

FILIPINO CALL CENTER AGENTS' ENGLISH COMMUNICATION PROFICIENCY AND HOW THEY DEVELOPED IT

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Abstract

This study aimed at determining the English communication proficiency of Filipino Call Center Agents (CCAs), specifically their vocabulary and oral communication skills. It sought answers to the following research questions: (1) What is the proficiency level of the respondents in terms of vocabulary skills and oral communication skills? (2) Is there a significant difference in the vocabulary skills and oral communication skills of respondents based on the following variables: a) age; b) educational attainment; c) gender; and d) length of work experience as a call center agent? (3) How did the participants develop their vocabulary and oral communication skills? This mixed method study was conducted in Iloilo City, Philippines with 107 respondents (72 females and 35 males). Quantitative method was used to answer RQs 1 and 2 and qualitative method to answer RQ3. The finding shows that the proficiency level of the Filipino CCAs was categorized as intermediate in their vocabulary skills and expert in oral communication skills. There is no significant difference in the agents' vocabulary skill and oral communication skill when gender, educational attainment, and length of work experience are compared. However, the language status in terms of age is significant on their vocabulary skills while considered insignificant in oral communication skills. Overall, the Filipino CCAs tend to have better oral communication skills than vocabulary skills. Five major themes emerged from the interview data of eight participants: actual language use; reading and practicing newly acquired vocabulary; immersion, audiovisuals, and media for imitation and comprehension; call center trainings; and consulting the dictionary.

Keywords: call center agents, English proficiency, oral communications

Call center agents (CCAs) or customer service representatives (CSRs), who are not necessarily title holders in English communication, are important human resources particularly in countries where Business process outsourcing (BPO) exists such as in the Philippines. Their job deals with different people with diverse cultures, interests, and personalities. CCAs need to communicate best to their clients globally as they are the call center industry's frontline. They are responsible for crafting long-term relationships with customers aside from dealing with tricky situation like receiving complaints over the phone (Smith, 2013) and all these can be done by good English communica-

tion skills. The Philippines is declared as the "Call Center Capital of the World" (The Manila Times, 2013). Chanco (2017) stated that "the BPO sector is expected to generate \$40 billion in revenues, 7.6 million direct and indirect jobs, 500,000 jobs outside of the National Capital Region, and cover 15 percent of the total global outsourcing market by the end of 2022 (para 1). To meet such demand, the teaching of English in schools, colleges, and universities have to be strengthened with good materials that address the need of CCAs. Therefore, there is a need to determine the language proficiency status of CCAs in the Philippines and the communication strategies they use.

Mastery of the English language is of utmost importance to become a highly efficient and proficient call center agent. It includes competence in grammar, vocabulary including idiomatic expressions commonly used by native English speakers who constitute the number of call center clients, as well fluency and pronunciation to be understood well by the customers. Schelmetic (2012) believes that it is not enough to simply understand what customers are saying. Inability to understand foreign customers' culture can leave a call center agent with dissatisfied customers. In any call transaction, it is important that call center agents must have a broad understanding of not only languages but world cultures. Indeed, language and culture are inseparable. Studies show that Filipinos speak English, but not at the level of what the international industry is looking for. Graduates usually fail when they engage in a free-flowing conversation and when they talk about business communication (Mercado as cited in Dumlao, 2013). A study in Manila, Philippines (2012) showed that out of 100 applicants to local outsourcing companies, 95 were turned down. Forty-nine percent of the overall jobs remained unfilled simply because a competent candidate could not be found. The most important skills are English proficiency specifically oral communication skills as well as critical thinking and problem solving (Visconti, 2012).

Graduates' weaknesses can be traced to the English communication curricula which the Filipino graduates took in college. They are to be globally competent workers who will work in the country or abroad. English language proficiency regression in Philippine English education should not be overlooked. The Department of Education (McLean, 2010) ascertained that for every five public high school teachers, only one is proficient in English. When this problem transpires, it will be difficult to find employers because of their inadequate English language skills. A negative observation on Filipinos' English communication skills was found by Mendoza (2012) mentioning an anonymous outsourcing and offshore foreign manager who believed that every Filipino who plans to work in a call center and whose English is good enough is already working in a call center.

In El Salvador, intermediate and advanced level students learning English as a Second Language (ESL) consider call centers as their first and best option for working (Acosta, Umana, & Gomez, 2012). Acosta et al. said that:

Students think of a call center as a wide range of possibilities not only for improving their possibilities but also the opportunity to make money without quitting their major... Nonetheless, not all of the Intermediate and Advanced English level students are conditioned to be employed by a call center. As a matter of fact, less than 20% of the students are accepted as customer service agents. (pp. 4-5)

As mentioned above, the English proficiency level acquired for some ESL students does not meet the requirements that call centers need when hiring a call center agent; a CCA must be prepared to achieve the adequate oral proficiency demanded by the call center industry. The English language is a must to communicate clearly with the costumers around the world.

Having worked in a call center, the main researcher experienced the similar predicaments and was fully convinced that English proficiency is the key to the success in the call center workplace. This situation incited the researcher to study the English language status of CCAs and the challenges and strategies they use in the workplace. These identified language conditions would be an appropriate basis to formulate a guide in teaching English communication and further enhance the learners' communication skills.

Research Questions

- What is the proficiency level of the respondents in terms of vocabulary skills and oral communication skills?
- Is there a significant difference in the vocabulary skills and oral communication skills of respondents based on the following variables: a) age; b) educational attainment; c) gender; and d) length of work experience as a call center agent?
- How did the participants develop their vocabulary skills and oral communication skills?

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized mixed method design. Quantitative method was used to determine the proficiency levels of the participants in terms of vocabulary skills and oral communication skills whether novice, intermediate, or expert. According to Airasian, Gay, and Mills (2009), the purpose of mixed method design is to build on the synergy and strength that exist between quantitative and qualitative research methods. Mixed method was used to understand the phenomenon of the study more fully as the researcher gathered data directly from the participants through tests and interviews; data were collected from the natural setting, i.e. at the call center as the workplace.

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the participants of this study to better identify, describe, and gain insight on the language status of Filipino CCAs. Lund Research (2012) explained that purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling technique which represents a group of different non-probability sampling techniques. The main goal of purposive sampling is to focus on particular characteristics of a population of interest to the study which helped the researcher to answer the research questions.

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were 107 purposively selected. Originally, the study aimed to employ 110 participants. However, only 107 responded based on their availability and the practicality of the situation. Such sample size of 107 respondents was sufficient for the quantitative design. Of this number, only eight participants allowed to have the oral communication skill test and the interview.

Data Gathering Instruments

Two adapted instruments were used to acquire the needed data to answer Research Question (RQ) 1: Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) for the vocabulary and self-constructed interview using a rubric adapted from the International English Language Testing System

(IELTS). The two research instruments were validated by language experts and had gone through pilot testing. The criteria in the rubric were used to evaluate the application of the exact vocabulary in the statements used in each test item. Interviews were used to answer RQ 2.

Data Gathering Procedures

Endorsement letter to conduct the study was secured from the AUP Center for Graduate Studies (CGS). It was scanned and sent via email to the call center in Iloilo then later the hard copy was submitted during the courtesy visit to the head of corporate office. Pilot testing of the two tests was administered to 35 respondents and two of them were interviewed. The written vocabulary skill test was administered to the 35 respondents for about 30 minutes while the one-on-one recorded interviews for oral communication skills were between 11 and 25 minutes. In the actual data gathering, the 30-item vocabulary written test was administered to 107 call center agents on the assigned schedules. After conducting the written test and the recorded interview, the interview data were transcribed and were interpreted separately.

Data Analysis

The written test and oral communication test had undergone descriptive analysis in order to give understanding on the language status of the CCAs. Descriptive statistics as described by Hale and Napier (2013) included frequencies (simple counts), percentages, and means (averages). In the same way, too, identifying the scores, averages, and differences from the results of the vocabulary skills test and the oral communication skill test gave information needed in this study. Discourse analysis was used to interpret the recorded interview for the oral communication skills. In doing discourse analysis, attention is given to the structure and organization of language with an emphasis on how participants' versions of events are constructed; it focuses on recognizing the regularities in the language in terms of patterns and repertoires or constructs (Gray, 2014). This study focused on the context of the call center agents' language patterns particularly in their vocabulary and oral communication skills at the workplace.

Results and Discussion

Respondents' Proficiency Level in Terms of Vocabulary and Oral Communication Skills

As presented in Table 1, the result shows that the proficiency level of the Filipino CCAs is *intermediate* in terms of their vocabulary skills. Their oral communication skill is *expert*.

Table 1
Comparison of Vocabulary Skills and Oral Communication Skills of the Call Center Agents

Respondents	Vocabulary Skills Category	Total Score Average	Oral Communication Skill Category	Total Score Average
1	Expert	28	Expert	14
2	Intermediate	20	Expert	11
3	Intermediate	24	Intermediate	9.47
4	Intermediate	21	Intermediate	9.5
5	Expert	27	Expert	12.25
6	Intermediate	22	Intermediate	9.75
7	Intermediate	22	Expert	13.5
8	Intermediate	25	Expert	12.75
	Intermediate	Grand mean = 23.625	Expert	Grand mean = 11.75

This may be due to a combination of factors such as in their consistent business English interactions in the workplace and personal motivation in learning English. As Tingyong (2012) mentioned, in all business features, the knowledge of English in business requires accurate use of technical terms and sets of language and meaning of words.

Differences in the Vocabulary Skills Considering Participants' Demographic Profile

Age. Table 2 presents that there is a significant difference in the vocabulary skill test scores when grouped according to age ($p < .05$) using the Kruskal Wallis Test. The results indicate that the age group 30 and above has the highest mean rank (72.47 %) and the age group 19 to 24 has the lowest mean rank (45.87). These indicate that the language status in ages 30 years old and above Call Center Agents (CCAs) is higher in vocabulary skills. Conceivably, as the age increases, the higher the acquisition of vocabulary knowledge increases. This is also supported by the qualitative result that the CCAs learn a lot from their experience and trainings in the call centers.

Table 2
Language Status in Vocabulary Skills by Age

Vocabulary Skill by Age Category	Mean Rank	H(3)	P	VI
19 to 24	45.87			
25 to 29	55.86	10.529	0.005	Significant
30 and above	72.47			

Kim, MacLaughlin, and Osterhout cited in Pujol (2008) supported the current study in terms of how the language skill was acquired. The experts were conclusive that “Adult language learners rapidly gather information in different aspects of L2 [second language] words (initially about form and then about meaning)” (p. 42). The result of this study is also strengthened with the idea formulated by Hammond (2015) who stated that the experience of maturing into adulthood gives older learners access to some tools and techniques not available to children.

Educational attainment. Table 3 presents that most of the respondents were college graduates (n=69) and college in progress (n=27). Nonetheless, the numerical analysis shows that those with college in progress have a higher mean rank (52.52) than those who were college graduates (46.93). Although there is a difference between the college graduates and college in progress in terms of their mean rank score in vocabulary skills, it shows that the difference is not significant on the educational attainment of the respondents ($p > .05$).

Table 3
Language Status in Vocabulary by Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment by Vocabulary Skill	Mean Rank	H(3)	P	VI
College Graduate	46.93			
College in Progress	52.52	823	.374	Not Significant

As Hubpages (2016) indicated, business processing outsource (BPO) companies do not require any applicant to have a college degree or be a professional. BPO companies only require the needed skills such as at least 2 years of college education. This suggests that the educational attainment does not have a strong impact in the language status of the Filipino CCAs in their vocabulary skills maybe because the needed skills such as the technical skills and the social skills are more given emphasis.

Gender. Table 4 presents that the male respondents have a higher mean rank (55.2 %) than their female counterparts. However, there is no significant difference on the vocabulary skill test when grouped according to gender ($p > .05$) using the Mann-Whitney U Test. This implies that the male and female Filipino CCAs are comparable in their language status when it comes to their vocabulary skills test scores.

Table 4
Language Status in Vocabulary by Gender

Vocabulary Skill by Gender	Mean Rank	H(3)	P	VI
Female	53.42			
Male	55.2	1218	0.779	Not Significant

The result of this study is consistent with the findings of Babalola (2012) that gender had no significant influence on students' ability to acquire language communication skills. The result of the current study is contrary to the various studies that perceived the dominance of females in the use of English language as proposed in the findings of Aslan (2009) and Zhang (2010).

Length of work experience. Considering the length of work experience of the respondents, the results show that there is no significant difference in the vocabulary skills of the call center agents when grouped according to length of work experience ($p < .051$) using the Kruskal Wallis Test. Table 4 shows that the respondents who belonged to the group with 5 years and above length of work experience got the highest mean rank (70.86%). The respondents who belonged to the group with 0 to 6 months length of work experience, however, got the lowest mean rank (48.20%). Although there is a variation in between, those who have longest working experience have the highest mean scores.

Table 5
Language Status in Vocabulary by Length of Work Experience

Vocabulary Skill by Length of Working Experience	Mean Rank	H(3)	P	VI
0 to 6 months	48.2			
7 months to 1 year	55.42	7.758	0.051	Not Significant
2 to 4 years	49			
5 years and above	70.86			

This result is contrary to the idea of Mendoza (2012) that a language proficient call center agent has been working for a long time in a call center. Likewise, Loper (2010) mentioned that the vocabulary skills relevant to a call center position and their customer's location is one of the important skills expected from each Filipino CCAs. This idea suggests that agents are expected to develop their vocabulary skills based on the location of their customers. Table below shows the language status in vocabulary skills in terms of length of work experience.

Comparison of Vocabulary and Oral Communication Skills to the Demographic Profile of the Eight Call Center Agents

Table 6 shows the language status of Filipino call center agents on their vocabulary skills and oral communication skills differences. The data show consistently that the agents are proficient in their intermediate vocabulary skills and expert oral communication skills. There is no significant difference in the call center agents' language status when their demographic data are compared.

Table 6
The Language Status of Call Center Agents Categorized Between Vocabulary Skills and Oral Communication Skills

Respondent	Gender	Age	Educational attainment	Vocabulary skill	Oral Communication Skills
1 (seasoned)	Male	39	Public-College in Progress	Expert	Expert
2 (seasoned)	Male	25	Public-College Graduate	Intermediate	Expert
3 (newbie)	Male	25	Private-College Graduate	Intermediate	Intermediate
4 (seasoned)	Male	30	Private-College in Progress	Intermediate	Intermediate
5 (seasoned)	Female	26	Private-College graduate	Expert	Expert
6 (seasoned)	Female	27	College Graduate	Intermediate	Intermediate
7 (newbie)	Female	21	Private-College in Progress	Intermediate	Expert
8 (newbie)	Female	23	Private-College Graduate	Intermediate	Expert

Legend: newbie: 0-6 months employment or new in the company; seasoned: at least 7 months

The results show that there is no significant difference in the agents' vocabulary skill and oral communication skill when gender, educational attainment, and length of work experience are compared. However, the language status in terms of age is significant on their vocabulary skills while considered insignificant in oral communication skills. This could mean that there are many influences that can affect the language status of the call center agents; it could be their educational attainment, personal learning, immersion, and call center training. Overall, the Filipino CCAs tend to have better oral communication skills than vocabulary skills. Those who are expert in their vocabulary skills are also expert in their oral skills, while those who are intermediate in the former are either intermediate or expert in the latter. The vocabulary in the call center CCAs who were interviewed claimed that their

learning in English language and communication development was strongly influenced socially by their interactions or practice particularly in the workplace. It could be due to the fact that there is a mismatch in the vocabulary taught in school and the vocabulary used in call centers in that, schools use book or formal English while call centers use informal or conversational English with many idiomatic expressions used. As Del Rosario (2004) mentioned, Filipino call center agent should be good at outsourcing and have English adeptness. This result is similar to Castillo, De Guzman, and Tahimic's (2010) result that oral communication skills affect students in numerous ways, not only inside the classroom but even after the students graduate and when they go to look for jobs.

How the Participants Developed Their Vocabulary and Oral Communication Skills

The participants of the study presented various ways of developing their vocabulary and oral skills. Five major themes emerged from the interview data of eight participants. They are actual language use; reading and practicing newly acquired vocabulary; immersion, audiovisuals, and media for imitation and comprehension; call center trainings; and consulting the dictionary.

Actual language use. In the recorded interview, CCAs were asked about their English language learning experiences on how they developed their vocabulary and oral communication skills. The participants believe that they learned English and developed their communication skills by actual use of English at an early age. For example, P1 was certain that his exposure at the call center helped improve English communication skills:

For me, it is more on social learning. Being exposed in the call center industry and talking to your fellow agents or your colleagues in the industry develops your communication skills a lot.

P2 shared that his English language learning experience at school was not of help. He stated: *"You're not interacting in school, right?"* P2 indicated that there was a lack of interaction in English between teacher and student and among

students when he was a student. He believed that actual use of the language with others in a form of social learning was a big factor in developing his English communication skills particularly the practice he got at the call center industry.

Reading and practicing newly acquired vocabulary. In acquiring vocabulary, majority of the eight respondents acknowledged that reading was essential in their English language learning and communication development. When asked how they acquired their vocabulary, the CCAs revealed that they are active readers and practice their newly learned vocabulary in English speaking dialogues. P1 said, *"For vocabulary, it's because of my reading. I'm fond of reading."* P4 also supports this by saying, *"For vocabulary, one of my hobbies is reading novels. If there are words that sound so strange for me, then, I have to copy that word. Then, after reading, I have to check."* Like P1 and P4, P7 also pointed out that she reads a lot of books. Chang (2011) believed that the learners will improve their vocabulary skills when they engage in reading. Similarly, Sternberg (1987) posits that people learn most of their vocabulary by reading.

P6 also suggested that through reading books, magazines, and pocketbooks, and practicing the new words she gleaned from the reading materials improved her vocabulary knowledge. Reading and practicing the lessons learned by socializing have positive effects on vocabulary skills development as mentioned by Chang (2011) and Ong (2009). These results are related to the study by Castillo, De Guzman, and Tahimic (2010) that practice and frequent use of the English language from reading is the best way for one to be an effective English speaker. One must always take into consideration participating in English-related activities to maximize practice and command of the English language. Aclan and Abdul Aziz (2015) also found that students of English as a foreign language preparing for debates read a lot and acquire new words by reading then they use the new words they have learned during the actual debates. The authors explained that by practicing their newly learned words, the new words become a part of their interlanguage system and registered in their long-term memory.

Immersion, audiovisuals, and media for imitation and comprehension. CCAs' immersion at the workplace helped improve their oral communication skills. P1, 3, 5, 6, and 8 indicated in their responses that they were immersed with the English language conversation in the workplace. They work with native English speaker clients and they accommodated the way they speak. The agents also claimed that the language spoken from the audio-visual films made them imitate how to communicate in English. The ideas suggested that constant and abundant exposures in English language communication made the CCAs imitate the English language pronunciation and accent. For example, P8 said, *"Every day, just talking to Americans, I was able to adopt their accent. So that's how I was able to improve my English communication skills"*. On the other hand, P6 learned oral communication by watching movies. She stated, *"I watch foreign movies. And then, I practice so that I'll be able to pronounce or imitate the accent."* Similarly, P1 adopted the way she speaks by imitation of native English speakers.

It's more on my will to develop it so that I will be sounding more American compared to the Filipino accent and so I watch American movies. I also watch news, like for example the BBC news with Cathy Court...So, I tried to imitate her as well as when you are already on the phone, actually. It will also lead you to develop the accent because you're just going to imitate the accent of your customer.

In imitating the native speakers, learners can improve their pronunciation and their use of structures, vocabulary, idioms, and intonation, gesture and style (Oxford, 1990). In this study the call center agents prefer to imitate the accent and pronunciation of the native speakers in order to develop their English pronunciation skills similar to their clients. In a study by Mcgeown (2016) conducted in the Philippines, many speak with clear American accent and the call centers in the Philippines train their staff to sound indistinguishable from Americans. The expert concluded that the callers never realize that the person they are calling is on the other side of the world. In India, an article inferred that imitation of American ac-

cent for a call transaction is significant (Arora & Kaul, 2005).

Exposure to native English speakers even just on the Internet via Youtube, movies, TV shows and programs help CCAs not only to imitate speaking but also to improve listening comprehension. This was expressed by P8, a newbie agent who said that TV shows has helped him develop language comprehension by saying, *"I think it's also with American TV shows. Not only American TV shows but also different foreign programs improve language comprehension"*. Television and radio programs should be used with appropriate spoken language skills in English to enhance appropriate language skill acquisition (Gowon, 2009). The use of audiovisuals such as for listening English dialogues improved the CCAs language learning experience particularly in developing their oral language skills and listening comprehension. In fact, the call centers where the data were gathered have several flat screens showing on purpose audiovisuals such as Anglophone-related films to influence the English communication skills of the Filipino CCAs in their workplace.

Call center trainings. When the participants were asked about their language oral communication development, P2, a CCA for more than two years, admitted that the call center training helped him develop his communication skills by saying, *"We have this training in this call center to develop our vocabulary, accent, and pronunciation."* The impetus of call center trainings show that hired agents should be linguistically proficient particularly in vocabulary, accent, and pronunciation so that they will be received well as they communicate with their native English speaker clients. Blake (2016) mentioned that call center agents with poor limited skills in areas such as active listening, pronunciation or business vocabulary can make mistakes that result in lost customers, billing errors, or financial losses. Thus, proper training of CCAs is imperative.

Consulting the dictionary. Other participants mentioned that consulting the dictionary how to pronounce words correctly improved their pronunciation. P7, a newbie call center agent, stated that using a dictionary aids her pronunciation skill development. She stated, *"If I'm not sure of*

the pronunciation of word, I usually check the dictionaries." This result is supported by Al-Bayati and Reishaan (2007) who found out that the use of dictionary helps students master a better English pronunciation. The experts hypothesized that the adoption of dictionary-based instruction enables students to practice various skills that are involved in the mastery of the language.

The results imply that the language status of Filipino call center agents were reflected proficient through their vocabulary skills and oral communication skills data. The gender, educational attainment, and length of work experience show that there is no significant difference in the agents' vocabulary skill and oral communication skill. However, the language status in terms of age is significant on their vocabulary skills while considered insignificant in oral communication skills. This could mean that there are many influences that can affect the language status of the call center agents; it could be their educational attainment, personal learning, immersion, and call center training. Overall, the Filipino CCAs respondents tend to have better oral communication skills than vocabulary skills. Those who are experts in their vocabulary skills are also expert in their oral skills, while those who are intermediate in the former are either also intermediate or expert in the latter. The Call Center Agents who were interviewed claimed that their learning in English language and communication development strongly influenced socially. As Del Rosario (2004) mentioned, Filipino call center agent should be good in outsourcing and have English adeptness. This result is similar to Castillo, De Guzman, and Tahimic's (2010) finding that oral communication skills affect students in numerous ways, not only inside the classroom but even after the students graduate and when they go to look for jobs. The oral communication skills needed by CCAs were basically enhanced in their workplace.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of the study show that majority of the CCAs in Iloilo are *proficient* in both vocabulary and oral communication skills. Majority of the CCAs are categorized as *intermediate* in their vocabulary skills and *expert* in their oral

communication skills. As Sun (2014) mentioned based on the communicative competence model of Bachman and Palmer, Filipino call center agents are skillful in English communication both in their vocabulary and oral communication. Hammond (2015) theorized that the experience of maturing into adulthood gives older learners access to some tools and techniques not available to younger age children. This study, however, showed that length of work experience, gender, and educational attainment do not have significant effect on the English communication skills among CCAs.

CCAs acknowledge that they have improved in their oral communication skills needed to function as a CCA largely due to their language immersions particularly by exposures to English audiovisuals and media with actual practice with English speakers, reading English dialogues, and their company trainings. This means that relatively, they did not learn from school the accent, vocabulary, and techniques for being a CCA. Their constant communication in English language with fellow workers and Anglophone customers improved their communication skills, specifically their listening comprehension, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Most of the CCAs have completed an undergraduate degree and some are still studying in college and they believe that their English communication skills were enhanced socially, i.e., by listening to native speakers and actually using the language. Social learning is supported by Haynes (2007) that language acquisition is present in day-to-day conversation socially. However, social learning can be created in the classroom if a well-rounded English communication competency that will be applicable in various contexts is to be achieved. This is particularly important for the Philippines being known as supplier of human resources globally such as nurses who need to take TOEFL or IELTS that require understanding of English spoken by native speakers for them to get accepted in the US, the UK, Australia, and New Zealand.

Based on the results of the study, effective English communication does not merely rely on the learning of Standard English communication found in formally written books across the country. There should be a place for conversational

English including idiomatic expressions used by English native speakers for Filipinos to be able to effectively function globally. Teachers may use recorded conversations such as those used in TOEFL, TOEIC, or IELTS to expose Filipino learners to various accents, pronunciation, and idiomatic expressions commonly used by native speakers. Neutral accent should be encouraged in schools and the use of International Phonetic Alphabet should be emphasized when teaching English pronunciation.

Future research may be directed on an in-depth exploration of the commonly acquired vocabulary particularly idioms in their interaction with native English speakers. It may also inquire on how oral communication books in both secondary and tertiary levels teach conversational English.

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