surely contribute to the success of this academic endeavor.

Thank you very much and more power!

Respectfully yours,

SGD. KIMBERLY ROSE L. DIAZ

Researcher

Noted:

SGD. PROF. JOMEL B. GUINTIVANO

Research Adviser

Appendix D

Consent Form

The purpose of the consent form is both to make sure that a participant has understood the main points about taking part in the research and for there to be a record of their consent. The form should be written in language that is easy to understand. The participant should be given a copy of the completed form and the researcher should retain the signed original.

Consent to take part in [Focus on Fluency: A Case Study on the Production of Segmentals Among Pre-service English Teachers]

Purpose of Study: This study focused on the pre-service teachers’ oral fluency and the relation of such to their articulation of segmentals. Their language contact and orientation will be observed and will be the basis for the analysis.

Please initial each box if you agree with the statement

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet version _____, dated _____ for the above research. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any point until dd/mmm/yy, without giving any reason.

I understand who access to personal data will have provided, how the data will be stored and what will happen to the data at the end of the project.

I understand that I will (not) be/ the extent to which I could be identifiable from any publications.

[Optional:] I consent to being [audio/ video] recorded.

[Optional:] I consent to having my photo taken.

I understand how [audio recordings/ videos/ photos] will be used in research outputs.

Use of quotations: Please indicate your preference (select *one* option):

- a) I do not wish to be quoted. **or**
- b) I agree to the use of quotations in research outputs if I am not identifiable. **or**
- c) I agree to the use of direct quotations, attributed to my name, in research outputs.

I give permission for you to contact me again to clarify information.

I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint.

I agree to take part.

Optional: I agree that my personal contact details can be retained in a secure database so that the researchers can contact me about future studies.

YES/NO

Name of participant

Date

Signature

Name of person taking
consent

Date

Signature

Appendix E

Data Gathered

Date: April 5, 2023

Time: 8:43 AM

Interviewer: Kimberly Rose L. Diaz

Interviewee: Participant A

1 Int: Good morning, I have some questions for my thesis.

2 Par: Yes, good morning.

3 Int: Okay, how about difficulties in segmentals. Do you
4 have some problems encountered?

5 Par: But when I encounter that I think the most hard words 6 to pronounce are those with
the /ə/ sounds since once say them repeatedly it becomes difficult and I think that's
7 where I find most words that those words how those sounds
8 have are what I have difficulties most of the time once I'm
9 considered once I'm saying things repeatedly.

10 Int: Thank you. Next question. Do you have some least part 11 of being pre-service teacher?

12 Par: Facing hundreds of students everyday since there is a 13 lot of enrollees. Facing a
hundred of students is a very

14 difficult challenge. Since you'll have to adjust to every
15 section or every person every student that you encounter.

16 Int: I guess you have a lot sections handling. Alright,
17 next question. Which among the vowels you have the
18 difficulty in pronouncing? And why?

19 Par: Out of all the vowels I think I would have a problem
20 pronouncing the sound /ə/ or the vowel sound. Since /ə/

21 once it is put into words you can't really identify easily 22 the vowels that have the /ə/ sound,
because some vowels /ə/ 23 it could be the letter A or it could be the letter U. I
24 have a difficulty in determining whether those vowels would 25 have the /ə/ sound. So
sometimes I mispronounce some words.
26 Int: Okay. There are three vowels by tongue position. These 27 are back, central and
front. Which among these vowels is 28 easy to pronounce? And why?
29 Par: I think that front vowels are much easier to pronounce 30 because they are very direct
or they are as you see them. 31 For example, the /a/ sound the /I/, they are much very easy 32
because you know once you see the letter and that is
33 how they are normally taught to sound like. So mostly those 34 are what easy for me.
35 Int: Yes. I agree with you. What should you do to perfectly
36 pronounce the difficult vowels?
37 Par: Okay so first of all, I researched especially with
38 difficult words and then after that I try to read as much 39 of it as I can.
40 Int: If you have encountered, the words which have
41 confusing vowel sounds. What will you do to locate and know 42 the correct pronunciations of
those confusing words?
43 Par: Okay so most of the time, but then since well I have 44 very accommodating teachers here. I
asked my teachers or
45 those who know better than me. Also, another is I try to
46 read it and then try to determine which one sounds right or 47 which one that I have heard
some people say before.
48 Int: Are you willing to undergo speech lesson if you think 49 you have the speech
difficulties?
50 Par: Actually, I am very willing to join speech lessons
51 even if I don't have any speech difficulties because I
52 think that it's very interesting to learn or practice how 53 you speak. Since I am very much
interested in listening to 54 other people speak, and I would like to actually be able to 55 speak
in front of a whole audience or a large group of
56 people without having difficulty. So, I think joining
57 speech lessons would actually very nice.
58 Int: Thank you so much.

Date: April 5, 2023
Time: 9:27 AM
Interviewer: Kimberly Rose L. Diaz
Interviewee: Participant B

1 Int: Good morning, I have some questions for my thesis.
2 Par: Good morning.
3 Int: Okay, how about difficulties in segmentals. Do you
4 have some problems encountered?
5 Par: Even though I have a problem in pronouncing the long /i/

6 sound because I have the tendency to quicken some words.
7 Int: It's alright. Do you have some least part 11 of being 8 pre-service teacher?
9 Par: That it is very challenging and facing different
10 diverse students in comes in teaching and also the lack of 11 time preparations in doing
daily lesson plans and also the
12 different instructional materials because you really need 13 to exert more effort in making
instructional material in
14 order for you to have an enjoyable class discussions.
15 Int: Alright, next question. Which among the vowels you the 16 difficulty in pronouncing?
And why?
17 Par: Okay. So, in my perceptions, the vowel I find
18 difficult to pronounce is the long /i/ sound. Because
19 sometimes, I forgot to pronounce it correctly and tend to 20 cut it or quicken it.
21 Int: There are three vowels by tongue position. These are
22 back, central and front. Which among these vowels is
23 easy to pronounce? And why?
24 Par: Okay, for me the easiest vowels to pronounce are in
25 the back position of the tongue because I often used that 26 in speaking and also it seems
natural and it doesn't need 27 to exert more effort in terms of speaking.
28 Int: What should you do to perfectly pronounce the
29 difficult vowels?
30 Par: So, in order to pronounce difficult vowels, I should 31 practice it frequently with a
guidance of an expert or a
32 person who is more knowledgeable enough in terms of
33 pronunciation.
34 Int: If you have encountered, the words which have
35 confusing vowel sounds. What will you do to locate and know 36 the correct pronunciations of
those confusing words?
37 Par: Okay so first of all, I researched especially with
38 difficult words and then after that I try to read as much 39 of it as I can. I read literature that
have apparent vowel 40 sounds so that I will find it much easier if I can
41 encounter one in the future.
42 Are you willing to undergo speech lesson if you think
43 you have the speech difficulties?
44 Yes, of course. Because I know that it can help me to
45 improve and enhance my speaking skills well and also to
46 boost my confidence as well in terms of speaking.
47 Thank you.

Date: April 5, 2023
Time: 9:38 AM
Interviewer: Kimberly Rose L. Diaz
Interviewee: Participant C

- 1 Int: Good morning, I have some questions for my thesis.
2 Par: Good morning, ma'am.
3 Int: Okay, how about difficulties in segmentals. Do you
4 have some problems encountered?
5 Par: You know I sometimes mispronounce words in my
6 discussion especially the long /i/ you know I sometimes
7 said the short /ε/.
8 Int: Do you have some least part of being pre-service
9 teacher?
10 Par: Maybe the naughtiness of some of my diverse students 11 because actually I'm handling
5 sections so we have
12 different personalities so for me it's a least because
13 sometimes some of the students are not paying attention
14 especially when you are discussing on them so that's all.
15 Int: Which among the vowels you have 17 the difficulty in
16 pronouncing? And why?
17 Par: Okay among the vowels I have the difficulty
18 pronouncing the vowel /ε/, it's because sometimes I
19 mispronounce words especially those words that supposedly a 20 long sound words but
sometimes, I 18 pronounce the words 21 in a short sound.
22 Int: There are three vowels by tongue position. These are
23 back, central and front. Which among these vowels is easy 24 to pronounce? And why?
22 Par: Among these vowels, I think it's easy to pronounce the
23 central position ones since the tongue central is more
24 relax and I do not have that much trouble pronouncing it. 25 Words with central vowels
are also what I'm exposed and
26 used quite frequently so I am more used to them.
27 Int: What should you do to perfectly pronounce the
28 difficult vowels?
29 Par: In order for me to perfectly pronounce the difficult 30 words, I made research on the
internet or I used app such 31 as English pronunciation. Also, I seek help to those people 32 who
are knowledgeable than me in order for me to be aware 33 to pronounce such words.
34 Int: If you have encountered, the words which have
35 confusing vowel sounds. What will you do to locate and know
36 the correct pronunciations of those confusing words?
37 Par: As what I said earlier, if I encountered confusing
38 vowels sounds, I go to Google and search the proper
39 pronunciation of those confusing words and then I practice 40 it several times until 4I
finally pronounce it correctly.
41 Int: Are you willing to undergo speech lesson if you think
42 you have the speech difficulties?
43 Par: Yes, I would love to. With or without speech

44 difficulties, if I give a chance to undergo speech lesson, 45 I will surely be joining it because as
an English teacher I 46 believe it's our responsibility to become an effective
47 English speaker to the people around us.
48 Int: Thank you so much.