

# PHILIPPINE HIGH-SCHOOL TEACHERS' COGNITION OF PRONUNCIATION TEACHING

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## Abstract

This study contributes to the steadily developing global picture of teacher cognition of pronunciation teaching by presenting the perspective of the Philippine context. It surveyed teachers' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices, as well as the impact of Covid-19 on pronunciation teaching and learning. The 251 responses from junior and senior high school English teachers suggest that pronunciation teaching in the Philippines is in a relatively healthy state. Teacher education appears to prepare teachers well, especially in terms of knowledge of phonetics and phonology and confidence in their own pronunciation. Although there was learning on how to teach pronunciation, respondents indicated that more was needed. Teachers wanted their students to communicate effectively rather than have native-like accents, and most notably, intonation teaching was high on the priority list. Additionally, distance learning during Covid-19 often meant that pronunciation was neglected. The study identifies a number of areas for follow-up in-depth qualitative studies.

**Keywords:** Teacher Cognition, Pronunciation Teaching, L2 Teacher Education, The Philippines.

## INTRODUCTION

Over the last 25 years, research into pronunciation teaching has led to large gains in pedagogical knowledge. However, to be of value, it must be reflected in teacher education and practice, which in turn leads to the need to more fully understand teachers' classroom actions and the factors that influence their behaviour (Couper, 2021). There has been a corresponding growth in research into teachers' cognitions of pronunciation teaching, that is teacher's knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, identities, and related practices. Teacher cognitions are complex, being influenced by many intertwined factors, including personality, experience, classroom and institutional context, and the wider context (Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015).

Research is slowly being undertaken in an ever-wider range of countries and contexts. This has included ESL contexts such as Canada (Foot et al., 2016) USA (Baker, 2014), Australia (Burri & Baker, 2021; Fraser, 2001), and New Zealand (Couper, 2021) as well EFL contexts. Here, studies have covered East and Southeast Asia: Malaysia (Wahid & Sulong, 2013), Hong Kong (Bai & Yuan, 2019) and Vietnam (Nguyen & Newton, 2020), South America: Brazil (Buss, 2016), Uruguay (Couper, 2016a), and Europe: Europe-wide (Henderson et al., 2012); and Turkey (Yağiz, 2018).

From this research, a global picture is starting to emerge, with several universal themes that cut across many contexts, while others may be specific to EFL and others.

There is broad agreement that pronunciation is important and that it should be taught (Bai & Yuan, 2019; Buss, 2016; Couper, 2016a; Henderson et al., 2012). However, many studies have found that teachers often lack the pedagogical knowledge of how to teach pronunciation, which is apparent in both ESL contexts (e.g., Couper, 2017; Foote et al., 2016; Fraser, 2001) and EFL contexts (e.g., Bai & Yuan, 2019; Nguyen & Newton, 2021; Wahid & Sulong, 2013). Teachers have also been found to lack content knowledge, that is knowledge of phonetics and phonology, especially in ESL contexts (e.g., Couper, 2016b; Fraser, 2001). In EFL contexts, teachers often have stronger knowledge of phonetics and phonology as seen in studies by Buss (2016), Nguyen and Newton (2020), and Couper (2016a). However, this is not always the case, with Bai and Yuan (2019) and Wahid and Sulong (2013) finding a lack of phonological knowledge was a problem.

In addition to knowledge of phonetics and phonology, and pedagogy, teachers also need to have intelligible pronunciation. This is clearly a problem that relates specifically to non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs). There are two factors to consider; teachers' actual pronunciation skills and their confidence in those skills. NNESTs have often reported that they are not confident enough in their pronunciation skills (Couper, 2016a; Nguyen & Newton, 2020; Yağiz, 2018). However, as most studies rely on self-reporting, it is difficult to establish whether it is solely a matter of confidence or if pronunciation skills levels are inadequate. Another key issue in teacher cognitions is teacher identity. Here too, NNESTs often struggle to establish their identities as fully qualified English language teachers who are fully capable of teaching pronunciation (Bai & Yuan, 2019; Couper, 2016a). Teachers also lack training, both pre-service (Couper, 2017) and in-service (Bai & Yuan, 2019). Likewise, they lack opportunities for training (Couper, 2016a; Nguyen & Newton, 2020). The above issues related to lack of training, knowledge and confidence, and teacher identities have meant that pronunciation teaching has been neglected in many contexts.

Other issues that have emerged in teacher cognition research are the goals that teaching should aspire to, what should be taught, how it should be taught, and when and how errors should be corrected. While it is now generally accepted that intelligibility is the appropriate goal in most contexts (Levis, 2018), many teachers still pursue the ideals of native speakerism (Henderson et al., 2012). This phenomenon is often reflected in a desire to use only inner circle varieties, usually US or British English, as models. It is also well established that teachers should focus on both segmentals and suprasegmentals (Burri, 2015) because they play an important role in effective communication (Derwing & Munro, 2015). However, much research has seen that segmentals receive the vast majority of attention (Burri & Baker, 2020).

Teaching techniques have been found to be generally limited, relying on listen-and-repeat and focused on ad hoc response to errors or occasional explanations (Couper, 2016a; Nguyen & Newton, 2020). Teaching has been limited to presentation and tightly controlled practice with limited free practice (Baker, 2014). There is also almost no use of diagnostics (Couper, 2019; Wahid & Sulong, 2013), meaning that most attention to

pronunciation occurs in the context of error correction. However, it has been seen that many teachers are not convinced that error correction is effective (Couper, 2019).

Contextual factors such as prescribed textbooks, syllabus and curricula, especially an exam-oriented curriculum that does not test pronunciation, have also led to pronunciation being neglected (Nguyen & Newton, 2020). Learner perspectives and expectations also play a role in teachers' decisions as do other institutional, sociocultural, national, and global factors (Bai & Yuan, 2019).

### **Pronunciation teaching in the Philippines**

The impact of globalization on the Philippines has meant a demand for Filipino students to develop a neutral accent that is acceptable in international communications (Malicsi, 2005). This demand has been driven by an increase in job opportunities resulting from the influx of business process outsourcing and call centers providing services to the world using English since the 1990s (Friginal, 2007). Some senior high schools have even collaborated with call centers as industry partners in which students are immersed through on-the-job training. In the Philippines, English is the medium of instruction in most subjects in high school.

In the 2004 general education curriculum, all tertiary students were required to take the course "Speech and Oral Communication". The course focused on improving pronunciation and public speaking skills. Target competencies included the correct production of sounds, stress, phrasing, blending, and intonation. Speech laboratories were also required in the Philippine Commission on Higher Education's 2004 policies, standards, and guidelines. However, changes to the general education curriculum in 2012/2013 led to moving this course down to senior high school. The course is now titled "Oral Communication in Context". At junior high school, grades 7 to 10, English subjects include speaking and pronunciation.

During the pandemic, classes in the Philippines became either modular distance learning through the use of SLMs (self-learning modules), fully online, and blended or a combination of SLM and online classes. The Department of Education also made changes, introducing a Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) list which tended to omit pronunciation (<https://www.scribd.com/document/463657411/MELC>).

Teachers at both Junior and Senior High School are expected to explicitly address pronunciation, requiring informed beliefs and practices towards pronunciation teaching (Balinas & Penilla, 2014). Currently little is known of Filipino teachers' cognitions of pronunciation teaching, leading to the need for this study. The aim of this study is to gain an overview of teachers' beliefs and practices, which will lead to a more in-depth follow-up study involving interviews and classroom observations. Such studies inform researchers, teacher education institutions, textbook and curriculum designers, and teachers on their own reflective practices (Couper, 2019).

This study addresses the research question: What is the state of knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices regarding pronunciation amongst Philippine junior and senior high school teachers?

## METHOD

The survey (Appendix A) attempts to shed light on the above research question by exploring:

- How well training supports the development of content knowledge (phonetics and phonology), pedagogical knowledge, and pronunciation skills. (Part 1 and Qs 4, 6, 7)
- Teacher confidence in teaching pronunciation, based on having sufficient content and pedagogical knowledge, and pronunciation skills. (Qs 1, 2, 3)
- Teachers' views on the value of pronunciation teaching, goals, and models (Qs 5 and 8).
- Teaching practices: learner-focus, attending to pronunciation, what is taught and how, corrective feedback, and the impact of Covid (Qs 9 – 21).

## Participants

Participants were drawn from current teachers of English in the junior and the senior high school private and public schools in Central Luzon, Philippines, during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. They were all Filipino second language (L2) speakers of English and had been teaching in that context for at least one year. Teachers who took units of Education to qualify for licensure examination and/or non-majors of English were also included. Sampling was purposive. The target number of participants was at least 381 English teachers from the eight provinces of Region 3 or Central Luzon with an estimated 36,810 total number of English teachers in the junior (n=29,701) and the senior (n=7,109) high school levels.

To determine the sample size of schools, the researchers used Cochran's formula and identified 261 schools out of 782 high schools. Through proportional allocation-stratified random sampling, they ensured that participating schools were proportionally representative of the 20 divisions in the region. Using systematic random sampling, they picked every third school in the list from the Department of Education (DepEd), grouped per division. To reach the desired sample size of 381, they invited at least two from each of the 261 schools. However, only 251 high school English teachers answered the questionnaire. It is always difficult to maximise survey responses. In this case, Google Forms may not have been familiar and accessible to all and there were some difficulties in contacting potential participants. Nevertheless, it is believed that the 251 responses provide a reasonably representative picture of the state of teachers' cognitions of pronunciation teaching.

A profile of the 251 participants reveals that most (90.04%) are teaching in public schools, and 79.65% teach junior high school. In terms of age and experience, 85.26% have been teaching for between one and 10 years and 59.75% are 20 to 30 years old. Professionally, most hold at least a bachelor's degree (84.86%) and 67.33% hold a license as a professional teacher and have not taught the course "Speech and Oral Communication" (78.59%). A small number of participants (10.76%) had not taken a bachelor's degree relevant to teacher education and therefore took 18 units of professional education

courses. Specifically, 6.37% took courses related to an Education major in English (i.e., Mass Communication, Bachelor of Arts in English, Bachelor of Secondary Education major in Literature, and Bachelor of Arts in Speech Communication). Some of them (16.73%) took up teacher education but majored in another subject (e.g., Mathematics, Industrial Education, Home Economics) while 6.73% took up business, computer science, and nursing.

### **Instrument**

This study adapted the questionnaire developed by Couper (2016b). The questionnaire includes items on background information (i.e., grade level taught, age, bachelor's degree, education/professional qualification, preparation in teaching pronunciation, years in teaching, and previous teaching experience), and on practices and beliefs in teaching pronunciation. The researchers excluded items that were not relevant to the local context and added items such as preparation and training and experience in teaching pronunciation.

Apart from the background information, there are 21 questions. They elicit answers to both open-ended questions and closed questions on a range of different scales. The instrument was pilot tested and further refined.

### **Data Collection**

Due to Coronavirus, data collection was online. The researchers obtained necessary permissions from education authorities, school heads, and ethics approval from the affiliated university. All potential participants were invited via Facebook Messenger and/or email and sent the link to the questionnaire in Google Forms.

### **Data Analysis**

To analyze the quantitative data, the researchers used descriptive statistics (i.e., frequency, percentage and mean) and investigated correlations between different factors

All the information gathered from the open-ended questions was categorized into thematic groups using NVivo 11. Responses in relation to error correction techniques were categorized according to Couper's (2019) summary of techniques.

## **RESULTS**

In this section, the quantitative results of the survey are presented followed by the qualitative ones. Note that when quoting participants, italics have been used rather than inverted commas.

### **Quantitative results**

The first part presents the results from Part 1 of the survey in relation to knowledge and skills learned during pre-service and in-service training. The second section reports on knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices.

### Teacher development: knowledge and skills learned

Table 1 shows the majority of participants learned about phonetics and phonology, how to teach pronunciation, and how to improve their own pronunciation in both pre-service and in-service training. As might be expected, more of them learned about phonetics and phonology (80.08% versus 70.52%) and ways to improve their own pronunciation (74.10% and 71.71%) pre-service. However, it seems that learning how to teach occurred slightly more often once participants were actually teaching (65.74% versus 62.15%).

**Table 1: Knowledge and Skills Learned During Pre-Service and In-Service Training**

Learned	Pre-service		In-service	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Phonetics and phonology	201	80.08	177	70.52
How to teach pronunciation	156	62.15	165	65.74
How to improve one's pronunciation	186	74.10	180	71.71

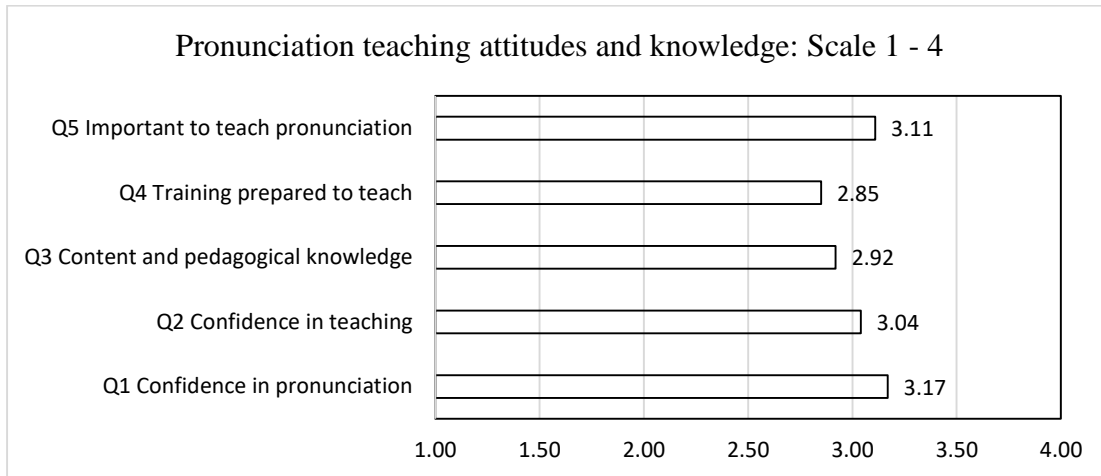
As shown in Table 2, participants gained knowledge on pronunciation in various ways, mostly by attending seminars and workshops (68.53%), by attending formal courses in tertiary or graduate school (50.60%), reading (44.22%), getting certification (16.73%), and through other means (3.98%) such as watching movies, working in a business process outsourcing or call center industry, and watching videos. The formal courses would have been at graduate school as 23.51% of the participants have units in the master's program; 10.36% have a master's degree and one (0.4%) has a doctorate degree.

**Table 2: Factors Contributing To Teachers' Knowledge Base of Pronunciation**

Professional Development Type	Frequency	Percentage
Formal courses	127	50.60
Certification (e.g., TESOL)	42	16.73
Seminars/Workshops	172	68.53
Professional readings	111	44.22
Others	10	3.98

### Knowledge, Attitudes, Beliefs, and Practices

Figure 1 shows the respondents' self-assessment of their attitudes and knowledge. Participants agree that they are confident in their own pronunciation (3.17) and in their ability to teach pronunciation (3.04). They also agree that teaching pronunciation is important (3.11), that their training prepared them to teach it, (2.85) and that they have good content and pedagogical knowledge (2.92).



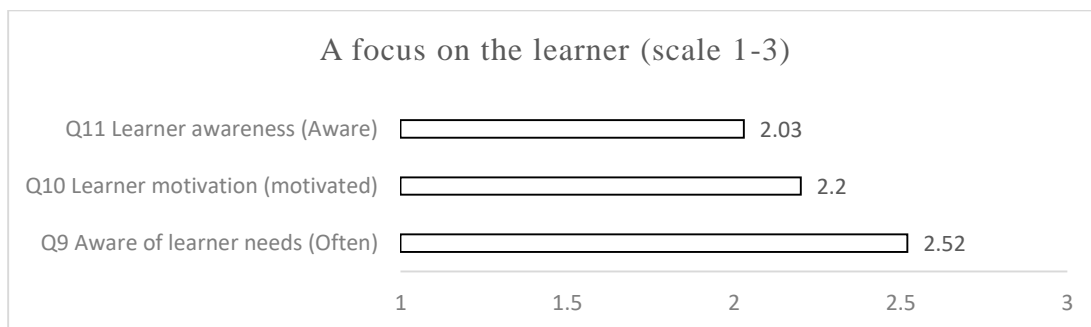
**Figure 1: pronunciation teaching attitudes and knowledge**

When asked about the ultimate goal of teaching pronunciation (Q8), 81.27% of the respondents answered *to be able to communicate* while 15.94% said *to sound native-like when speaking* (Table 3). Seven (2.78%) participants specified other teaching pronunciation goals. These were to develop self-monitoring abilities, to be understood, to communicate with hesitation, to gain confidence and credibility, to understand and be understood, and to be intelligible or comprehensible.

**Table 3: Goal of Pronunciation Teaching (Q8)**

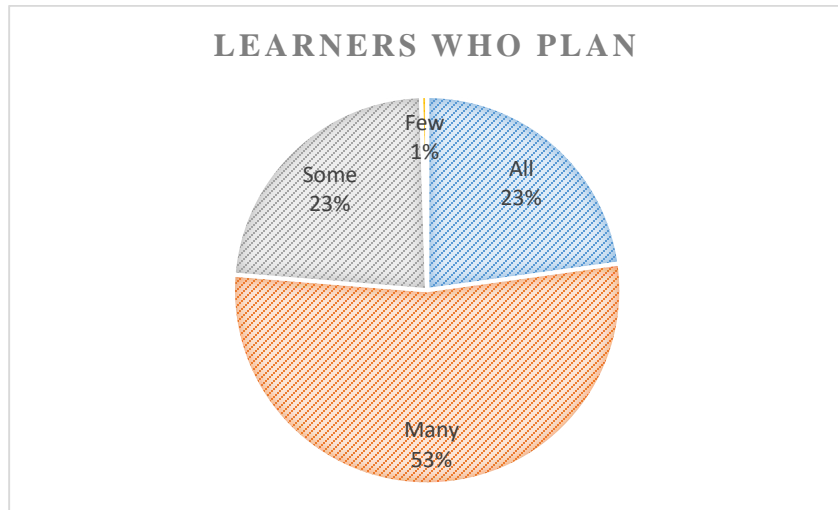
Goal	Frequency	Percentage
To sound native-like when speaking	40	15.94
To be able to communicate	204	81.27
Others	7	2.78

Questions 9 – 12 focused on the learner and revealed that participants believe their learners are aware (2.03) of their difficulties and think that their learners are motivated (2.20) to learn pronunciation. To gain an impression of teacher awareness of learners' pronunciation needs, they were asked how often they take note of learners' pronunciation difficulties in order to address them later. Responses suggested they often did this (4.2/5). This has been reduced proportionately to 2.52/3 in figure 2 to enable comparison with the other questions around learners.



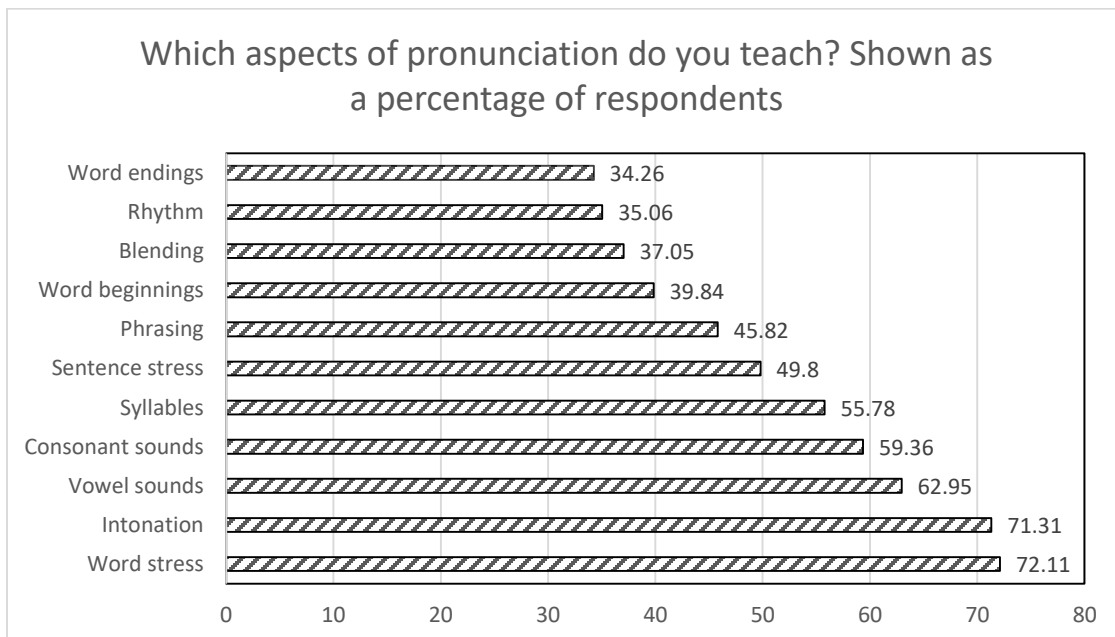
**Figure 2: A Focus on the Learner**

Question 12 aimed to find out if teachers were actively helping learners to develop a plan for improving their pronunciation. As can be seen in figure 2, 23% of respondents said that they make sure they all do, with a further 53% saying they encourage it.



**Figure 3: how many learners develop a plan.**

Questions 13 – 19 focused more on teachers' practices, revealing that most (73.71%) do not feel the need to be bound completely by the curriculum guide and often add pronunciation-related topics when they think it is appropriate. Participants also said they often teach pronunciation (3.72/5).



**Figure 4: aspects of pronunciation taught**



As can be seen in Figure 4, the aspects of pronunciation taught by the greatest number of teachers were word stress (72.11%) and intonation (71.31%), highlighting a strong recognition of the importance of suprasegmentals. These were followed by vowel sounds (62.95%), consonant sounds (59.36%), syllables (55.78%), and sentence stress (49.8%). Respondents also had the opportunity to name additional aspects of pronunciation. One said *Different cultural and sub-cultural contexts* and one said *fluency*

Figure 5 illustrates the range of techniques and activities employed by the participants in teaching pronunciation. By far the most commonly used technique is listen and repeat drills (91.24%), followed by the use of sounds and spelling (58.57%), and tongue twisters (53.39%). In addition to the choices offered, one respondent said *actual communication* and another one said *read aloud*.

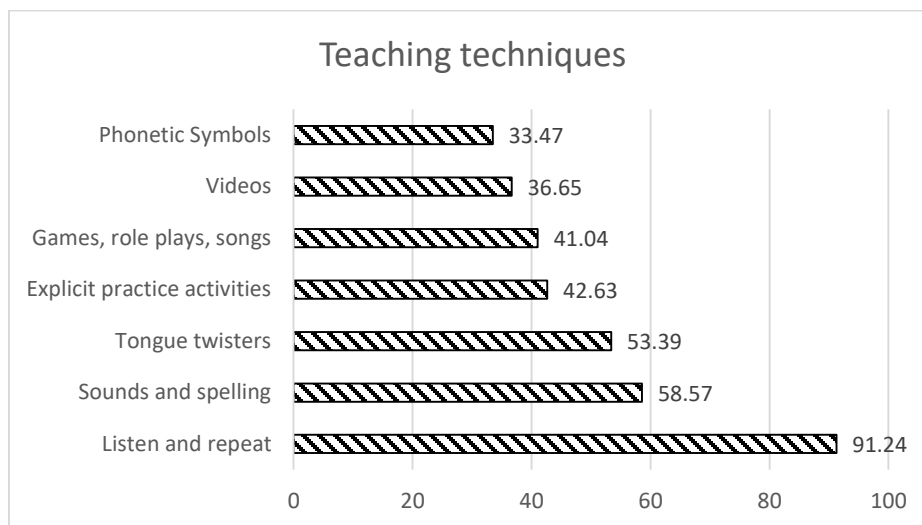


Figure 5: teaching techniques

The respondents said they often (4.06/5) correct their learners' pronunciation errors. In terms of timing (Figure 6), the majority provide corrective feedback immediately (64.14%), 17.53% wait until after the activity has finished, 13.55% only correct when it interferes with communication and 4.38% when it is the teaching focus of the lesson.

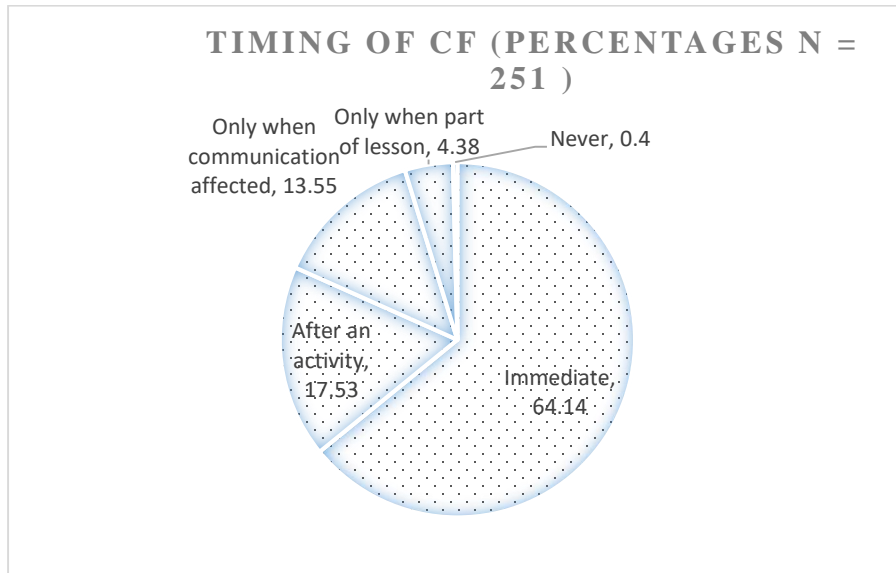


Figure 6: timing of corrective feedback

### Qualitative Results from Open-ended Questions

From questions 6, 7, 18, 20 and 21, several themes or topic areas emerged, summarized in Table 4 and expanded on below. Question six asked participants what the most important thing was that they learned during their training (Key Learning). Question seven aimed to identify gaps in knowledge and training and asked what they wished they had learned during their training (Desired Learning). Question 18 focused on how they usually correct pronunciation errors (Corrective Feedback (CF) Methods). Question 20 inquired on what they were most worried about when teaching pronunciation (Key Issues) while Question 21 asked how their pronunciation teaching has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic (Covid-19 Impact).

Table 4: summary of responses to open-ended questions

Key Learning	Desired Learning	CF Methods	Key Issues	Covid-19 Impact
<b>Pronunciation skills</b> (n=76)	<b>Pronunciation skills</b> (n=56) Confidence (n=2)	<b>More Implicit:</b> Listen & repeat /Modelling (n=158) Recast (n=10) Prompts: Self-correction (n=11) Prompts: Peer-correction (n=4)	<b>Teacher Pronunciation skills</b> (n=30)	<b>Delivery mode</b> and its effect to teaching (n=21)
<b>Goal of teaching pronunciation</b> (n=35)	<b>Pedagogy:</b> Pronunciation techniques or strategies (n=34) Authentic Communication (n=2) Authentic communication (n=2)	<b>More Explicit:</b> Physical explanation (n=36) Using IPA (n=10) Breaking of words into sounds (n=2)	<b>Pedagogy:</b> Students' pronunciation skills/How to help students (n=62) Ineffective teaching techniques (n=2)	<b>Limited oral practice</b> (n=16)

<p><b>Pedagogy:</b> Importance of confidence (n=10) Modelling (n=6) CF Methods (n=2) Authentic communication (n=2) Strategies (n=1)</p>	<p><b>Phonetics and Phonology:</b> Accent/English variety (n=27) Sounds and phonetics (n=20) Suprasegmentals (n=3)</p>	<p><b>No Correction: (n=18)</b></p>	<p><b>Other:</b> Regional Accent (n=5) Student's attitudes (n=7)</p>	<p><b>MELCs:</b> Less emphasis in teaching pronunciation (n=5)</p>
<p><b>Phonetics and Phonology:</b> Suprasegmentals (n=13) Segmentals (n=11) Phonetic transcription (n=12) Accent/English variety (n=9) Articulation (n=5) Vocabulary (n=3)</p>	<p><b>Other:</b> Learn from NS (n=2) More time for training (n=2) Want to do more training (n=2)</p>			<p><b>Challenging monitoring of students (n=3)</b></p>

The respondents referred to a range of learning contexts that had informed their teacher cognitions. These included early education, undergraduate and postgraduate studies, TESOL, and other speech-enhancing training with native speakers. They had also learned through work experience as English or ESL teachers or as a *call center agent*, as well as their own initiatives such as reading materials (e.g., comic books, dictionary) and watching *videos, foreign movies and series, and shows*.

Firstly, as can be seen in Table 4, the participants reported that their most important takeaways from training were pronunciation skills (n=76). A good number (n=35) specified the goal of teaching pronunciation as their key learning.

In terms of pedagogy, they learned the importance of confidence (n=10), the technique of modeling (n=6), CF methods (n=2), the need for authentic communication (n=2), and strategies (n=1). The respondents also learned content such as suprasegmentals (n=13), segmentals (n=11), phonetic transcription, particularly the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) (n=12), accent/English variety such as American and British (n=9), and related vocabulary (n=3).

The teacher-participants referred to two goals of pronunciation as their key learning; some (n=32) said that communication is the goal, *instead of sounding native-like* while three said the aim is *sounding native-like*. This is consistent with the results in Table 3, where 81.27% of the participants said that the aim is to communicate.

One expressed that one cannot learn proper pronunciation *without constant exposure or the environment (full of native speakers/people with accurate and proper pronunciation)*.

One respondent detailed how teachers can model pronunciation based on training; s/he wrote, *Teachers have to demonstrate it first, then do it with the learners, and then, the learners do it on their own*. On accent, one participant specified that it must be *neutral* while another pointed out that there is a *variety* of accents and all of which are correct.

In line with the quantitative results showing agreement on the importance of pronunciation, some participants commented how this had become clear to them through their training:

- *Proper pronunciation is helpful in understanding grammar.*
- *Proper pronunciation helps to have a good facility of language.*
- *It helps to avoid miscommunication.*
- *It [Pronunciation] is important because learning pronunciation helps to develop our vocabulary and know the correct way on how to pronounce the word/s. I learned pronunciation during my college [years].*

When asked what they wished they had learned in training, very similar themes emerged, suggesting that while what they had learned was useful, they needed more depth. Specifically, they wanted to learn how to pronounce words correctly (n=56), to learn techniques/strategies in teaching pronunciation (n=34) such as how to teach phonetics, create pronunciation remedial activities designed for large number of students, strategies to address speaking difficulties, and correct fossilized errors of Filipino and foreign students. They also wished they had learned about; accent/English variety (n=27), sounds and phonetics (n=20), suprasegmental stress and intonation (n=3), facilitating authentic communication/simulation (n=2), and confidence in pronunciation (n=2). A range of other wishes were mentioned, such as learning *borrowed words, words with complicated spelling and with silent letters, commonly mispronounced words, and modern English used in call centers*. Additionally, two wanted to learn *from native speakers*, two others wished for *more time for training* and two more claimed they were willing to undergo more training. These gaps in knowledge may account for the results in Figure 1, which suggest participants have good rather than excellent knowledge in terms of content pedagogy.

A range of error correction methods were reported by the participants. Their responses sometimes covered more than one of these themes, but in general terms, listen-and-repeat (n=158) was clearly the most used method. Another largely implicit/imitative (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010) method involved recasting or repeating the word correctly (n=10). Prompts were also reported through the teacher encouraging students to correct their own errors (n=11) or asking other students to provide the correction guidance (n=4). A number of participants also reported providing very explicit feedback through explanations related to articulation or physical explanation (n=36) or, in two cases, breaking the mispronounced words into individual sounds. Ten participants used IPA symbols explicitly in their corrections as a way of making the target sound clear to students.

Some participants (n=7) were also concerned about offending students when correcting them as seen in the following statements:

- *By telling the learners in a way they won't be offended or upset*
- *I correct them in a way that they will not feel bad on their mistakes*

- *I will repeat his/her whole answer to emphasize the mispronounced word in a way he/she will not be embarrassed.*

In a similar vein, one participant revealed that they do not correct students' pronunciation errors because of not wanting to *humiliate them or break their courage trying to speak English*. In this case, the teacher also reported focusing on grammar and spelling rather than pronunciation when using the self-learning modules (SLMs) imposed as a result of Covid. A number of others appeared not to correct pronunciation, with sixteen writing N/A, two saying the SLMs made it impossible, and another two with responses that were unclear. This compares with only one respondent saying *never* in Figure 6 above, suggesting this is in need of further investigation.

In response to question 20, which asked them what they were most worried about, some of the key issues that emerged were relevant to teachers' pronunciation skills, pedagogy, and confidence. While the closed questions suggested that the respondents are confident with their own pronunciation and their ability to teach it (see Figure 1), the open question found that 30 participants are worried about their own pronunciation and if they are teaching the *correct pronunciation*. Respondents shared that they *lack knowledge*, fear *encountering an unfamiliar words*, worry about their *accent* and possible *discrimination*, and feel bothered about how they look while modeling pronunciation. One participant is afraid to mispronounce /p/ and /f/ which is seen as *regional defects* and another thinks they might mix up *long and short vowel sounds*. As a remedy, two said that they research using Google before teaching. Two of them also wondered if they were using the *correct techniques*.

A second key issue for many participants (n=62) was their students' pronunciation and how they could help them. Five others felt that students' regional accents had a detrimental effect on their English pronunciation. Some felt that gaps in students' knowledge of vocabulary and phonetics made it difficult to help them *unlearn wrong pronunciation*. Students' attitudes towards learning pronunciation also troubled the teacher-respondents, thinking that learners may get *tired of learning pronunciation*, feel *awkward*, *self-conscious*, or *intimidated* while pronouncing correctly and *offended* while being corrected, be *uncooperative*, and ridicule their classmates. They encountered students with the mindset that *call center English is the correct one*, leading to *over delivering [their message] well*, and they *overdo and don't sound natural*.

The COVID pandemic also impacted the teaching of pronunciation. Classes in the Philippines became either modular distance learning through the use of SLMs (self-learning modules), fully online, and blended or a combination of SLM and online classes. Teacher-respondents singled out the delivery mode (n=21), limited oral practice among learners (n=16), less emphasis on pronunciation in the MELCs (n=5), and the more challenging ways to monitor learners (n=3), as the notable changes. One claimed that *SLM don't [does not include] lessons on pronunciation* at all and another admitted not teaching pronunciation during the pandemic. The students who did not attend online classes and relied on SLM alone *did not talk to their teachers* during the school year. Health and safety protocols restricted the mobility of people, especially minors. Hence,

the teachers did not have a chance to teach these students or to practice their own pronunciation.

A number of difficulties were identified with online teaching. In addition to it being *quite complex*, the following factors were reported as having a negative impact on pronunciation teaching and assessment: *distracting external noise*, *poor internet connection*, *limited devices to use for online classes*, and *student-teacher communication*. The *limited screen time* imposed by the DepEd also resulted in limited to no time for oral activities.

For some participants from private schools which must have delivered instruction online, the pandemic *did not affect* pronunciation teaching negatively or *eased* it because *technology is easily accessible*. A good number, however, still prefer *face-to-face teaching* to online.

## DISCUSSION

The study asked a number of questions in an attempt to better understand Filipino teachers' cognitions and related practices in teaching pronunciation. This section first considers the impact and adequacy of training on promoting content and pedagogical knowledge and on the development of teachers' pronunciation skills. Then, the role of knowledge and skills in instilling confidence and encouraging teachers to focus on pronunciation is considered followed by a discussion of participants' beliefs and attitudes towards pronunciation teaching and how they are reflected in practice.

Teacher knowledge is a key factor in supporting the likelihood of teachers addressing pronunciation in the classroom and in feeling confident when doing so. Three types of knowledge and skills were explored: Knowledge of phonetics and phonology, teachers' own pronunciation skills, and teachers' pedagogical knowledge.

Participants appear to have been well prepared in terms of knowledge about phonetics and phonology, with 80% reporting that they learned about it in pre-service training and 70% during in-service training. This is in line with findings in other EFL contexts such as Vietnam (Nguyen & Newton, 2021), Brazil (Buss, 2016) and Uruguay (Couper, 2016). However, it should be noted that studies in Hong Kong (Bai & Yuan, 2019) and Malaysia (Wahid & Sulong (2013) have reported a lack of teacher phonological knowledge.

Participants reported having received support (74% pre-service and 72% in-service) and being reasonably confident (3.7/4) in their own pronunciation skills. By way of comparison, some studies in other contexts have found that teachers desire more help with their own pronunciation (Bai & Yuan, 2019; Couper, 2016a).

The other area of knowledge addressed was pedagogical knowledge. Results here suggest that even though 62% said they had learned how to teach pronunciation pre-service and 65% in-service, this had received the least attention. Other studies appear to suggest that the situation is similar but more pronounced in other contexts. These include both ESL contexts such as Canada (Foote et al., 2016), Australia (Fraser, 2001), and

New Zealand (Couper, 2017), as well as EFL contexts such as Hong Kong (Bai & Yuan, 2019), Malaysia (Wahid & Sulong, 2013) and Vietnam (Nguyen & Newton, 2021).

The open-ended questions also tend to suggest the pre-service and in-service training in these areas was helpful (76 mentioned work on their own pronunciation, 41 phonetics and phonology, and 21 pedagogical knowledge). However, it is not clear whether this was sufficient as a number of respondents felt they needed more knowledge (own pronunciation – 58, pedagogy – 36, and phonetics and phonology – 23). It seems that their greatest concerns are with their own pronunciation and how to teach it. In particular, the open-ended questions suggest that for some at least, concerns about their own pronunciation may be limiting their confidence. These concerns have come out more strongly in other research involving NNESTs (Couper, 2016a; Nguyen & Newton, 2020; Yağiz, 2018). This suggests more qualitative research might be appropriate to further explore just how confident teachers in the Philippines are and what the reasons for that might be.

Another factor impinging on confidence is pedagogical knowledge. As noted above, 36 respondents felt they needed more support in how to teach pronunciation. This was also reflected in responses suggesting a concern about how to help their students and a desire for greater pedagogical knowledge. As noted above many other studies have also reported a similar desire, and this lack of knowledge restricts confidence (e.g Baker, 2014)

Questions also revealed some insights into teachers' attitudes and beliefs. It was found that participants are very aware of the importance of pronunciation and teaching it. This finding seems to be fairly universal (See, for example, Bai & Yuan, 2019; Buss, 2016; Couper, 2016a; Henderson et al., 2012). The closed questions suggested an awareness of learners' pronunciation needs, and that many attempted to encourage learners to develop a plan. This is quite unusual as most research to date has tended to find that teachers do not undertake diagnostic tests or help students develop plans to improve their pronunciation. Further qualitative research could usefully explore how teachers here set this up and if they have more institutional support than elsewhere.

Although some studies have found that many teachers are strongly influenced by native speakerism (Henderson et al., 2012) it would seem that the participants in this study are clearly in favour of a focus on the ability to communicate. This is in line with the literature now being generally in favour of the intelligibility principle (Chen, 2016; Levis, 2018), along with recognition that a goal of being easily understood is much more realistic (Derwing & Munro, 2015). Related to the question of goals is the identity and role of the NNEST. From the findings, it appears that even though some concerns were raised in the open-ended responses, many participants are reasonably comfortable with their own pronunciation and in their identities as NNESTs. However, this relied on self-reporting and would require further qualitative research to delve deeper into teachers' pronunciation and pronunciation teaching skills and their identities.

This consideration of teachers' cognitions leads onto the question of how they are reflected in practice. In terms of what is taught, respondents claimed to teach a wide

range of aspects at both the segmental and suprasegmental levels . It is particularly interesting that two suprasegmental features, intonation (71%) and word stress (72%), were said to be given the greatest attention. Many other studies (e.g. Foote et al., 2016; Nguyen & Newton, 2020) have found that most pronunciation teaching focuses on segmentals. Teachers have also reported that even if they do not teach suprasegmentals, they recognize them as important and that they should pay greater attention to them (Couper, 2016a, 2017; Wahid & Sulong, 2013). The results here are more in line with research showing the importance of suprasegmentals in communication (Derwing & Munro, 2015). The Philippine context appears to encourage intonation teaching. However, a qualitative investigation would provide an understanding of the various contextual factors behind this. Along with expected findings that vowels and consonants were often taught, a strong focus on other features, such as syllables and stress, reinforces the impression that suprasegmentals are a strong focus of English language teaching in the Philippines.

In line with findings from many other studies (Couper, 2016a; Nguyen & Newton, 2020), the most popular teaching technique is model, listen and repeat. It might have been expected that, given the Department of Education's focus on effective communication and use of authentic tasks, we would see a greater amount of focus on less controlled and free activities. The focus on tightly controlled teaching techniques appears to have emerged from most studies (e.g. Baker, 2014). Again, research involving observations of teachers in action would lead to a greater understanding of techniques used.

In terms of Corrective Feedback, the respondents often correct pronunciation errors, with two-thirds saying they do it immediately. The open-ended question also suggested listen-and-repeat, where the teacher models the correct pronunciation, was by far the most popular approach to CF. Physical explanations were the next most common where teachers use instructional gestures or images to correct pronunciation errors. This is in line with other findings that most pronunciation teaching is ad-hoc and in response to errors (Couper, 2019). A qualitative study might reveal the extent to which CF builds off prior teaching, an important factor in its success (Saito & Lyster, 2012).

The role of textbooks and curriculum guides in limiting pronunciation teaching has been highlighted in other studies (Nguyen & Newton, 2020). The results of this study suggest that teachers are quite comfortable in going beyond the curriculum guide when pronunciation does not receive sufficient cover. Whether this is because of deficiencies in the curriculum guide or because teachers are responding to needs as they arise, would require further investigation.

Contextual factors may have had a positive impact on what appears to be a relatively healthy state of pronunciation teaching in the Philippines. Perhaps most significant is the focus on benefiting from the impact of globalization through operating call centers and other international business services. This has led to aiming for easily intelligible accents and an education system that places a high premium on effective oral communication in English.



Covid had an impact on pronunciation teaching in a number of ways. It saw the introduction of self-learning modules and changes to competencies, which for many students led to a loss of pronunciation instruction and a lack of opportunity for genuinely interactive communication. Similar observations were reported from Turkey (Isler & Elmas, 2022) where learners were found to have fewer opportunities to practice speaking. However, other studies in contexts with good access to the internet and related technology, and with participants studying at university level, have found that pronunciation can still be adequately addressed (Moxon, 2021). While students in private schools in the Philippines managed quite well with online learning, as reported by the 10% of participants teaching in that context, the rest relied mostly on self-learning modules and did not fare so well. As noted in the results section, internet connectivity and devices represent huge challenges in the Philippines, especially for public school students (De Guzman, 2021). Therefore, we conclude that Covid also led to a widening of the gap between those attending public and private schools and that those without good internet access were more adversely affected.

## IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The results imply that pre- and in-service training should be reviewed to address the need for more lessons on pronunciation pedagogy, specifically in designing communicative activities and in making the teaching of pronunciation relevant. The focus on pronunciation pedagogy may give teachers more confidence in their own pronunciation and in knowing how to help learners and address any negative attitudes they may have towards pronunciation. A further implication is that the curriculum guide might be reviewed for the adequacy of its

pronunciation-related objectives and how they are reflected in the MELCs. The DepEd may consider highlighting pronunciation goals and funding-related certifications. Textbook designers may also integrate strategies and techniques in teaching pronunciation towards the attainment of the goal of communication. It is hoped that greater support for teachers will encourage them to become reflective practitioners and lead them to focus on the aim of intelligible pronunciation.

An implication from the Covid experience is that there is an urgent need to improve internet access so that teachers can take advantage of online teaching resources and software programs. In particular, students attending public schools need to be provided with reliable internet access and the relevant devices if they are to develop to their full potential.

There are also a number of limitations to the study. Response numbers were reasonable, although below expectations and it seems that younger teachers may be over-represented. A number of issues have also been identified that would benefit from a more in-depth qualitative study. These include teacher confidence and factors behind it, how teachers diagnose their learners' needs, teachers' pronunciation and pronunciation teaching skills and their identities as NNESTs, contextual factors behind the focus on suprasegmentals, teaching techniques used, the extent to which corrective feedback builds on prior teaching, and the curriculum guide.

## CONCLUSION

This study has further added to a growing global picture of teacher cognition of pronunciation teaching. It has also provided an initial overview of the as-yet unexplored state of pronunciation teaching in the Philippines. Although there may still be deficits, content and pedagogical knowledge appear to be at a reasonable level, which certainly allows teachers to be confident in their explicit instruction. The strong focus on suprasegmentals was particularly notable. There are nevertheless actions that could be taken to further support teachers in terms of pedagogy and helping them to improve and be more confident in their own pronunciation. These might include a greater focus on pedagogy in both pre- and in-service training, and improvements to the curriculum guide to offer more help with pronunciation, especially in encouraging the development of less-controlled and free activities. The impact of Covid was also seen to further disadvantage those without the means to access online learning.

As anticipated, the issues identified in the study require a more in-depth qualitative investigation to further explore and better understand the realities behind them. It will be important to not only explore issues with teachers through dialogue but also to observe how the various aspects of their cognitions on pronunciation teaching are reflected in practice.

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