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RESEARCH ARTICLE

ALLOPHONIC PRONUNCIATION VARIETIES AMONG THE STUDENTS OF JOSE RIZAL MEMORIAL STATE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

This study investigated the allophonic pronunciation varieties among students of Jose Rizal Memorial State University, Dapitan City, with particular emphasis on the factors influencing their pronunciation skills and the development of a speech improvement program for second language learners. Employing a descriptive-normative survey design, the researcher utilized simple random sampling within a cluster framework drawn from the seven colleges of the university. Data collection involved observation and survey instruments administered to selected students. The findings revealed four major categories of allophonic pronunciation variation: vowel sound mispronunciations; semivowel and diphthongal sound mispronunciations; consonantal sound mispronunciations; and mispronunciations of words with irregular orthographies. Contributing factors identified include sex, family background (particularly the medium of oral communication), academic course, limited exposure to pronunciation drills and speech models, difficulty in acquiring accurate English phonemes, negative attitudes toward the English language, lack of proficient pronunciation models, insufficient faculty training, and inadequate instructional facilities. In light of these findings, the study recommends addressing these influencing factors through the implementation of a comprehensive, intensive, and curriculum-integrated pronunciation enhancement program tailored to the needs of English language learners.

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Introduction:-

Pronunciation issues involving allophonic variations—non-distinctive realizations of phonemes occurring in specific linguistic environments—can pose significant challenges to students' academic engagement and communicative competence. At Jose Rizal Memorial State University (JRMSU), such issues have increasingly become a barrier to clear self-expression and effective second language acquisition. Krashen (cited by Page, 2010) asserts that when learners become anxious about making errors, particularly in pronunciation, they tend to become defensive, which hinders their linguistic confidence and classroom participation. In some cases, students are subjected to ridicule—not necessarily for providing incorrect answers during class recitations, but for mispronouncing certain utterances, which leads to social discomfort and emotional withdrawal.

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Schumann (quoted by Pascasio) refers to students with low ego permeability as being particularly vulnerable to such criticisms, which may lead to inhibition and reluctance to participate further in oral discussions. These difficulties are not confined to early learners; even senior college students often commit pronunciation errors, some of which they make consciously or have come to normalize. For example, the mispronunciation of /p/ as /f/ and /æ/ as /ʌ/ can transform the intended word “pack” into an inappropriate or vulgar term, leading to potential embarrassment and misunderstanding.

Such issues emphasize the importance of recognizing pronunciation not merely as a mechanical aspect of language learning but as a fundamental component of effective speech communication. According to Krashen (mentioned by Campoy, 2013), college students are expected to have developed adequate self-monitoring mechanisms in their language use. However, the persistence of pronunciation lapses suggests a gap in the instructional approaches currently in place. This calls for the systematic enhancement of English pronunciation instruction in tertiary education at state universities worldwide.

As Carruthers (quoted by Page, 2010) rightly recommends, any pronunciation defect that causes a speaker to be misunderstood—or not understood at all—warrants correction. The objective of pronunciation teaching, however, is not to produce native-like speakers but rather intelligible ones. As Carruthers notes, pronunciation should be clear enough to be understood and should not distract from the speaker’s intended message.

This linguistic inquiry into Allophonic Pronunciation Varieties among the Students of Jose Rizal Memorial State University is anchored on both pedagogical and communicative concerns. It aims to identify the recurrent allophonic variations observed among college students, investigate the underlying factors contributing to these variations, and propose pedagogical strategies to improve pronunciation instruction. Drawing on principles from Pronunciation Theory and Speech Act Theory, the study recognizes that language is not only structured but also functional. Effective communication entails more than the articulation of forms; it involves the correct phonetic projection of speech to convey intended meanings and functions—whether to greet, request, compliment, or express disagreement.

Ultimately, understanding the factors that contribute to persistent mispronunciations may help educators design more effective and responsive approaches to pronunciation teaching. This study endeavors to contribute practical insights and theoretical grounding for developing targeted speech improvement interventions within the curriculum.

Objectives of the Study:-

This study aimed to investigate the allophonic pronunciation varieties among the students of Jose Rizal Memorial State University (JRMSU), with the ultimate goal of utilizing the findings to inform the development of a targeted speech improvement program.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine the most commonly occurring allophonic pronunciation varieties committed by the students across different phonological categories;
2. Identify the key factors that influence the pronunciation skills of students at Jose Rizal Memorial State University; and
3. Propose evidence-based instructional interventions and strategies designed to enhance students’ pronunciation skills, thereby supporting more effective speech communication in the context of second language learning.

Methods:-

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to investigate the allophonic pronunciation varieties among students at Jose Rizal Memorial State University during the First Semester of the Academic Year 2024-2025. The approach allowed for an in-depth examination of current pronunciation patterns and the factors contributing to pronunciation difficulties. A combination of data collection methods was used, including a structured questionnaire checklist, direct observation, document analysis, and follow-up interviews. These tools enabled the researcher to gather both quantitative and qualitative data relevant to the linguistic performance of the student-respondents.

The primary instrument used in this study was a researcher-developed questionnaire checklist designed to identify specific pronunciation variations. Supplementary data were obtained through classroom observations and individual interviews, which provided contextual insights into learners' oral language behaviors. These methods allowed the researchers to describe and interpret the existing conditions in real-time and to formulate insights based on the actual linguistic phenomena observed.

In terms of sampling, the study utilized a combination of probability and non-probability sampling techniques. For the probability sampling component, simple random sampling was conducted to select respondents from the various colleges of the university. Each student had an equal chance of being selected, and the sampling process was facilitated by the availability of the participants during the administration of the research instruments. This method ensured unbiased representation across the different academic programs.

Complementing the probability sampling, the study also employed snowball sampling, a non-probability method under the broader category of convenience sampling. This technique was particularly useful in reaching respondents who exhibited specific pronunciation characteristics but were not easily accessible through random selection. Initial participants who met the study criteria referred other potential respondents, thereby expanding the sample base with relevant individuals.

The impetus for conducting this research stemmed from the researchers' classroom observations and experiences. Notable challenges in students' oral and written English performance—especially in pronunciation—became evident during assessments and classroom interactions. Many students were observed to exhibit timidity and hesitation when required to speak in class, often due to a lack of confidence in their grammatical and phonological accuracy. These observed deficiencies motivated the researcher to undertake the present study with the broader goal of improving students' competencies, not only in enunciation, but also in all aspects of the English language and literature, including pronunciation, which is fundamental to effective communication.

The target population of the study consisted of 1,200 students enrolled across the various colleges of JRMSU Main Campus. Using a margin of error of 5%, a sample size of 300 respondents was determined to be sufficient for the study.

A simple proportionate sampling technique using the lottery method was employed to ensure equitable representation from each college. The proportion was calculated by dividing the sample size (300) by the total population (1,200), resulting in a sampling proportion of 0.25. The number of respondents from each college was then computed by multiplying the number of enrolled students per college by the derived proportion. Students were selected randomly from these college-based subsets to reduce sampling bias and ensure representation across academic programs.

In addition to probability sampling, snowball sampling, a non-probability technique under convenience sampling, was used to identify additional participants who exhibited relevant pronunciation characteristics, particularly when certain subgroups were difficult to access through random methods. Initial respondents helped refer others with similar traits, enriching the data with authentic cases of allophonic variations.

The primary data collection tool was a researcher-developed questionnaire checklist, which was validated by language experts before the administration of the instrument. Supplementary data were gathered through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews to capture real-time instances of pronunciation challenges and contextual linguistic behaviors. This mixed-method approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of students' pronunciation patterns.

Results:-

The pronunciation varieties among JRMSU students were classified under the following categories:

- A. Typical Words with Vowel Sound Mispronunciation;
- B. Typical Words with Semivowel and Diphthongal Sound Mispronunciation;
- C. Typical Words with Consonantal Sound Mispronunciation;
- D. Typical Words Mispronounced for Their Irregular Orthography

This study presents only the most frequently mispronounced words as identified among a significant number of students. Each representative word serves as a phonological marker for a broader set of mispronounced lexical items that share similar phonemic patterns and orthographic structures. The approach is grounded in the assumption that

the same allophonic deviation evident in a given word may occur in other words of similar linguistic configuration, even if those words are not explicitly listed due to space constraints.

For example, the word *sachet*, which is commonly mispronounced by students with the final segment rendered as /-t/ instead of the correct /ʃeɪt/, is indicative of a recurring pattern. This same mispronunciation tendency may extend to other French-derived loanwords such as *ballet*, *crochet*, and *bouquet*. These words, though not exhaustively enumerated in the data, likely share the same misarticulation due to similar orthographic endings and non-phonetic spelling-to-sound correspondences.

Discussions:-

A. Typical Words with Vowel Sound Mispronunciation

Approximately three out of five college students at Jose Rizal Memorial State University demonstrated mispronunciations involving English vowel phonemes. The following list represents the most frequently mispronounced vowel sounds based on observed data. Each sample word illustrates a phonological error that may apply to other similarly structured words, even if those words are not explicitly included due to space constraints.

1. /ɪ/ – This short front vowel is often substituted with /i/, /e/, or other vowel sounds, particularly when represented by irregular orthographies.

Examples:

biscuit → /wɪ/

little → /letəl/

English → /ɪŋlɪʃ/, /eŋlɪʃ/

ensign → /'ensain/

parliament → /'parlyəmənt/

women → /wʊmən/, /wumən/

before → /befər/, /bifər/

been → /bin/

2. **Schwa** /ə/ – This unaccented vowel sound is frequently elongated or replaced by /e/, /ɛ/, or /a/.

Examples:

college → /kələdʒ/, /kəledʒ/

certain → /sɜrtən/

mortal → /mɔrtəl/

famous → /fejməs/, /famas/

budget → /bʌdʒət/

Britain → /brɪtən/

special → /spəʃəl/

difference → /defərəns/

3. /i:/ – This long front vowel is often shortened or replaced with /ɛ/, /e/, or /ɪ/.

Examples:

equal → /ekwəl/

even → /even/

meter → /mɛtər/

sequence → /sekwens/

frequent → /frɛkwənt/

ceiling → /selɪŋ/, /selɪŋ/

obsolete → /ɒbsəlet/

unique → /junɪk/, /junɛk/

4. /eɪ/ – This diphthong is often mispronounced as /ɛ/ or /ɪ/.

Examples:

paint → /pɛnt/

waste → /wɛst/

paste → /pɛst/

fatal → /fatəl/

radar → /radər/

halo → /halo/

opaque → /ɑpək/

acre → /ækər/

5. /ɛ/ – Frequently mispronounced as /ɪ/, /e/, /a/, or /æ/.

Examples:

special → /speʃəl/

sweater → /swɪtər/, /swɛtər/

legendary → /lɛdʒəndəri/, /lɛdʒəndəri/

heifer → /haɪfər/

any → /eni/

instead → /ɪnstɪd/

dictionary → /dɪkʃənəri/, /dɪkʃənəri/

leopard → /liwərd/

6. /æ/ – This vowel is often replaced by /a/ or /ɛ/, with significant difficulty noted in approximation.

Examples:

apple → /ɛpəl/

half → /haf/

slacks → /slaks/

class → /klɪs/

laugh → /laf/

exam → /ɛgzəm/

cabin → /kəbən/, /kæbən/

wagon → /wəgən/, /wɛgən/

7. /ʌ/ – Commonly confused with /a/ or /ɒ/.

Examples:

son → /sən/

luxury → /lʌgzuri/, /lɒgzuri/

- blood** → /blʌd/, /blad/
tongue → /tʌŋ/
culture → /kʌltʃər/, /kʌltʃər/
8. /a/ – While typically not mispronounced by Cebuano speakers, occasional substitutions with /æ/, /ɔ/, or /ʌ/ are noted.
Examples:
hearth → /hɜrθ/, /harθ/
nominate → /nɒmɪneɪt/, /nomɪneɪt/
politics → /pəˈlɪtɪks/
document → /dɒkjʊmənt/
- double** → /dʌbəl/, /dobəl/
tough → /tʌf/
vulgar → /vʌlgər/
9. /u/ and /ʊ/ – These back vowels are frequently interchanged or substituted for other sounds.
Examples:
supervisor → /sjuːpərvajzər/
flu → /flʊ/
tomb → /tʌm/
canoe → /kənəʊ/
- collar** → /kɒlər/, /kʌlər/
wash → /wæʃ/
contact → /kɒntækt/, /kʌntækt/
doctor → /dɒktər/
10. /ʊ/ – This phoneme is frequently misread as /o/, /u/, or other variants based on spelling.
Examples:
wolf → /wɒlf/
bulletin → /bʊlətɪn/, /bolətɪn/
today → /tədeɪ/, /todeɪ/
would → /wʊd/, /wod/
- flew** → /flju/
soup → /sop/
jewel → /dʒewəl/
bamboo → /bæmbʊ/, /bæmbu/
11. /oo/ – This mid-back rounded vowel is often replaced by /ɔ/, /ʌ/, or approximated based on spelling.
Examples:
radio → /rɛdʒəʊ/, /redju/
corps → /kɔːps/
poem → /pəem/
apropos → /apɹəpəʊ/
- should** → /ʃʊd/, /ʃɔɪd/
pudding → /pʊdɪŋ/, /pɔdɪŋ/
pulpit → /pʊlpɪt/
bush → /bʊʃ/
12. /ɔ/ – Mispronunciations often arise from irregular spellings.
Examples:
thesaurus → /θesawrus/
because → /bɪkɔs/, /bɪkəs/
law → /lo/
pause → /pɔs/
- forum** → /fɔrəm/
smoking → /smɔkɪŋ/
bow → /baw/
sew → /syw/, /sju/
13. /ɜr/ or /ər/ – This r-colored central vowel is often mispronounced as /ɪr/, /ɛr/, or /ɔr/.
Examples:
earth → /ɪrθ/
shirt → /ʃɪrt/
stir → /stɪr/
hurt → /hɜrt/
- water** → /wɔtər/
altar → /ɔltər/
holiday → /hɔlɪdeɪ/
dawn → /dɔn/
- fur** → /fɜr/, /fɔr/
fertile → /fɜrtəl/
early → /ɪrli/
church → /tʃɜrʃ/, /tʃɔrʃ/

Vowel sound mispronunciation is among the most persistent pronunciation challenges for second language (L2) learners, especially when their first language (L1) contains a more limited vowel inventory, such as in many Philippine languages, including Cebuano. As noted by Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin (2010), English has a complex system of vowel contrasts—such as the distinctions between /ɪ/, /i:/, /ɛ/, and /æ/—which are often difficult for learners whose L1 lacks similar contrasts. This results in phonemic substitutions like /i:/ for /ɪ/ (e.g., bit as beet) or /a/ for /ʌ/ (e.g., cup as cap), which affect intelligibility. Additionally, the inconsistency between English orthography and pronunciation misguides learners in decoding vowel sounds, leading to common errors such as pronouncing women as /wɒmən/ or been as /bi:n/ (Derwing & Munro, 2005). Without adequate auditory exposure and explicit instruction on vowel distinctions, these allophonic variations persist and may contribute to communication breakdowns in both academic and social settings (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992).

B. Typical Words with Semivowel or Diphthongal Mispronunciation

While semivowels /w/ and /j/ (commonly represented as /y/ in orthography) are generally less prone to mispronunciation, errors occur particularly in words with unfamiliar or deceptive phonetic representations. Such

instances tend to confuse learners due to the irregular orthographic-phonemic correspondence of the English language.

1. Mispronunciation of /w/ as /w/ instead of /hw/

One common error involves the mispronunciation of the voiceless labiovelar semivowel /hw/, typically represented orthographically by the digraph **wh**. Many students drop the /h/ element and instead pronounce the sound simply as /w/, thereby failing to distinguish minimal pairs such as **whale** and **wail**.

Examples:

whale → /weɪl/ (instead of /hweɪl/)	whirl → /wɜːrl/
while → /waɪl/	when → /wɛn/
which → /wɪtʃ/	where → /wɛr/
whether → /wɛðər/	whittle → /wɪtəl/

2. Mispronunciation of Diphthongs Due to Irregular Orthographies

Diphthongs such as /aɪ/ are often mispronounced not because of their intrinsic articulatory difficulty but due to misleading or nonstandard orthographic representations in specific words. Learners often resort to simplified monophthong pronunciations or substitute the diphthong with unrelated vowel sounds.

Examples:

nylon → /nɪlən/ (for /'naɪlən/)
sleight → /slet/ or /sli:t/ (for /slart/)

3. Misinterpretation of the Letter “Y” as a Semivowel /j/

Some words beginning with or containing the letter **y** are erroneously pronounced as if they carried the semivowel /j/, when in fact they do not. These words originate from Greek, Latin, or French and often have consonant sounds different from their spelling.

Examples:

syringe → /jɪrɪndʒ/ **pyjamas** → /pajamas/ → /pajɛmas/

Syria → /jɪrɪə/ **pyramid** → /jɪrəˈmɪd/

synonym → /jɪnənɪm/ **nymph** → /jɪmf/

syphilis → /jɪfɪlɪs/ **mythology** → /mɪθəˈlɒdʒi/ → /jɪθəˈlɒdʒi/

4. Mispronunciation of the Diphthong /aʊ/

The diphthong /aʊ/, found in words like **bow** and **brow**, is often pronounced as a monophthong /o/ or with other non-target sounds due to orthographic confusion. Additionally, diphthongs in certain multi-syllabic or borrowed words are altered due to interference from spelling.

Examples:

bow → /bo/ (for /baʊ/) **voucher** → /vuːtʃər/ → /vɔːtʃər/

brow → /bro/ **sow** → /so/ (for /saʊ/)

crow → /kro/ **point** → /pɔɪnt/

toilet → /twɪlɪt/ **ointment** → /oʊwɪntmənt/, /owɪntmənt/

These observed deviations reflect the impact of orthographic interference, limited exposure to accurate phonological input, and overgeneralization of native language rules onto English phonemic structures. While not all semivowel or diphthong errors result in communication breakdown, they can affect fluency, intelligibility, and listener comprehension, especially in academic or formal speech contexts.

Mispronunciation of semivowels and diphthongs among second language learners is a recurring issue, especially in contexts where the learners' native languages do not contain equivalent glides or vowel combinations. As Roach (2009) explains, English semivowels such as /w/ and /j/ often present difficulties for learners due to their transitional nature between vowels and consonants, resulting in omissions or substitutions (e.g., /w/ in **whale** pronounced as /hweɪl/ or simply /weɪl/). Similarly, diphthongs such as /aʊ/, /aɪ/, and /ɔɪ/ require dynamic tongue movement and auditory familiarity, which many Filipino learners lack, especially those whose L1 does not feature diphthongs as phonemic contrasts (Yavas, 2011). According to Jenkins (2000), mispronunciations of diphthongs—such as rendering **toilet** as /twɔːlɪt/ or **voucher** as /vuːtʃər/—stem from both orthographic confusion and insufficient exposure to native-like pronunciation models. Without targeted intervention in phonological awareness and articulatory training, these inaccuracies persist, hindering the learners' communicative intelligibility in formal and academic settings.

C. Typical Words with Consonantal Sound Mispronunciation

In general, consonantal phonemes do not pose major pronunciation challenges for most college students at Jose Rizal Memorial State University. This may be attributed to the overlap of English consonant sounds with those present in Cebuano and other Philippine languages. However, difficulties still arise with particular fricatives, affricates, and consonant clusters—especially when represented through irregular orthographies or borrowed forms. Below are examples of commonly mispronounced consonantal sounds categorized according to type and phonological context:

1. Plosive Consonants /p/, /t/, /k/

Mispronunciations often occur in the area of aspiration, particularly when students either under-aspirate or hyper-aspirate plosives. For instance, /t/ in talent may be over-aspirated as /tæləθ/. Mispronunciations also occur in final or medial positions.

Examples:

pot, shepherd, rope, ptomaine, written, doubt

2. Final /t/ Deletion or Voicing in Regular Past Tense Forms

Words ending in voiceless consonants (/p/, /k/, /f/, /s/, etc.) should take the /t/ ending in the past tense, but this is often either omitted or voiced as /d/.

Examples:

pumped, clasped, dipped, milked, golfed, junked, barked, stuffed

3. Final /d/ Voicing and Substitution Errors

When /d/ should be pronounced after voiced consonants (e.g., /b/, /g/, /v/, /n/), it is either omitted or incorrectly'voiced.

Examples:

barbed, hinged, changed, charged, saved, buzzed, filmed, burned

4. Omission or Substitution of /d/ Allophones in Connected Speech

Some allophones of /d/ are substituted or omitted in fast or careless speech, often producing informal reductions.

Examples:

beautiful, critical, atom, etiquette, written, forget it, magnetic, mosquito

5. Substitution of Voiceless and Voiced Labiodental Fricatives

Due to articulatory closeness, students often interchange /f/ and /p/, or /v/ and /b/, particularly when these occur in clusters or rapid speech.

Examples:

future perfect tense, flower pot, foul play, profession, personify, Philippines, pitiful, prefer

6. Orthographic Confusion in Foreign Loan Words

Words borrowed from German, Russian, and other languages tend to exhibit consonant spelling-to-sound mismatches, resulting in incorrect pronunciations.

Examples:

verboten (/f/ for /v/), Volkswagen (/v/ or /w/), Gorbachev (/f/ for /v/), Wagner (/w/ as /v/)

7. Mispronunciation of Interdental Fricatives /θ/ and /ð/

These fricatives are often replaced with /t/, /d/, or /s/ due to their absence in Philippine languages.

Examples:

think → /tɪŋk/	three → /tri/
birth → /bɜrt/	mouth → /mawt/or/maut/
theme → /tim/	method → /metəd/

8. Misarticulation of /s/ in Clusters and /z/ in Voiced Environments

Some students add an epenthetic vowel (/ɪ/) before s-clusters, while others mispronounce /z/ as /s/ after voiced sounds. The plural /-iz/ is also often dropped.

* Mispronounced as /Is/:

Spain, specific, spiritual, spread, speech, spaghetti, scream, scholar

* /z/ mispronounced as /s/:

does, was, opens, has, blizzard, causes, xylophone, dissolve

* /ɪz/ dropped or altered:

pages, ridges, urges, Charles, taxes, boxes, rashes, ashes

9. Alveopalatal and Palatal Fricatives /ʃ/, /ʒ/, and Affricates /tʃ/, /dʒ/

Mispronunciations occur in both directionality (e.g., /tʃ/ as /s/) and voicing (e.g., /ʒ/ as /ʃ/), often due to nonstandard orthographies.

- Words with irregular spellings for /ʃ/:
conscience, cliché, chandelier, moustache, Chicago, chalet
- Words where /ʒ/ is mispronounced as /ʃ/:
Asian, Parisian, azure, leisure, erosion, lotion, rouge, regime

10. Confusion Between Affricates and Fricatives or Plosives

The palatal affricates /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ are sometimes mispronounced as /s/, /g/, or /ʃ/, particularly in multisyllabic or unfamiliar words.

- /tʃ/ mispronounced as /s/:
cheer, chicken, future, creature, orchard, teacher, question, picture
- /dʒ/ mispronounced as /g/:
gymnasium, mangy, gesture, gesticulate, longevity, gibberish, gemmy, genesis

11. Errors in Lateral and Nasal Consonants /l/, /m/, /n/, and /ŋ/

- The lateral /l/ is sometimes mispronounced or omitted, as in gorilla (/lyarilla/), kiln (/kɪn/), and salmon (/sæmən/).
- The glottal stop /ʔ/, often present in Philippine morphophonemic transitions, may be omitted or replaced in rapid speech.

Examples:

incoherent (/ɪŋkəhɪrənt/), incorporated, rancor (/ræŋkər/), incalculable

- Irregular nasal consonants:
gnome (/n/), psalm (/səm/), bomb (/bɒm/)

Consonantal sound mispronunciations among Filipino learners of English are often attributed to phonemic interference from the first language (L1), wherein certain fricatives, affricates, and interdental sounds in English do not exist in local languages such as Cebuano or Filipino. Yavas (2011) explains that the absence of phonemes such as /θ/, /ð/, and /ʒ/ in the learners' L1 leads to consistent substitution with more familiar sounds like /t/, /d/, or /s/, resulting in errors such as pronouncing think as /tɪŋk/ or vision as /vɪsɪn/.

Similarly, Roach (2009) notes that problems in aspirated stops like /p^h/, /t^h/, and /k^h/ are common among Asian ESL learners, who tend to under-aspirate or entirely drop aspiration due to non-equivalence in their native phonological systems. Furthermore, Carruthers (1987) emphasizes that articulation issues also arise in the misuse of voicing distinctions, as seen in the confusion between /f/ and /p/, or /v/ and /b/, particularly in environments of rapid or careless speech. These patterns reflect that consonantal mispronunciations are not isolated incidents but systemic issues linked to phonological transfer, lack of auditory discrimination training, and insufficient articulatory practice in formal instruction.

D. Typical Words Mispronounced for Their Irregular Orthographies

A distinct category of pronunciation errors among college students arises from words whose orthographic forms are highly irregular, meaning their spelling does not closely correspond to their phonetic realization. These words defy the learners' expectations of "phonetic spelling correspondence," making them particularly vulnerable to mispronunciation.

The following words were selected based on the frequency and severity of mispronunciations observed among a representative sample of students. Each entry includes the correct phonemic transcription based on standard American English pronunciation.

Word	Correct Pronunciation (IPA)	Notes
abbatoir	/ˈæb.ə.twaːr/	Final silent “r” and French-origin ending
aborigines	/ˌæb.əˈrɪ.dʒə.nɪz/	Primary stress on the third syllable
adagio	/əˈdɑː.ʒi.oʊ/	Italian-derived; “g” pronounced /ʒ/
admirable	/ˈæd.mə.ə.bəl/	Schwa insertion; elided middle syllable common
almond	/ˈɑː.mənd/	Silent “l”
antibody	/ˈæn.tɪ.baː.di/	Primary stress on the first syllable

These examples reflect only a fraction of the irregular words that were frequently mispronounced. The complexity of English orthography—especially for loanwords from Latin, French, and Italian—poses considerable challenges to learners whose first language relies more heavily on phonemic spelling systems. Instructional interventions should therefore emphasize decoding irregular patterns, along with listening exposure and articulatory training, to bridge the gap between visual form and auditory accuracy.

Irregular orthography is a significant factor influencing pronunciation errors among second-language English learners, particularly in contexts where phonemic awareness is underdeveloped. According to Cook (2004), English orthography is notoriously inconsistent, often leading learners to rely on spelling rather than sound, thereby producing mispronunciations in words like colonel, aisle, or adagio.

This is exacerbated in environments such as the Philippines, where English is taught as a second language and instruction often emphasizes reading and writing over speaking and listening (Gonzalez, 1997). As Crystal (2003) points out, orthographic irregularities like silent letters, unpredictable vowel combinations, and morphophonemic changes can significantly hinder learners’ pronunciation accuracy.

For students at Jose Rizal Memorial State University, the mispronunciation of words such as almond (/ɑmənd/) and admirable (/ˈædməəbəl/) demonstrates the confusion caused by English’s opaque spelling system. Without sufficient phonetic training, learners tend to pronounce words based on their visual form, reinforcing the need for explicit instruction in phoneme-grapheme correspondence and phonetic transcription.

E. Varieties that cause Pronunciation Problems

The mispronunciation patterns observed among the students of Jose Rizal Memorial State University may stem from early language development experiences, particularly during formative school years when systematic speech training should have been introduced. Ideally, competent English language educators at the primary and secondary levels would have laid a foundational awareness of phonological distinctions in English. However, anecdotal accounts from university faculty suggest that inadequate early instruction, coupled with a lack of emphasis on spoken language proficiency, has led to persistent pronunciation difficulties.

At the tertiary level, some instructors attribute these challenges to students’ limited appreciation of the practical value of accurate pronunciation—often perceived as peripheral or irrelevant to their academic disciplines. Furthermore, as second language (L2) learners of English, many students face inherent difficulties in approximating non-native phonemes and suprasegmental features.

Based on the findings of this study, the following interrelated factors were identified as contributing significantly to pronunciation problems:

1. Lack of Exposure to the English Language

Many students have limited opportunities to use English outside the classroom. Their exposure is often restricted to written texts, reducing the development of listening and speaking skills necessary for accurate phonological acquisition.

2. Absence of Effective Speech Models and Limited Training

A shortage of trained pronunciation instructors and insufficient use of authentic audio-visual materials hinder students’ ability to hear and emulate standard English sounds. The lack of structured speech drills further compounds the issue.

3. Low Interest in English Pronunciation

Some learners perceive pronunciation training as tedious or unimportant, especially when their academic programs emphasize technical or theoretical competencies over communicative competence.

4. Negative Attitudes Toward the English Language

Affective factors—such as anxiety, embarrassment, or past ridicule from peers—discourage active spoken participation. These attitudes contribute to avoidance behaviors and fossilization of incorrect articulation patterns.

5. Difficulty in Acquiring Specific English Sounds

Phonemes not present in the students' first language (e.g., interdental fricatives, certain diphthongs, or back vowels) are particularly challenging. Such difficulties are magnified when phonological interference from the mother tongue occurs.

6. Second Language Acquisition Limitations

As L2 learners, students may not acquire pronunciation intuitively and require explicit, sustained instruction. Without phonological awareness training, their speech remains influenced by native language constraints.

In light of these findings, the study recommends the incorporation of explicit pronunciation instruction, increased exposure to standard spoken English, and enhanced teacher training programs focusing on phonetics and phonology. Addressing these factors is crucial in supporting students' overall communicative competence and academic performance.

Conclusion:-

Christian Buckner, in *Credo*, articulates that the ability to speak with clarity and precision is fundamental to improving human relations and fostering global peace. In the context of language learning, this notion emphasizes not only the accurate expression of ideas but also their correct phonological articulation. Indeed, proper pronunciation is central to achieving mutual understanding, and its absence can hinder meaningful communication.

The findings of this study underscore that mispronunciation—particularly of allophonic varieties—can significantly distort the intended meaning of an utterance, often leading to hesitation, self-consciousness, and withdrawal from classroom participation. As Krashen (as cited by Campoy, 2013) posits, the anxiety resulting from the fear of making pronunciation errors can raise the affective filter, thus impeding second language acquisition. This phenomenon explains why many students avoid oral recitation and other verbal classroom activities.

Although the mispronunciations observed are predominantly linguistic in nature, they can hinder the broader goal of attaining communicative competence, which, according to Canale and Swain (cited by Pascasio and Campoy, 2013), integrates four essential components: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies. When one component is underdeveloped—such as pronunciation—it inevitably affects overall language proficiency.

At Jose Rizal Memorial State University, approximately 60% of college student-respondents demonstrate persistent mispronunciation issues, particularly involving vowel shifts, semivowel inconsistencies, diphthong confusion, and irregular orthographic representations. These pronunciation challenges are often rooted in phonological interference from the first language (L1), insufficient exposure to standard English, and lack of focused speech training in earlier educational stages.

Furthermore, words with irregular orthographies—such as *bureau*, *sachet*, or *ballet*—are frequently mispronounced due to learners' reliance on literal or phonetic spellings, illustrating a gap between written form and phonological awareness. Other contributing factors include limited access to competent pronunciation models, inadequate classroom instruction in spoken English, lack of learner motivation, and persistent misconceptions about the role of pronunciation in language learning.

James B. MacMillan (cited by Page, 2010) rightly observed that pronunciation is acceptable when it facilitates communication without distracting from the message. However, this does not justify arbitrary or self-invented articulations. As Wilfred Funk warns, poor pronunciation can negatively affect how one is perceived—implying deficiencies in education and professionalism—an outcome that should not be tolerated at the tertiary level.

Despite the scope of these challenges, the study affirms that pronunciation difficulties are neither permanent nor insurmountable. With the implementation of informed pedagogical strategies, targeted speech drills, exposure to authentic spoken English, and institutional support, these phonological limitations can be addressed. The results of this study offer a clear direction for enhancing pronunciation instruction, empowering students to express themselves with greater clarity, confidence, and communicative competence in English.

Pedagogical Recommendations:-

This study on the allophonic pronunciation varieties among students of Jose Rizal Memorial State University underscores the vital pedagogical roles that language educators must assume in addressing the observed pronunciation difficulties. One essential role is the enhancement of current pronunciation instruction within the English language curriculum. Although this research does not exhaustively enumerate every mispronounced utterance, it presents a representative overview of the most common phonological errors, serving as a useful reference for English instructors in prioritizing specific English phonemes in their instruction. Additionally, English instructors are encouraged to cultivate students' interest and foster consistent habits necessary for the acquisition of intelligible pronunciation.

The following are pedagogical recommendations based on the findings of the study:

1. **Focus on Vowel Mispronunciations.** Vowel phonemes emerged as the most problematic among student respondents. Teachers should, therefore, incorporate consistent drills on frequently mispronounced vowels, particularly distinguishing between long and short vowel sounds. The schwa /ə/, especially in unstressed syllables, should be emphasized, ideally using audio recordings or native speaker models to enhance student recognition and production.
2. **Emphasize Phonetic Awareness Over Orthography.** Beyond spelling drills, educators should introduce pronunciation practices involving words with irregular orthographic patterns. Students should be trained to use the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to decode the actual sounds of words whose spelling masks their pronunciation (Carruthers, as cited by Campoy, 2013).
3. **Teach Aspiration and Prosodic Features.** The correct aspiration of plosives /p/, /t/, and /k/ should be integrated into phonology instruction. In addition, word stress, intonation patterns, and rhythm—although not covered extensively in this study—should form part of regular pronunciation lessons.
4. **Integrate Morphophonemic and Articulatory Instruction.** Teachers should explain morphophonemic changes (e.g., /s/ in **cats** versus /z/ in **dogs**) and teach the basic principles of voicing, manner, and place of articulation. This approach helps students understand the physical production of each sound and enables them to differentiate minimal phonemic contrasts.
5. **Create a Diagnostic Framework for Pronunciation Issues.** English instructors may observe and categorize common pronunciation issues among their students (e.g., voicing errors, vowel distortion, incorrect stress). These observations can inform lesson planning and be integrated into grammar instruction—for instance, teaching voicing rules while addressing pluralization (Carruthers, as cited by Page, 2010).
6. **Utilize L1 as a Bridge to L2 Pronunciation.** Following Carruthers' principle of moving "from the known to the unknown," teachers can use familiar words from the students' first language (e.g., Cebuano) to approximate English sounds. For example, the /a/ in **mob** may be illustrated using the sound in Cebuano **ato**.
 - **Employ Varied and Creative Pronunciation Techniques**

Teachers are encouraged to use pronunciation techniques such as:

 - **Minimal pairs** to train sound distinctions,
 - **Monotony drills** to refine subtle sound differences,
 - **Tongue twisters** based on students' phonological errors,
 - **Audio recordings** and **articulatory diagrams** to model accurate pronunciation.

These tools can lower the affective filter and engage learners more effectively.
7. **Provide Constructive and Timely Error Correction.** To avoid discouraging learners, error correction should be tactful and limited to one issue at a time. Corrections are best delivered after speech tasks rather than during, except in cases where mispronunciation significantly alters meaning or results in unintended obscenities (Carruthers).
8. **Promote Autonomous Learning and Exposure to Authentic Models.** Students should be taught to use dictionaries effectively—particularly those with IPA transcriptions—and be encouraged to become independent learners of pronunciation. Exposure to authentic English through films, news programs, and online media should be consistently promoted. Moreover, classroom activities such as role plays, newscasting, oration, and choral speech may enhance pronunciation proficiency.

9. **Encourage English Use in and Beyond the Classroom.** The frequent use of English in classroom interactions and in social settings should be encouraged to reinforce the learned pronunciation patterns and to normalize spoken English in everyday academic life.
10. **Institutional Support Through a Speech Laboratory and Qualified Instructors.** The establishment of a fully functional speech laboratory is highly recommended. Furthermore, speech and oral communication subjects should be handled by instructors with advanced proficiency in spoken English and specialized training in phonetics and pronunciation pedagogy, who can serve as near-native models for learners.

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