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English Language Learners' Perspectives of the Communicative Language Approach

Colonda LaToya Barnes-Hawkins
Walden University

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Colonda Barnes-Hawkins

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Dr. Vicki Underwood, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer

Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University

2016

Abstract

English Language Learners' Perspectives of the Communicative Language Approach

by

Colonda Barnes-Hawkins

MA, Regent University, 2005

BA, North Carolina Central University, 1994

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

The communicative language approach (CLA) dominates pedagogical practice in second language acquisition classrooms in the US. However, this approach does not emphasize independent pronunciation instruction, leaving learners to improve pronunciation on their own. This study explored the perspectives of English language learners (ELLs) being instructed via the CLA regarding the effectiveness of the CLA in providing intelligible pronunciation skills. The intelligibility principle of language served as the theoretical foundation underlying this study guided by research questions addressing how well the CLA met ELLs' pronunciation intelligibility needs and their perspectives on receiving independent pronunciation instruction to meet these needs. Using qualitative case study methods, the research questions were addressed through an analysis of interviews of 10 community college ELL adult volunteers who received instruction using the CLA as current or former students in the intensive English program, had linguistic skill levels ranging from beginner to advanced, and were graduates of U.S. schools. A typological analysis model was followed where the data were organized by themes, patterns, and identified relationships. Participants reported wanting to improve their pronunciation and that their pronunciation had improved with the CLA instructional strategies. Although all participants desired to receive some independent instruction in pronunciation, their preferred instructional modes differed. It is recommended that ELLs' perspectives be heard and that English as a Second Language educators instruct with the CLA while also providing explicit pronunciation instruction. The results of this study indicating student satisfaction with the CLA may elicit positive social change within the ELL community by providing a voice to ELLs.

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

English language learners (ELLs) receive instruction via the communicative language approach (CLA) while attending a community college located in southwest Texas. This pedagogical approach aims to teach communicative competence while not emphasizing independent pronunciation (IP) instruction. This lack of instructional emphasis on pronunciation may present a problem as ELLs strive to achieve intelligible pronunciation.

Both nonnative and native language speakers can be impacted by this problem as communication is often flawed during verbal exchanges. As English as Second Language (ESL) students are being directly affected by the CLA and may be receiving little independent pronunciation instruction, knowing the ELL students' perspective is essential and merits the attention of the college leadership, education scholars, and members of the ESL professional community.

An analysis of the ELLs' perspective of the current CLA in delivering intelligible pronunciation needs provided critical insight into the effectiveness of today's teaching strategies in meeting ELLs' intelligible pronunciation needs. This study contributed to the current body of knowledge by addressing the perspectives of community college ELLs at a southwest Texas college regarding the CLA and pronunciation instruction. The focus was on the perspectives of the participants relative to the effectiveness of the CLA in achieving pronunciation intelligibility. The participants of this study were students of Hispanic descent who graduated from U.S. school systems. While these

participants are among the few students at the setting previously educated in the United States as they are joined in the ESL program by foreign nationals who commute internationally to attend the college, their perspectives may inform other ELLs' perspectives in other parts of the United States. In Section 2, I present a literature review on this present study's topic.

Problem Statement

The problem of this study is that ELLs are instructed in SLA classrooms via the CLA, which does not emphasize independent pronunciation instruction. Pronunciation intelligibility serves as an indispensable component of effective oral communication, and ELLs attempt to achieve this essential element as they progress through the English as a Second Language program. Therefore, ELLs and second language acquisition professionals would deem an investigation of ELLs' perspective worthy of scholarly examination because ELLs are directly impacted by the communicative language pedagogical practice. Moreover, the participants of this study, who were primarily Hispanic graduates of U.S. school systems, may inform the perspectives of other ELLs throughout the United States.

The ELL study participants have completed a formal public school education in the United States and may desire to either advance their education in the United States' predominantly English speaking institutions of higher education, or they may desire to integrate into predominately English speaking workforce environments. Therefore, their pronunciation intelligibility skills should prove solid and able to effectively communicate with others from English speaking communities. Pedagogical practices augmenting

independent pronunciation with the CLA may be deemed crucial to ELLs in accomplishing this goal, and ELLs are cognizant of whether such strategies are beneficial or would prove beneficial in their pronunciation intelligibility acquisition. Therefore, the perspectives of community college ELL students on the effectiveness of the CLA in meeting their pronunciation intelligibility needs were explored, and the students' interest in independent pronunciation instruction was assessed.

Scholarly research has revealed that language instructors once taught independent pronunciation as their primary focus of SLA studies in the late 1800s through the 1960s (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 1996). However, a dominant opponent of independent pronunciation instruction, American linguist Chomsky, led the linguistic revolutionary movement and declared that the "current standard structural theories of language were incapable of accounting for the fundamental characteristic of language—the creativity and uniqueness of individual sentences" (Chomsky, as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 1987, p. 64). This stance was a major contributor to the focal change in instructional strategies leading to the disappearance of independent pronunciation instruction in the second language acquisition classrooms. Chomsky advocated the 1960s cognitive approach of language learning in which pronunciation instruction faded into the linguistic background of teaching as speaking in a native-like tongue was considered unrealistic and unattainable (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996). This shift provided the opportune juncture for grammar and vocabulary to gain focus in the language learning classroom (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996). Equally influential to Chomsky's instructional change were the works of Halliday and Widdowson who emphasized redirecting the

focus of language teaching to communicative proficiency instead of language structure (Richards & Rodgers, 1987). These aforementioned contributions all led to today's communicative approach instructional focus. Characteristic of the communicative approach, independent pronunciation instruction is almost nonexistent, and pronunciation instruction, if any, is integrated within the instructional lesson.

ELLs, recipients of the CLA, can provide valuable perspectives about the CLA and express their opinions regarding the idea of receiving independent pronunciation instruction. The perspectives and opinions of ELLs may be deemed influential at the college level as curriculums could possibly undergo modifications, or the ELLs' perspectives and opinions could provide insight to the inquiry of why the CLA dominates the 21st century SLA pedagogical practice. Authors Asassfeh, Khwaileh, Al-Shaboul, and Alshboul (2012) concurred that "understanding learners' beliefs is quintessential to ensure that they receive the quality education of preference to them. Their views of which communicative aspects are necessary in actual instructional practices should guide the pedagogical decisions associated with their learning" (p. 532).

This 1970s CLA phenomenon deserves a close and critical examination. The absence of independent pronunciation instruction prevalent in today's classroom-dominant CLA led me to question whether some SLA students' unintelligible pronunciation has roots in this very instructional approach. This inquiry has ultimately led me to explore the perspectives of the students directly affected by this practice.

Research Questions

The research questions (RQs) guiding this qualitative study were as follows:

RQ 1: What were the perspectives of community college ELLs who received instruction using the CLA regarding how the approach met their pronunciation intelligibility needs?

RQ 2: What were the perspectives of these ELLs regarding receiving independent pronunciation instruction to meet their pronunciation intelligibility needs?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to capture the perspectives of ELLs regarding the effectiveness of the communicative language in producing the necessary intelligible pronunciation skills. A qualitative research design was used to conduct this study to thoroughly explore and gather an understanding of the ELLs' perspectives. Also, with this qualitative research approach, the inquiry was conducted via one-on-one interviews in a location with very few or no distractions and where the interviews were able to be recorded, as recommended by Creswell (2007). The qualitative research design allowed a focus specifically on the participants' perspectives through the case study design. Data were collected for the inquiry via the interview method of gathering data, which can also be a characteristic of the qualitative research design. Additionally, using a qualitative approach, the data were organized into categories by themes, patterns, and identified relationships in preparation for the data analysis. In Section 3, I further describe the research design for this study.

Conceptual Framework

The CLA currently dominates the English as a Second Language classroom's pedagogical practice. This pedagogical practice, also commonly referred to as the

communicative language teaching approach, provides the conceptual framework for this study.

The primary goal of the CLA is communicative competence. Richards and Rodgers (2014) informed that communicative competence encompasses the following:

1. Knowing how to use language for a range of different purposes and functions,
2. Knowing how to vary [the] use of language according to the setting and the participants (e.g., knowing when to use formal and informal speech or when to use language appropriately for written as opposed to spoken communication),
3. Knowing how to produce and understand different types of texts (e.g., narratives, reports, interviews, conversations), and
4. Knowing how to maintain communication despite having limitations in one's language knowledge (e.g., through using different kinds of communication strategies). (p. 90)

This CLA, which dates back to the 1970s, has main foci in vocabulary and communication, and little motivation on pronunciation or grammar. Richards (2012) made the following assertion:

While dialogs, grammar, and pronunciation drills did not usually disappear from textbooks and classroom materials at this time, they now appeared as part of a sequence of activities that moved back and forth between accuracy activities and fluency activities. Accuracy work could either come before or after fluency work. (p. 1)

Therefore, with this approach, ELLs are likely not receiving explicit pronunciation instruction. Instructors teach pronunciation as ELLs make mistakes during classroom communicative activities. However, students could possibly improve pronunciation intelligibility and communicative fluency with this explicit pronunciation instruction.

The community college students who served as participants of this study were highly impacted by this pedagogical practice, as they are the ELLs. The ELLs were interviewed to obtain their perspectives of the current approach. This study used the concepts of the CLA as the framework to inform the research questions of this study.

Definition of Terms

The terms defined below are specific to this particular research study.

Cognitive approach (also cognitive academic language learning approach, CALLA): With CALLA students are taught to use “learning strategies derived from a cognitive model of learning to assist their comprehension and retention of both language skills and concepts in content areas” (Chamot & O’Malley, 1987, p. 1). “CALLA is designed for limited English proficient students who are being prepared to participate in mainstream content-area instruction”. (Chamot & O’Malley, 1987, p. 1).

Communicative language approach (CLA): The following summarizes the CLA: Communicative language teaching makes use of real-life situations that necessitate communication. The teacher sets up a situation that students are likely to encounter in real life. Unlike the audiolingual method of language teaching, which relies on repetition and drills, the communicative approach can leave students in suspense as to the outcome of a class exercise, which will vary

according to their reactions and responses. The real-life simulations change from day to day. Students' motivation to learn comes from their desire to communicate in meaningful ways about meaningful topics. (Galloway, 1993, p. 1)

The following enumerates communicative approach traits:

Characteristics of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) include (a) everything is mostly done with communicative intent, (b) students use the language through communicative activities such as game[s] and role-plays; (c) communication is purposeful; (d) using authentic materials, (e) activities are often carried out by students in small group[s], and (f) grammar is taught inductively. (Natsir & Sanjaya, 2014, p. 59)

Community language learning (CLL): La Forge (1975) described community language learning as an instructional method that combines learning theory principles with counseling attitudes and techniques.

English language learner: The National Council of Teachers of English (2008) defined a person learning English below:

[An ELL is] an active learner of the English language who may benefit from various types of language support programs. ELLs are the fastest *growing* segment of the student population. ELLs do not fit easily into simple categories; they comprise a very diverse group. ELL students are increasingly present in all U.S. states. (National Council of Teachers of English, 2008, p. 2)

Intelligibility: Intelligibility refers to how well the listener receives and comprehends the speech signal (Gelfand, 2010).

International phonetic alphabet: This alphabet “is a set of symbols designed to be used for representing the speech sounds of languages of the world” (Brown, 2012, p. 1).

Pedagogy: Pedagogy is defined by Macneill, Cavanagh, and Silcox (2003) in the following way:

Pedagogy concerns enabling the learning and intellectual growth of students in contrast to instruction that treats students as the object of curriculum implementation....successful classroom pedagogy requires that teachers understand how students learn and have the autonomy to design, implement, and assess educational activities that meet the needs of the individual and all students. (p. 2)

Silent way method: The silent way method is defined by linguistic scholars below:

The silent way learner attention is focused on the sound system without having to learn a phonetic alphabet or a body of explicit linguistic information. The teacher, true to the method’s name, speaks as little as possible, indicating through gestures what students should do. (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996, p. 5)

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations

Assumptions

One assumption of this study was the candidness of the participants as they engaged in the interview sessions. I assumed that the interview responses given by the participants were honest. I stressed the importance of being truthful by reiterating that ELLs’ responses could possibly be read and interpreted by community college ESL

coordinators, the dean of the community college program, faculty, SLA professionals, researchers, and others interested in the perspectives of ELLs.

Limitations

This study was limited to a small sampling of ELLs with predominately the same native language. Therefore, the data collected were primarily from the perspective of one native language speaking population. Another limitation of this study was my view that independent pronunciation instruction should become a component of the English as a Second Language program at the community college. This perspective was based on years of teaching and communicating with second language learners who have graduated from United States public schools systems and continue to find themselves confronted with unintelligible pronunciation. However, my views, as the researcher, are not the focus of this study.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study encompassed ELLs and their perspectives of the communicative approach in achieving intelligible pronunciation. In the study, I also gauged the ELLs' opinions of pronunciation instruction being taught as independent instruction. The study's participants included only United States high school graduates. The study aimed to contribute to the current body of knowledge specializing in both the communicative approach and pronunciation instruction.

Delimitations

A delimitation of this study was that the study focused only on one particular community college's ELLs. The inordinate number of community colleges across the

United States made it impractical to conduct a study encompassing all or a majority of the community colleges. A second delimitation was that this study focused only on community college students as the participants. Students at university level also receive instruction via the CLA and could provide their perspectives as well. However, the focus of this present study was the community college's ELLs' perspective. A final delimitation of this study was the composition of the participants. The participants were predominately Hispanic, second generation United States citizens, and graduates of U.S. school systems. These students may inform other ELLs' perspectives in other parts of the United States.

Significance of the Study

This study provided a channel for ELLs to express their views through an exploration of ELLs' perspectives. English as a Second Language deans and coordinators, faculty members, researchers, and SLA professionals may review this study and find the results applicable to their particular college as they strive to provide a high quality education to their matriculating ELL student population.

Equally important, this study could significantly impact the social conditions of the ELL community and United States society collectively. By identifying and highlighting the perspectives of ELLs regarding the CLA and their opinions about receiving independent pronunciation instruction to meet their intelligible pronunciation needs, the ELL's perspective may demand attention in the world of academia. These perspectives could ultimately lead to curriculum changes that affect the ELLs' oral communication goals, and, subsequently, positive social change will transpire.

Summary

In this qualitative study, I explored the views of ELLs regarding the CLA and their perspectives about receiving independent pronunciation instruction to meet their intelligible pronunciation needs. A case study qualitative research approach was employed. The community college ELLs were interviewed using a predesigned interview guide to collect data from these participants. The subsequent sections of this doctoral study include a literature review, the methodology employed, results, and discussions, conclusions, and recommendations.

Section 2: Literature Review

Introduction

While there is extensive debate and research on the numerous SLA teaching strategies and techniques for instructing ELLs, in this current research, I focused on the ELLs' perspective of how the CLA strategy is meeting their intelligible pronunciation needs and their interest in receiving independent pronunciation instruction. Previous researchers have analyzed the CLA primarily from the educators' and the experts' perspective with little emphasis on the acquisition of intelligible pronunciation as the primary goal. As the researcher, I perceive intelligible pronunciation to be pronunciation that is clear and understandable to the listener while communicating orally. Some questions to ask are if the listener can understand the speaker, if the speaker is effectively communicating his or her intended thoughts through his or her speech, if the CLA meets the pronunciation intelligibility needs of the ELL, and if the ELL believes receiving independent pronunciation instruction meets his or her pronunciation intelligibility needs. A review of the scholarly literature pertaining to this study addressed the CLA, independent pronunciation instruction, and the ELL. This literature review is arranged in various subcategories as they relate to intelligible pronunciation, the communicative approach, and pronunciation instruction. This literature was searched with the goal of exploring all aspects of linguistics that are relevant to the ELL achieving pronunciation intelligibility. A list of searched keywords from Google Scholar include the following: *pronunciation intelligibility, pronunciation instruction, second language acquisition, communicative language approach, pronunciation methodology, phonetics, English*

language learners, pronunciation teaching techniques, second language acquisition strategies, audio-lingual method, linguistics, English pronunciation, speech production, segmentals, and suprasegmentals.

Pronunciation Instruction Then and Now

From reviewing current literature, it is clear that researchers of SLA pedagogy recognize the lack of scholarly research available on pronunciation instruction. Teacher-researchers Baker and Murphy (2011) highlighted this lack in their work. The authors proclaimed that even though there has been years of urgency for more research of pronunciation teaching in ESL and English as a foreign language (EFL), limited research exist (Baker & Murphy, 2011).

Historical literature has revealed that prior to the 19th century, the focus of teaching pronunciation had been relatively inconsequential within our American school system (Kelly, 1976). While slightly before the 20th century, pronunciation attempted to emerge to the forefront of our classrooms (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996).

Specifically, in the 1890s, the Reform Movement marked the first significant period of pronunciation teaching with major contributions from phoneticians Passy, Sweet, and Vietor (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996). Most notably, the aforementioned phoneticians founded the International Phonetic Association in London in 1886 and created the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996). With the IPA, foreign language learners are able to correctly pronounce any language as sounds are dedicated to a particular symbol (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996). However, this

pronunciation instruction tool is rarely used within my present English language acquisition environment.

During the 1940s and 1950s, the audiolingual and the oral approach surfaced in the United States and Great Britain, respectively (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996). Both instructional methods emphasized the importance of pronunciation teaching. This pronunciation teaching began in the initial stage of the instruction. Teachers would concentrate on phonetics by using the IPA and various visual aids to model sound articulation (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996).

The cognitive approach of the 1960s placed no emphasis on pronunciation. Author and linguistics professor Scovel (1969) found that pronunciation warranted no need for emphasizing because he believed native-like pronunciation was unachievable and more time should be devoted to grammatical structures and words, as they are learnable. Another dominant opponent of independent pronunciation instruction, American linguist Chomsky, led the linguistic revolutionary movement and declared that the then present-day language theories were unable to allow for the creative and unique sentences (Chomsky, as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 1987). This stance was a major contributor to the focal change in instructional strategies leading to the disappearance of independent pronunciation instruction in the SLA classrooms.

During the 1970s, pronunciation was again stressed during the initial stage of instruction through the silent way method (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996) as with audiolingualism and the oral approach. Pronunciation instruction advocates, such as Gattegno used the silent way method for learners to achieve pronunciation proficiency

(Celce-Murcia et al., 1996). Employing the silent way, teachers speak as little as possible while using gestures to convey communication to the learner. Learning tools, to include sound colored charts, the Fidel wall charts, colored rods, and word charts, provide vowel and consonant instruction to the second language learner. The Fidel wall charts assist in instructing spelling patterns for each sound in the target language (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996). A second pronunciation instruction advocate of the 1970s was Curran. Curran (1976) developed the community language learning method in 1976. Pronunciation was taught in the beginning of instruction and is initiated by the learner. Teachers or counselors act as computers by immediately responding to the learner's request once it is made. The student can request assistance or learn independent of the human computer. Regardless of its demand, the human computer is readily available to the student (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996).

In the 21st century, pronunciation instruction has reverted to the background through the popular communicative approach of teaching. The primary goal of the communicative approach is for the learner to effectively communicate using the target language (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996). The learner is to attain intelligible pronunciation to ensure communication is not deemed flawed. Pronunciation is not explicitly taught as errors are corrected through natural communication. This approach dominates our English as a Second Language classroom today.

Senior lecturer and author Kelly (2000) observed the two key problems with pronunciation teaching as (a) it is neglected in the classroom, and (b) when it is taught in the classroom, more reactive to problems than proactive and strategic (Kelly, 2000).

This neglect of teaching pronunciation in the classroom may stem from educators' doubt and lack of adequate training in how to teach pronunciation. Through his research, Kelly (2000) learned that many experienced teachers admit to their lack of theory of pronunciation knowledge, thus exhibiting a need for training. Kelly (2000) believed that pronunciation teachers need the following: "a good grounding in (a) theoretical knowledge, (b) practical classroom skills, and (c) access to good ideas for classroom activities" (p. 13).

Because of the criticality of pronunciation instruction, SLA educators should be deliberate in their instruction of pronunciation (Kelly, 2000). Kelly (2000) believed that sidelining or disregarding factors of pronunciation presents an incomplete analysis of the language. Students need pronunciation instruction to allow them to see the full picture and give them a chance at successfully communicating (Kelly, 2000).

With the CLA, also known as CLT, Isaacs (2009) referred to the work of Celce-Murcia and acknowledged that educators are not adequately equipped to teach the CLT approach. Pourhosein and Ahmadi (2011) contended that educators are not equipped with the necessary background or tools to teach pronunciation effectively. Thus, as a result, they do not teach it. Additionally, Pourhosein and Ahmadi described the current foreign language curricula as curricula that focus on pronunciation in the initial year of instruction with the alphabet and the phonetic system. This focus often changes, however, after the initial, introductory level (Pourhosein & Ahmadi, 2011).

Teaching Pronunciation Through Phonetics

Kelly (1976) referred to German scholar and author Breul who conveyed his thoughts on pronunciation teaching and the need for phonetic knowledge while teaching a foreign language as he declared,

I think the very great practical importance of pronunciation is not yet sufficiently insisted on in all quarters, and the high value of phonetic training is recognised still less. A teacher should possess a correct pronunciation and a sufficient knowledge of the auxiliary science of phonetics to be able to teach the conscious imitation of foreign sounds. (Kelly, 1976, p. 65)

Early phoneticians, as referenced by Sweet in his 1899 work, believed and promoted the following principles for language teaching:

1. The spoken form of a language is primary and should be taught first.
2. The findings of phonetics should be applied to language teaching.
3. Language teachers must have solid training in phonetics.
4. Learners should be given phonetics training to establish good speech habits.

(p. 3)

Additionally, Sweet (1899) described phonetics as a speech-sound science or a pronunciation art (1899). Without phonetics, it is not possible to observe the simplest phenomena of language. Therefore, phonetics is imperative in the theoretical and the practical study of languages (Sweet, 1899). Additionally, Sweet described a method of studying phonetics. He focused on the following two areas of phonetics: organic and acoustic. The actions of the human organs of speech producing sounds by the positioning

of the tongue and palate characterize the organic side of phonetics (Sweet, 1899). The acoustic side, proclaimed Sweet, describes and classifies speech-sounds according to their likeness to the ear.

The process of sound isolation involves separating individual sounds and maintaining their unique sound within combinations and while under conditions of quantity and stress (Sweet, 1899). Imitating a language, according to Sweet, is one of the two fallacies of efficient teaching of phonetics. The other fallacy of efficiently teaching phonetics is “that minute distinctions of sound can be disregarded—or, in other words, that a bad pronunciation does not matter” (Sweet, 1899, p. 5). Significant sound distinctions cannot be ignored. Sound distinctions may appear to be very minute, but to the native speaker’s ear, they always seem considerable (Sweet, 1899). This sound distinction may lead to unintelligible communication.

Hismanoglu (2006) advocated the teaching of phonetic symbols to language learners to promote autonomous learning. The autonomous learner can become reliant on him or herself in extremely likely situations when the teacher is not present (Hismanoglu, 2006). Ylinen et al. (2010) investigated the effects of phonetic training on nonnative cue weighting. The authors of this study referenced several phonetic training techniques deemed beneficial to the second language learner. One of the techniques is the high-variability phonetic training (Ylinen et al., 2010). This training teaches the second language learner ways to identify nonnative contrasts of speech.

Morano (2007) conducted a qualitative study aimed at identifying the factors necessary to achieve a successful acquisition of the English language. This qualitative

study involved 10 bilingual/biliterate professionals as subjects. These subjects participated in interviews and follow-up process to provide the necessary data to answer the following research question: What factors do proficient bilinguals and biliterate ELLs perceive as having most heavily influenced their English acquisition and development? Among the many factors revealed by the 10 participants, the most applicable to this current study is the factor of the "importance in the language acquisition process is the development of a complete awareness of the phonemic elements of the new second language by the second language learners" (Morano, 2007, p. 200). Another factor to receive high rankings among the participants was to be aware of the significance of conventional pronunciation of English speech sounds and to differentiate between the sound system of both native language and target language (Morano, 2007). Based on the findings of Morano's study, phonemic instruction is equally as critical to the affective needs of ELLs.

In the Classroom: Pronunciation Instruction—Suggested Strategies

A research question that focused on three pronunciation teaching techniques preferred by language teachers was posed in a 2010 investigation by Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu. The results of this investigation were that reading aloud, using dictionaries, and reading dialogues were the three preferred techniques in teaching pronunciation (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2010). The authors suggested that perhaps the teachers were taught using these techniques, so they chose to employ these traditional techniques (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2010).

Schaetzel and Low (2009) suggested the following pronunciation instructional strategies for trained SLA educators:

1. Cultivate positive attitudes toward accuracy,
2. Identify specific pronunciation features that pose problems for learners (by using contrastive analysis),
3. Make learners aware of the prosodic features of language (stress, intonation, rhythm—extremely important for comprehensibility), and
4. Focus on developing learners' communicative competence. (p. 3)

To cultivate positive attitudes towards accuracy among ELLs, SLA educators should create a classroom environment in which there is an affiliation with the ELL's native language while being taught a pronunciation of English (Schaetzel & Low, 2009).

Hypotheses such as the contrastive analysis hypothesis have been tested to identify second language learners' potential problem areas in a particular language (Schaetzel & Low, 2009). During a contrastive analysis, contrasts between the various teaching methods were made to identify meaningful differences. Additionally, Schaetzel and Low (2009) suggested that educators observe foreign language learners in other classroom environments and while communicating with peers to identify problems that cause communication barriers. Schaetzel and Low provided a pronunciation checklist to assist the educator in identifying the language learner's pronunciation problems.

Schaetzel and Low (2009) advised SLA educators to provide prosodic training to language learners. This prosodic training includes intonation, word stress, and rhythm. These aspects of a language are extremely critical in pronunciation intelligibility.

Examples of prosodic training could include listening activities to distinguish between the rise and fall in tones. Learners can compare the intonation of asking questions in English and their native language. In addition, learners can imitate dialogues and perform in plays, again, to hear intonation. To teach word stress, educators can teach pronunciation rules for stress on words by teaching grammatical elements such as reflexive pronouns. Word stress can be taught while teaching vocabulary acquisition by identifying where the major stress falls in the word (Schaetzel & Low, 2009).

SLA educators can promote student communicative competence through instruction activities, such as role-playing and video-taping and audio-taping sessions. Language learners should role-play events likely to occur in their daily lives, such as requesting a check to be cashed by a bank teller (Grant, 2010). Video-taping and audio-taping students allow them to listen to themselves and others to become their own critics and learn from others, thus improving communicative competence (Florez, 1998).

Several SLA authors have suggested various approaches to implementing phonetic training in classroom lessons. Celce-Murcia et al. (1996) recommended the educator instructs the learner to focus on and practice sounds. Celce-Murcia et al. advised the educator to instruct pronunciation using the following activities to emphasize the communicative component of pronunciation:

- (a) listen and imitate, (b) minimal pair drills, (c) contextualized minimal pairs, (d) tongue twisters, (e) developmental approximation drills, (f) practice of vowel shifts and stress shifts related by affixation, (g) phonetic training, (h) Visual aids,

(i) Reading aloud/recitation, and (j) recording of learner's production. (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996, pp. 8-10)

Additionally, Celce-Murcia et al. (1996) suggested the use of poems and song lyrics to demonstrate the communicative value of pronunciation. The typical pronunciation lesson should compose the following five techniques:

(a) description and analysis, (b) listening discrimination, (c) controlled practice and feedback, (d) Guided practice with feedback, and (e) communicative practice and feedback. (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996, p. 36)

Teaching pronunciation via today's prevalence of technology provides an option to teach pronunciation nontraditionally. Numerous software programs have been developed to teach, enhance, and to attain intelligible pronunciation. Kim (2006) highlighted the use of FluSpeak software in pronunciation instruction. FluSpeak is an automatic speech recognition software application used "to identify words that are read aloud or spoken into any sound-recording device" (Kim, 2006, p. 322).

Kim (2006) acknowledged the challenge teaching a class of multiranges in proficiency levels. Therefore, the author recommended using ASR software and educator-led classroom instruction (Kim, 2006). In Kim's study, the following steps with FluSpeak were employed: (a) repeating each sentence after the speaker in software application, (b) self-training initiated by students, (c) instructor's Q&A session, (d) student pair practice, (e) student's unified repetition with the target pronunciation being modeled, and (f) sessions of role playing and other activities (Kim, 2006).

Busà (2008) described the computer language and pronunciation training systems as modern day ways of enhancing the pronunciation teaching in the classroom. Busà listed several computer software applications that educators may use to assist in their students acquiring intelligible pronunciation. Those applications are recorded below:

- Signal analysis software can be used to teach intonation, the rise and fall of speech patterns.
- Speech synthesis, used for learning sound symbols and listening comprehension.
- Automatic Speech Recognition, used exclusively for pronunciation. Learners are compared to native speakers.

Living in a technological era, the abovementioned will undoubtedly impact the foreign language learning classroom.

Research conducted by Szpyra-Kozłowska and Stasiak (2010) suggested that second language acquisition educators, when teaching pronunciation, should not focus on segment and suprasegments “but on the pronunciation of whole words” (p. 8). Based on the results of their study, redirecting this focus, the following was concluded:

- It is easier for the learner to learn to pronounce whole words without the major phonological deviations than to learn the individual segments and suprasegments of words.
- This approach is more rewarding for the learner as it results in immediate communicative gains and the feeling of accomplishment.

- Pronunciation lessons should include phonetic transcription, language awareness tasks, and production exercises. (Szpyra-Kozłowska & Stasiak, 2010, p. 8)

Gilbert (2008) thoroughly explained the elements of prosody when defining the melody and rhythm of spoken English. She emphasized the importance of language learners grasping the prosodic system. She asserted:

Without a sufficient, threshold-level mastery of the English prosodic system, learners' intelligibility and listening comprehension will not advance, no matter how much effort is made drilling individual sounds. That is why the highest priority must be given to rhythm and melody in whatever time is available for teaching pronunciation. (Gilbert, 2008, p. 8)

Gilbert suggested that teachers may view teaching rhythm and melody as complicated. However, teaching the basic level of understanding, the essence, of the prosody system may not be complicated at all. Gilbert contended that if classroom instructional time is limited, teaching the core system and practicing rhythmic and melodic cues and critical sounds will benefit the language learner's communicative competence immensely.

Can rap music improve intelligibility? Fischler (2009) focused her research on answering the question, "Did the rap method improve the students' use of word and sentence stress?" (p. 46). In her research, the author conducted a study involving six advanced intermediate level Grades 9-12 ELLs. These language learners participated in a pretest consisting of reading samples using stress syllables that were to be taught during a proceeding pronunciation course. The readings were evaluated by an ESL instructor for

accuracy of stresses and were also rated on the perception of intelligibility by the ESL instructor. Following the pretest, the language learners participated in an intensive 4-week pronunciation course consisting of auditory discrimination, syllabification, guided and controlled practice using raps, word stress, and, communicative practice. Following the course, the students participated in a posttest, where again they read the same sample readings as in the pretest. These sample readings were evaluated by three trained North American English intelligibility raters. Their results were calculated and compared to their pretest scores. The difference in the pre and posttest scores indicate the following:

There was general perceived improvement in the performance of most students.

Perhaps the most valuable result is that the students in this sample gained a sense of autonomy through learning metacognitive skills regarding word and sentence stress production. Their focused efforts can certainly contribute to future competence in pronunciation. (Fischler, 2009, p. 50)

Huang (2009) presented additional supporting evidence for pronunciation instruction. However, this research presented an interestingly different approach. A fictional story entitled *Wowo's Adventure* was created to include several consonants and vowels with a mnemonics-based pronunciation instructional approach to assist Taiwanese students during their pronunciation instruction. The story depicted each consonant and vowel using personification phonetic symbols befitting of the Taiwanese culture and relative to the students' native language. For the explication pronunciation instruction, the students received 90 minutes of instruction four times a week. During the instruction, phonetic symbols were taught that corresponded with the pictures. Following the study,

interviews with the students were conducted to gather their reactions. Results from the interviews exhibited positive results. Some of the reactions follow with the students' actual comments: Cybil said, "I think learning pronunciation through this method is interesting because this method is very interesting and it helps me to memory vocabulary faster" (p. 26). Betty concluded, "I like learning pronunciation through this method because it helps me to memorize new vocabulary" (p. 26). However, Anna asserted:

It is just so-so for me to learn pronunciation through this method. I think the story doesn't connect well and I don't know. But I think to some extent, consonants and vowels are difficult to remember. The listening of story does make the memorization of consonants and vowels easier. (p. 26)

From the teacher's perspective, she too found the approach interesting and a diversion from the norm. She believed that the pictorial depictions augmented her students' memorization of vowels and consonants, thus improving their pronunciation. In conclusion, this different approach emphasizing the use of mnemonic devices to teach pronunciation suggests benefits for the teacher and most importantly the language learning student.

Pronunciation learning strategies employed by second language learners can also benefit the second language acquisition educators' instructional approach to pronunciation teaching. Eckstein (2007) focused a study on answering three research questions including one relevant to this current study. That research question asked, "What pronunciation strategies do adult ESL learners in an intensive English program use to help them improve their English pronunciation?" (p. 36). The author used a strategic

pronunciation learning scale to gather data from his 183 ESL learning study participants. From an analysis of the data, the strategies listed below were found to be used by the language learners. Some of those strategies included (a) asking for pronunciation help. (b) using their native sound system to pronounce new words (c) adjusting their facial muscles for new sounds, and (d) practicing new sounds. With effective instructor-led phonetic instruction paired with the learners' pronunciation learning strategy, intelligible communication can be achieved.

Trofimovich (2006) described an instructional approach the SLA instructor may use to promote intelligible pronunciation. This approach has been coined Automatization in Communicative Contexts of Essential Speech Segments (ACCESS).

Automatization in Communicative Contexts of Essential Speech Segments involves an instructional process engaging the learner in activities that are genuinely communicative (involving an authentic need to exchange information) inherently repetitive (requiring repeated use of language to attain the task goal), and functionally formulaic (including language with high reuse potential in everyday interactions). (Trofimovich, 2006, p. 529)

This ACCESS approach should be used with repetition and with a deliberate focus on a particular form (Trofimovich, 2006). For example, while teaching stress, a communicative task is given, such as buying groceries. Stress is placed on particular words (the items to be purchased). The student plays the role of shopper. As she browses the aisles of the grocery store, she pronounces the particular item repeatedly

until she locates it. By doing so, she has practiced the use of stress, a suprasegmental feature of English pronunciation.

Pronunciation pegs is defined by author and inventor Samuel (2010) as “an in-class teaching/learning strategy to help learners develop their ability to self-monitor and self-correct with a view to adopting target pronunciation” (p. 103). Samuel further describes pronunciation pegs as mnemonic strategies to assist in the language learners’ memory recall ability. The author referred to Gilbert’s (2008) use of pegs while using rubber bands to practice primary stress sounds. Additionally, Samuel listed personal examples of using pegs through human gestures to teach both segmental and suprasegmentals. These gestures include pointing to her eye to prompt correcting a vowel, making scissor-like gestures to correct stress, and touching her necklace to suggest linking words or sounds. These pegs can be useful to pronunciation teaching and can create a fun learning environment for the second language learner.

Munro and Derwing (2006) referred to the theoretical notion of the functional load principle as “a means of determining which consonant distinctions have the greatest impact on listeners’ perception of accentedness and comprehensibility” (p. 1). Munro and Derwing tested this theory. Eighty Cantonese students participated in the study by reading 23 Cantonese-accented sentences. Listeners evaluated the readings. High and low functional load error determinations were made relative to their impact on accentedness and comprehensibility. From these findings, classroom instructors can determine where to place their pronunciation instructional emphasis, as instructional time is often limited.

Woore's (2010) work shed light on the various strategies employed by second language learners to decode unfamiliar words. Twelve native French speakers of an English class in southeastern France participated in the study. The students were given 10 French words to read aloud and to vocalize their process of pronouncing the words. The findings show some of the decoding strategies as follows:

- Students focused on pronouncing individual syllables in the unfamiliar words.
- Students would separate the words into many parts then attempt to pronounce.
- Students used the analogy strategy by comparing familiar words with the unfamiliar words.

Current SLA educators can consider the use of these strategies to assist language learners in pronouncing new words. It is critical that the students are knowledgeable of the English phoneme system to successfully decode unfamiliar words. This is especially true when second language learners apply the abovementioned analogy strategy.

Pronunciation Instruction in Today's Curriculum

The discussion of the inclusion of pronunciation SLA classrooms was highly debated in recent literature. Lord (2010) enumerated several studies advocating the need for pronunciation instruction in the classroom. Lord referred to a study by Elliott (1995) where Elliott concluded pronunciation accuracy is linked to years of pronunciation instruction. A second study Lord referenced is Gonzalez-Bueno's (1997) work. Gonzalez-Bueno studied the effects of explicit pronunciation instruction. The findings revealed there were significant improvements in the students' pronunciation after one semester of pronunciation instruction. And, three additional studies referenced by Lord

all conclude with the advantages of included pronunciation instruction in the classroom's curriculum. "Pronunciation must be viewed as more than correct production of individual sounds or isolated words. Instead, it must be viewed as a crucial and integral part of communication that should be incorporated into classroom activities," advocated Pourhosein (2011, p. 12) of the Macrothink Institute.

Another work of Lord's (2008) disclosed improvement in the language learners' pronunciation after a different type of pronunciation instruction—podcasting. Current research emphasizes using technology as a method of pronunciation fluency. Lord's work studied the impact of podcasting on language learners' Spanish pronunciation. One of the research questions in the study asked, "Do students improve their foreign language pronunciation after participating in weekly podcast projects over the course of a semester?" (p. 368). After analyzing and discussing the collected data from the mixed methods research, results indicated there were overall improvements in the subjects' pronunciation.

Nilsson (2011) promoted teaching pronunciation in the early stage of acquiring a new language. "Pronunciation should be introduced at the earliest stage in language acquisition rather than trying to rectify fossilized language patterns at a later stage" (p. 5). She stressed the importance of young learners recognizing the significance of pronunciation in their second language fluency. This will later aid them in speaking proficiently, as they develop linguistically.

Counselman (2010), Ph.D. candidate at the Pennsylvania State University, conducted a study investigating students' pronunciation improvement after completing a

specific assignment. Students were given an assignment to focus on the differences in L2 sounds of English speakers pronouncing Spanish words. This assignment was a semester-long assignment. The results revealed that the pronunciation of mid vowels /e/ and /o/ was improved. Results also revealed that students improved more from mimicking sentences than from mimicking isolated sounds. This study's results can assist in the educator's pronunciation instruction.

Shizuka (2008) strove to compare the differences of utterances before and after pronunciation tests. Sixty-six students participated in a 24-hour pronunciation course. After the instruction, tests were given. The results revealed improved "phonological qualities of participants' scripted utterance" (p. 57).

From the teachers' and the students' perspective, Leulseged (2008) conducted a descriptive study of a teacher training program at the university level. With this study, the students and teachers completed a questionnaire regarding their attitudes towards pronunciation teaching in the classroom. The results found that students agreed on the importance of English pronunciation. Students desired to improve their pronunciation of English. And, a large percentage of students desired to speak with native-like proficiency. However, half of the teachers who participated in the study thought that pronunciation should be taught if sufficient time is permitted.

In a separate study, Varasarin (2007) focused on the teachers' perspectives. The author referred to Fraser's study regarding ESL teachers' beliefs in pronunciation teaching. Fraser maintained, "ESL teachers agree that explicit pronunciation teaching is an essential part of language courses and confidence with pronunciation allows learners

to interact with native speakers, which are essential for all aspects of their linguistic development.” (p. 20).

Darcy, Ewert, and Lidster (2011) concurred that teachers have unclear guidelines as to what aspect of pronunciation to teach. Teachers do not see any immediate results from teaching pronunciation, and what the students learn is quickly forgotten. Consequently, our SLA educators feel uneasy about instructing pronunciation (Darcy et al., 2011).

In a study conducted by Hodges (2006) of the University of Florida, she sought to answer three research questions of which one was, “What are the effects of formal pronunciation instruction on the vowel production of second-semester learners of Spanish who are native English speakers” (p. 14). This study included university students from three sections of the same Spanish class. These participants completed a pretest and two posttests as well as a Pronunciation Attitude Inventory (PAI), following the posttest. Students were taught three times for 15 minutes on the production of Spanish vowels. Three native Spanish speaking judges rated the sounds. The results concluded with positive effects on the learners’ production of vowels /a/, /e/, and /o/. Additionally, Hodges asserted that, “explicit pronunciation instruction gives students information they would not otherwise have about the sounds of the L2, and provides them with the opportunity to improve their pronunciation” (p. 39).

The case of pronunciation instruction classroom inclusion is also illuminated in Hurado and Estrada’s (2010) study in which the authors expounded on the complexity of the Spanish trill within the language even among native speakers. Because of the

difficulty of these trills, they, understandably, are less popular than the other vibrants in the Spanish speaking community (Hurado & Estrada, 2010). With the explicit instruction of pronunciation, this complexity can become minimized or even nonexistent.

In Saito's (2011) study, the researcher aimed to determine the linguistic effects of independent phonetic teaching. In the study, 20 native Japanese-speaking students participated in a 1-hour per week, 4-week tutoring session. The students participated by giving speech samples to four native English speakers to be evaluated before and after receiving training. The results of the evaluation indicated that there were benefits to explicit pronunciation instruction in the learners' speech comprehensibility at the controlled and spontaneous speech levels.

When we refer to English as an international language, we can consider Adityarini's (2007) reference to McKay's (2003) definition with the following:

International English is used by native speakers of English and bilingual users of English for cross-cultural communication. International English can be used both in a local sense between speakers of diverse cultures and languages within one country and in a global sense between speakers from different countries.

(Adityarini, 2007, p. 103)

With English being an international language, achieving intelligibility warrants a much greater emphasis in our classrooms. While teaching pronunciation to achieve pronunciation, Jones' recommendation for teaching pronunciation is referenced by Adityarini (2007). First, sociological and psychological issues should be addressed. Additionally, our classroom's curriculum should include the "psychological aspects of

pronunciation training, integrating confidence building and reflective activities into their courses” (Adityarini, p. 108).

Another source contributing to the pool of beneficial reasons for pronunciation instruction is found in Chen’s (2009) work. In this study, Chen used 44 students from a private, South Texas high school to help answer the research question, “What effect, if any, does phonetic and phonological instruction implemented in a cooperative learning setting have on the oral proficiency of ELLs?” (p. 32). The students were both pre and posttested with a 72-word-level proficiency test and a sentence-level proficiency test. The students received 6 weeks of phonological and phonetic instruction. There was a significant difference in the pretest and the posttest results. Therefore, the phonological and phonetic instruction was, indeed, beneficial.

Additionally, Joaquin (2009) provided reasons for pronunciation instruction:

The studies suggest that when we hear people talk, we are actually simulating their articulation in our brains through mirror neurons. We are matching their pronunciation to stored templates in our brains, and if their nonnative or dialectically different pronunciation does not perfectly match with ours, our brains “work” to find a match that facilitates comprehension. This provides some explanation as to why speakers are intelligible despite differences in dialect or problems with phonemes in their speech. Such findings also support the notion that teaching segmentals, at least to a level of intelligibility, to a nonnative speaker can improve a learner’s communicative competence. In addition, research demonstrates that mirror neurons can learn. Thus, if research also demonstrates

that mirror neurons involved in speech perception can be acquired, then such a finding supports the value of including a focus on segmentals (i.e. drilling) in a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) framework. (p. 19)

Chiu (2008) aimed to answer three research questions, with one being the following, “What beliefs with regard to pronunciation teaching inform teachers’ decision to incorporate or not incorporate such features in certain ways?” (p. 3). This particular study’s subjects consisted of three native English-speaking teachers and three nonnative English-speaking teachers. The subjects participated in the study through semi-constructed interviews, classroom observations, and simulated-recall interviews. The author, from his data collection and analysis, concluded that the native English-speaking teachers “consider pronunciation teaching as merely the inevitable process and the by-product when introducing grammatical structures” (p. 76). This view is consistent with today’s SLA classroom instruction. The nonnative English speaking teachers considered “pronunciation teaching more analytically and consider that pronunciation instruction includes teaching of both segmental and suprasegmental features” (p. 76). These two contrasting views undoubtedly affected the learner’s intelligible pronunciation acquisition.

Ghorbani (2011) aimed at determining if there was any significant improvement in learners’ listening ability after instruction. During the study, two groups of Iranian third grade high school students participated. One group of 20 students, the experimental group, received phonological and phonetic teaching paired with listening training. The other group of 25, the control group, received only listening training. Both groups took a

listening pretest prior to their 10 weeks of instruction. Their instruction included phonetic symbols, phonemic transcription, and sound and spelling exercises.

Additionally, the students researched specific words and checked phonemic transcription after their training sessions. Then, the students again listened to the audio to enhance listening ability. Lastly, the students took the same listening pretest as their posttest.

According to the results, there was a significant difference found between the experimental and the control groups' scores. Therefore, the study's finding suggests that phonetic instruction paired with phonemic transcriptions benefited SLA learners.

The impact of phonemic sound distinctions and phonetic instruction on English pronunciation of Spanish speaking ELLs were the foci of a study conducted by Goswami and Chen (2010). This study assessed "the impact of instruction in phonetic and phonemic distinctions in sounds on the English pronunciation of ELLS" (p. 29). Thirty three high school native Spanish-speaking students ranging in age from 15 to 19 years participated in the abovementioned study. These participants were separated into either an experimental or a control group that were both administered pre and posttests before and after the experimental group received instruction. The experimental group was instructed in phonetic and phonemic sound distinction during two 45-minute sessions per week for 10 weeks. The control group did not receive this instruction; they received their regular ESL instruction. Based on the posttest results, there was a significant difference in the overall performance score of the experimental group as compared to the overall performance score of the control group. The experimental group's posttest scores ($M = 85.7$, $SD = 9.84$) were higher than the control group's posttest ($M = 76.9$, $SD = 9.06$).

Therefore, the researchers concluded that “the instruction in phonetic and phonemic distinctions in sounds had a statistically significant effect on the overall pronunciation of target sounds in the experimental group of this experiment” (p. 36).

Kennedy (2008) conducted a study with the primary purpose of determining the changes in the pronunciation and intelligibility of learners who received instruction versus those learners who did not receive instruction. Additionally, Kennedy aimed to determine if there were any environmental, instructional, and methodological factors affecting pronunciation and intelligibility. To conduct her study, Kennedy recruited 17 second language learning students at the university level. From those 17 students, a control group (those who did not receive instruction) and an experimental group (those who received instruction) were formed. The learners told anecdotes to native-speaking English listeners to rate their speech. The results of the study showed almost all of the students “expressed satisfaction with their ability to communicate in English” (p. ii). Therefore, this study, as many others, provided support for the need for explicit pronunciation classroom instruction.

Ruellot’s (2010) work offered an analysis of several textbooks featuring primarily pronunciation instruction and recommended strategies. Those textbooks emphasized the need to practice sound discrimination, pronunciation production, and perception. Equally important, Ruellot highlighted the need for prosodic and segmental instruction as they both largely affect comprehensibility. Some of the strategies enumerated in the textbooks the author reviewed are the use of poems, nursery rhymes and lullabies, short excerpts of films, television shows, and commercials. Second language acquisition educators can

find benefit in Ruellot's researched work by implementing applicable instructional strategies for second language learners to achieve their much desired goal of pronunciation intelligibility thereby achieving communicative competence.

The results of Lee's (2009) study indicated the need for explicit pronunciation instruction in today's classroom. Specifically, the study examined the effects of pronunciation instruction using manipulated sounds. During the study, Lee aimed to combat the problem of Korean English learners' lack of discernment between English vowel sounds. To illustrate, the /i/ in heed and the /i/ in hid presents a problem for the Korean learning the English language (Lee, 2009). Lee designed the pronunciation teaching method implemented and tested in this project. After testing the effects of the explicit pronunciation instruction on the 111 native Korean-speaking English learners, the results indicated that a significant difference existed between the learners' pretest and their posttest. This study therefore presented evidence that formal pronunciation instruction might be effective in today's second language acquisition classroom.

Tominaga (2009) aimed at finding suggestions to improve the teaching of English pronunciation. Tominaga's study concentrated primarily on teaching English to Japanese students. Questionnaires and interviews were completed by 24 junior high school students to gather information on pronunciation pedagogy and to determine instructional strategies. From an analysis of the data gathered from those questionnaires and interviews, technologies such as music and movie films should be used in teaching pronunciation to incite and maintain an interest in pronunciation instruction. Additionally, the results indicated a desire for learners to find their particular strategy for

learning English pronunciation. This can possibly be accomplished through “appropriate assignments and feedback by teachers” (p. 136).

Teacher Training

The work of G. Kelly (1976) referred to the profound and essential statements of scholar Johann Amos Comenius as he enumerated the qualities of an educator. He proclaimed,

1. A teacher should be competent to teach. (a skillful teacher)
2. A teacher should be skillful in teaching. (a capable teacher)
3. A teacher should be zealous in teaching. (one to whom indolence and distaste are unknown). (p. 384)

Comenius is known today as the Father of Modern Education who firmly believed that the interest in the subject matter and the student are the two most important teacher qualities (G. Kelly, 1976). During Comenius’ study of the SLA teaching approaches, he discovered that the grammar-translation method required very little teacher skill and creativity (G. Kelly, 1976). However, the direct method and the natural method required teaching skills to effectively implement (G. Kelly, 1976).

Derwing’s (2009) work reported one of her ambitions as her “second utopian goal is an increased focus on pronunciation in teacher education” (p. 27). Having taught pronunciation, Derwing experienced a time where useful resources were limited for the teacher. While times have progressed, Derwing protested:

There is a definite need for more courses for ESL teachers. In Canada, for instance, there are very few TESL programs that offer a full course in teaching

pronunciation. Not only are there not enough courses in pronunciation pedagogy, there are TESL programs that have no requirement for even an introductory course in Linguistics, which is surprising indeed. All teachers would benefit from an increased understanding of L2 pronunciation. (p. 28)

Educational administrators gained a new awareness that the teaching profession required professional teacher training.

Varasarin (2007) investigated the answer to the inquiry of "Does pronunciation training and LLS [language learning strategies] increase confidence and improve communicative competence of learners?" (p. 7). She simplistically stated the study's goal as the following, "The main focus of this study was on whether pronunciation training improved learners' pronunciation" (p. 49). Additionally, Varasarin "decided to undertake action research to investigate the effect of teaching pronunciation on confidence and intelligibility" (p. 58). In her attempt to arrive at an answer, five teachers within a school system in Thailand were trained, as students, by the researcher, on pronunciation and language learning strategies. The training included 20 hours of instruction focusing on phonetic pronunciation, consonant and vowel articulation, speech organs, and dictionary usage. After receiving their training, these five teachers then instructed four groups of students. Results of these trainings reveal improvement in pronunciation and increased self-confidence. Teachers indicated improved intelligibility. And, students improved their communicative competence. Because of the positive findings of this action research study, the participating school implemented a policy change of teaching pronunciation and allowing those competent teachers to teach English classes.

Nair, Krishnasamy, and De Mello (2006) addressed the issue of the teacher's perspective of pronunciation. The authors interviewed 12 ESL instructors to discuss their views on teaching pronunciation. The instructors were from Malaysian schools and institutions of higher educations. From their discussion, they learned the following: ESL teachers felt they were poorly equipped to teach pronunciation. They revealed that during their college studies, pronunciation received very little attention. Some of the teachers believed that pronunciation cannot be taught; it is a talent. They cited that pronunciation should be taught communicatively to provide a "realistic environment" of usage. They felt that correcting the students' pronunciation would "only frustrate the students more" (pp. 30-31). Some agreed that there is not enough time to incorporate teaching pronunciation in an already overwhelming curriculum. And, lastly, the teachers interviewed admitted that they were unaware of how to effectively teach pronunciation to their students.

Demirezen (2010) suggested using the audioarticulation model to solve the issue of the lack of pronunciation teaching and lengthy pronunciation rehabilitation methods in teacher education programs. The audioarticulation model consist of the following steps:

1. Identification of a problematic core sound of the target language for the non native learners of the target language.
2. Preparing a corpus of 50 to 100 words including the problem causing core sound and its nearest pair.
3. Singling out minimal pairs from the corpus for practice.

4. Developing proper tongue twisters, proverbs, idioms, mottoes, or cliché expressions in chunks for classroom practice.
5. Doing further awareness raising and experiential practices within a suitable methodology. Using the AAM model, in a typical lesson, should last approximately 45-50 minutes. (Demirezen, 2010, pp. 130-135)

Methodology Selection

When considering the appropriate methodology for this study, ethnography was not selected because I have little interest in describing a particular culture or a culture's behavior from their perspective. The exploration of particular participants' life through the telling of stories were neither of interest to me nor essential to arrive at the goal of the current study. The use of a participant's oral history or biography would not have proved effective for this particular study. These traits are characteristics of the narrative design of qualitative research, not the case study. The fourth qualitative research design approach deemed as less effective than the case study for this particular study is the phenomenological design. This design directs its focus on the participants' lived experience of a specific phenomenon and what they have in common with respect to the particular experience. Therefore, this is in direct contrast to the goal of the current study because I attempted to gather the varying perspectives of the ELLs, not one common perspective. The fifth research design of qualitative research not deemed appropriate for this particular study is the grounded theory design. According to Creswell (2014), the grounded theory "derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of participants" (pp. 243). The case study does not attempt to

derive a theory, but to develop an analysis of a case. Case study research focuses on investigating units of study. Data collection research methods such as surveys and interviews are used. Case studies are scientific investigations founded on knowledge and experience and collecting and analyzing data (Farquhar, 2012).

Section 3: Research Method

Introduction

In this section, I describe the qualitative research paradigm employed in this study. With this paradigm, the case study approach of qualitative research was used. The problem statement for this study that describes the need for increased understanding of ELLs being instructed in SLA classrooms via the CLA, which does not emphasize independent pronunciation instruction, directed an in-depth investigation into the case involving ELLs and their perspectives within the boundaries of their SLA classrooms. The case study design was selected primarily because of the nature of the constructivist perspectives of the ELLs that are essential for the investigation. Qualitative research focuses on individuals socially constructing meaning as they interact with their specific world (Merriam, 2002). Merriam (2002) further explained qualitative research as consisting of several constructions and several interpretations of reality that change over a period of time. Typical qualitative researchers have interest in comprehending those interpretations at specific times and in specific contexts (Merriam, 2002).

Furthermore, the qualitative research design was selected due to its interpretive and descriptive nature (Merriam, 2002). As the researcher, I had a primary interest in how ELLs interpret the pedagogical approach in their classroom. Rubin and Rubin (2005) described the researcher as being interested in how people perceive events, similar expectations, and understandings of what they see and what occurs to them (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Characteristic of the qualitative research design, open-ended, probing inquiries were conducted with the goal of identifying emergent patterns and themes.

During these inquiries, the participants provided a detailed account of their experience.

These accounts led to a descriptive result detailed in my study.

Research Design and Approach

The goal of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of community college ELLs relative to the CLA in assisting in their achieving pronunciation intelligibility and to explore ELLs' interest in independent pronunciation instruction. To accomplish this goal, the following RQs were formulated to guide this qualitative research study:

RQ 1: What were the perspectives of community college ELLs who received instruction using the CLA regarding how the approach met their pronunciation intelligibility needs?

RQ 2: What were the perspectives of these ELLs regarding receiving independent pronunciation instruction to meet their pronunciation intelligibility needs?

The context of this study was a community college in southwest Texas. This environment was the natural setting for the participants, the SLA learners. The case was bounded within the learners' classroom or natural setting. With the case study as the selected research design, this context was paramount.

It was my responsibility to ensure the participants were safeguarded from any physical, psychological, social, economic, or legal harm, following the suggestion of Creswell (2007). Therefore, the institutional review board (IRB) was established to protect participants by means of federal regulations. I abided by the IRB policies by submitting an application to the Walden University IRB, requesting permission to

conduct research, to solicit participants, to obtain consent from participants via consent forms, to schedule interviews, and to begin collecting data from participants. My IRB application was approved with the 10-09-14-0046439 approval number. I received permission from the community partner to conduct the study. Then, I solicited these participants via flyers (Appendix C) circulated throughout the college campus. These flyers were designed to attract participants needed to conduct the study. In the flyer, I announced that a \$5 reward would be given to those individuals selected to participate in the study. I selected the first 10 students who responded and met the criteria to participate in the study, while the remaining three respondents who met the criteria were designated alternate participants. During the interview process, the 10 participants informed the research questions with similar responses; therefore, saturation was met. Consequently, the three alternate participants were not needed. I informed them of such and expressed my gratitude for their interest in assisting with the study. This selection process occurred during the Fall semester of 2014.

I conducted this qualitative study at a community college where I was a current faculty member. My professional status with the community college proved beneficial when attempting to collect data. Through classroom visits of my colleagues, telephonic communication with colleagues' students, and electronic media, I established relationships with the intended participants of the community college. Some of these participants were former students of mine; therefore, their responses were not influenced, as our student-teacher relationship was in the past. These students will never be my students again because I teach on a separate academic track from the participants. My

personal experience with the study's topic was that of current English as Second Language instructor and former program coordinator with an unaffiliated organization. From my professional experience teaching ELLs, I was intimately aware of the struggles that the ELL population encounter as they attempt to achieve intelligible pronunciation. As a result of this experience, my bias towards explicit pronunciation instruction should be disclosed. My belief is that it is necessary to address the problem of pronunciation at the core and through dedicated instruction of pronunciation. However, as the researcher, my biases were uninfluential in this study.

Participants

The participants of the current study consisted of SLA students from a community college in southwest Texas. The participants reflected a combination of linguistic skill levels ranging from beginner to advanced learners. The participants were predominately Hispanic and second generation United States citizens. These participants may inform other ELLs' perspectives in other parts of the United States. They were graduates of U.S. school systems. These participants were current ELLs enrolled in my colleagues' classes and former students of mine. The criteria necessary for the abovementioned participants were being a current or former student in the intensive English program and a graduate of a U.S. school. I established a researcher-participant working relationship by ensuring that ethical practices were implemented. I assured the participant that he or she was protected during and after the research process. The participants' English proficiency levels were insignificant as a broad range of levels enriched the study and its results. There were 10 participants in the study from the community college. This small sample

size gave me a manageable number of participants with whom to conduct thorough and in-depth inquiry sessions. Per Creswell (2011), “the qualitative idea is not to generalize from the sample (as in quantitative research) but to develop an in-depth understanding of a few people—the larger the number of people, the less detail that typically can emerge from any one individual” (p. 174).

Data Collection

During the data collection process, I completed the following: (a) identified the site for the study, (b) identified the participants, (c) noted the number of participants between four to 10 participants (Creswell, 2011), (d) obtained permissions, (e) recorded the data via laptop computer and smartphone for audio recordings, and (f) collected data via transcribing face-to-face interviews within 2 to 7 days after the interviews. The data collected included answers to questions in the interview guide (Appendix A) that I posed to the participants. Each interview session was conducted within the natural setting and were all held after or between each participant’s classes, as agreed upon in the IRB application. As indicated above, I was the primary research instrument. Merriam (2002) described the researcher as instrument as such:

A second characteristic of all forms of qualitative research is that the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis. Since understanding is the goal of this research, the human instrument, which is able to be immediately responsive and adaptive, would seem to be the ideal means of collecting and analyzing data. Other advantages are that the researcher can expand his or her understanding through nonverbal as well as verbal communication, process

information (data) immediately, clarify and summarize material, check with respondents for accuracy of interpretation, and explore unusual or unanticipated responses. (p. 5)

There were instances when I checked with the respondents for accuracy of interpretation for data analysis. I shared the transcript (Appendix B) with the participant and asked for clarification where needed. This was done a few days after the interview sessions in follow-up meetings of no more than 5 minutes. This process ensured accuracy and quality of the participants' responses.

Data Analysis

To analyze the qualitative data, I conducted a five-phase process. In the first phase, I prepared the data for analysis by organizing the interview transcripts and notes. In the second phase, I analyzed the data by writing notes related to the participants' responses and by creating a codebook. In the third phase of the analysis, I coded the data, assigned labels to those codes, categorized those codes, and executed a command on a MS Excel software program to search and identify text with the same code labels. In the fourth phase, I presented the results of the data analysis by reporting the findings in the study and providing visual representations. In the fifth phase, I interpreted the qualitative results by reporting how the results answered the research question and comparing those results with the literature reviewed in the study. In the sixth and final phase of qualitative data analysis, I validated the raw data and results by employing triangulation and reporting disconfirming evidence. This step was also employed to identify discrepant cases. The discrepant cases were reported in the findings. During triangulation, I used

the member checking strategy. Additionally, I triangulated by using a diversity of skill level of students ranging from beginner to advanced. Shenton (2004) regarded this technique as follows:

Another form of triangulation may involve the use of a wide range of informants. This is one way of triangulating via data sources. Here individual viewpoint and experiences can be verified against others and, ultimately, a rich picture of the attitudes, needs or behavior of those under scrutiny may be constructed based on the contributions of a range of people. (p. 66)

Concurrent with the course of the study, I conducted member checks with the participants by sharing my interpretations to ensure that I had an accurate understanding of their intended thoughts and perspectives. This occurred specifically during Phases 1, 2, and 6 of the data analysis process. These phases were the preparing, analyzing, and validating of the data, respectively. During these member checks, the participants provided comments on their responses to ensure clarity of my interpretations. This concluded the analysis of the study's qualitative data.

Section 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to capture the perspectives of ELLs regarding the effectiveness of the CLA. As the researcher, I sought to understand if instructors using the CLA in the classroom produced intelligible pronunciation skills in their students, and I aimed to capture the participants' perspectives of independent pronunciation instruction. A qualitative research design was used to conduct this study to thoroughly explore and gather an understanding of the ELLs' perspectives.

Common characteristics of qualitative research noted by Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, and Ormston (2013) included the following:

Aims and objectives that are directed at providing an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world of research participants by learning about the sense they make of their social and material circumstances, their experiences, perspectives, and histories. Data that are detailed, rich, and complex. (p. 4)

The data for this study were collected using a research log and voice recorder application on my smartphone. Notes were taken and participants' responses were recorded detailing the interview sessions. The research log and voice recorder were used to record the notes from the participants' responses to the interview questions and later used to assist in data analysis. (See Appendix D.) Data were generated to inform the following research questions:

1. What were the perspectives of community college ELLs who received instruction using the CLA regarding how the approach met their pronunciation intelligibility needs?
2. What were the perspectives of these ELLs regarding receiving independent pronunciation instruction to meet their pronunciation intelligibility needs?

A research log was used to record the notes from the participants' responses to the interview questions and later used to assist in data analysis. (See Appendix D.)

Data Generation

Yin (2013) instructed that the case study research method, “allows investigators to focus on a ‘case’ and retain a holistic and real-world perspective” (p. 4). To that end, data generation was an essential step in the process. In this section, I explain how data were generated, recorded, and analyzed.

Data for the study were collected via face-to-face interviews with me as the primary research instrument. A predesigned interview guide was used during the interview process. (See Appendix A.) The data collection occurred during a 6-week period. I recorded the interviews on a personal laptop computer and a personal smartphone. Microsoft Word and the voice recorder applications were used, concurrently, to capture the data. A research log was used to record the notes from the participants' responses to the interview questions and later used to assist in data analysis. (See Appendix D.)

The first 10 respondents to meet the criteria were interviewed for the study. Selecting the first 10 participants yielded a diverse group of persons with respect to

ethnicity, status as a current student, and level in the program. It was critical to have a diversified group of participants to ensure triangulation could be employed. The diversification is reflected in the participants' ethnicity and their second language proficiency levels. The second language proficiency levels are represented as Level 1–lower beginner, Level 2–upper beginner, Level 3–lower intermediate, Level 4–upper intermediate, Level 5–lower advanced, and Level 6–upper advanced. The participants' demographics are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1

Participants' Demographics

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Student status</u>	<u>Level in the program</u>
1	Hispanic	current student	5
2	Arab	current student	2
3	Hispanic	university student	former student
4	Hispanic	college student	former student
5	Hispanic	current student	5
6	Hispanic	current student	5
7	Hispanic	current student	5
8	Hispanic	college student	former student
9	Hispanic	college student	former student
10	Hispanic	college student	former student

Findings

During the data coding process, several themes emerged. The themes emerged as the following categories with their applicable labels in parentheses: (a) pronunciation improvement, (b) instructional strategies, (c) language acquisition goals, (d) specific language acquisition challenges, and (e) pronunciation instruction preference. These themes reflect the students' perspectives of the CLA. Their perceived improvement status, challenges they encountered, goals they desired to achieve, and their instructional preference directly informed the research problem. Those five themes are described below.

Theme 1: Pronunciation Improvement

The pronunciation improvement theme emerged from the participants' responses. During the interview, I asked the following two questions as they related to the CLA's capability to meet the participants' pronunciation intelligibility needs: (a) after completing Level 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6, how would you describe your pronunciation skills and (b) has your pronunciation improved since you have taken Listening and Speaking Level 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6? The findings showed that the participants perceived their pronunciation had improved to either good or better than prior to being taught with the CLA. However, one student felt that her pronunciation remained weak even after learning under the CLA. The theme of pronunciation improvement resonated throughout the data as shown below from seven of the participants.

Participant 1: Um, I think so it's so better my skills because when I start here in the Level 3, I don't know very pronunciation. Now I have little difficulty to pronounce words. Now, it's more better.

Participants 2, 10, 3, 4, 7, and 9 expressed improvement from one level to next in the next passages. Participant 2 perceived that his pronunciation was better in clarity of speech but still needs more improvement. Participant 4 joined Participant 2 as expressing improvements with the desire to improve more.

Participant 2: I think my pronunciation is more useful. When I come to the Level 2, it was my pronunciation not very clear. Right now I think it like improved very well, but I think I can improve more, my pronunciation.

Participant 10: I started in Level 1, and I feel my pronunciation is better now.

Participant 3: I think I should describe my pronunciation skills as up and improved.

Participant 4: It [pronunciation] improved a lot. There's a lot of difference between how I was speaking when I got in the program than the way I am talking now. But I feel I need to improve more.

Participant 7: Oh, it's better than like before. Before I had a lot of problems with the pronunciation putting my tongue in the wrong position....Yes, because I don't know many words how to pronounce, and Mrs. H help us to improve our how to speak better.

Participant 9: Well, my pronunciation skills have been really good since I take the ESL program. Actually, I have been doing better when I talk with people.

Theme 2: Instructional Strategies

I asked about instructional strategies the instructors used to help struggling students with challenging sounds or words. Participant 5 and Participant 10 indicated that videos were used to model speech for accurate pronunciation:

Participant 5: Listening to music watching movies with subtitles and talk with other people.

Participant 10: Um, work in group to make conversation with other people classmate and listen to video and how many words or sentence we understand.

Additionally, a participant shared that instructors would have students repeat the sound or word after the instructor had modeled the accurate pronunciation of those particular sounds or words:

Participant 6: He gave us like a list of how to pronounce [pronounce] and he pronounce [pronounce] with us.

Various other strategies were shared from the participants. For example, Participant 3 shared the strategy of dividing words into sound parts to help with pronunciation. Participant 3 also suggested practicing pronunciation with multiple people:

Participant 3: I think when we have a hard word or a long word, they make us divide it in three part, and we hear the audio and we can repeat one or more than three times you can pronunciation with the word with the other people. You can practice.

Participant 4 shared a strategy imparted by an instructor involving manipulating the throat:

Participant 4: My last instructor used a lot of like the phonetical lessons. He implemented a lot of like feeling I don't know how to say it our throat how the sound must come out to but how to feel a lot of the sound.

Participant 9 added technology use as a strategy in the following response:

Participant 9: Well, I remember that they were making us with the program on the computer. They [the instructors] were recording us and also they made us talk in class...with our classmates, making like speeches and all that.

Informing RQ 1, these strategies were used by instructors through the CLA and deemed instrumental in helping students improve their pronunciation. Participants perceived that their pronunciation needs were met using these strategies.

Theme 3: Language Acquisition Goals

The participants' language acquisition goals related to RQ 1 in regards to their pronunciation intelligibility needs. Their linguistic goals were their primary language needs as students of the program. As a result, the participants' perspectives revealed the Language Acquisition Goals theme. Several participants indicated that they wanted to correctly pronounce words better, while one participant expressed that he or she wanted to learn how to correct his or her own errors after making a mistake. For example, Participant 1 was interested in learning self-correcting methods:

Participant 1: I need the correct. How to correct the pronunciation.

Participant 3 expressed the desire to be understood by listeners in and outside of his SLA environment. This desire led to a need to improve his pronunciation:

Participant 3: I think the first important is for the people understand me like when I go like shopping or some any place or go to the gym they understand what I say. And I think when I go to the college the teacher understand me. So I need to improve my pronunciation.

Participants 6, 7, and 9 shared pronunciation goals of being almost good, fluent, and of learning more vocabulary. Participants desired not to speak with perfection but at an acceptable level of good. Fluency and intelligibility dominated their goals.

Participant 6: My pronunciation goals not to be perfect but to be almost good.

Participant 7: Before I take this program, my goals were to be more fluent and to learn more vocabulary. And after this class finish, I think my fluency is better and I know more vocabulary....My pronunciation goals are to be fluent. In that way people can understand me and talk to me and I think it is real important to be a fluent person in English.

Participant 9: Um, well, like my goals and all that. My goals have been to my fluency. Well, yes my pronunciation. Well, I can say that I reached them.

Theme 4: Specific Language Acquisition Challenges

The Specific Language Acquisition Challenges theme emerged from the data to answer RQ 1. The language challenges revealed in the data needed to be addressed through the CLA to assist the students in meeting their pronunciation needs. I asked the participants about specific words or sounds that were difficult for them to pronounce.

The following sounds and/or words were shared with me by participants 1, 4, 7, 8, and 10: *th, ch, sh, r, party, reunion, ed* verb, and long words. The *th, ch, sh, r* and *ed* verb posed problems with the majority of the participants. However, only one student reported that long words (multisyllabic) posed a production problem. Applicable responses follow:

Participant 1: For me it's all the words when start with *th* because this sound we I don't know in Spanish.

Participant 4: Especially with the *ch* and the *sh* um. I can notice or I cannot know the difference of the pronunciation of those.

Participant 6: Um, some words that are difficult to me are like long words or words that are together. So, I think they are more difficult for me.

Participant 7: In my last class, I was having difficulties which was *party* and actually *reunion* because for me it sounds weird, but I repeat these words, and now it sounds better.

Participant 8: Well, like the word have like a *t* or *th* for the sound change the sound for a *d* or *r*.

Participant 9: They're not exactly words or sounds. Well, it's more like the letter, like the *r* letter. Sometimes I talking when I am talking or pronouncing to words that have an *r*. I have difficulty to pronounce it.

Participant 10: Starting with irregular verb ending in *ed*. This sound is difficult for me.

Theme 5: Pronunciation Instruction Preference

With the second research question for this study, I attempted to explore the participants' interest in receiving independent pronunciation instruction to help meet their pronunciation intelligibility needs. RQ 2 was designed to explore participants' interest in an independent pronunciation instruction course. All of the participants expressed an interest in some independent pronunciation instruction; however, four of the participants preferred the current instruction using the CLA where pronunciation is taught in context. Another four participants indicated that they would prefer to be taught phonetically focusing on individual sound production, while Participants 9 and 10 expressed favorable responses to explicit pronunciation instruction.

Researcher: Would you be interested in taking a pronunciation course? If so, why or why not?

Participant 1: Yes, because you need communication...I think so, it's the both [phonetic and CLA] but for me ah learn words it's more important than the sentence.

Participant 2: Yes, I think that because that would make us to improve our pronunciation. To make our pronunciation make up and be a good. That is my opinion....Yeah, I think that would be very important to the student. I think it would be very useful for the student to use it in class. I prefer to be say all word. For me it is the particular way to say English.

Participant 3: Yes, I think that because that would make us to improve our pronunciation. To make our pronunciation make up and be a good. That is my

opinion....Yeah, I think that would be very important to the student. I think it would be very useful for the student to use it in class. I prefer to be say all word. For me it is the particular way to say English.

Participant 4: I would definitely be interested in it because I think it could help me a lot to improve my pronunciation of many words specifically with the college level vocabulary that I need to be now in the regular classes or in the classes that the program not at the ESL program...I think that a combination of both would be great because with the individual sounds you can identify when you are faced with the strange word that you have never seen before, you could know how to pronounce it even though you don't know the meaning of it. But with the words that are already in a sentence, also because it can help you with your fluency of your speaking.

Participant 5: Yes, because I think I need more pronunciation in some words are difficult.... I think the words be used in sentences.

Participant 6: Yes, would be interested because I guess it is one of the things that I need to improve in my English.... I think it would be more helpful for me to learn words being used in sentences, but both are okay for me.

Participant 7: Yes, of course, because since the beginning I want to speak English so, I think pronunciation is a part of essentially to be for people to understand you. Of course I would glad to take a pronunciation course...Ok, I think it is to learn words being used in a sentence because you can remember better the word and in that way you can pronounce better, I think.

Participant 8: Yes, of course because we need to improve our skills for sometimes we think we say the correct words the pronunciation or something but it's not... I think it would be better how to use in sentences.

Participant 9: Well, I would like to because I would like to pronounce more with those words I can't pronounce with my Rs or well with my conversation sometimes... Um, well, everything is helpful to make you talk better to pronounce things better. Everything is useful actually the individual sounds and everything. It helps you more.

Participant 10: Yes, because for me it is very important how communication with other people understand with other people.... For me to learn individual sounds like I don't know like the pronunciation of some words.

Discrepant Cases and Nonconforming Data

During the data analysis phase of this study, nonconforming data emerged. An occurrence of nonconformity within the data was that after completing the program, a student perceived her pronunciation as weak. Another discrepancy was discovered when a participant disclosed her desire to totally eliminate her native language accent. When asked about her pronunciation goals, she indicated that she did not want to have her current foreign accent.

Evidence of Quality

I adhered to guidelines agreed to by the IRB to ensure that quality research was conducted. Triangulation was implemented in the data collection process as I included a diversity of participants with a range of linguistic skill levels. I also triangulated by

interpreting the data relative to the participants' linguistic skill levels which varied from lower beginner (Level 1) to upper advanced (Level 6). This provided richer data to inform the research questions. I performed member checks as a means of ensuring accurate interpretations were made based on the participants' responses to the interview questions. There were several instances when the audio files were unintelligible during the data analysis phase. Therefore, I shared the transcript (Appendix B) with the participant and asked for clarification where needed. Another instance was when a term was used by the participant, and I learned that I had misinterpreted the term after asking for clarification. Prior to and during the interview process, I encouraged the participants to provide honest answers. I reminded the participants that their responses would remain confidential and no other instructors would be made aware of their responses. As a result, trustworthiness was made a priority and participants reported that they felt comfortable in providing in their perspectives, especially because the participants were not my current students.

Section 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Overview

The purpose of this study was to capture the perspectives of ELLs regarding the effectiveness of the CLA to produce the necessary intelligible pronunciation skills. The research questions that led this research were the following:

1. What were the perspectives of community college ELLs who received instruction using the CLA regarding how the approach met their pronunciation intelligibility needs?
2. What were the perspectives of these ELLs regarding receiving independent pronunciation instruction to meet their pronunciation intelligibility needs?

I employed the qualitative case study research approach to inform these research questions. I interviewed 10 SLA students to explore their particular perspectives. Prospective participants responded to flyers posted throughout the college seeking students who met the specified criteria to participate in the study. After I selected the students, the students were then interviewed either after class in their classroom setting or in a designated language lab at the college. I probed the participants by asking 10 questions that were predesigned from an interview guide. (See Appendix A). I recorded the participants' responses to the questions via smartphone, laptop computer, and notepad. The students' responses were analyzed during the data analysis process and findings were reported in this study.

Interpretation of the Findings

The data analysis presented intriguing findings to inform the two research questions posed in this study. Detailed findings are reported in Section 4.

RQ1: What were the perspectives of community college ELLs who received instruction using CLA regarding how the approach met their pronunciation intelligibility needs?

Participants responded to the predesigned interview questions and revealed that all except one student in the English as a Second Language program believed that the instruction using the CLA met their pronunciation needs. This one exception disclosed that his or her pronunciation had improved but was still considered weak. Patterns of satisfaction with the CLA emerged from the participants' responses to the interview questions. These patterns resulted in the five themes of the study: Theme 1—pronunciation improvement, Theme 2—instructional strategies, Theme 3—language acquisition goals, Theme 4—specific language acquisition challenges, and Theme 5—pronunciation instruction preference. Because of the CLA, the participants' pronunciation skills improved, which can be attributed to the instructional strategies employed. These were reflected in Themes 1 and 2. The link between Themes 3, 4, and 5 revealed similar challenges among participants, similar goals, and similar instructional preferences. While participants believed that the CLA was and is (currently enrolled students) an effective instructional approach and their pronunciation improved, the data revealed that participants believed that their pronunciation skills improved only a little, not significantly. As indicated in Hong's (2008) study, advanced linguistic proficiency

typically takes from 5 to 7 years. Language acquisition requires 5 to 10 years to accomplish, according to Haynes (2007). Another pattern revealed during the data analysis was that participants were challenged by identical phonetic sounds. Those particular challenging sounds were *ch*, *th*, and past tense verbs ending in *ed*. While students believed the CLA did assist with intelligible pronunciation, these challenging sounds persist in their linguistic development. Therefore, this particular component of CLA relative to pronunciation intelligibility seemingly failed to meet the needs of the participants.

RQ 2: What were the perspectives of these ELLs regarding receiving independent pronunciation instruction to meet their pronunciation intelligibility needs? Through a qualitative analysis of the data, patterns emerged that revealed the students of the English as a Second Language program at the community college are interested in receiving additional pronunciation instruction beyond the current CLA. All of the participants responded affirmatively. However, the analysis revealed that only two of the second language learners had an interest in explicit pronunciation instruction where phonetics is emphasized, although such instruction is advocated in the literature (Chen, 2009). The overwhelming theme showed that the CLA, where pronunciation is integrated in daily instruction and communicative competence is the priority, is the preferred methodology of ELLs in the English as a Second Language program at this community college. Literature has supported this instructional strategy while training adults in SLA (Schaezel & Low, 2009).

Based on the findings of this study, pronunciation instruction within the CLA should continue to be practiced while explicit pronunciation instruction should remain at a minimum. Many participants preferred learning correct pronunciation within the confines of communicative content. The majority of these adult participants preferred the communicative language teaching approach for SLA instruction. While some participants seemed to benefit from dedicated phonetic instruction, this practice was not a priority for the majority of the participants. However, the practical application of these findings is to not completely ignore the instruction of phonetics within the second language learning classroom, as there is a need indicated by a limited number of the study's participants. Unlike the majority of themes found in my study, Pourhosein (2011) emphasized the criticality of pronunciation instruction in daily classroom instruction. Some participants believed that they would be interested in instruction of phonetics and learning English sounds individually. However, similar to my findings, Hodges's (2006) study revealed the positive effects of dedicated pronunciation instruction that would give students information not provided in nonexplicit pronunciation instruction.

Implications for Social Change

Social change to the SLA community can occur based on the findings of this study as students have been given a voice to share their perspectives relative to their intelligible pronunciation. The perspective that the CLA met the participants' pronunciation needs confirms the need for continued implementation of the approach in U.S. classrooms. ESL professionals can use these findings as motivation to research

strategies to continue to enhance the CLA. Social change can also occur based on this study's findings that there is an interest in pronunciation instruction among ELLs. Interest was low in phonetics instruction, however. Nonetheless, phonetics instruction was noted as a need.

Effective oral communication is vital in our society; therefore, it is a priority to our ELLs. With this study, ELLs have allowed me to explore their perspectives to share with our community. By doing so, possible changes could be made within educational institutions as a result of the participants' shared perspectives. Curriculum designers could implement changes that affect ELLs in their daily classroom environment. Moreover, instructors could better understand the students' perspective and begin and/or continue to provide instruction that results in students achieving pronunciation intelligibility. Furthermore, students with intelligible pronunciation are effective communicators in our society. Effective communicators can improve the communication process in our society and provide a benefit to everyone involved. This is the ultimate social change.

Recommendations for Action

From the findings of this study, I recommend that second language learning institutions, ESL educators, and curriculum designers listen to the voice of students and provide instruction to language learners by employing both the CLA and explicit pronunciation. Results from this study revealed that students perceived that both the contextual learning of pronunciation and the explicit learning of individual sounds would

be helpful in achieving their goal of intelligible pronunciation. Second language learning institutions, ESL educators, and curriculum designers can implement such actions by

- Analyzing current research that focuses on the students' perspective, giving the student a voice to be heard,
- Training educators on the CLA, as needed,
- Ensuring that the CLA is being implemented in the classroom,
- Training educators on phonetics instruction (Sweet, 1899), and by
- Offering independent pronunciation instruction courses to the second language learner.

These findings and recommendations can be disseminated to the SLA community through faculty development courses, SLA professional organizations, and through professional conferences that are held periodically where thousands of attendees dedicated to the profession are present.

Recommendations for Further Study

After completing the study and analyzing the data through use of typological analysis, I recommend that further studies be conducted on the student's perspective. Secondly, further study should explore the perspective of those particular students who have taken independent pronunciation courses. Thirdly, I recommend a study that reveals the findings of a comparative analysis of the CLA and independent pronunciation and their effectiveness on intelligible pronunciation. All of these topics deserve a closer examination and could be deemed beneficial to the second language learner and ultimately our society.

Reflections

As the researcher, I am compelled to share my experience with this research process. Despite all of the critical findings revealed in this study, I have been most affected by the students' response to my desire to hear their perspective. Students want and need to be heard. I feel honored and obligated as an educator to listen to and share their voices. Also, as the researcher, I have to admit that prior to conducting this research, I possessed a personal bias towards explicit pronunciation instruction. It was my belief that students in our program wanted that dedicated pronunciation instruction to learn individual English sounds more explicitly. Contrary to my belief, my findings by way of the students' voices, prove otherwise. Thus, this research experience has changed my thinking. May the SLA community listen to the students.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Research Question 1

What are the perspectives of community college ELLs who received instruction using the CLA regarding how the approach met their pronunciation intelligibility needs?

1. What level are you currently taking?
2. After completing Level (1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6, depending on their level), how did your pronunciation skills improve?
3. Describe a typical daily lesson in your last Listening & Speaking course.
4. How did the last level address your pronunciation skills?
5. Describe how your pronunciation has been affected by taking an oral communication course.
6. How do listeners respond to you better after having taken your courses in the Americana Language Program?
7. What are some particular words or sounds that you have difficulty pronouncing?
8. What strategies did your instructors use to help you improve the pronunciation of these words or sounds?
9. How has the CLA met your pronunciation needs?

Research Question 2

What are the perspectives of these community college students regarding receiving independent pronunciation instruction to meet their pronunciation intelligibility needs?

1. How are your ESL courses meeting your pronunciation needs?
2. Would you be interested in taking a pronunciation course? Why or why not?
3. What are your pronunciation goals?
4. Describe your thoughts about learning individual sounds of words and learning words being used in sentences.

Appendix B: Interview Excerpts

Participant 7

Researcher: After completing Level 6, how would you describe your pronunciation skills?

Participant 7: Oh, it's better than like before because before I had a lot of problems with the pronunciation putting my tongue in the wrong position.

Researcher: Describe a typical daily lesson in your last Listening & Speaking course.

Participant 7: well, my last listening & Speaking course was very good because the teacher she did a dictation and we need to hear her for to write the correct word.

Researcher: Has your pronunciation improved since you have taken Listening & Speaking courses?

Participant 7: Yes, not a lot but yes. Well, yes, but not a lot. But I mean a little but comfortable.

Researcher: After completing the ESL program, how would you describe your pronunciation skills?

Participant 7: My pronunciation skills are better than they use to be. I used to have problems with the "th". I think it is much better than when I came to this class.

Researcher: Describe a typical daily lesson in your last Listening & Speaking course.

Participant 7: Mrs. H use to have us repeat the words because we use to have problems with the pronunciation and that help us our pronunciation.

Researcher: Has your pronunciation improved since you have taken Listening & Speaking courses in Language Institute?

Participant 7: Yes, because I don't know many words how to pronounce and Mrs. H help us to improve our how to speak better.

Researcher: Do you feel listeners understand you better after having taken your courses in the EPCC Language Institute?

Researcher: What are some particular words or sounds that you have difficulty pronouncing?

Participant 7: In my last class, I was having difficulties which was "party" and acutally "reunion" because for me it sounds weird but I repeat these words and now it sounds better.

Researcher: What strategies did your instructors use to help you improve the pronunciation of these words or sounds?

Researcher: How did your ESL courses meet your pronunciation needs?

Participant 7: Before I take this program, my goals were to be more fluent and to learn more vocabulary. And after this class finish, I think my fluency is better and I know more vocabulary.

Researcher: While you were an ESL student would you have been interested in taking a pronunciation course? If so, why or why not?

Participant 7: Yes, of course, because since the beginning I want to speak English so, I think pronunciation is a part of essentially to be for people to understand you. Of course I would glad to take a pronunciation course.

Researcher: What are your pronunciation goals?

Participant 7: My pronunciation goals are to be fluent. In That way people can understand me and talk to me and I think it is real important to be a fluent person in English.

Researcher: Do you think it would have been more helpful to learn individual sounds that form words or to learn words being used in sentences?

Participant 7: Ok, I think it is to learn words being used in a sentence because you can remember better the word and in that way you can pronounce better, I think.

Participant 8

Researcher: Do you feel listeners understand you better after having taken your courses in the EPCC Language Institute?

Participant 8: Yes, I think. I think I can be better than before.

Researcher: What are some particular words or sounds that you have difficulty pronouncing?

Participant 8: Well, like the word have like a t or th for the sound change the sound for a d or r.

Researcher: What strategies did your instructors use to help you improve the pronunciation of these words or sounds?

Participant 8: Some teachers tell me to listen to English in music and watch TV.

Researcher: How are your ESL courses meeting your pronunciation needs?

Participant 8: I think I need more focus on some difficult words. When the word have the rules or like German or other countries like some words are very difficult to pronunciations.

Researcher: Would you have been interested in taking a pronunciation course? If so, why or why not?

Participant 8: Yes, of course because we need to improve our skills for sometimes we think we say the correct words the pronunciation or something but it's not.

Researcher: What are your pronunciation goals?

Participant 8: My pronunciation goals can be like the people can understand me.

Researcher: Do you think it would be more helpful to learn individual sounds that form words or to learn words being used in sentences?

Participant 8: I think it would be better how to use in sentences. Because sometimes when you speak the same way you write because the American people always use a lot like when you say "I am" they say "I'm."

Participant 9

Researcher: After completing the ESL program, how would you describe your pronunciation skills?

Participant 9: Well, my pronunciation skills have been really good since I take the ESL program. Actually, I have been doing better when I talk with people.

Researcher: Describe a typical daily lesson in your last Listening & Speaking course.

Participant 9: Well, when I speak with people who don't speak Spanish, I feel more comfortable. When I speak my pronunciation is better.

Researcher: So, um for the typical daily lesson in your last Listening & Speaking course. How would you describe the instruction? Or what were some of the activities that you completed?

Participant 9: Well they had put us on a program in class. I don't remember the name but they put us to pronounce the word to describe something and also to pronounce some words or sentences. Yeah, that's mainly what they had put us on.

Researcher: Has your pronunciation improved since you have taken Listening & Speaking Level 6?

Participant 9: Yes, a lot. Um, my pronunciation wasn't that good. Well, since the beginning they had told me that my pronunciation was good, but it has improved a lot.

Researcher: Do you feel listeners understand you better after having taken your courses in the EPCC Language Institute?

Participant 9: Well, they do understand me, but I also understand them. While I was taking the courses, I was very nervous making a conversation with an American that did not speak Spanish because I was like maybe they wouldn't understand me.

Researcher: What are some particular words or sounds that you have difficulty pronouncing?

Participant 9: They're not exactly words or sounds. Well, it's more like the letter like the r letter. Sometimes I talking when I am talking or pronouncing to words that have an r . I have difficulty to pronounce it.

Researcher: What strategies did your instructors use to help you improve the pronunciation of these words or sounds?

Participant 9: Well, I remember that they were making us with the program on the computer they were recording us and also they made us talk in class. Or talk with our classmates. Making like speeches and all that.

Researcher: How did your ESL courses meet your pronunciation needs?

Participant 9: Um, well, like my goals and all that. My goals have been to my fluency. Well, yes my pronunciation. Well, I can say that I reached them.

Researcher: While you were an ESL student would you have been interested in taking a pronunciation course? If so, why or why not?

Participant 9: Well, I would like to b/c I would like to pronounce more with those words I can't pronounce with my Rs or well with my conversation sometimes.

Researcher: What are your pronunciation goals?

Participant 9: Well, learn how not to get confused with words when I am saying words with r or yeah words like that.

Researcher: Do you think it would have been more helpful to learn individual sounds that form words or to learn words being used in sentences?

Participant 9: Um, well, everything is helpful to make you talk better to pronounce things better. Everything is useful actually the individual sounds and everything. It helps you more.

Participant 10

Researcher: After completing Level 6, how would you describe your pronunciation skills?

Participant 10: I started in level 1 and I feel my pronunciation is better now.

Researcher: Describe a typical daily lesson in your last Listening & Speaking course.

Participant 10: Well, listen to some videos about news or conversation in group and work in groups principally

Researcher: Has your pronunciation improved since you have taken Listening & Speaking courses in the Language Institute?

Participant 10: I think that the pronunciation is well in this level because I learn more vocabulary and grammar rules.

Researcher: Do you feel listeners understand you better after having taken your courses in the EPCC Language Institute?

Participant 10: Yes, it's the same. I think in this course I can learn many more vocabulary I can understand the conversation and I can do the conversation with other people.

Researcher: What are some particular words or sounds that you have difficulty pronouncing?

Participant 10: Starting with irregular verb ending in ed. This sound is difficult for me.

Researcher: What strategies did your instructors use to help you improve the pronunciation of these words or sounds?

Participant 10: Um, work in group to make conversation with other people classmate and listen to video and how many words or sentence we understand.

Researcher: How are your ESL courses meeting your pronunciation needs?

Participant 10: It's like continuous keep this method

Researcher: Would you have been interested in taking a pronunciation course? If so, why or why not?

Participant 10: Yes, because for me it is very important how communication with other people understand with other people.

Researcher: What are your pronunciation goals?

Participant 10: I want to get a good job in the future.

Researcher: Do you think it would be more helpful to learn individual sounds that form words or to learn words being used in sentences?

Participant 10: For me to learn individual sounds like I don't know like the pronunciation of some words.

Appendix C: Interview Flyer

\$5 gift reward*
for participating in interview sessions
for research study
November 2014

Are you a current or former ESL student who graduated from a U.S. high school? If so, is your **pronunciation** improving? Do the current instructional methods work for you? **Let your voice be heard!**

Join me in an interview session to **share your perspectives.**

Please contact me to schedule your interview.

*Participants must complete entire study to receive gift.

Research conducted by Walden university Doctoral student

Appendix D: Research Log Excerpt

Research log				
Participant	Location	Date	Comments	Suggestions
D	Language Lab	11/24/2014	D: Confident. Excited about participating. Proud to share as former student.	Relax more. Watch intonation in voice when asking questions.
M	Language Lab	11/24/2014	M: Nervous but excited. Loud responses	Anticipate the need to clarify questions for lower level students.
FM	Language Lab	11/25/2014	FM: Soft spoken. Gave short responses.	Explain the need to elaborate before the session begins.