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**TRAINING TRAINERS
IN THE USE OF ACTING
TECHNIQUES OF ACCENT
MODIFICATION TO ALTER
THE SPEECH OF
NON-NATIVE
SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH**

SHARON BLAUER

2002

2002/75

The American University in Cairo
School of Humanities and Social Sciences
TEFL Department

TRAINING TRAINERS IN THE USE OF ACTING TECHNIQUES
OF ACCENT MODIFICATION TO ALTER THE SPEECH OF
NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH

A Thesis Submitted to
The English Language Institute
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts in TEFL

By
Sharon Blauer
B. Ed. TESL

December, 2002

2002/75

The American University in Cairo
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A Thesis Submitted by Sharon Blauer
To The Department of Teaching English as a Foreign Language

December, 2002

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for
The degree of Master of Arts

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"Si hoc legere scis nimium eruditionis habes."

(Translation: If you can read this, you're overeducated.)

-Xandriel

There are too many names to mention here: those who supported, encouraged and inspired me to pursue an area of Applied Linguistics that had held my interest for some time; and others who kept pushing me to complete the study after the magnitude of the undertaking gradually dawned on me.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis looked at the feasibility of training EFL students to speak English with a Standard American English accent, using the same techniques that actors employ to acquire an accent for a given role. Four Liberian refugees, currently residing in Cairo, were chosen to participate in a 21-hour pronunciation course, designed and taught by a theatre teacher who currently instructs his students in theatrical training, including accent modification, at the American University in Cairo.

Digital studio recordings of the subjects' recitation of an identical stage monologue were made at pre, mid and post training intervals. In order to assess the subjects' proximity to Standard native American speech, parallel sections from recordings of the same passage, read by five male native speakers of Standard American English, were made. These native speaker files were analyzed, using Speech Tools, and model formants were produced, using averaged native speaker data. From these recordings, the pronunciation of five phonemes, in three different parts of the passage, were extracted for analysis. Analyses of variance (ANOVA) were carried out to determine the significant impact of the training on the formant, the phoneme, and the placement of the phoneme. Additionally, a stem and leaf analysis was conducted to assess overall performance of the subjects in the pre, mid and post recordings, in relation to their proximity to native Standard American speech.

Overall results indicated that two of the four participants demonstrated a ten percent improvement in their post-training pronunciation performance. Although there were no results which indicated that the theatrical training approach could not be used to successfully train EFL students in Standard English pronunciation proficiency, none of the subjects in the study were found to produce speech identical to that of

native Standard American English. The study's results may have been hampered by the impact of connected speech, as phonemes which were sounded before and after the phoneme extracted for analysis colored the pronunciation of the target utterance, thus making the extracted phoneme difficult to assess in isolation. Factors which may have hampered the success of the training include the brevity of the course, at-home assignments which were not completed by the subjects and an absence of extrinsic motivators, such as monetary reward, which could encourage good pronunciation performance.

Suggestions for future studies are included in chapter five. The results of a questionnaire indicated that the subjects felt that they could pass on the training in accent modification which they had acquired in the program.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Problem and Its Setting

Until the 1980's, little emphasis had been placed in the ESL/EFL classroom on teaching proper pronunciation in relation to what are often perceived as more pressing goals, such as grammar and vocabulary acquisition (Tarone, 1978). This is in spite of the fact that self-consciousness, which is often heightened by poor pronunciation, can hinder the progress of the student in oral production. Thus, training the student in native-like pronunciation proficiency may help to reduce EFL speakers' insecurities, which can, in turn, encourage further growth and interest in EFL acquisition. Moreover, non-native speakers are often judged by others through the manner in which they pronounce words, not just by the correctness of grammar and vocabulary (Morley, 1991). In as much as research has shown that native English speakers can also be discriminated against, based upon their accents (Morley, 1991), it makes sense to make EFL students and teachers aware of this pronunciation discrimination as well as to give these learners the opportunity to acquire a native or near-native accent which may bolster their social standing.

1.2. Research Question and Rationale

Since some actors are able to alter their 'native' pronunciation for the successful execution of their roles, it seemed logical to investigate whether EFL students who were provided similar accent modification training could achieve similar success for the attainment of native proficiency in a given accent. As such, the primary research question of my study concerned the efficacy of training EFL students in Standard English pronunciation proficiency using some of the methods

employed by actors to acquire an accent for a particular role. Specifically, the study sought to address to what degree non-native subjects, who are trained in accent modification in a similar manner to actors, acquire a native or near-native English accent.

The two studies found on the subject of accent modification using dramatic technique, Kerr (1987) and Lederer (1981), were position papers that described the use of dramatic exercises such as role playing in L2 learning, which included practice in accent modification. There were no research papers that I found which specifically tackled the efficacy of EFL students' use of pronunciation modification techniques, as employed by actors, to improve their L2 speech. However, one approach was developed by an acting coach, Dr Stern (1996), whose expertise in teaching dialects to actors has been put to further use in instructing ESL students in accent modification. Dr. Stern developed his own accent-reduction technique while teaching non-native actors to audition for the roles of American-born characters. He teaches that each language and dialect employs a particular center of articulation from which all speech is subsequently colored (please refer to page 21). Intonation is also considered by Stern to be a very distinctive marker of one's socio-cultural identity from the standpoint of speech. Thus, the primary key, according to Stern, to altering one's pronunciation, is to ascertain and make use of the focal point of articulation of the target accent as well as to learn the intonation patterns of that language or dialect.

1.3. Delimitations of the Study

The proposed study aimed at investigating the feasibility of training EFL students in Standard English pronunciation proficiency, using some of the methods employed by actors to acquire an accent for a particular role; specifically, the study aimed to demonstrate whether or not non-native speakers could produce speech commensurate with the pronunciation patterns of native English speakers after such training. The subjects' use (or lack thereof) of the accent for everyday spoken interaction was not gauged as part of the study. Nor were the sociolinguistic or psycholinguistic implications of the accent acquisition explored. The study did not attempt to measure the causal relationship between motivation and accent acquisition. Nor did the study look at the relative difficulty of acquiring one native accent over another. Finally, the study did not look at the motivating factors behind the choosing of one accent over another.

1.4. Theoretical Constructs

Accent: A characteristic pronunciation, especially: (a) one determined by the regional or social background of the speaker; or (b) one determined by the phonetic habits of the speaker's native language carried over to his or her use of another language (Merriam-Webster, 2002).

Native English accent: This construct was determined by the subjects' ability to sound utterances in a manner commensurate to that of a native English speaker.

Foreign accent: This construct was determined by the subjects' tendency to sound utterances that do not resemble native English speech.

1.5. Operational Definition of Constructs

(Non-) Native Standard American English Pronunciation Proficiency: This

construct was measured through the subjects' (in)ability to utter sounds in a manner similar to that of speakers of Standard American English. Linguist Steven Schaufele defines the Standard American dialect as: "native to the north-central region of the U.S., roughly from the Ohio River valley westwards to roughly Nebraska and reaching as far south as Kansas. This is the dialect that has been identified as most acceptable/least offensive to the majority of Americans. And therefore it's the dialect [one is] most apt to hear coming out of the mouths of radio, TV, and movie personalities who are supposed to represent American ideals. Johnny Carson, Harrison Ford, William Shatner all speak this dialect natively" (Schaufele, 1999, p.1). It must be noted, however, that although there are particular characteristics involved in coloring or creating the Standard American dialect, Jones (1914) admitted there to be a lack of absolute consistency in how a group of people pronounce words, regardless of their collective dialect classification. "No two persons pronounce exactly alike" (Jones, 1914, p.1). Moreover, "even the best speaker commonly uses more than one style" (Jones, 1914, p.1).

A software program specifically geared for the analysis of speech, Speech Tools, was used to compare the utterances of the subjects with that of a speaker of the target accent (the procedures are detailed in Chapter IV).

1.6. Statement of Assumptions

In the study, it was assumed that: (a) subjects would attend most or all training sessions offered; (b) subjects would be adequately motivated to learn the target accent; (c) there would be little or no discrepancy in the amount of time that each subject dedicates to training in accent modification.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITTERATURE

2.1. Current Theories of Approaches to Second Language Pronunciation Instruction

The acquisition of proper second language (L2) pronunciation has historically taken a back seat in the language classroom, as it was judged to be a relatively unimportant goal in relation to the other, more pressing concerns of language learning and production (Elliott, 1995). Beginning in the 1980's, however, there was a resurgence of interest in the topic of L2 pronunciation and teaching (Morley, 1991). Unfortunately, and perhaps because of the previous lack of interest in the subject, not much is yet known about the techniques most likely to enable L2 learners to acquire proper pronunciation. Moreover, there is a clash of opinion in the language learning community regarding realistic and appropriate goals in L2 pronunciation. Most teachers would posit that communicative competence should be the L2 learner's aim. This is defined by the speaker's ability to provide intelligible, communicative, and confident speech (Morley, 1991). But intelligible to whom? And at what level of pronunciation acquisition is the student going to feel confident? For example, there are some members of the work force whose L2 pronunciation needs are significant (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 1996: p. 8):

- Foreign language assistants and foreign faculty of English-language universities
- Foreign-born technical, business and professional employees in English countries
- International business people and diplomats who use English as their lingua franca
- Refugees in resettlement and vocational training programs who wish to migrate to English-speaking countries
- TEFL teachers whose first language is not English

- People working in the tourism industry who need English as their lingua franca to communicate with foreigners.

In all of the above cases, proper pronunciation is important, as these individuals use English either to speak to other foreigners of disparate origins, or it is their job to model proper English, or they simply need to be easily understood by other native speakers of the L2. Without clear pronunciation of the L2, speakers are not only at risk of being misunderstood, their accent places a strain on the interlocutor, who must concentrate all the more on the speech of the L2 speaker so as to comprehend him/her.

2.2. Dialect Prejudice and Discrimination

Although some students may not have as pressing a need to acquire native or near-native pronunciation, they still consider it a desirable goal. In fact, when interviewed, L2 learners consistently express a strong interest in acquiring native-like pronunciation of the target language (Stevick, 1982). Even native speakers of English study accent reduction in order to be more upwardly mobile.

This trend is in part due to the fact that information can be obtained about the speaker's ethnicity and socio-economic background from their dialect alone. Accents are often used by the listener as a means of assessing the intelligence or competence of the speaker, regardless of the actual subject matter being discussed by him/her.

Studies have shown that the manner in which a person speaks can thus be a predictor of the type of job (and income) they will acquire. Sapp (2000) described a recent experiment performed by researchers at the University of Texas, in which human resource managers were made to listen to identical passages, which were recorded by individuals of varying U.S. regional accents. Their task was to

recommend the most appropriate job for the speaker. Results indicated that speakers with a heavy Southern drawl were most often recommended for lower-paying jobs involving less client or customer contact. Those speakers with a more neutralized accent, such as those found in the Midwest, tended to be recommended for jobs which involved greater client contact, as well as higher-profile, higher paying jobs in public relations and marketing.

That there exists legislation in some parts of the world prohibiting discrimination by employers based upon one's manner of speech, demonstrates that such discrimination is a phenomenon that is frequently practiced. Miranda Chow, a Chinese-American, was awarded \$55,000 settlement in 1999, after she filed a suit with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Chow had complained that a former supervisor at the marketing research firm where she worked harassed her for months, which precipitated her departure from the firm, because she was speaking English with an accent. As stated by American Civil Liberties Union, Northern California (ACLU-NC) staff attorney Ed Chen, "An employer may not harass or terminate an employee solely because the employee speaks with an accent or uses a foreign language at work. Those that do are at risk of having to pay for their actions—and reimburse employees for their loss of wages as well as emotional damages" (Watson-Smyth, 1997, p.1). Note that her manner of speech was not deemed by others to be incomprehensible by listeners: "Any assertion that Ms. Chow could not comprehend or be understood by the company's clients because of her English is totally undercut by the company's own documentation, which showed that even under the new supervisor, she exceeded her production goals. It is also belied by the fact that Ms. Chow has since successfully performed bilingual duties as a telemarketer for an insurance company, medical translator, and as a customer service representative for a

major telecommunications firm.” said Chen. “It simply defies all the evidence and experience to suggest that her accent in any way kept her from doing her job well”

(Watson-Smyth, p.1).

Although such discrimination may be legally prohibited as well as politically incorrect, nevertheless the Institution of Personnel and Development (UK) found that “accents were seen as crucially important by many employers” (Watson-Smyth, 1997, p.1) A London consultant was quoted by a reporter as saying: “They communicate background, education and birthplace and, frankly, some backgrounds are more marketable than others. I would advise anyone with a ‘redbrick’ or industrial accent to upgrade. Politicians and lawyers do it, so why shouldn’t others?” (Watson-Smyth, 1997, p.1).

On the other hand, certain individuals may not wish to subdue or erase the phonological markers of identity in favor of that of their target language, as it symbolically suggests the abandonment of their former culture and heritage in favor of the assimilation of values of the target language’s culture (Guiora & Schonberger, 1990). As Finegan (1999) noted: “Asking people to change their customary language patterns is not like asking them to try on different sweaters; it is asking people to take on a new identity and to espouse the values associated with speakers of a different dialect...all vernacular language variations are deeply entwined with the social identities of their speakers and with the values of the social group speaking them” (412). It has been suggested that the more learners can identify with native speakers of the target language, the more likely they will acquire native or near-native pronunciation (Jones, 1997).

2.3. Factors Which Inhibit EFL Pronunciation Acquisition

The affective filter (Krashen, 1982) is a screen of emotion that can block language acquisition or learning if it keeps the users from being too self-conscious or too embarrassed to take risks during communicative exchanges. The filter is up when the acquirer is unmotivated, lacking in confidence, or concerned with failure. The filter is down when the acquirer is not anxious and is trying to become a member of the group speaking.

To answer the question of whether impaired pronunciation proficiency has an impact on a learner's affective filter, one has only to consider that limited pronunciation repertoire can undermine learners' self-confidence, restrict their social interactions and negatively affect estimations of the speakers' credibility (Morley, 1998).

Regardless of individual motivation or resistance toward L2 accent modification, or the relative importance that teachers place on training L2 students in accent modification, foreign language pronunciation training is in high demand by L2 speakers (Stevick, 1982). In today's classrooms, a multitude of techniques are employed to teach pronunciation (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 1996). And, as mentioned above, although compelling arguments have been put forward for the superiority of one technique of L2 pronunciation training over another, linguists have posited that there is, in fact, no empirical evidence to suggest the superiority of any one pronunciation training technique over another (Pennington & Richards, 1986). This lack of conclusive findings is considered to be due to the fact that so little importance in the past was placed on learning pronunciation (Tarone, 1978). Another reason might lie in the fact that the acquisition by adult learners of L2 pronunciation is more difficult to achieve than other facets of language learning (Elliot, 1995).

Not only is it a difficult task, some believe it to actually be impossible. In fact, Scovel (1969) defined adults' lack of facility to acquire native or near-native L2 pronunciation proficiency as the Joseph Conrad phenomenon, in homage to the Polish author whose otherwise superior command of the English language was compromised by great difficulty in pronunciation. Once an adult achieves a certain degree of pronunciation proficiency, it is believed that his ability to make further improvements in L2 pronunciation becomes stunted to the point of fossilization (Selinker, 1972). This is said to be due to a number of factors, including: neurophysiology (e.g. Scovel 1969, Selinker and Lamendella 1979); general development (e.g. Vigil and Oller, 1976); and socio-cultural considerations (e.g. Schumann, 1976). Still, evidence exists of adults who are able to acquire native or near-native pronunciation with the proper exposure to instructional techniques (Neufeld, 1977).

Krashen (1982) further maintains that after puberty, the ability to master a second language, and especially native-like pronunciation proficiency, becomes severely impeded. Lenneberg (1967) had originally amassed evidence in support of this Critical Period Hypothesis. Penfield and Roberts (1959) had also found physiological evidence to support this claim. The theory posits the following: at around puberty, brain lateralization is completed. This is when the brain completes assigning various functions to the two hemispheres of the brain. The phase prior to this completion stage is known as the critical period, where the individual is at an ideal biological state for language acquisition. After this critical period, there is a loss of the brain's plasticity, which in turn renders it virtually impossible for a person to achieve native or near-native like pronunciation proficiency in the L2 (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 1996).

Cognitive scientists, however, have dismissed the notion of the brain becoming incapable of assimilating new sounds, as it has been found to retain a certain degree of plasticity throughout life (Diamond, 1988). Despite this physiological evidence, it remains the widespread belief among linguists as well as educators that age has a significant influence on one's ability to pronounce new sounds.

2.4. The Influence of L1 on the Acquisition of Second Language Pronunciation Proficiency

Factors which are said to affect the acquisition of a target accent include the linguistic characteristics of the speaker's first language. Interference, or negative transfer, from the first language can alter the speaker's aspiration, intonation, and rhythm in the target language (Florez, 1998). Various questions continue to plague researchers concerning which facets of the L1 come into play in L2 pronunciation acquisition. These include the degree to which the phonological acquisition of the L2 is similar to that of the L1, the degree to which the pronunciation patterns acquired in the L1 determine the order of L2 phonological acquisition, as well as the question of how language universals come into play in the acquisition of phonology (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 1996, 19).

There have been several theories put forward regarding the influence and impact of one's L1 on second language proficiency. The following is a summation of those widely recognized ones by the linguistic community.

Contrastive Analysis. Lado's contrastive analysis hypothesis (1957) holds that any second or foreign language acquired is first filtered through the learner's L1. Those facets of the L2 which are similar to the L1 will be more easily acquired, while those facets which are different will foment more difficulty in their acquisition.

Controversy has ensued towards this hypothesis, as it fails to predict effectively the areas of difficulty that learners are likely to encounter in acquiring the L2. Wardhaugh (1970) subsequently rejected the strong version of the contrastive analysis hypothesis (CAH), which holds that the CAH could predict all learning problems, in favor of a weak version, which states that while many L2 errors of learners can be predicted, not all errors can be accounted for through this analysis. However, evidence has shown that interference or negative transfer from the L1 is a major factor in the phenomenon of foreign accents, specifically with regard to aspiration, intonation and rhythm (Broselow, 1987; Broselow, Hurtig and Ringen, 1987; Sato, 1987; Tarone, 1987). That is why we are often able to guess what the L1 of an L2 speaker is, if we are familiar with their native language.

Error Analysis. Banathy and Madarasz (1969) argued for the implementation of error analysis of the learners' interlanguage. Richards (1971) created a three-way means of classifying L2 learner errors in order to learn their cause or origin: interlingual errors, or errors which stem from negative transfer from the learner's L1; intralingual errors which are a product of the target language and which do not appear to have any relation to the learner's L1 (these errors are likely to be made by most or all learners of the target language, regardless of the qualities of their L1); and finally, developmental errors which are errors which coincide with the type that children are prone to commit in acquiring their L1.

This approach also received criticism due to its focus on errors to the exclusion of correct usage of the L2. Furthermore, the approach failed to address the issue of avoidance, whereby L2 learners use alternative means of expressing an idea (i.e. paraphrasing) when the target word or grammatical structure is difficult (Kleinman

1977; Schachter 1974). Avoidance in the current context could include phonological avoidance of a word which is deemed difficult to pronounce.

Selinker (1969, 1972) introduced the interlanguage hypothesis which posits that there are unique grammatical structures created as part of the L2 acquisition process, which are the product of first and second language input, language universals as well as the learner's communication. Interlanguage phonology was addressed through investigating both the universality of phonological acquisition as well as the developmental nature of the L2 learner's interlanguage (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 1996).

Markedness theory. This theory posits that there are phonological or semantic pairs, one of which is marked while the other is unmarked. The former are more specific, less universal, and thus less frequently employed than the latter. The latter tend to be learned first (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 1996).

Language universals. The theory draws from evidence that, despite the fact that there are a wide range of possibilities of sounds that humans produce (collectively, some 845 phonemes exist across human languages), the finite variety that are employed in languages are strikingly similar to one another in terms of both the sound system inventory as well as the order that they are typically acquired by learners. Jakobson (1941) developed an implicational hierarchy which was later modified by Macken and Ferguson (1975), namely that stops are acquired before nasals, which are in turn acquired before fricatives. Investigators further discovered a predictive pattern of substitution in the early stages of L2 phonological acquisition: fricatives are replaced by stops (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 1996).

Recent research in early language acquisition by Kuhl (2000) has suggested that the ambient linguistic exposure that an infant experiences (as early as in utero)

may determine the linguistic repertoire (including pronunciation) that the infant will possess in later life. It was found that by as early an age as nine months old, an infant's phonemic perception becomes warped, so that those phonemes which the infant was not given ambient exposure to prior to this time will be much more difficult to perceive and thus produce. Kuhl's discovery marks a departure from the two prominent theories of early language learning introduced by Chomsky and Skinner. The Chomskian view (1957) stressed that there exists a universal grammar and phonetic framework from which the capacity as well as the constraints of language formulation and perception are influenced. The Skinnerian approach (1957), however, posited that language was acquired through feedback and conditioning acquired through external reinforcement. Kuhl (2000), however, suggested that what is, in fact, innate in infants is not universal grammars and phonetics but rather "biases and strategies that place constraints on perception and learning... The learning strategies used by infants may themselves have influenced the nature of language, in much the same way that general auditory processing influenced the selection of phonetic units for language during its evolution" (Kuhl, 2000, 11857).

Kuhl (2000) summarized her position on early language acquisition, using the following six tenets:

- 1) Infants' initially parse the basic units of speech allowing them to acquire higher-order units created by their combinations.
- 2) The developmental process is not a selectionist one in which innately specified options are selected on the basis of experience.
- 3) Rather, a perceptual learning process, unrelated to Skinnerian learning, commences with exposure to language, during which infants detect patterns, exploit statistical properties, and are perceptually altered by that experience.
- 4) Vocal imitation links speech perception and production early, and auditory, visual, and motor information are co-registered for speech categories.
- 5) Adults addressing infants unconsciously alter their speech to match infants' learning strategies, and this is instrumental in supporting infants' initial mapping of speech.
- 6) The critical period for language is influenced not only by time, but by the neural commitment that results from experience.

(11856-7)

2.5. Where Drama and EFL Converge in Pronunciation Instruction

There are many facets to bear in mind when considering the proximity a speaker has to native-like L2 pronunciation. Besides the phonological awareness needed to be able to distinguish and produce correct L2 speech, there is also the impact of rhythm, intonation, pitch, isolated words and words as pronounced in connected speech. As these factors need to be addressed in both EFL pronunciation and dialect coaching for actors, it seems logical to assume that useful parallels exist between EFL pronunciation exercises and dialect coaching practice for actors. It is also logical that in the repertoire of skills to be learned, both EFL pronunciation acquisition and dialect coaching vary as to both the manner of instruction as well as the facets of pronunciation acquisition deemed most important, depending on the preferences or chosen approaches of the teacher/coach, as well as the preferred learning styles of the student.

In terms of methodology employed, both approaches have within their repertoire of pedagogy, pronunciation instruction through the IPA (or an alternative manner of coding or spelling out the pronunciation of a given word), a focus on the pronunciation of words in isolation as well as in connected speech. Both tend to make use of a map of the articulators at some point during the instructional process. Also, both approaches usually study the intonation patterns and rhythm of the target language, accent or dialect.

2.6. Dialect Coaching Techniques and Emphases

Although the places of articulation are delineated in both approaches, dialect work usually involves an extra focus on the dialect's resonant features. These features derive from identifying the central point of articulation from which speakers of a

given dialect or accent shape, and serve to configure the vocal tract (Stern, 1995b, 6).

In other words, attention is paid to the place of articulation most often employed by speakers of a given dialect. Stern (1995b) explains the general differences in resonant features of certain dialects and accents as follows:

A. Some languages or dialects place a great deal of [stress/emphasis on the use of the] muscularity in parts of the front face.

1. Some patterns have forward muscularity in the lips and the tongue-tip, resulting in a resonance focus behind the top-front teeth (Spanish, Italian, Romanian).
2. Some patterns have a rounding or "pursing" muscularity in the lips, resulting in resonance which is "muffled" by the lips (Swedish, Norwegian, African, Caribbean, Dublin Irish).
3. Some dialects have a downward muscularity or "pump" in the lower lip and jaw resulting in an aggressive-sounding, low-front resonance (the New York City area).

B. Some languages or dialects place a great deal of muscularity in parts of the tongue or soft palate.

1. Some patterns have a downward muscularity of the mid-tongue, leading to a resonance in the mid-low mouth and sometimes leading to limited articulation of final consonants and clusters in English (most East Asian patterns).
2. Some patterns push or squash the mid-tongue up toward the hard palate creating a "squashed" style of resonance (Scottish, Northern Irish).

3. Some patterns maintain a backward stretch of the velum (soft palate) and uvula (flap at the back of the soft palate). This stretch creates a tonal focus on near the spot where the throat and nose divide (French, Danish, Hebrew).
- C. Some languages and dialects pull the velum (soft palate) away from the throat wall, creating various degrees of actual nasality –the passage of some of the sound through the nose instead of the mouth.
1. Some languages have nasality only on certain vowels (European French).
 2. Some patterns have a slight nasality on all vowels and voiced consonants (Australian).
 3. Some patterns have greater degrees of nasality on all vowels and voiced consonants (Quebecois, Afrikaans, some rural and mountain varieties of Southern American)
- (Stern, 1995b, 7).

Any attempts at speaking a new language or dialect will be hampered by the domination of the resonant qualities of their native pronunciation. In order to rectify this, the speaker's muscularity must be altered to be in line with the manner in which native speakers of the target dialect use it. Without this change, "the production of native-like phoneme pronunciation is difficult, or even impossible for most speakers" (Stern, 1995b, 7).

Dr. Stern, a dialect coach who has worked with prominent actors, advocates the prioritization of muscularity change as well as intonation work in dialect coaching and accent reduction in general. He believes that programs which begin with or stress

the changing of vowels and consonants without consideration to muscularity and an accent's resonant features are "doomed to failure" (Stern, 1995, 5).

As has been noted earlier, there is no universal method employed by all actors in learning a dialect. This very often depends on the preferred style as well as the aptitude of the actor. As dialect coach Robert Easton (referred to as the 'Henry Higgins of Hollywood') explains (cited in Schleier, 1999), some actors, such as Robin Williams, have the ear for picking up an accent, and can do so through listening, drilling and general practice. Others, like Charlton Heston, require visual data to reinforce the pattern of the accent. Heston has his scripts transcribed so that he can literally read the text in the manner that the words are pronounced. And still others require more of a kinesthetic approach to dialect acquisition, such as Patrick Swayze, who needs to be told how to pronounce the words within the context of the places of articulation.

Besides the work designed specifically for the purposes of modifying an accent, actors also make use of complementary techniques designed to loosen the vocal chords, the facial muscles involved in pronunciation, and the body as a whole.

Kristin Linklater's approach (1976) is one of the more popular means of achieving these aims. The premise underlying this approach is to liberate the natural voice in order that it might express the full range of emotion or expression permissible, through exercises designed to release the tension and neuromuscular conditioning that comes from habits, emotional trauma, one's reactions to one's environment and other factors which inhibit the voice's capacity for free expression. Specifically, the aim of the Linklater approach is to remove the blockages which prevent this free, impulsive expression from manifesting (Linklater, 1976). It is believed that, in order for the actor to express himself properly, "the inner muscles of

the body must be free to receive the sensitive impulses from the brain that create speech" (Linklater, 1977, 2). This is done through the removal of "psycho-physical" blockages and through breaking the body and voice out of conditioned behavior in order to allow for a freer range in the use of the voice. Besides Linklater, Arthur Lessac as well as Edith Skinner also contributed to the field of voice training, specifically in the provision of exercises designed for similar purposes as those described above (Wren, 1999).

It may be argued that actors do not actually speak with an authentic accent, but rather one that sounds close enough to fool an audience. In fact, it is becoming increasingly more important for actors to sound convincing as today's audience are on the whole, more well-traveled, and thus more discriminating when it comes to appraising the authenticity of an actor's accent.

Although some actors may employ accents for their roles which are not completely authentic to the identity of their character, it isn't necessarily because the actor is unable to replicate the pronunciation and nuances of the target accent. For example, Gregory Peck had discovered that Abraham Lincoln had possessed a "very high-pitched, very unpleasant nasal voice" (Schleier, 94). It was decided, however, that the character would appeal more to the audience with Peck's own tone, enhanced by a Kentucky regional accent. Other reasons why actors may not sound 'authentic' include their need to be understood clearly by the audience through enunciation, which is not always possible if one were to authentically replicate a thick accent.

2.7. The Use of Drama in the EFL Classroom

The two approaches to teaching pronunciation described thus far are by no means mutually exclusive. In fact, EFL/ESL have within their pronunciation instruction repertoire facets of dramatic instruction used to enhance the quality and

authenticity of the students' L2 pronunciation. Mirroring is one of the techniques adapted from drama. In mirroring, students literally replicate or mimic the actions of another individual simultaneously, be it the way they move or the way they talk. Tracking, a similar technique, involves the student repeating what the speaker says but without replicating their movements. Shadowing requires the student to repeat what the speaker says, but rather than tracking the speaker (i.e. speaking simultaneously with the speaker), he/she repeats the phrases slightly after the speaker.

Drama also allows for the delivery of the speech to be played with so as to make the message of the speakers' sentences sound more authentic and genuine. Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin (1996, 308-309) provided the following examples:

Slow, relaxed mode of delivery:

I am not in a hurry. I can take it easy and relax. Everything around me is calm and time seems to be standing still.

Quick, rushed mode of delivery:

I can't stand it. Life is so hectic. Everywhere, people are rushing around. Traffic is terrible. There isn't enough time in the day to do all the things that have to get done.

Students can also be asked to create monologues that allow for further practice in setting the tone of the passage. The effect of pitch on the interpretation of sentences, monologues as well as dialogues can be studied through performing the same passage in a number of ways (i.e. slow, uninterested, then higher pitch to convey interest, then even higher to suggest excitement, etc).

Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin (1996) list other means through which drama can be incorporated into language learning. These include improvisation, where students are provided opportunities to practice fluency in pronunciation without

the controlling element of a script as well as enactments of a given scene, using props and costumes to lend authenticity to the scenario.

As has been put forward earlier, ego-permeability, or “the extent to which the ego can be flexible and adapt” (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 1996, 19) is one of the factors which comes into play in the acquisition of a (L2) accent. One positive element of assuming a role in drama is that the distance between one’s true self and the character of a play or sketch allows the student to “transcend the barriers of their own ego” (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 1996, 311).

2.8. The History of EFL Pronunciation Instruction

Throughout the years, there have been numerous approaches to pronunciation instruction in English language instruction, some more successful than others. The Direct Method, which would pave the way for later naturalistic methods, such as Total Physical Response (TPR) and the Natural Approach, became popular in the late nineteenth century. In this method, pronunciation is taught through intuition and imitation. Students initially listen to the target utterance without any obligation to speak, thus enabling them to internalize the sound patterns. When they do speak, their abilities to pronounce target utterances are considered very good, in spite of the fact that no formal instruction was provided (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 1996).

The 1890’s also marked the dawning of the Reform Movement of language education, where more linguistic and analytical methods of pronunciation instruction were developed, including the creation of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), whose innovation made it possible to spell the sound patterns of any given language (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 1996, 3). Phoneticians of this movement, which included Henry Sweet, Wilhelm Viëtor and Paul Passy, recommended the teaching of phonetics to teachers and L2 students for training in proper pronunciation techniques.

Some historians (Howatt, 1984) believe that Audiolingualism was a by-product of the Reform Movement. Popular in the 1940's and 50's (a similar method to this was known in Britain as the Oral Approach), the Audiolingual method consisted of students listening to target utterances that they reproduced orally, including minimal pair drills for sound differentiation practice. Visual stimuli were also provided in the form of phonetic transcriptions and charts that demonstrated the articulation of sounds.

The 1960's marked the debut of the Cognitive Approach. A hybrid of the schools of transformational-generative grammar and cognitive psychology, it emphasized the teaching of grammar and vocabulary over pronunciation, as the first two were considered of greater importance and were also much more likely to be learned, whereas learning native-like pronunciation, the movement stressed, was neither important nor feasible (Scovel, 1969).

Other approaches to pronunciation instruction emerged later in the seventies: Community Language Learning (CLL), developed by Charles Curran, sought to provide a more humanistic framework for achieving target pronunciation. The student is requested to say something in their native language that they wish to be able to say in the target language. That phrase is translated by the teacher and provided in chunks. The student repeats the utterances until he has produced the complete utterance, at which point it is recorded on tape. In other sessions, the teacher acts as a human computer, providing only as much data as is requested by the learner, be it a word, a part of a phrase or a sentence in its entirety.

The Silent Way also emerged during this time. Its approach is very similar to the Audiolingual method but for its exclusion of the phonetic alphabet or other

explicit forms of linguistic data as a means of instruction (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 1996).

Today's catch phrase is the Communicative Approach. The Communicative Approach has borrowed from among the many language learning methods of its predecessors to offer a myriad of techniques, from visual aids to minimal pair drills, tongue twisters to listen and imitate activities, as well as phonetic training (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 1996). As can be inferred by its name, the movement's aim is to enable the learner to be able to communicate; in terms of methodology, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation are primarily addressed within the context of real communication: the approach has sparked some controversy. There remains an ongoing dispute among educators on the efficacy of prioritizing fluency over accuracy in language learning. Proponents of the latter maintain that, for example, formal grammatical instruction is necessary for successful language learning, whereas those who disagree with this stance argue that the learner can deduce rules of a language through adequate exposure to examples of a linguistic item's usage, without the need for formal instruction. Whereas, in its infancy, the movement had minimized the importance of teaching prescriptive grammar as part of language learning pedagogy, more recently, the method has come to incorporate more (formal) grammatical instruction into its approach.

The multifaceted nature of the Communicative Approach is believed to make for more stimulating, enjoyable learning, and with today's technology, the opportunities are that much greater for multifaceted, multimedia language learning.

2.9. Information Technology and Pronunciation Instruction

Living in the age of the Internet, language students now have many online resources to choose from for improving their pronunciation skills; from fully

automated websites to sites which incorporate interaction with teachers through online correspondence. Although some may argue that online instruction is dehumanizing, there are those who posit the contrary: some researchers have discovered that, in fact, "students can only have 10 seconds of individual attention for every hour of class" or "one full week of individual instruction for the previous 13 years of school attendance" (Heuston, 1986, pp. 10-11, as quoted by Donahue, 1999). Also, unlike conventional classroom settings which are time bound and space bound, online instruction can take place anywhere there is an internet connection, at any time (Donahue, 1999).

Added to this are the programs readily available online to analyze the proximity of the utterance to target-like proficiency. This can be particularly useful when combined with instruction in the use of the places of articulation, which can be achieved through, for example, formant analysis. Formant analysis (see Chapter 4) enables an analysis to take place of the places of articulation of a vowel sound as employed by the speaker. This analysis, in turn, enables the speaker (directly or through the medium of an online instructor) to be instructed as to how he or she should modify the manner of pronunciation of the item in order to pronounce the target utterance correctly. There are various aspects of pronunciation which can be addressed through on-line programs like Praat and Speech Tools. While the former is more geared to linguists already familiar with the rudiments of technological field linguistic analysis, the latter is more user friendly for those who are not as seasoned in that specialization. However, with either software package, "The trained teacher who is equipped with the results...can address the recalcitrant pronunciation problems of students on a sound-by-sound basis. Acoustic analysis includes the following features:

Intonation: analyze speech for pitch and amplitude.

Stress: analyze speech waveforms indicative of stress.

Vowels: analyze on vowel charts or through formants.

Consonants: analyze based on formant, voicing, and aspiration patterns.”

(Donahue, 1999).

2.10. Summary

It is clear that numerous techniques have been attempted over the years to instruct students in pronunciation of the English language. Despite the selection of techniques explored, it is debatable whether any of these individual techniques can be said to be superior in efficacy to their historical predecessors or counterparts (Pennington & Richards, 1986). Clearly, some of the factors attributed to the relative success or failure of a given technique include the students' individual learning style, rate of practice, the individual attention deemed feasible (or not) by a teacher in a language classroom, as well as the individual students' motivation to learn. And because the relative importance of teaching pronunciation proficiency has often paled in comparison to the more pressing needs of grammar and vocabulary acquisition, one wonders how tested the above pronunciation techniques truly are. Certainly, it appears as though, despite the demand for native-like pronunciation instruction by L2 speakers of English, and an increase in focus in the last two decades on pronunciation proficiency in the language classroom, there still remains little in the way of encouragement to pursue training in native-like pronunciation proficiency (i.e. its relative importance as well as its feasibility). Nor is there much in the linguistic community available in the way of tried and tested means of achieving the goal of native-like pronunciation proficiency. By contrast, adult actors, whose age puts them beyond the critical period of language acquisition, are trained to be able to sound like

native speakers of a language or dialect which is foreign to them. Although some may be more proficient in this skill, the fact remains that an actor's efforts often 'fool' an audience into believing, at least temporarily, that the performer is from the country, region and social class represented by their accent. It thus made sense to see whether the techniques used by actors could be successfully employed by L2 students of English, which is why this researcher has chosen to assess the efficacy of teaching L2 speakers of English the techniques normally employed by actors for the goal of native-like pronunciation proficiency. The efficacy of such an experiment thus comprised the focus of this study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Type of Design

The study was a mixed one, combining both qualitative as well as quantitative approaches. The study's aim was to assess the efficacy of training EFL students in Standard English pronunciation proficiency using some of the methods employed by actors to acquire an accent for a particular role. This assessment was achieved through a case study design of all four participants in the program, as described below in Sections 3.3 through 3.7.

3.2. Training Program

The instructor began the training by introducing the Linklater techniques (1976) over two complete sessions. These techniques were thenceforth used for approximately 10 minutes at the beginning of each subsequent class. The following session involved the delineation of the focal points of resonance. The fourth session focused on lilt and musicality in sentence formation. Instruction in the IPA took up the next 15 classes. These classes were divided up into the following: three classes for front vowels, two for mid vowels, three for back vowels, two classes for teaching the diphthongs, a review class, followed by three classes for consonants and one for review. The final class involved mask acting (having them 'pretend' to be an American) as well as more work on lilt and musicality.

The training sessions were held in a room specially equipped for theatre performance and rehearsals on the main campus of The American University in Cairo. One entire wall of this room was mirrored, which allowed for visual focus on the places of articulation as well as some of the exercises of the Linklater technique.

3.3. Description of Materials and Rationale for their Inclusion

Map of articulators (i.e. a drawing which details the speech organs which are employed to properly pronounce utterances): to familiarize subjects with the places of articulation so that they may make use of this awareness in learning how to pronounce.

Phonetic chart: to familiarize subjects with phonetic spelling so that they can perform a contrastive analysis (via transcription) between their current manner of pronunciation and that of a native English speaker.

Mirrors: used in conjunction with the map of articulators, the mirror enables subjects to see their own places of articulation so as to enable them to achieve their pronunciation objectives.

Tape recorders: for subjects to play back and listen to their own pronunciation for assessment and modification. The machines are also to be used to play back the target utterances of native English speakers for replication purposes.

Pencil and paper: for subjects to record phonetic transcription of target utterance as well as to record general advice for pronunciation.

Script of monologue: for subjects to practice speaking in a controlled context; also to have a scripted monologue on which to map key phonetic symbols in order to practice and improve upon those utterances in context. Finally, the monologues were read and recorded as a means of assessing accent modification which might have taken place from the onset of the training to its mid-term, as well as the end of the sessions.

Excerpts from textbook: The materials for these sessions consisted primarily of the lessons and exercises found in chapters six and seven of Voice and Articulation (Crannell, 2000). These chapters contain the following: Chapter Six introduces the map of articulators as well as the sites of resonance in the mouth for proper pronunciation of vowel sounds. Vowel phonemes were introduced one at a time,

followed by exercises involving the pronunciation of words in isolation, sentences as well as excerpts of literary pieces, all of which allow for pronunciation practice of the target phoneme. Also, minimal pair drills were employed in the book to contrast similar sounding phonemes for additional discernment (e.g. /i/, /I/). Whereas Chapter Six comprises the production of vowel sounds, Chapter Seven focuses on the production of consonants.

3.4. Training

The subjects used their training in the IPA to compare and contrast their pronunciation with that of the target pronunciation in order to isolate and remedy these differences. Subjects rehearsed their monologue through the use of the target accent transcription of the monologue. Further awareness of the subtleties of pronunciation were acquired through listening to the speech produced by the trainer. It should be noted that the participants have been provided with only a cursory overview of the IPA. It was not the aim of the training to give a comprehensive overview of the IPA, but merely to provide enough of an introduction to facilitate a basic differentiation of sounds, which could be transcribed into written form.

From April 7th to May 6th, the students practiced what they had learned thus far, through peer instruction, which was overseen by the instructor's assistant, as well as one-on-one work which was required to further reinforce the material learned. During this time, participants were asked to demonstrate methods of teaching various aspects of pronunciation instruction that they had acquired, such as how to teach the sounding of a particular phoneme. These teaching sessions were informally evaluated and coached by the participants (i.e. peer coaching) as well as the teaching assistant.

As part of the training session, the present researcher provided mini-lectures on the benefits of acquiring native-like pronunciation proficiency so as to foster and

maintain a high level of motivation for the subjects to complete the training and attend the sessions regularly.

The person appointed to train the subjects was Mr. Paul Mitri, an Assistant Professor of Theater at AUC's Performing and Visual Arts Department. The trainer was a natural choice as he currently instructs his theatre students in accent modification techniques at AUC. Also, Mr. Mitri, himself, has altered his former Illinois accent to that of a standard American dialect. He currently uses the standard American dialect as part of his everyday speech. Interestingly, he underwent this accent modification for reasons of increased marketability as an actor.

The instructor delineated the following schedule for the pronunciation course. Mr. Mitri instructed the group for 21 classes altogether of one-hour duration (see appendix II for complete schedule), which was run by the instructor with additional help from his assistant in the Wednesday classes. These classes took place twice a week, on Mondays and Wednesdays, between 1:30-2:30 p.m. During his absence, this researcher assisted the subjects in reviewing what Mr. Mitri had taught prior to his departure, providing practice time as well as a general review of his lessons so as to ensure that Mr. Mitri could proceed from where he had left off when he returned from his hiatus.

3.5. Subjects and Selection Procedures

The four subjects who completed the program are members of the Liberian refugee community who have been in Egypt for at least a few years and who are likely to stay indefinitely. This selection criterion was used so as to better guarantee the likelihood that the subjects will be in town to train members of the refugee community in pronunciation instruction after completion of this training program.

Having been informed of the need for five subjects for the study, candidates were first elected by members of the Liberian refugee community according to their collective assessment of who is most motivated, qualified and available to attend all the sessions. The subjects who were selected for the study were all volunteers for the program.

A literacy assessment was made through asking for a writing sample in which subjects had to describe their motivation for wanting to improve their English language pronunciation proficiency. An informal interview of the candidates was also performed, whereby once again, subjects had to describe their motivation for wanting to participate in the course, their commitment to following the training to its completion, their commitment to training others upon completion of the program, as well as provide general biographical data.

Among the selection criteria, only those candidates with no prior training in theatrical accent modification were enlisted to participate in the study. The subjects' innate talent or skill in accent modification could not be anticipated, nor controlled for. All five candidates who were initially elected by members of the Liberian community were subsequently found to be suitable participants for the study. This researcher had chosen to enlist five subjects in order to keep the number of participants low enough to enable proper attention to be paid in the training sessions to each subject, yet high enough to control for attrition. The number of subjects went from five down to four after one had to leave due to professional commitments.

3.6. Instruments

The following information was collected as a means of conducting case studies of the participants: interviews and the distribution of a questionnaire to the participants at the onset of the program to ascertain their motive for wanting to alter their accent,

as well as a mid training questionnaire to discern the participants' opinions on the effectiveness of the training program.

A monologue which was excerpted from The Marriage of Bette and Boo (see Appendix 1) was used for the subjects to read and record for assessment purposes in all three recordings.

3.7. Data Collection Methods

As mentioned above, a questionnaire was distributed and interviews of the participants were made at the onset of the program to ascertain their reasons for wanting to modify their accent. A mid-term questionnaire was distributed to learn of the participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of the training session.

Data was collected which compared the subjects' pronunciation proficiency from the onset of the training session with their pronunciation proficiency at the mid term as well as following completion of the training, in order to assess their progress. Consequently, recordings of the subjects' accents were made at these intervals. The subjects were asked to read and record a passage from a monologue chosen for the purposes of assessing their pronunciation proficiency. The scripted monologue was used so that subjects might record the phonemic spellings of words or 'trouble spots' in their pronunciation, so as to pay special attention to these areas in practice.

The pre, mid and post training recordings were fed into the Sound Analyzer software program for analyses of the formants of isolated phonemes. Data collection went as follows: recordings of the subjects were made at the pre, mid and post phase of the training sessions at a professional sound studio. These consisted of the subjects reading an identical monologue of approximately 4-5 minute duration. Only cursory review of the monologue was allowed prior to the recording in order to retain some measure of spontaneity in the recollection of learned pronunciation techniques.

Recordings of the same monologue were made, using five native American speakers of English. Note that Americans possessing an accent which differed markedly from Standard American English (e.g. the Southern 'drawl') were excluded from participation in these recordings.

These recordings were subsequently edited by a sound engineer in order to isolate five phonemes as uttered in three separate locations of the monologue (see Chapter 4). These isolated phonemes were then run through the Speech Analyzer software program in order to measure the formants of the phonemes, to detect the subjects' pronunciation in relation to the target utterance. In order to have a baseline to measure the progress of the subjects' pronunciation performance, model formants were produced, using averaged native speaker data.

3.8. Data Analysis

The Speech Tools program was employed for the purpose of assessment of the proximity of the subjects' pronunciation to Standard American speech. This program was chosen over others of its kind, as it is a comprehensive program with clearly delineated instructions on how to analyze speech properties. Unlike Praat (Boersma & Weenink, 2001), which is a similar program for speech analysis and synthesis, but whose complexity renders it virtually exclusively for use by acoustic engineers, Speech Tools (2001) provides similar data through an approach as well as clearly delineated instructions and explanations, which renders it accessible to the average applied linguist. The data was analyzed as follows: Individual phonemes extracted from the recordings (see Chapter 4 for a complete description) were entered in a database suitable for use with SYSTAT 3.0 (Wilkinson, 1986). Model formants (I, II, III, IV) were produced, using averaged native speaker data, expressed in Hertz. The means and standard deviations of each formant were then calculated for each of the trainees, by time, phoneme, and placement of phoneme in the passage, using the

SYSTAT package. Analyses of variance (ANOVA) were carried out for each of the trainees, to determine the significant impact of the training on the formant, the phoneme, and the placement of the phoneme. A stem and leaf diagram was used to show the subjects' proximity to Standard American speech, as well as the frequency of incidence (in the recitation of the monologues in the pre, mid and post training recordings) in attaining this goal.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1. Introduction

In order to assess the impact this training had on the pronunciation of the four trainees, each subject recorded a standard passage (See Appendix I for the text). These recordings were made under studio conditions, prior to, during, and following training time without rehearsal, so as to retain a measure of spontaneity in the recitation of the monologue.

Selections from the recordings of the four trainees were compared to parallel sections from recordings of the same passage read by five male native speakers (and recorded under studio conditions, without rehearsal), as follows: five phonemes were selected for study (initial, voiceless 'th', initial 'r' final 'l', 'awe' as in 'God' and /ʌ/ in first (stressed) consonant position), in three different sections of the passage. These particular phonemes were chosen, based upon the level of difficulty the subjects initially exhibited in uttering these sounds (note that these difficulties were not experienced by all the subjects, owing to a disparity in the relative dialects of the L1 as well as the L2 learning background, exposure of the L1, etc.).

Pronunciation samples of the phonemes were extracted from the subjects' recording of the monologue. Three samples of each of the five phonemes were extracted from each of the three recordings of the monologue. These same phonemes were extracted from the digital .wav files produced for each of five native speakers. These native speaker files were analyzed using Speech Tools, and model formants were produced, by averaging native speaker data (expressed in hertz).

The study of formants seemed the most logical means of analysis of isolated phonemes as the data obtained related to the places of articulation that the speakers employed in uttering the phonemes:

The frequency of F1 is inversely related to height (e.g. high vowels have a low F1).

The frequency of F2 is related to tongue advancement (e.g. F2 increases as the tongue moves forward).

The effect of lip rounding is to generally lower the formant frequencies of F1, F2, F3, F4.

The fourth formant, F4, is nearly constant in frequency for any one speaker. (Baart, 1998, p.3).

The formant reveals significant information about the pronunciation of the target phonemes. The closer the formant is to the model, the closer the person is to the correct articulation. It should be noted why isolated sounds were studied within the context of a passage: because native-like pronunciation proficiency is difficult to gauge within the context of isolated sound utterances (i.e. connected speech is a more realistic means through which to measure native-like pronunciation proficiency as it is the manner in which people speak), it was deemed more appropriate to assess phonemes within the context of connected speech. However, the impact of connected speech also effected the pronunciation of the isolated phoneme, as those which preceded as well as followed the utterance most certainly impacted the pronunciation of this utterance, which rendered into question the ultimate suitability of comparing the pronunciation of these phonemes in different parts of the text. In retrospect, it may have been more appropriate to analyze prosody (discourse-level analysis) as a more

suitable or accurate means of assessment of the subjects' progress, but regrettably, this appropriateness was not foreseen prior to the analysis of findings of the study.

The formant models were averaged to produce the results contained below. It should be noted that in the case of one of the phonemes, the voiceless 'th', only one native speaker articulated well enough to produce formants. Thus it was difficult to isolate and capture this phoneme (from the digital recording of the monologue) for analysis. This is due, in part, to the fact that the pronunciation of the 'th' sound occurred within the context of connected speech, rather than in isolated speech, as previous research in pronunciation has done. It should be noted that the above phenomenon occurred both in instances involving the native speakers as well as the subjects' speech.

After this average model of each phoneme in each of the three positions was constructed, the .wav file (a .wav file is a digital recording saved in a Microsoft compatible format) for each of the five target phonemes (three different locations in the passage) for each of the four trainees was analyzed using Speech Tools.

Specifically, each .wav file was read into Speech Tools. Then the spectrogram with formants was selected. The program produced estimates for each of four formants, in conjunction with the spectrogram. The application of Speech Tools to the .wav files resulted in a table of formants, which were then analyzed to reveal the possible impact of the training, the formant, the phoneme, and the placement of the phoneme in the passage on the pronunciation of the four trainees. It had been planned to average the three locations, but it was found that potentially significant variance in the formants produced by both the native speakers and the trainees, would have been lost; therefore, each location was retained in subsequent analyses, rather than being averaged into one.

In order to produce data which could be analyzed using inferential statistics, each formant produced by each trainee was divided by the formant produced by the average native speaker model, to produce the proportion of the model reached by each trainee, for each phoneme, in each placement. A total of sixty phoneme by placement formants were produced for each trainee.

These proportions were entered in a database suitable for use with SYSTAT 3.0 (Wilkinson, 1986). The means and standard deviations were then calculated for each of the trainees, by time, formant, phoneme, and placement of phoneme in the passage, using the SYSTAT package. Analyses of variance (ANOVA) were carried out for each of the trainees, to determine the significant impact of the training, the formant, the phoneme, and the placement of the phoneme.

4.2. Data Analysis

Below are the results of the analysis of variance (ANOVA), for each trainee, for each recording. The results for the first subject showed that his performance changed significantly over time (i.e. before, during and after the training--he actually declined between the mid and final session--but mainly due to the poor production of "th"--cf. Native speakers failure to produce this phoneme in the same discourse context); did not change across formants; differed based on phoneme and placement of phoneme.

TABLE 4.1 ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR FIRST SUBJECT'S PRONUNCIATION PERFORMANCE

SOURCE	SUM-OF-SQUARES	DF	MEAN-SQUARE	F-RATIO	P
TIME	10688.248	2	5344.124	4.864	0.009
FORM	1273.811	3	424.604	0.386	0.763
PHON	56138.793	4	14034.698	12.773	0.000
POSIT	9595.284	1	9595.284	8.733	0.004
ERROR	185697.357	169	1098.801		

The results shown in Table 4.2 (subject 2) reveal that this subject's pronunciation did not change due to the passage of time, and did not change across formants or phonemes. There was a significant ($p < .04$) change across position of phonemes.

TABLE 4.2 ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR SECOND SUBJECT'S PRONUNCIATION

PERFORMANCE					
SOURCE	SUM-OF-SQUARES	DF	MEAN-SQUARE	F-RATIO	P
TIME	90.744	2	45.372	0.119	0.888
FORM	1821.027	3	607.009	1.594	0.193
PHON	2922.065	4	730.516	1.918	0.110
POSIT	1624.208	1	1624.208	4.265	0.040
ERROR	64355.200	169	380.800		

The third trainee (Table 4.3) showed a significant change across phonemes; otherwise, there were no significant differences shown.

TABLE 4.3 ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR THIRD SUBJECT'S PRONUNCIATION

PERFORMANCE					
SOURCE	SUM-OF-SQUARES	DF	MEAN-SQUARE	F-RATIO	P
TIME	5334.277	2	2667.138	2.580	0.079
FORM	2568.624	3	856.208	0.828	0.480
PHON	16790.784	4	4197.696	4.061	0.004
POSIT	720.391	1	720.391	0.697	0.405
ERROR	174706.813	169	1033.768		

The final trainee showed a significant difference across phonemes and placement of the phonemes. He did not show a difference across times or formants.

TABLE 4.4 ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR FOURTH SUBJECT'S PRONUNCIATION PERFORMANCE

SOURCE	SUM-OF-SQUARES	DF	MEAN-SQUARE	F-RATIO	P
TIME	3957.897	2	1978.948	2.016	0.136
FORM	6363.735	3	2121.245	2.161	0.095
PHON	26082.658	4	6520.664	6.642	0.000
POSIT	15646.928	1	15646.928	15.939	0.000
ERROR	165902.094	169	981.669		

The summary chart below demonstrates that there is more variance due to the phoneme, indicative of a discrepancy of ease in producing the different target phonemes. In addition, the position of the phoneme in the passage is significant in three out of four cases, indicating the key role played by the discourse context. There was no significant difference due to formant, which indicates that there was no significant difference amongst articulation points represented by the formants in any of the subjects. While the results of the ANOVAs revealed important findings in terms of the critical influence of phoneme and contexts on assessing learner performance, they did not reveal significant positive improvement following the course.

TABLE 4.5 SUMMARY CHART OF ANOVA FINDINGS

Subject	Time	Formant	Phoneme	Posit
1	.009	NS	.000	0.004
2	NS	NS	NS	0.04
3	NS	NS	.004	NS
4	NS	NS	.000	.000

NS Non Significant

The stem and leaf charts below illustrate the overall performance of the subjects in the pre, mid and post recordings, in relation to their proximity to native Standard American speech (as exemplified by the averaged performance of the native speaker recordings of the monologue for each formant, in each position). Note that the median is the point at which fifty percent of the proportions lie above and fifty percent lie below; the hinges represent the quartiles. A figure of one hundred represents an exact match of the NS model. The outside values represent anomalous behavior in the pronunciation performance of the subject in relation to the target phoneme. A formant analysis of the target phonemes was performed, culminating in a sixty-item stem and leaf analysis of each monologue recording for each subject.

OUTSIDE VALUES

The above diagram represents an analysis of the formants contained in the utterances produced by the first subject in his pre-training recording. Note the median results; though the highest number (twelve) of formants are found at around the one hundred percent mark, there is also a fair degree of anomalous behavior in the subject's pronunciation performance, as compared to the goal. In other words, the chart (Table Seven, below, which represents the second recording of same subject, shows an increase in the frequency of the subject attaining the target pronunciation of the phonemes. Note the propensity toward clustering between eighty and a hundred percent of achievement of the target pronunciation.

TABLE 4.6 RESULTS OF PRE-TRAINING RECORDING OF FIRST SUBJECT

STEM AND LEAF PLOT OF VARIABLE: PNNS1 , N = 60

MINIMUM IS: 0.000
 LOWER HINGE IS: 80.650
 MEDIAN IS: 91.690
 UPPER HINGE IS: 101.790
 MAXIMUM IS: 141.710

0 00006
 4 6
 OUTSIDE VALUES
 5 2
 5 6
 6
 6 8
 7 03
 7 7788
 8 H 334444
 8 5566799
 9 M 002444
 9 566899
 10 H 00001223444
 10 588
 11 1
 11 9
 12 0
 12 7
 OUTSIDE VALUES
 13 5
 14 1

The above diagram represents an analysis of the formants contained in the utterances produced by the first subject in his pre-training recording. Note the mixed results: though the highest number (twelve) of formants are found at around the one hundred percent mark, there is also a fair degree of anomalous behavior in the subject's pronunciation performance, as exemplified in the outside values of the chart. Table Seven, below, which represents the second recording of same subject, shows an increase in the frequency of the subject attaining the target pronunciation of the phonemes. Note the propensity toward clustering between eighty and a hundred percent of achievement of the target pronunciation.

TABLE 4.7 RESULTS OF SECOND RECORDING OF SUBJECT ONE

STEM AND LEAF PLOT OF VARIABLE: PNNS1 , N = 60

MINIMUM IS: 5.690
 LOWER HINGE IS: 70.100
 MEDIAN IS: 90.150
 UPPER HINGE IS: 103.955
 MAXIMUM IS: 202.160

0 57
 OUTSIDE VALUES
 2 7
 3 46
 4 8
 5 124579
 6 049
 7 H 13579
 8 001245899
 9 M 0012237789
 10 H 01113344556689
 11 01349
 12 7
 OUTSIDE VALUES
 20 2

The final recording (Table 4.8) shows a striking consistency of the subjects' inability to sound utterances commensurate with the native English models. Note that the results (from this recording) relates especially to the failure to utter the voiceless 'th' phoneme. Note that this result is anomalous: no other subject data produced this pattern.

TABLE 4.8 RESULTS OF FINAL RECORDING OF FIRST SUBJECT

STEM AND LEAF PLOT OF VARIABLE: PNNS1 , N = 60

MINIMUM IS: 0.000
 LOWER HINGE IS: 0.000
 MEDIAN IS: 90.225
 UPPER HINGE IS: 100.990
 MAXIMUM IS: 137.530

0 00000000000000000001
 0
 0 5
 0 66677
 0 M 88888899999999999999
 1 H 000000001
 1 22223333

TABLE 4.9 RESULTS OF FIRST RECORDING OF SECOND SUBJECT

STEM AND LEAF PLOT OF VARIABLE: PNNS2 , N = 60

MINIMUM IS: 53.570
 LOWER HINGE IS: 84.395
 MEDIAN IS: 92.690
 UPPER HINGE IS: 101.900
 MAXIMUM IS: 147.670

5 3
 OUTSIDE VALUES
 6 0
 6 57
 7 12244
 7 89
 8 H 123444
 8 6778999
 9 M 001122234444
 9 79
 10 H 0000011234
 10 55999
 11 2
 11 67
 OUTSIDE VALUES
 12 9
 13 9
 14 27

Comparisons between Tables 9 and 10 show an increase in attainment of the target pronunciation of phonemes by the time of the second recording. Note the

clustering in Table 9 between eighty and one hundred percent, as compared with the subject's more evenly distributed pre-training score.

TABLE 4.10 RESULTS OF SECOND RECORDING OF SECOND SUBJECT

STEM AND LEAF PLOT OF VARIABLE: PNNS2 , N = 60

MINIMUM IS:	65.920
LOWER HINGE IS:	81.980
MEDIAN IS:	94.180
UPPER HINGE IS:	103.780
MAXIMUM IS:	144.090

6	58
7	178999
8	H 000111123355678899
9	M 003345577888
10	H 0001223444457789
11	
12	5
13	02
OUTSIDE VALUES	
13	9
14	34

The results of the third recording demonstrated a relative improvement in the subject's attainment of the target pronunciation, indicative of a consistent propensity toward improvement from the onset of the training to its completion.

TABLE 4.11 RESULTS OF FINAL RECORDING OF SECOND SUBJECT

STEM AND LEAF PLOT OF VARIABLE: PNNS2 , N = 60

MINIMUM IS: 12.250
 LOWER HINGE IS: 85.650
 MEDIAN IS: 95.790
 UPPER HINGE IS: 106.270
 MAXIMUM IS: 157.160

1 2
 5 1
 OUTSIDE VALUES
 5 9
 6 348
 7 4568
 8 H 00135566789
 9 M 012335555567788
 10 H 000112225666679
 11 368
 12 39
 OUTSIDE VALUES
 14 3
 15 227

TABLE 4.12 RESULTS OF FIRST RECORDING OF SUBJECT THREE

STEM AND LEAF PLOT OF VARIABLE: PNNS3 , N = 60

MINIMUM IS: 23.960
 LOWER HINGE IS: 85.370
 MEDIAN IS: 99.795
 UPPER HINGE IS: 118.555
 MAXIMUM IS: 160.780

2 3
 OUTSIDE VALUES
 4 5
 5 2
 6 4559
 7 156
 8 H 1112467
 9 M 0012445566679
 10 002356678
 11 H 1256788
 12 0344588
 13 125
 14 29
 15 5
 16 0

Whereas in the first recording, subject three had more evenly distributed results, with the greatest concentration (13) at the ninety percent range, the second recording shows the subject's performance improving markedly. Note the clustering of the results of recording two between eighty and one hundred percent of the target pronunciation.

TABLE 4.13 SECOND RECORDING OF THIRD SUBJECT

STEM AND LEAF PLOT OF VARIABLE: PNNS3 , N = 60

MINIMUM IS: 0.000
 LOWER HINGE IS: 84.305
 MEDIAN IS: 97.060
 UPPER HINGE IS: 107.855
 MAXIMUM IS: 163.310

```

0 0000
***OUTSIDE VALUES***
6 369
7 2478
8 H 11225666778999
9 M 1244778889
10 H 000124455789
11 799
12 0567
13 067
14 0
***OUTSIDE VALUES***
15 1
16 3

```

Again, a phenomenon is observed whereby the results of the subject's third recording demonstrate inferior results than those of the second recording. Note the eight examples of the subject attaining a level of zero percent of the target pronunciation (Table 4.13).

TABLE 4.14 FINAL RECORDING OF THIRD SUBJECT

STEM AND LEAF PLOT OF VARIABLE: PNNS3 , N = 60

MINIMUM IS:	0.000
LOWER HINGE IS:	84.100
MEDIAN IS:	94.905
UPPER HINGE IS:	110.005
MAXIMUM IS:	141.250

0	00000000
2	9
OUTSIDE VALUES	
6	9
7	
8	H 122234556789
9	M 01333444456789
10	012355889
11	H 0114457
12	69
13	0059
14	01

TABLE 4.15 RESULTS OF THE FIRST RECORDING OF SUBJECT FOUR

STEM AND LEAF PLOT OF VARIABLE: PNNS4 , N = 60

MINIMUM IS: 0.460
 LOWER HINGE IS: 77.390
 MEDIAN IS: 87.965
 UPPER HINGE IS: 101.070
 MAXIMUM IS: 160.300

```

      0 013
      1 0
      3 4
    ***OUTSIDE VALUES***
      4 9
      5
      5 7
      6
      6 5
      7 13
      7 H 555677789999
      8 3444
      8 M 557789
      9 00034
      9 7788899
     10 H 0144
     10 56788
     11 3
     11
     12 2
     12
     13 02
    ***OUTSIDE VALUES***
     14 7
     15 8
     16 0
    
```

The fourth subject also showed improvement from the first to second recording in attaining more target-like pronunciation proficiency.

TABLE 4.16 RESULTS OF SECOND RECORDING OF SUBJECT FOUR

STEM AND LEAF PLOT OF VARIABLE: PNNS4 , N = 60

MINIMUM IS: 0.000
LOWER HINGE IS: 80.190
MEDIAN IS: 92.615
UPPER HINGE IS: 109.815
MAXIMUM IS: 154.950

0 00004
OUTSIDE VALUES
5 599
6 6
7 244668
8 H 2333356677789
9 M 1133345568
10 H 0356679
11 0123577
12 1278
13
14 356
OUTSIDE VALUES
15 4

TABLE 4.17 RESULTS OF THIRD RECORDING OF SUBJECT FOUR

STEM AND LEAF PLOT OF VARIABLE: PNNS4 , N = 60

MINIMUM IS: 0.000
 LOWER HINGE IS: 88.385
 MEDIAN IS: 96.535
 UPPER HINGE IS: 115.210
 MAXIMUM IS: 164.050

```

0 0000
***OUTSIDE VALUES***
6 23
7 78
8 H 1335578889
9 M 1111222335566788
10 00223457
11 H 1336
12 124788
13 03
14 2
15 1
***OUTSIDE VALUES***
15 6774
16 4
    
```

The third recording shows an overall improvement in the proximity of the subject's speech toward that of the native speaker model. Note the clustering of numbers between eighty and one hundred percent attainment of the target pronunciation model, with the greatest concentration at the ninety percent range.

TABLE 4.18 SUMMARY CHART OF STEM AND LEAF ANALYSIS

Student	Time	Out of 60	Percent	Min.	L Hinge	Med.	U Hinge	Max.
1	P	35	58%	0	80.65	91.69	101.71	141.71
	M	38	63%	5.69	70.1	90.15	103.95	202.16
	P	X	X	0	0	90.22	100.99	137.53
2	P	37	61%	53.57	84.395	92.69	101.9	147.67
	M	46	77%	65.92	81.98	94.18	103.78	144.09
	P	41	68%	12.25	85.65	95.79	106.27	157.16
3	P	36	60%	23.96	85.37	99.795	118.555	160.78
	M	36	60%	0	84.305	97.06	107.855	163.31
	P	42	70%	0	84.1	94.905	110.005	141.25
4	P	38	63%	0.46	77.39	87.965	101.07	160.3
	M	30	50%	0	80.19	92.615	109.815	154.95
	P	38	63%	0	88.385	96.535	115.21	164.05

In summary, two of the subjects (subjects two and three) showed improved performance (subject two went from 61% proximity to the target pronunciation model in the pre training recording, up to 77% in the mid and down slightly to 68% in the final recording, whereas subject three scored 60% in both the pre and mid recording, climbing to 70% in the final recording) one subjects' results were indeterminate (subject one: see chart above), owing to problems with their production of the target utterance and one subject (subject four) did not show any significant improvement.

4.3. Summary of Findings

Most of the subjects demonstrated an improvement in their pronunciation proficiency (clustering increasingly around one hundred percent), however, the first subject demonstrated anomalous behavior in his pronunciation performance. It would seem that some of the subjects' performance in pronunciation proficiency deteriorated in the final recording; possible reasons for this phenomenon are delineated in Chapter Five.

4.4. Training Trainers

As mentioned in Chapter Three, the subjects were taught primarily through the use of Voice and Articulation which provided an overview of the IPA, mainly through minimal pair exercises and passages which made extensive use of the target phoneme. The teaching of the IPA was further achieved through activities whereby the blackboard was employed to record, for example, all the IPA vowel symbols for Standard American pronunciation, which were clustered on the board according to their position as front, mid and back vowels. At the beginning, words which made use of the target phoneme would be listed next to the symbol. Gradually, students were able to come up with words which made use of the target vowel, even to the point of spelling entire words phonetically; however, this achievement appeared to take place mainly through in-class practice, as homework, which entailed review and practice of previously learned phonetic symbols which were assigned, was rarely done. This neglect of homework ultimately detracted from the in-class time available for more acting-related activities (minimal pair drills and the above board activities are not particular to actor training, but are rather 'means to an end'; the goal being to familiarize students with the IPA so that they may employ this tool in their script work, so as to know how to pronounce a given word or string of words in the script). It should be noted that subsequent evidence of the subjects' mastery of the IPA symbols of English was made manifest through spot quizzes, which included the students' writing all the symbols on the board, accompanied by words which employed the sound.

As mentioned in Section Three, subjects were required to begin the classes with exercises from the Linklater technique. After the first month of training, they were asked to take turns guiding the rest of the group through the exercises. When one would run out of ideas for exercises, another would intervene. By the end of the

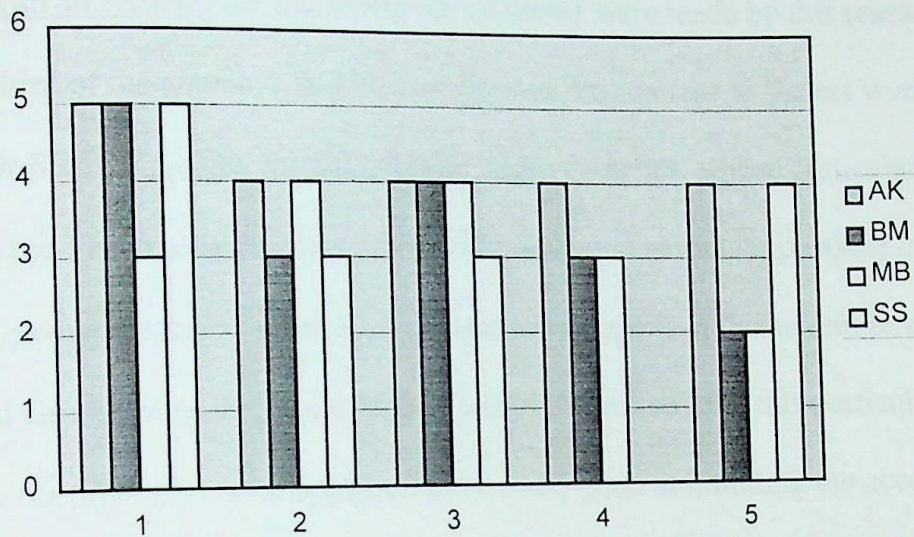
training, the subjects had all demonstrated their knowledge of and competence in practicing the various Linklater exercises introduced by Mr. Mitri.

4.5. Results of Midterm Questionnaire

The following questions were asked of subjects, using a five-point Likert questionnaire (five being the highest possible score for any given item):

1. Do you feel that your pronunciation is improving?
2. Are you still motivated to continue the program to its completion?
3. Do you think that this training is helping you to sound more like a native American speaker?
4. Do you think that you could pass on the training that you have acquired (so far) to others?
5. Are you doing the homework assigned by your pronunciation trainer?

TABLE 4.19 RESULTS OF LIKERT QUESTIONNAIRE



Q	1	2	3	4	5
AK	5	4	4	4	4
BM	5	3	4	3	2
MB	3	4	4	3	2
SS	5	3	3		4
	18	14	15	10	12
verages	90%	70%	75%	50%	60%

Most students indicated that they strongly felt that their pronunciation had improved from the onset of the training to the midterm. The results also indicated that, on the whole, subjects felt fairly confident that they could pass on that which they had learned in class to others.

Additional written feedback was solicited from subjects in the form of an open-ended questionnaire. From these, the following were mentioned: the subjects were in favor of increased use of Dr Stern's Acting With An Accent dialect tapes, as well as increased training in the use of the IPA. The two points of contention cited by subjects concerned the brevity of the training as well as the desire and perceived need of the subjects to engage in one-on-one coaching (which was subsequently offered by this researcher, pending their phoning to set up a time; interestingly, this particular

individual never called to set up a tutorial) as well as more group practice, which was subsequently encouraged although not practiced. Regarding the exercises done with Acting with an Accent, the following observations were made by this researcher: In the last third of the course, Mr. Mitri introduced the students to dialect work, using one of Dr Stern's Acting with an Accent audio cassettes, whose particular edition featured the Texan accent. The subjects demonstrated particular pleasure in this activity, perhaps because there was no pressure to maintain this accent beyond class time and also because they were able to imitate or poke fun at this particular dialect of English. Surprisingly, most appeared to be quite good at imitating the accent. This dialect of English appeared to allow for greater ego permeability to take place: after the first few minutes of practice, there appeared to be little evidence of self-consciousness on the part of the subjects towards attempts at speaking in this dialect – they were 'in character'. Subjects subsequently read excerpts of the script in the Texan dialect. Mr. Mitri made use of this session to remind the subjects of the prevalence of prejudice toward individuals, based on their accents.

The above questionnaire was given at the mid term only, as this period up to the mid term comprised the time when Mr. Mitri had provided the most contact time with the students (please refer to the course schedule, found in Appendix 1). It was felt that, as Mr. Mitri was the only professional trainer in actor pronunciation techniques (in this training course), the feedback should be about the actor training techniques that he alone provided. As he was only able to teach two more classes after his return, it was perceived to be inappropriate for students to assess the efficacy of the training again. The success from the final stage of the program was thus gauged alone from the statistical analysis of the results.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1. Introduction

This section focuses on the impact of the findings of this study. The findings have been scrutinized according to the manner that the data was collected, the efficacy as well as the flaws of the training itself, as well as suggestions for future research.

5.2. Results and Interpretation

All in all, there were two subjects who improved by ten percent in their overall pronunciation proficiency. The lack of great overall significance in the results could be due to a number of factors: one of which, as mentioned above, is the impact of connected speech on the pronunciation of the phoneme extracted for analysis. Another concerns the concentration that the subjects exhibited on pronunciation in the recitation of the script. Although no rehearsals took place prior to the studio recordings, it was clear that some subjects were concentrating more on the manner of pronunciation of the monologue than others. Also, some appeared to begin the (approximately) five-minute recording focusing on their manner of pronunciation only to have the concentration fall away toward the end of the monologue.

One reason which could account for the (overall) superior results in the pronunciation of the subjects in their second recording could be the greater concentration of classes prior to the second recording (Mr Mitri, the trainer, was only able to teach two more classes upon his return from a one-month hiatus, prior to the final recording). Another could relate to an over-articulation by the subjects in the final recording, which is thus not commensurate with native Standard American English speech.

Although the study yielded some positive results, no doubt these results could have been all the more significant had the subjects been more dedicated in doing their homework. It is also the opinion of this researcher that the findings could have been more pronounced, had the classes occurred more frequently (e.g. daily) than twice a week for only an hour. Daily classes would be the ideal. Of course, it is also logical to assume that a more intensive training period would yield superior results. As Mr. Mitri's own experience testifies, to change the dialect that one is used to using in everyday speech in favor of that of Standard American speech takes time and dedication (Mr. Mitri's current accent is a product of a two year program of theatrical studies, which incorporated daily practice in voice/dialect work). Although the subjects' corrected speech cannot be deemed (yet) to be on par with that of Standard American English speech, there were no findings of the study which suggested that the use of theatrical modes of accent modification couldn't render the speech of non-native English speakers to be on par with (or near to) the speech of the target dialect. Indeed, two of the four participants were ten percent closer to the native speaker model after completion of the training.

Discrepancies in the training approach, as mentioned above, such as the time dedicated to practice the exercises acquired in class (i.e. homework), as well as the amount of in-class training time given to the students, were factors which likely hindered the subjects' progress in the pronunciation course. While the former could have been avoided (see above), the latter could not have been altered, owing to the trainer's limited time availability. Thus, the study failed to mirror the total time commitment that is necessary for actors to rehearse and 'master' the target dialogue. Should another study be conducted in this area, it is advised that ample time be given to the subjects for practicing speaking the target dialect in a monitored atmosphere to

ensure that the work is being done (and done properly). Although the Linklater technique was introduced at the beginning of the course and subsequently injected into the first ten minutes of each lesson, it is questionable whether this amount of time was sufficient to have a measurable impact on the subsequent pronunciation performance of the subjects. Teaching the IPA proved to take up the majority of the training program. Although the IPA was essential for subsequent mapping of the monologue, as well as useful for enabling subjects to distinguish subtleties in pronunciation, the significant time impact which it had in the training took away from more 'actor' pursuits, such as improvisation and rehearsal of the text, as well as Linklater training.

5.3. The Subjects

In enlisting subjects for the study, I was concerned about the subjects' level of literacy (in order to guarantee their comprehension and ability to complete class and homework), their motivation for modifying their accent (so as to ensure that they had the impetus to complete the training program), as well as the homogeneity of their place of origin (so as to better guarantee their starting from the same baseline). Literacy proved to be no impediment at all; however, their motivation for accent modification did not appear to be sufficient to spur them to work on their accents after class hours. Finally, as is to be expected of most nationalities, there was a telling variation of regional dialects between the four Liberian subjects (this variation could also be a product of the subjects' L2 education and their relative exposure to English and the target accent), so that the fact of their citizenship from the same country did not appear to control for the baseline.

Although all of the subjects demonstrated interest and participated actively in class activities, there was a noticeable lack of commitment to homework practice,

especially concerning the reviewing of class work and practice in pronunciation. Only two out of the four subjects demonstrated any visible change in pronunciation between classes (i.e. empirical proof that they had been practicing the pronunciation exercises outside of class time).

This lack of effort on the part of the subjects could have been due to a number of factors. Both the trainer and myself agree that extrinsic motivating factors, such as formal assessment and accreditation, as well as monetary reward for exceptional performance and/or the promise of gainful employment upon successful completion of the program, might have motivated the subjects to work harder toward the goal of (near) native-like American English pronunciation proficiency. Neither undergoing the training for its own sake (i.e. intrinsic motivation) nor the prospect of better job opportunities later, through the acquisition of the Standard American accent, seemed to be sufficient motivators to entice the subjects to do their homework. The subjects' collective poverty most probably resulted in a marginalizing of the importance of the project in the face of more immediate and basic concerns.

To control for their lack of personal resources, a recording walkman was purchased to enable the subjects to listen and record their own attempts at a monologue at home, so as to self-assess what aspects of their own accent needed to be worked on, as well as to listen to a recording of the monologue as spoken in the Standard American dialect as a means of having a model of the target dialect. The subjects admitted that they were not making much use of the machine for these aims.

Despite the fact that prospective subjects had been warned not to volunteer for the project unless they were sure they could commit to attending the entire course, one of the original five dropped out within the first month of the program, which resulted in four, instead of five subjects completing the training program.

Despite the setbacks described above, it must be remembered that two of the four subjects improved their pronunciation (i.e. came closer to native-like pronunciation proficiency) by ten percent overall. So, although they may not yet have attained native-like pronunciation proficiency, there is no evidence to suggest that they couldn't do so, should they be provided with further training. Also, considering that this was somewhat of a pioneering study in the use of actor techniques of pronunciation instruction on L2 students, it is the belief of this researcher that much ground was broken in investigating both the feasibility of such instruction, the means available to rate the success of such training, as well as ideas for future studies, which may yield superior results.

5.4. Future Research

For future research studies, I would look for more homogeneity in the accent of the speakers so as to guarantee their beginning from the same baseline; however, for general pronunciation training, this may be an unrealistic ideal, as there are too many pronunciation variables to control for. Also, it may be difficult as well as unrealistic to control for the individual differences of the trainees' educational and experiential differences, even among so-called homogenous groups (both of which are likely to affect the success rate of the participants).

I would try to provide a better means of guaranteeing the subjects' commitment to working toward the goal of increased pronunciation proficiency, be it through extrinsic rewards or through finding more intrinsically motivated subjects for the study. Also, it is the belief of this researcher that (in future studies) a longer training period would be instrumental in augmenting the probability of increased pronunciation proficiency in the target accent. Ideally, a combination of extrinsic (e.g.

monetary) reward and an intensive pronunciation program would most likely yield superior results in future studies.

Providing a substitution list for subjects to be able to compare the phonetic traits of their accent with that of the target accent would be a useful reference for future training projects in accent modification. This would most likely entail the creation of materials for this aim, as (as was found with Acting With An Accent) there may not be published materials which provide substitution lists of the pronunciation of the target accent in relation to the particular speakers' L1.

The use of a professional studio to record and edit the monologues was costly, a geographical inconvenience as well as a time consuming undertaking; however, the use of the studio enabled the quality of the monologue recordings to be superior to using Speech Tools, as uncontrollable noise was edited out by the sound technician; an option which was not present with the software alone. Though the quality of the recordings was superior as a result, in retrospect, it seems to have been unnecessary to utilize the studio to edit the recorded monologues when Speech Tools already provided the means through which to achieve this aim.

This study analyzed the pronunciation of individual utterances within the context of scripted speech. Future studies could investigate the efficacy of dialect study training, as employed by actors in L2 intonation in speech, for the pronunciation of individual utterances, words, sentences and passages in scripted speech as well as that of improvised, free speech. It is recommended that further studies also look into pronunciation training which involved the subjects' complete immersion in theatre-related activities.

Materials designed for language teachers to instruct their students in pronunciation proficiency using actor techniques could be developed in future studies,

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Materials designed for language teachers to instruct their students in pronunciation proficiency using actor techniques could be developed in future studies,

along with the development of assessment tools through which to measure the success of this training on language students.

It may be of benefit to incorporate the pronunciation instruction with lessons on self-assessment and self-study, through training students to utilize programs such as Speech Tools, which can provide data on their proximity to native-like speech, as well as inform them on what places of articulation need to be addressed to improve their manner of pronunciation. It is also likely that the use of IT in self-analysis as well as self-study will be a motivating factor as a result of intrinsic interest in IT, especially among younger candidates (i.e. youth).

The study analyzed the pronunciation of both consonants and vowels in scripted speech. It may be more suitable to conduct future studies which looked exclusively at the pronunciation of vowels, whose proximity to the target pronunciation may be more indicative of the speaker's proximity to sounding like a native English speaker than consonants. Finally, the results of the study has called into question the practical value of teaching the pronunciation of certain phonemes. For example, anomalous behavior was observed in the pronunciation of the voiceless 'th' in both the subjects' as well as the native speakers' monologue recordings. It is logical to assume that connected speech rendered these utterances different to what they would have sounded like in isolated speech, thus perhaps it would be prudent to discern, teach and analyze only those phonemes which are most frequently used in connected (i.e. authentic) speech in future studies of this genre.

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Appendix I

Monologue Used for Assessment of Accent

Excerpt from *The Marriage of Bette and Boo*, by Christopher Durang.

Father Donnally:

Now I don't mean to get off the point. The point is husband and wife, man and woman, Adam and rib. I don't want to dwell on the inequality of the sexes because these vary from couple to couple –sometimes the man is stupid, sometimes the woman is stupid, sometimes both are stupid. The point is man and wife are joined in holy matrimony to complete each other, to populate the earth and to glorify God. That's what it's for. That's what life is for. If you're not a priest or a nun, you normally get married (*Emily raises her hand*). Yes, I know you're not married, Emily. Not everyone gets married. But my comments today are geared towards married people here (*Emily lowers her hand*). Man and wife are helpmates. She helps him, he helps her. In sickness and in health. Anna Karenina should not have left her husband, nor should she have jumped in front of a train. Marriage is not a step to be taken lightly. The Church does not recognize divorce; it does permit it, if you insist for legal purposes, but in the eyes of the Church you are still married and you can never be unmarried, and that's why you can never remarry after a divorce because that would be bigamy and that's a sin and illegal as well (*Breathes*). So, for God's sake, if you're going to get married, pay attention to what you're doing, have conversations with the person, figure out if you really want to live with that person for years and years and years, because you can't change it. Priests have it easier. If I don't like my pastor, I can apply for a transfer. If I don't like a housekeeper, I can get her fired. (*Looks disgruntled*) But a husband and wife are stuck together. So know what you're doing

when you get married. I get so sick of these people coming to me after they're married, and they've just gotten to know one another after the ceremony, and they've discovered they have nothing in common and they hate one another. And they want me to come up with a solution. (*Throws up his hands*) What can I do? There is no solution to a problem like that. I can't help them! It puts me in a terrible position. I can't say get a divorce, that's against God's law. I can't say go get some on the side, that's against God's law. I can't say just pretend you're happy and maybe after a while you won't know the difference because, though that's not against God's law, not that many people know how to do that, and if I suggest it to people, they'd write to the Bishop complaining about me and then he'd transfer me to some godforsaken place in Latin America without a shower, and all because these people don't know what they're doing when they get married. (*Shakes his head*). So I mumble platitudes to these people who come to me with these insoluble problems and think to myself, "Why didn't they think before they got married? Why does no one ever think? Why did God make people stupid?" (*Pause.*) Are there any questions?

Appendix II
Pronunciation Training Course Schedule

Class 1 Linklater technique First recording of monologue	Class 12 IPA: back vowels
Class 2 Linklater technique	Class 13 IPA: diphthongs
Class 3 Focal points of resonance	Class 14 IPA: diphthongs
Class 4 Lilt and musicality in sentence formation	Class 15 Review
Class 5 IPA: front vowels	Class 16 IPA: consonants
Class 6 IPA: front vowels	Class 17 IPA: consonants
Class 7 IPA: front vowels	Class 18 IPA: consonants
Class 8 IPA: mid vowels	Class 19 Review Second recording of monologue
Class 9 IPA: mid vowels	Mr. Mitri's one-month hiatus. Classes continue in practicing what has already been taught, peer feedback and practice in instructing peers in pronunciation-related activities.
Class 10 IPA: back vowels	Class 20 (End of 1st week of May) Mask acting, as well as work on lilt and musicality in sentence formation
Class 11 IPA: back vowels	Class 21 Mask acting, as well as work on lilt and musicality in sentence formation

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