Original Research Article

ENGLISH VOWEL PERCEPTION AND PRODUCTION AMONG CEBUANO-SPEAKING JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: INVESTIGATING FIRST LANGUAGE INTERFERENCE

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ABSTRACT

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| **Background:** Accurate English vowel perception and production are essential for communicative competence. However, learners whose first language (L1) is Cebuano often struggle with certain English vowels due to phonological interference.  **Objective:** This study examined the levels of vowel perception and production skills among thirty Grade 8 students at a National Trade School in Pagadian City and investigated the impact of Cebuano L1 interference on English vowel pronunciation.  **Methods:** A descriptive survey design was employed. Data were collected through a Minimal Pair Test (MPT) assessing perception and a Sentence Reading Test (SRT) assessing production. Scores were analyzed quantitatively, and paired comparisons were conducted to identify differences between perception and production of the six target vowels (/ɪ/, /iː/, /ɛ/, /e/, /ɔː/, /uː/). **Results:** Overall mean proficiency fell within the “Average Mastery” category: perception at 49.9% and production at 60.6%. No statistically significant differences emerged between perception and production for /ɪ/, /iː/, and /ɔː/ (p > .05), whereas significant differences were observed for /uː/, /ɛ/, and /e/ (p < .05). Analysis of substitution errors highlighted L1 interference: /iː/ and /ɔː/ were often replaced based on Cebuano phonology constraints, even though /iː/ exists in Cebuano and /ɔː/ does not.  **Conclusion and Implications:** Cebuano phonological influence remains a barrier to accurate pronunciation of certain English vowels. The findings underscore the need for enhanced pronunciation instruction within the junior high curriculum. A structured intervention plan targeting problematic vowels is recommended to support students’ English phonological development. |

*Keywords: English vowel perception, pronunciation skills, L1 interference, Cebuano phonology, second language acquisition*

1. INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation has long played a vital role in language learning, yet it has experienced both neglect and revival in language teaching. With the emergence of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) paradigm, pronunciation has been repositioned as a key component of communicative competence, the ultimate goal of language instruction (Ketabi & Saeb, 2015; Jenkins, 2004). According to Derwing (2010), many language teachers feel uncertain about how to teach pronunciation effectively, often due to the lack of adequate training. This has left both educators and learners at a disadvantage, particularly in non-native English-speaking contexts such as the Philippines.

For English language learners, poor pronunciation remains a major impediment to fluency and confidence. De Wilde (2010) emphasizes that pronunciation difficulties can lead to embarrassment, while Gilakjani (2011) notes that learners often struggle with correct pronunciation despite years of study. The impact of poor pronunciation can be far-reaching, resulting in reduced self-confidence, limited social interaction, and even negative evaluations of one’s professional competence (Fraser, 2000).

One of the most significant factors contributing to pronunciation challenges is first language (L1) interference. This occurs when elements from the learner’s native language transfer to the second language at phonological, lexical, grammatical, or orthographic levels (Berthold, Mangubhai, & Batorowicz, 1997). Interference frequently leads to the substitution of unfamiliar English sounds with more familiar native sounds. Hassan (2014) supports this observation, stating that non-native speakers often replace English phonemes that do not exist in their L1 with similar sounds from their own language. Moosa (1979) and Homeidan (1984) similarly found that Arab learners of English substitute unfamiliar sounds such as /v/, /p/, and /ŋ/ with closer equivalents from Arabic, primarily based on place of articulation.

In the Philippine setting, English has long served as a primary language of instruction. However, despite its early introduction in schools, many students continue to show limited proficiency in English, especially in pronunciation. A 2009 report by the Safe Democracy Foundation attributed poor performance in international English proficiency assessments such as TOEIC to language barriers, particularly in Math and Science. In 2018, Senator Grace Poe called for a review of the national curriculum after reports showed that Filipino graduates lacked sufficient command of the English language (Inquirer.net, February 16, 2018).

Although current DepEd teaching materials promote the use of literature as a springboard for English instruction, pronunciation is often given less attention. As Martin (2015) found, students expressed dissatisfaction with the minimal time spent on pronunciation practice in the classroom. Furthermore, although Filipino is the national language and is frequently used for instructional convenience, its phonological features may interfere with students’ mastery of English phonemes, particularly vowels.

Given these persistent challenges, this study seeks to address the gap in local research related to English vowel perception and production among Cebuano-speaking learners. Specifically, it investigates the level of vowel perception and production skills among Grade 8 students at a National Trade School and examines the extent to which first language interference affects their pronunciation. The focus is on six English vowels: /ɪ/, /iː/, /ɛ/, /e/, /ɔː/, and /uː/.

Grounded in the frameworks of Eckman (2008), Drager (2010), and Ching (2013), this study aims to (1) determine the learners’ proficiency levels in English vowel perception and production, (2) examine whether a significant difference exists between these two domains, and (3) identify instances of first language interference. The findings are expected to inform the development of an intervention plan tailored to address pronunciation challenges in the classroom, thereby contributing to improved pedagogical practices in English language teaching.

2. methodology

**2.1 Research Design**

This study employed a quantitative research design, primarily descriptive in nature, to examine the English vowel perception and production skills of Grade 8 Cebuano-speaking students at a National Trade School. The descriptive approach was appropriate, as the goal was to assess students' oral competencies by gathering and analyzing detailed data on their sound discrimination and articulation. The study aimed to describe the level of mastery of three English vowel pairs and to identify possible first language (L1) interference using structured instruments and statistical analysis.

**2.2. Participants and Sampling Technique**

The participants were thirty (30) Grade 8 students selected through simple random sampling from a population of approximately 160 students enrolled across three sections. Using the lottery method, 10 participants were drawn from each section. The inclusion criteria were: (1) Cebuano as the participants’ mother tongue, and (2) no diagnosed hearing impairments, as the study involved audio-based tests. Hearing capabilities were verified by the school’s registered nurse to ensure accurate perception test results.

**2.3. Research Instruments**

Two researcher-made instruments were used to assess vowel perception and production:

1. Minimal Pair Test (MPT) – This instrument consisted of three English vowel pairs: [ɪ]–[i:], [ɔ]–[u], and [ɛ]–[e]. Each pair contained nine minimal word pairs, totaling 54 words. It was used to assess both perception (via listening and identification) and production (via reading aloud).
2. Sentence Reading Test (SRT) – This test comprised nine sentences, each containing two target words representing the same vowel pairs used in the MPT. A total of 18 words were included. The SRT was used to test perception through listening and identification and to assess oral production by recording students’ readings.

Both instruments were validated by language experts and pilot-tested with ten Grade 8 students from a closer National High School. Reliability testing using Cronbach’s Alpha yielded a score of 0.88, indicating high internal consistency**.**

**2.4. Data Collection**

Data collection took place over three days in the school’s computer laboratory. Testing procedures followed ethical guidelines, with approval obtained from the Schools Division Superintendent of Pagadian City and informed consent secured from all participants and their guardians.

*Perception Skills Test*

The perception component consisted of two sub-tests:

* MPT Perception Test: Participants listened to recorded minimal pairs played twice and identified each word by writing it on an answer sheet. Each vowel pair included 18 items, totaling 54 points.
* SRT Perception Test: Participants listened to nine recorded sentences, each played twice. They identified and wrote the two embedded vowel words per sentence. This component included 18 words, totaling 18 points.

The maximum possible score for the perception test was 72 points.

*Production Skills Test*

Production testing was conducted in a quiet, isolated room to minimize peer pressure and distraction. Each participant read the test items aloud and their voices were recorded three times per task using a digital audio recorder.

* MPT Production Test: Participants read 54 words (same as in the perception MPT), and each word was recorded three times.
* SRT Production Test: Participants read nine sentences containing 18 key vowel words, with each sentence recorded three times.

All recordings were evaluated by two trained language raters using a pronunciation scoring rubric, focusing on accuracy, clarity, and intelligibility. To reduce bias and ensure consistency, raters independently scored the recordings and results were compared.

**2.5. Data Analysis**

The gathered data were organized, tallied, and processed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Descriptive statistics such as frequency, mean, standard deviation, and percentage were computed to determine the levels of perception and production skill mastery. Performance was interpreted using the following mastery scale:

* 90–100%: Mastered
* 75–89%: Approaching Mastery
* 60–74%: Average Mastery
* Below 60%: Low Mastery

A paired sample t-test was applied to examine significant differences between perception and production skills. Additionally, a qualitative phonological analysis was conducted on production errors to identify patterns of L1 interference, especially substitutions or approximations influenced by the Cebuano sound system.

3. results and discussion

**3.1. Vowel Perception Skills**

This section presents the results of the students’ performance in the Minimal Pair Test (MPT) and Sentence Reading Test (SRT), both designed to measure the participants' English vowel perception skills. The MPT consisted of three sets of vowel sounds, each containing nine minimal pairs (54 items in total), while the SRT included nine sentences with two minimal pairs each (18 items). Therefore, the total number of items for the perception skills test was 72.

**Table 1.****Descriptives of Minimal Pair and Sentence Reading Test Results on Students’ Perception Skills**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Vowel Sound | Mean | Standard Deviation | Percentage | Mastery Level |
| [ I ] |  |  |  |  |
| Minimal Pair | 4.97 | 1.92 | 55.19 | Average Mastery |
| Sentence Reading | 2.10 | 0.96 | 70.00 | Moving Towards Mastery |
| [ i ] |  |  |  |  |
| Minimal Pair | 4.13 | 2.15 | 45.93 | Average Mastery |
| Sentence Reading | 1.47 | 0.90 | 48.89 | Average Mastery |
| [ ɔ ] |  |  |  |  |
| Minimal Pair | 4.07 | 2.42 | 45.19 | Average Mastery |
| Sentence Reading | 1.37 | 1.07 | 45.56 | Average Mastery |
| [ u ] |  |  |  |  |
| Minimal Pair | 2.93 | 2.08 | 32.59 | Low Mastery |
| Sentence Reading | 0.80 | 0.81 | 26.67 | Low Mastery |
| [ Ɛ ] |  |  |  |  |
| Minimal Pair | 4. 93 | 1.87 | 54.81 | Average Mastery |
| Sentence Reading | 2.03 | 0.81 | 67.78 | Moving Towards Mastery |
| [ e ] |  |  |  |  |
| Minimal Pair | 4.87 | 2.00 | 54.07 | Average Mastery |
| Sentence Reading | 2.30 | 0.75 | 76.67 | Moving Towards Mastery |

*Legend :0% - 4% = Absolutely No Mastery, 5% - 14% = Very Low Mastery, 15- 34= Low Mastery, 35%-65%= Average Mastery, 66%-85% = Moving towards Mastery, 86%-95% = Closely Approximating mastery, 96%-100% = Mastered*

As shown in Table 1, the students demonstrated varied levels of perception skills across different vowel sounds. Generally, performance was higher in the SRT than in the MPT, indicating that participants perceived vowel sounds more accurately when presented within sentence contexts than in isolated word pairs. This aligns with Shak et al. (2016), who suggested that using context-rich texts such as the “North Wind and the Sun” facilitates better vowel perception due to prosodic and syntactic cues.

Among the six vowel sounds tested, [ e ] yielded the highest mean score in the SRT (76.67%), interpreted as *Moving Towards Mastery*, while the lowest was observed in [ u ] (26.67%), which falls under *Low Mastery*. The MPT results mirrored this trend, with [ I ] scoring the highest (55.19%) and [ u ] the lowest (32.59%).

The consistently poor performance on vowel sound [ u ], in both MPT and SRT, indicates significant perceptual difficulty among the participants. This could be attributed to phonological interference from their first language, Cebuano, which traditionally follows a three-vowel system: /i/, /a/, and /u/ (Tayao, 2009). Despite the presence of the [ u ] vowel in the Cebuano phonemic inventory, its phonetic realization appears to overlap with [ o ] in some lexical items, possibly due to historical allophony in Cebuano orthography (Dila.2020.).

Further complicating this perceptual challenge were notable spelling inconsistencies during the perception tasks. For instance, words like "ooze" were often spelled as "oz", "oops" as "ops", and "cruise" as "cross", indicating either a misidentification of the target vowel or confusion caused by orthographic irregularities in English. This supports findings from literature such as *Spelling and Phonetic Inconsistencies in English*, which identifies that perception errors are often compounded by inconsistent vowel-grapheme correspondences, especially among less skilled readers.

Additionally, this difficulty may stem from the transliteration habits influenced by local linguistic practices. As McFarland (2009) noted, local orthographic norms in multilingual contexts can impact the way English words are perceived and spelled. The students’ tendencies to default to familiar phoneme-grapheme mappings—replacing [ u ] with [ o ]—suggests the strong influence of L1 phonology on L2 perception.

In contrast, vowel sounds such as [ I ], [ e ], and [ Ɛ ] showed relatively better performance, particularly in the SRT. These sounds are more acoustically distinct and may more closely align with vowel qualities present in the students’ L1, hence leading to more accurate perception.

The findings highlight that phonemic perception in second language learners is intricately linked to their native phonological system, orthographic familiarity, and the contextual presentation of sounds. The stronger performance in sentence-based perception tasks implies that incorporating context, such as full sentence reading, can support learners’ phonemic discrimination skills more effectively than isolated word testing.

Future interventions in pronunciation instruction should consider incorporating both isolated and contextualized listening tasks, emphasizing vowel contrasts that are unfamiliar or problematic for learners based on their L1. Additionally, providing orthographic support and explicit spelling instruction may help bridge the gap between auditory discrimination and written production, particularly for vowels like [ u ] that suffer from high perceptual and spelling inconsistency.

**Table 2. Descriptives of Combined Minimal Pair and Sentence Reading Test Results on**

**Students’ Perception**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Vowel Sound* | *Mean* | *Standard Deviation* | *Percentage* | *Mastery Level* |
| *[ I ]* | *7.07* | *2.39* | *58.89* | *Average Mastery* |
| *[ i ]* | *5.60* | *2.70* | *46.67* | *Average Mastery* |
| *[ ɔ ]* | *5.43* | *3.06* | *45.28* | *Average Mastery* |
| *[ u ]* | *3.73* | *2.50* | *31.11* | *Low Mastery* |
| *[ Ɛ ]* | *6.97* | *2.33* | *58.06* | *Average Mastery* |
| *[ e ]* | *7.17* | *2.48* | *59.72* | *Average Mastery* |
| *Overall* | *5.99* | *0.04* | *49.95* | *Average Mastery* |

*Legend: 0% - 4% = Absolutely No Mastery, 5% - 14% = Very Low Mastery, 15- 34= Low Mastery, 35%-65%= Average Mastery, 66%-85% = Moving towards Mastery, 86%-95% = Closely Approximating mastery, 96%-100% = Mastered*

The results reveal that the overall performance level on the perception skills test is *Average Mastery* with 49.95. The highest performance level is on vowel sound [ e ] which is *Average Mastery* with 59.72 while the lowest performance level is on vowel sound [ u ] which is in *Low Mastery* level with only 31.11.

The results suggest that the research participants misperceived some of the words with long [ u ] sound. The researcher noted that because the perception skills test involved spelling of words, they spelled the words *oz, oh, ops, cross, mos, so, and sho* wrongly and wroteooze*, ooh, oops, cruise, moose, sue,* and *shoe* respectively. The results also imply that the research participants’ perception skills on the vowel sound [ u ] is also related to the study, *Spelling and Phonetic Inconsistencies in* *English: A Problem for Learners of English as a Foreign/Second Language* particularly in one of the areas of *Sound and Spelling Inconsistencies* where the same sound was not always represented by the same letter. This may also refer to the results in Al-Jarf’s study, *Spelling error corpora in EFL*, in which the study involved a dictation that consists of a taped dialog or text. The students listened to the dialog from the audio-taped sentence by sentence, while following the printed dialog or text and fill in the gaps in the printed dialog with the words they hear (not from memory). They had to write the exact words that they heard in the flow of the dialog.

It was found out in the study that the spelling problems were classified into phonological and orthographical problems. It was discussed that it may be that the misspelled word didn’t sound like the target word because the \*vowel is not heard at all, is misheard, is added or reversed with another and or the subjects failed to discriminate between minimal pairs. On the other hand, orthographic problems emerged because the misspelled word sounds like the written target word, but the written form used for the misspelled part does not correspond with the target word where there are confusing vowel graphemes that have the same sound, confusing consonant graphemes that have the same sound, confusing vowel or having double vowels like the words *ooze, ooh, oops* in the study.

The results of the study may suggest that perception-related activities should also be given importance in the classroom particularly in teaching pronunciation as theories also pointed out that sound perception-production was closely linked and that the insufficiency of either domains would make communication difficult and incomplete (Ho, 2009) thus in achieving one’s perception skill may lead to mastering of one’s production skill.

**3.2. Vowel Production Skills**

Vowels are produced without constriction of the air flow in the vocal tract which is the ability of the speaker to produce vowel sounds correctly. Many studies suggest that sound perception-production is closely linked that the insufficiency of either domains would make communication difficult and incomplete (Ho, 2009). In testing the vowel production skills of the research participants, the researcher utilized the vowels in the MPT and SRT as research instruments where the research participants were to produce the vowel sounds orally three times while being recorded. The data presented here are the results of the MPT and SRT. There are two tables that show the results of the tests; Table 3 shows the Descriptives of Minimal Pair and Sentence Reading Test Results while Table 4 presents the data of the combined Minimal Pair and Sentence Reading Test results on students’ production skills.

The MPT has also three sets of vowel sounds with nine-paired words totaling to 54 items or points while the SRT had 9 sentences with two minimal pairs in each totaling to 18. The total score for the production skills test is 72. The MPT results reveal lower vowel sound production skills level as compared to the SRT results. The highest performance level is on vowel sound [ Ɛ ] which is *Moving Towards Mastery* with 74.44. The lowest performance level for MPT is on vowel sound [ I ] and [ i ] which is *Average Master*y with 49.63. The SRT results on the other hand reveal higher performance levels in general as compared to the MPT results and the vowel sound [ I ] in particular which is found in words *ill, chick, crisis, it, pill, axis, itch, slip,* and *basis* has the highest performance level of 85.56 interpreted as *Moving Towards Mastery*. On the other hand, the vowel sound [ ɔ ] in the SRT which is found in words *Oz, awe, ops, fall, cross, moss, saw, bought,* and *shaw* has the lowest performance level interpreted *as* *Average Mastery* with the percentage performance of 37.78.

**Table 3. Descriptives of Minimal Pair and Sentence Reading Test Results on**

**Students’ Production Skills**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Vowel Sound | Mean | Standard Deviation | Percentage | Mastery Level |
| [ I ] |  |  |  |  |
| Minimal Pair | 4.47 | 1.85 | 49.63 | Average Mastery |
| Sentence Reading | 2.57 | 0.82 | 85.56 | Moving Towards Mastery |
| [ i ] |  |  |  |  |
| Minimal Pair | 4.47 | 1.89 | 49.63 | Average Mastery |
| Sentence Reading | 1.30 | 0.53 | 43.33 | Average Mastery |
| [ ɔ ] |  |  |  |  |
| Minimal Pair | 5.23 | 2.37 | 58.15 | Average Mastery |
| Sentence Reading | 1.13 | 0.94 | 37.78 | Average Mastery |
| [ u ] |  |  |  |  |
| Minimal Pair | 5.13 | 2.76 | 57.04 | Average Mastery |
| Sentence Reading | 1.90 | 1.06 | 63.33 | Average Mastery |
| [ Ɛ ] |  |  |  |  |
| Minimal Pair | 6.67 | 2.23 | 74.07 | Moving Towards Mastery |
| Sentence Reading | 2.20 | 0.66 | 73.33 | Moving Towards Mastery |
| [ e ] |  |  |  |  |
| Minimal Pair | 6.33 | 2.47 | 70.37 | Moving Towards Mastery |
| Sentence Reading | 2.23 | 0.86 | 74.44 | Moving Towards Mastery |

*Legend :0% - 4% = Absolutely No Mastery, 5% - 14% = Very Low Mastery, 15- 34= Low Mastery, 35%-65%= Average Mastery, 66%-85% = Moving towards Mastery, 86%-95% = Closely Approximating mastery, 96%-100% = Mastered*

The results suggest that short [ ɔ ] sound having the lowest performance percentage was not so familiar with the participants because it is not part of the Cebuano vowels (Dila.ph, n.d.). In conducting the study, the research participants usually pronounced the words with [ ɔ ] sound with [ o ] sound, for instance, they pronounced *‘bot’* instead of *bought,* or ‘*so’* for *saw.* The occurrence happened sometimes because there was a substitution of [ ɔ ] sound to sounds [ o ] or [ u ] when pronounced. Endriga (2010) explained that the inclusion of vowel sound [ ɔ ] usually occurred with borrowed words and with certain phonological changes in which vowel sound [ ɔ ] is written as ‘o’, but its pronunciation still varies. Moreover, in the same study, Rodolfo Cabonce, S.J. in his Cebuano Dictionary described the environments of the variations. Vowel sounds [ u ] and [ ʊ ] are equivalent to the orthographic ‘u’ and [ ɔ ] to ‘o’. Perhaps the reason why research participants of this study mostly pronounced words with [ ɔ ] sound to ‘o’. Other theory from the study may also propagate on the idea that Cebuano speakers have difficulty with non-Cebuano words with an ‘i’ or ‘e’. Accordingly, ‘pink’ is pronounced [ˈpɛnk] and ‘red’ is [ˈrɪd]. Sounds ‘o’ and ‘u’ had also the same case.

The results also suggest that the teaching of the vowel sound [ ɔ ] should be given emphasis since the sound was not really a primal part in the Cebuano Language System. As mentioned by the researchers in the previous paragraphs and by Eden Regala-Flores on the vowel inventories among Cebuano and Visayan speakers, that there is a substitution of [ ɔ ] for [ o ]. Although this variant of vowel sound could be made possible by the exposure to English music, movies, and other forms of media, however there is still a lack of a profound practice on the said vowel sound.

**3.3. Significant Differences between Students’ Vowel Perception and Production Skills**

As shown in the next table, the testing of hypothesis for the two skills yielded with different values. As reflected by the probability values higher than 0.05, the vowels sounds short [ I ], long [ i ], and short [ ɔ ] have no significant difference. However, as reflected by the probability values lesser than 0.05, the vowel sounds long [ u ], short [ Ɛ ] and long [ e ] had significant differences. The results revealed a homogeneity of responses by the research participants on vowel sounds [ I ], [ i ] and [ ɔ ] while a heterogeneity of responses on the vowel sounds [ u ], [ Ɛ ], and [ e ].

The results illustrated that the null hypothesis of the study was rejected in vowel sounds long [ u ], short [ Ɛ ] and long [ e ], while accepted in vowel sounds short [ I ], long [ i ], and short [ ɔ ]. It could also be theorized that the research participants had dissimilar perception and production when they have undergone the two skills test on vowel sounds long [ u ], short [ Ɛ ] and long [ e ], as having these vowels comparably higher than the other vowel sounds. While having lower comparable results in vowel sounds short [ I ], long [ i ], and short [ ɔ ], the research participants had similar perception and productions of the said vowel sounds as these target sounds obtained lower results in the study. Thus, it was deduced that most of the research participants had confusions or problems when they produced the target sounds.

**Table 4.Test of Significant Differences between Students’ Vowel Perception and**

**Production Skills**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Vowel Sounds | Mean | Standard Deviation | T-score | Df | p-value |
| [ I ] |  |  |  |  |  |
| Perception Skills | 7.07 | 2.39 | 0.06 | 29 | 0.953 |
| Production Skills | 7.03 | 2.47 |  |  |  |
| [ i ] |  |  |  |  |  |
| Perception Skills | 5.60 | 2.70 | -0.377 | 29 | 0.709 |
| Production Skills | 5.77 | 2.18 |  |  |  |
| [ ɔ ] |  |  |  |  |  |
| Perception Skills | 5.43 | 3.06 | -1.651 | 29 | 0.109 |
| Production Skills | 6.37 | 3.06 |  |  |  |
| [ u ] |  |  |  |  |  |
| Perception Skills | 3.73 | 2.50 | -5.292 | 29 | 0.000\* |
| Production Skills | 7.03 | 3.60 |  |  |  |
| [ Ɛ ] |  |  |  |  |  |
| Perception Skills | 6.97 | 2.33 | -3.843 | 29 | 0.001\* |
| Production Skills | 8.87 | 2.74 |  |  |  |
| [ e ] |  |  |  |  |  |
| Perception Skills | 7.17 | 2.48 | -2.395 | 29 | 0.023\* |
| Production Skills | 8.57 | 3.04 |  |  |  |

The case of first language interference construed to occur during the production of vowels sounds short [ I ], long [ i ], and short [ ɔ ] as well in the perception of the said vowels. This showed that although long [ i ] sound was part in the three-vowel system (Gabayan, 2015) of the Cebuano-Visayan language as previously discussed, the research participants did not master the said vowel as this was a free variant to short [ I ] sound in Cebuano language which interfered the production of the target sound when they were prompted to listen and read words. Also, on the other hand, short [ ɔ ] sound was not part in the three-vowel system of the Cebuano-Visayan language whereby substituting it to short [ o ].

The data presented in the study manifested that the mentioned vowel sounds were misperceived as well as mispronounced because there were situations where the same sound was not always represented by the same letter in the English language unlike Cebuano where all letters in the word is sounded and therefore when words are written there are no silent phonemes. The research participants failed to discriminate between minimal pairs. These difficulties have arisen from the fact that the original sound system of Cebuano includes three vowels only. Thus, this implied that teachers in the field of English have the utmost role to teach pronunciation particularly giving emphasis to those sounds that were not part of the vowel system of their students’ first language or were free variations in English sound system.

4. Conclusion

The conclusion was drawn by the researcher based on the strength of the findings on the level of the English Vowel Perception and Production Skills of Grade 8 Junior High School students.

The findings of the study include a difference established between the level of the perception skills and production skills on vowel sounds [ u ], [ Ɛ ], and [ e ], however, there is no difference established between the level of the perception skills and production skills from the research participants on the vowel sounds [ I [ i ], [ ɔ ]. Both skills obtained Average Mastery level, having perception skills of the research participants lower than their production skills.

The result on perception skills test is lower than the production skill test although the former obtained Average Mastery level. The said skill test involved spelling as many research studies admitted that perceiving vowels with the involvement of spelling was only a poor representation of pronunciation and has a little evident relation to its sound. On the contrary, although the production skills test obtained higher than the perception skills test in the study, there were some vowels that were incorrectly produced due to the interference of the research participants’ first language as having free variation environment in some vowels in the Cebuano language.

This study hypothesized that there was significant difference between the two skills, the findings revealed that there were indeed significant differences noted in some vowels and there was none in others.

Consent

"All authors declare that ‘written informed consent was obtained from the participants (or other approved parties) for publication of this case report and accompanying images. A copy of the written consent is available for review by the Editorial office/Chief Editor/Editorial Board members of this journal."

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