

USING COMPENSATORY STRATEGIES: A MIXED-METHOD IN ANALYZING PHONOLOGICAL COMPETENCY OF TERTIARY ESL FILIPINO STUDENTS

Elenita P. Galvez Ph.D.

Bulacan State University, City of Malolos , Bulacan , Philippines 3000

ABSTRACT: *The previous decades have witnessed the shift in language pedagogy from teaching approaches to learning styles and strategies (Nunan, 2009). Learners are naturally inclined to become competent and effective speakers, an ability that remains a challenge if not impairment to other learners. This condition can be attributed to a multiplicity of reasons. Today's language teachers need to give a second look at what students use as compensatory strategies as their survival mechanism. Though the present study is local in scope, its implications are far reaching, considering the experiences, challenges, frustrations, and expectations of ESL and EFL teachers in Asia and beyond. This study, hence, embarked to find out how students' compensatory strategies were instrumental in their success in developing phonological competence in a language alien to them. Furthermore, compensatory strategies' were stressed along with students' phonological processes and learning preferences. Through interactive learning compensatory approaches and authentic language assessment procedures, the study offered some fresh insights rewarding and enlightening to ESL and EFL practitioners. A mixed method approach was utilized to identify the compensatory strategies necessary to assist students by analyzing the phonological processes of students in Phase I and the phonological competence in Phase II necessary to effective oral communication. Frequency count was used, results were drawn, conclusions and recommendations were offered.*

KEYWORDS: *Compensatory Strategies, phonological processes, phonological competencies, learning preferences*

INTRODUCTION

The ESL Filipino students' objective is to become orally competent as they acquire the second language. Using compensatory strategies, students are expected to simply find ways to use appropriate phonological processing as strength to compensate for individual weakness/es. In this study, compensatory techniques are those activities that promote the acquisition of competencies in sounds and supra-segmental skills in learning the second language, English.

English for Foreign Language (EFL) preferences in learning the second language are influenced by their participation in various classroom compensatory activities like card swapping, communicative crossword, one-question survey, two-minute debate and eternal mingle. These approaches applied by teachers are also concerned with performance factors to cope with the nuisance of background noise or using gap fillers. Second language learners opt to become phonologically knowledgeable in the strategies being introduced to them which aimed at learning if not advancing in the second language acquisition.

Students' role is to participate and learn in the innovative equalizing strategies offered in the class which can make all the difference in their selves using oral technology and repeated practice, empathy, patience, and understanding of their language difficulties and needs. On the other hand, the teachers' task is to give effective assistance through classroom activities and

assistive technology to improve learners' phonological awareness and needs. It is extremely certain for language learning difficulties be addressed through some degree of exercise and constant practice. Maintaining a predictable routine and structured environment that incorporates prioritized tasks and reminders may enhance the person's phonological competence in particular and communicative adequacy, in general.

Rationale of the Study

The main objectives of the study were to identify the phonological processes of students in Phase I and the compensatory strategies necessary to improve tertiary ESL Filipino students' phonological and oral reading competencies in Phase II? Specifically, the study aimed at answering the following questions:

1. How may the compensatory phonological strategies of tertiary ESL Filipino students be described in terms of their:
 - a. phonological processes;
 - b. use of compensatory strategies;
 - c. oral competencies?
2. Is there a significant effect on the phonological processes and the oral competence of students with the use of compensatory strategies?
3. What compensatory strategies may be employed to improve phonological and oral skills?
4. How do students prefer learning in an oral communication class?

Phonological Processing

For a deeper insight on the ideas presented in this paper, let the researcher shed light on the terms for analysis. Phonological competencies were the subjects of this study dealing with phoneme, phonology and phonetics. Phonemes in a given languages, are those sounds that can bring a difference in meaning between two words. A phoneme is a phonic segment with a meaning value. While phonological awareness therefore implies the ability to identify, discriminate and manipulate the sound structure of words. Phonetics on the other hand is the description and classification of speech sounds, particularly how sounds are produced, transmitted and received. Hence, differences in accents that many learners of English had been brought about by the difference between the phonological systems of learners' language. It is no surprise, therefore, that even native speakers of those languages have difficulties producing or even perceiving such sounds. To attain phonological know-how, there is a dire need to find how these sounds are processed. Using compensatory strategies in the class, phonology assessment would reveal how assistance from language teachers be incorporated. What is phonological processing? How is this done? How can doing this sound assessment be of help in identifying the necessary compensatory strategies for the second language learners?

All non-native speakers of English make predictable pronunciation errors. These 'errors' are called phonological processes, or phonological deviations. Phonological processes are the patterns used to simplify speech.

Here below were the concepts investigated in Phase I of this study.

Phonological Process (Phonological Deviation)	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Context sensitive voicing	A voiceless sound is replaced by a voiced sound. In the examples given, /p/ is replaced by /b/, and /k/ is replaced by /g/. Other examples might include /t/ being replaced by /d/, or /f/ being replaced by /v/.	6.24	13%
Word-final devoicing	A final voiced consonant in a word is replaced by a voiceless consonant. "tag" is pronounced as "tak"	3.84	8%
Final consonant deletion	Final Consonant Deletion is the deletion of the final consonant or consonant cluster in a syllable or word. Ex: "soap" /sop/ is pronounced "sew" /so/; "pig" /pɪg/ is pronounced "pi" /pɪ/	.96%	2%
Velar fronting	Fronting (Velar and Palatal) is the substitution of sounds in the front of the mouth usually alveolar, for velar or palatal sounds. Ex: "key" /ki/ is pronounced "tea" /ti/; "gate" /get/ is pronounced "date" /det/.	2.4	5%
Palatal fronting	Fricative consonants 'sh' and 'zh' are replaced by fricatives that are made further forward on the palate, towards the front teeth. 'sh' is replaced by /s/, and 'zh' is replaced by /z/.	5.28	11%
Consonant harmony	The pronunciation of the whole word is influenced by the presence of a particular sound in the word. In these examples: (1) the /b/ in "cupboard" causes the /k/ to be replaced /p/, which is the voiceless cognate of /b/, and (2) the /g/ in "dog" causes /d/ to be replaced by /g/.	4.8	10%
Weak syllable deletion	Syllables are either stressed or unstressed. In "telephone" and "tidying" the second syllable is "weak" or unstressed. In this phonological process, weak syllables are omitted when the child says the word.	5.76	12%
Cluster reduction	"Spider" is pronounced as Consonant clusters occur when two or three consonants occur in a sequence. Cluster reduction "Spider" is pronounced as "pider"	5.76	12%
Gliding of liquids	The liquid consonants /l/ and /r/ are replaced by /w/ or 'y'. In these examples,	4.32	9%

	/r/ in "real" is replaced by /w/, and /l/ in "leg" is replaced by 'y'.		
Stopping	Stopping is the substitution of a stop consonant for a fricative or an affricate. Ex: "sail" /seɪ/ is pronounced "tail" /teɪ/; "knife" /naɪf/ is pronounced "knipe" /naɪp/. A fricative consonant (/f/ /v/ /s/ /z/, 'sh', 'zh', 'th' or /h/), or an affricate consonant ('ch' or /j/) is replaced by a stop consonant (/p/ /b/ /t/ /d/ /k/ or /g/). In these examples, /f/ in "funny" is replaced by /p/, and 'j' in "jump" is replaced by /d/.	8.64	18%

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The following results were drawn by the researcher based on the phonological processes of the respondents. Assessing students' sound deviations processes were identified as follows:

In a context sensitive voicing, unvoiced bilabial sound was replaced by a voiced bilabial sound, voiceless velar sound /k/ was replaced by voiced sound /g/, and voiceless alveolar /t/ replaced by voiced alveolar /d/, all were due to familiarity of the ESL Filipino learners to the substituted sounds since such replacement phonemes are part of the Filipino lingua franca. Fricative voiceless labio-dental /f/ on the other hand was replaced by fricative voiced labio-dental /v/. Such impairment to Filipino learners was due to inadequacy of foreign language foundation in the respondents' primary education. In the case of word-final devoicing, aspirated consonants were replaced by voiceless consonants as evident in the word "tag" pronounced as "tak". Learners were more likely to delete final contoid in *produce* omitting /ed/ pronounced as 't'.

Furthermore, when students aspirated velar fronting, velar or palatal sounds, like /k/, /g/, and sh, were substituted by alveolar /t/, /d/, and /s/. When a non-affricate was replaced with an affricate 'ch' or 'j', fronting affrication *'tootie' was pronounced instead with 'cookie'*. Consonant sound normally made with the middle of the tongue in contact with the palate towards the back of the mouth was replaced with consonant produced at the front of the mouth. Hence, the velar /k/ to the place of unvoiced alveolar /t/, /g/ put back by articulated /d/, and the nasal velar /'ng/ was substituted by nasal alveolar /n/. Besides, the palatal fronting fricative voiceless, alveo-palatal consonants 'sh' and 'zh' was articulated as fricatives made further forward on the palate, towards the front teeth. 'sh' replacing /s/, and 'zh' by /z/.

The presence of a particular phoneme influenced learners' pronunciation of the morpheme. The obstructed voiced bilabial /b/ in "cupboard" for example, caused the restricted voiceless velar /k/ to be substituted by /p/, the voiceless cognate of /b/ and the consonant /g/ in word "dog" caused the replacement /d/ with /g/.

What was more interesting on the weak syllable deletion were either stressing or un-stressing. In 'telephone' and 'tidying' the second syllable was weakened or unstressed. In this phonological process, weak syllables were omitted by ESL Filipino learners. In cluster reduction, a morpheme cluster reduced a single consonant when two or three consonants occur in a word. Cluster reduction took place in the word 'spider' when pronounced as 'pider'. Gliding of liquids consonants lateral alveolar /l/ and semi- vowel alveolar /r/ were replaced by

consonant semi- vowel bilabial /w/ or semi-vowel alveo-palatal /y/. ESL Filipino learners' pronunciation of the words /w/ in "real" replaced by /r/, and /l/ in 'leg' was replaced by 'y'.

Finally, for consonants fricative with stops /f/, /v/, /s/, /z/, 'sh', 'zh', 'th', or /h/, or an affricate consonant 'ch' or 'j' were substituted by stop consonants (/p/ /b/ /t/ /d/ /k/ or /g/). Students pronounced the fricative voiceless labio dental /f/ in the word "funny" was pronounced 'punny', while the consonant affricative voiced alveo- palatal 'j' in 'jump' was orally taken as 'dump'.

In summary, the phonological competence of the learner and his learning preferences may be attributed to his constant, repetitive voicing, aspirating of sounds, cluster reduction, gliding of liquids and fricative consonants stops.

The Use of Compensatory Strategies

Realizing the weaknesses of the ESL tertiary learners in Phase I of this study, the need to remedy such failures in sound production, made the researcher search and identify the appropriate Compensatory Strategies for the respondents of this study research. These remedy techniques made use of external aids or modifying activities to improve phonological or morphological breakdowns. Learners' sound failures were remedied using the compensatory strategies such as; card swapping, communicative crossword, one-question survey, two-minute debate and eternal mingle. These approaches were found to improve the phonological competencies of learners. Significant to this study, classroom activities helped tertiary learners through the evaluation of the researcher in curing weaknesses in reading and speaking by generating an action plan to assist respondents to become more effective communicators. The following strategies were done as compensatory classroom techniques:

(1) **Card-swapping Discussion** is a 20–25 minute strategy for oral fluency practice. In the class, the teacher-researcher pair the students then asked each to prepare a card where each time a partner completes a task, swaps cards and waits for the partner to reveal his observation. After each pair performed card swapping, the participants articulately pronounce the difference of /th/ from /t/, /s/ from /sh/, /f/ from /p/ sounds. This, activity was used as the primary avenue to gain knowledge where participants learn to react, reason out, conceptualize and synthesize thoughts.

(2) **Communicative crossword** is a 10–20 minute oral fluency practice drill. With the researcher as oral communication teacher in the class, the initial step was meant to discriminate long vowel from short vowel sounds, discriminate aspirated and unreleased plosives where each student has a crossword with only half the words filled in, and must invent clues for their partner. This compensatory strategy helped improve pronunciation and enunciation of words.

(3) **Question survey** is a 10–20 minute speaking and listening practice. Employing a compensatory approach for sound failure was the use of question survey. What was done initially by the facilitator was to give question to participants. They received different questions, and conduct survey from their classmates. This equalizing technique enabled participants divide lines into thought groups and can blend words in every phrase. Such technique assumes the attitudes, actions, and discourse of another person as well.

(4) **Two-Minute Debate** is a 25–30 minute oral competency tool coupled with disagreeing activity. In the speech communication class of the researcher, students were asked to work in pairs. The respondents were asked to conceptualize their thoughts based on the topics for argumentation. As the students delivered their idea, they learned to reconcile color, tone,

meaning, emotion and mood. The participants observed internal and final punctuations of every thought group being delivered. A series of quick dyadic debates were employed to improve self-confidence or cure dis-inhibition.

(5) **Eternal Mingle** an activity in a classroom where each student writes down one question. Although asking question is part of one's day to day activity, doing this strategy in the class unease students since the language used is English. Then they get up and mingle, asking their questions. After each question is asked, a partner moves around to get to other pairs to ask another question until all listed questions are asked. Exchanging questions needs a 10 or 15 minute-warm up. This compensatory strategy remediated anxiety, poor self confidence and low self esteem. As students learned to mingle, they became phonologically competent after working with peers.

METHODOLOGY

For the study to have its completion, the research used mixed method. Mixed methods research is a research design which involves philosophical assumptions to guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in the phases in the research process. Using this method, the research focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems. This approach used to investigate blends qualitative and quantitative methods. It has been called "hybrids" (Ragin, Nagel, & White, 2004); "methodological triangulation" acknowledging the convergence of quantitative and qualitative data; "combined research" (Creswell, 1994); and "mixed methodology," which acknowledges that it is both a method and a philosophical worldview (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

Today, the most frequently used name to this research design is 'mixed methods'. Quantitative data may begin the study. In this paper, a tool used was an individual reading assessment served as the performance instrument. Collection of this kind of data was done with the inclusion of respondents' behavior observed. Equalizing strategies to balance skillful presentation were studied by the paper writer to aid students in achieving phonological success. Frequency counting was taken as a way to identify learners' phonological processing as a path toward the analysis of the needed compensatory strategies to remedy oral weaknesses.

Qualitative method in this study began after the presentation of findings in Phase I. Searching for appropriate compensatory strategies to remedy oral weaknesses of the respondents to include dis-inhibitions on class participation. Learning attitude where observed during, before and after the proposed compensatory classroom oral activities. Card swapping, communicative crossword, one-question survey, two-minute debate and eternal mingle were the techniques employed to compensate students' weaknesses in oral delivery. Via compensatory strategies in Phase II, this research hoped to cure phonological inadequacies of students, develop their self-esteem and become communicatively competent not only inside but also outside of the classroom.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Although there is not much research on teaching phonology to ESL students who are at risk, learners' experiences clearly demonstrated the benefits of this study. There is a need for sustained review and practice to maintain their gains. A more pervasive benefit was that they could perceive individual words in spoken sentences far more accurately before using various techniques. This resulted in significantly more accurate reading aloud from written text they had during or after each compensatory exercises. Oral deliveries become more precise, clearer and the speakers were more competent. Improvements were observed specifically in the production of oral (both vowel and consonant) sounds and in general, students' motivation increased as well as their self-esteem.

Another important benefit of the phonology instruction, though less directly documented outside of the teacher-researcher's class was increase in the students decoding skills. Interest and ease was noticed especially during the multisyllabic-word reading. Overall, the students were able to do much better in the class than students with similar problems and who did not undergo speaking intervention techniques.

The compensatory phonological strategies of tertiary ESL students were described in terms of context sensitive voicing, word final devoicing, final consonant deletion, velar fronting, palatal fronting, consonant harmony, weak-syllable deletion, cluster reduction, gliding of liquids and stopping. These phonological processes brought forth differences in meaning between two words, implication on students' ability to identify, discrimination and manipulation of sound structure of words, description and classification on how SL speech sounds were produced, transmitted and received. The compensatory phonological strategies of tertiary ESL students were described using compensatory strategies such as; card swapping, communicative crossword, one-question survey, two-minute debate and eternal mingle. These equalizing techniques brought out the identification of the respondents remedies to their phonological weaknesses through SL sound production, articulation and enunciation. The tertiary ESL students oral competencies were found to distinguish, identify, differentiate and produce sounds of SL using the compensatory strategies employed.

It was also revealed that there is less significant effect on the phonological processes and the oral competence of students with the use of compensatory strategies because the respondents selectively preferred knowledge, insights and skills using the strategies employed by the researcher. Not all equalizing techniques suggested suited the interest and preference of ESL respondents

One highlight of this paper was the researcher's employment of the compensatory strategies aimed at improving phonological and oral skills. These classroom techniques were identified as: Card Swapping, Communicative Crossword, One-question Survey, Two-minute debate, and Eternal Mingle. Through these class approaches, the researcher-teacher was able to give learners a hand to choose learning techniques with ease and comfort. The hands-on employment of the strategies made the researcher realize that there was indeed a need for innovative and meaningful techniques to teach classroom oral communicators in overcoming communication deficiencies.

The researcher observed clientele's interests in participating in the strategies prepared for the tertiary learners. Very noticeable during the implementation of the classroom techniques was the learners' interest. They showed participative attitude because the strategies were new to

them. Although the study revealed participants' less enthusiasm in activities that called for sound aspiration and articulation to develop good diction necessary for communicative competence, the participation itself was an initial step toward learning. Card swapping and eternal mingle strategies were best to the respondents because both did not require much phonological processing. The less interesting techniques to the student respondents were designed to remedy social communication problems, meant just for the students to socialize with peers and develop confidence in the second language.

CONCLUSION

Lack of interest in an oral communication classes is due to many noticeable reasons. What is more important is the teacher's concern and continuous endeavor to motivate learners and remedy language and behavioral problems. Not to aggravate existing oral weaknesses, compensatory strategies should be employed. Remediation becomes faster when students begin to discriminate sounds more accurately and know what to expect in the activities and practices in the class. Students might be skeptical in the beginning, but when they see positive results of the teacher's plan and desired outcome, students become enthusiastic of the progress.

At the university level, learners benefit from these oral techniques by strengthening the foreign language acquisition skills of at-risk non-native English-speaking students. Positive attitudes go together with the teacher's desire may gradually increase the target behavior. Innovative and realistic life-situations may also be employed to attain success and lessen stress inside the class.

It is no surprise to the researcher realized that weaknesses of ESL Filipino learners in SL sound production, articulation, discrimination, articulation and difference floats. Upon identifying their inabilities and flaws in the second language, it is still but fitting to contemplate or the teachers not stop initiating appropriate means to help respondents become not only phonologically but communicatively competent.

Recommendations of the Study

1. ESL Filipino learners need to enhance and improve learning weaknesses using effective compensatory strategies.
2. Students may be encouraged to make use of innovative and interesting helpful strategies not only card swapping, communicative crossword, one-question survey, two-minute debate and eternal mingle to better learners' phonological and communicative competence.
3. Participants may continue to learn discriminate sounds more perfectly, distinguish the difference of consonants and vowels sounds, and may observe to find new ways on how to identify their needs and to better teaching with their participation in planning for their respective classes.
4. Learners may be encouraged to improve precise phoneme awareness task to focus and make use of developmentally appropriate activities for learners to upgrade phonological competence. Drills should not be too taxing but rather fun and exciting.

5. Facilitators may consider internet reading in teaching phonological and phonemic skills in small groups since students will likely be at different levels of competencies. Students may need more reinforcement and/or repetitive remedial instruction to master learning.
6. School mentors may consider maintaining a predictable routine and structured environment initiating prioritized checklists and reminders to enhance the person's functioning in aid of compensatory equalizers.
7. The university may incorporate in the curriculum the Basic English Language Training a program initiated by the Commission on Higher Education of the Philippines to help out ESL learners get more equipped with the SL.
8. Future researcher may take a risk in employing new techniques in teaching oral communication classes. A provision for innovative compensatory activities may be suggested to augment and pick up the pace of ESL learners' phonological incompetency.

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