

The effects of formal instruction on EFL pronunciation acquisition: a case study from Germany

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Summary

The area of pronunciation teaching is one that seems to be fairly cursorily covered in many Cert. TEFL courses. This shortcoming leaves the newly qualified teacher unsure of how to provide adequate instruction and correction and school managers in a position where it is necessary to provide supplementary training courses. Unfortunately, there has been relatively little research into the factors affecting pronunciation and the results have been fairly inconclusive. This study was set up in order to try and provide evidence of the effectiveness of pronunciation instruction with a view to justifying a training programme in pronunciation instruction for teachers. An empirical study of 2 groups of adult German learners of English at a private language institute in Frankfurt was carried out, with one group receiving pronunciation instruction and the control group receiving no instruction. A variety of teaching methods and tasks were used to account for different learning styles and individual differences in the learners. The variables of exposure to target language and importance of pronunciation were also considered in relation to pronunciation improvement over the study. The subjects took a pre-test and post-test to allow a comparison to be made in their pronunciation performance before and after the experiment. The study found that instruction did have a beneficial effect on the pronunciation of the experimental group and that those learners who placed more importance on pronunciation tended to show greater improvement. In contrast, exposure to target language did not appear to have an effect on overall performance for these groups. The study was subject to several constraints, particularly that of size and therefore the results should be treated with caution.

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Introduction

Due to the time restrictions on most preparatory certificate courses for TEFL, it is often the case that pronunciation teaching receives relatively little attention. This can lead to newly qualified teachers feeling unsure of how to provide instruction or correction in the classroom. Faulty pronunciation; however, may cause serious misunderstandings or communication breakdowns (Tench 1996) and therefore should be an integral part of any teacher training programme. One of a manager's most important responsibilities is to provide ongoing training and support to all staff, but this is of particular importance for recently qualified teachers. My institute recruits a large number of newly qualified teachers every year and there appeared to be a need for a training programme in teaching pronunciation. To be able to justify a training course in pronunciation; however, it was first necessary to provide positive evidence for the effectiveness of pronunciation instruction. In order to try to find such evidence, an experiment was conducted involving two groups of learners, one receiving pronunciation instruction and the other receiving no pronunciation instruction.

The institution in which I work provides English programmes for adult German learners of English whose primary goal is to achieve functional intelligibility and successful comprehension of non-German speaking clients. For these learners, attention to pronunciation is highly important in order to enable them to do their job efficiently and therefore would seem to be an important component of a programme of study. German learners have relatively few problems with pronunciation at the segmental level, experiencing more problems with suprasegmental features. One area of difficulty is that of the various features of connected speech which impede the learners understanding of native-speaker speech and also result in rather stilted speech production from the learner. Phonetic representations of words, such as given in dictionaries, imply a basically stable relationship between the representation given and the same word when used in a stream of speech. In reality, the word

may be changed a lot (Nolan and Kerswill 1990) by a variety of connected speech processes. It is important to raise the learners' awareness of these processes in order to help them improve their overall second language ability. The other area for concern is that of intonation which is central to the conveyance of both meaning and attitude in English. Whereas native speakers are fairly tolerant of grammatical errors or problems with individual phonemes, they are much less tolerant of errors in intonation. Tench (1996) claims that this may be due to a lack of awareness of the function of intonation on the part of the listener, or because, although wrong, the intonation used still carries a meaning. In wishing to convey one meaning, the learner erroneously sends a different message by using the wrong intonation pattern. Given the problems stated and the importance for these learners of being able to communicate with business colleagues efficiently, this study investigated the effects of instruction on features of connected speech, sentence stress and intonation.

Having briefly outlined the rationale behind the study, the first chapter will review the pertinent literature on the effects of instruction both on second language learning in general and also specifically on pronunciation. Other factors involved in the learning process will also be considered since second language acquisition is a highly complex process. By considering the research in the field, a general framework will be provided for this study and the discussion presented in the second chapter. Finally, the first chapter will present an outline of the specific features of pronunciation under consideration in this study. The second chapter will describe the study that was conducted to investigate the effects of instruction on pronunciation and present the data analysis and a discussion of the results. In the final chapter, the constraints of this study will be discussed, followed by implications for further research.

1 Literature Review

1.1 Historical Background

The role of pronunciation has varied widely in different schools of teaching from having low priority in the grammar-translation method to being the main focus in the audio-lingual method (Castillo 1990; Florez 1998). During the late 1960s and 1970s questions were raised about the role of pronunciation in EFL/ESL and particularly about whether the focus of the programmes and instructional methods were effective or not (Otlowski 1998). Many studies of this period concluded that little relationship exists between teaching pronunciation in the classroom and attained proficiency in pronunciation (Purcell & Suter 1980) which led to less time being given to pronunciation practice in the classroom. Since the mid 1980s:

'...there has been a growing interest in revisiting the pronunciation component of the ESL curriculum for adults and young adults.' (Morley 1991:487)

The effect of pronunciation instruction is widely debated today with researchers such as Purcell and Suter (1980) thinking that it is fairly ineffective, researchers such as Pennington (1989) believing that teachers can make a difference if they have formal training and Morley believing it to be an essential part of any course since:

'...ignoring student's pronunciation needs is an abrogation of professional responsibility.' (1991.: 489)

Traditionally the emphasis of instruction was on specific linguistic competencies but, more recently, this focus has changed to broader communicative competencies. Within such a framework where meaningful communication is the main goal, and therefore oral comprehensibility is more necessary, it is important to note that:

'...pronunciation - like grammar, syntax, and discourse organisation - communicates; ...the very act of pronouncing, not just the words we transmit, is an essential part of what we communicate about ourselves as people. (Beebe 1978:3)

Further, it is important to recognise that for many learners 'the development of improved L2 pronunciation remains a primary goal' (McDonald et al. 1994:76). Thus, pronunciation should play an important role in any language learning experience.

1.2 Target Pronunciation and Intelligibility

If we accept that pronunciation is an important part of any language course then we need to answer the question of what is the target pronunciation to be achieved. For many years this goal was 'perfect' or near-native pronunciation which raises the question of which target model is to be used, be it British English, Australian English etc. Whichever model is chosen, such a level is virtually unattainable for many learners and also 'not a necessary condition for comprehensible communicative output.' (Morley 1991: 498) Further, such a level may not be desirable to the learner who wants to keep their L1 identity. A more achievable and sufficient goal would seem to be that of being 'comfortably intelligible' as advocated by Abercrombie (1949.) To be comfortably intelligible a learner does not need to have perfect pronunciation, but their pronunciation of the target language should not put a great strain on the listener. The concept of comfortable intelligibility is concerned with functional intelligibility (being able to make oneself relatively easily understood) and functional communicability (the ability to cope with the communication needs one faces.) We can broadly define intelligibility as:

'...the extent to which a speaker's message is actually understood by a listener, but there is no universally accepted way of assessing it.' (Munro and Derwing 1995:289)

The notion of intelligibility is a 'slippery concept' (Morley 1991: 499), with judgements about intelligibility being strongly influenced by a listener's preconceived ideas about non-native speakers in general and the personality and accent of an individual learner. A study by Munro and Derwing (1995) shows that there is no simple positive correlation between intelligibility and nativeness of accent. It would, therefore, seem important to try and identify which aspects of pronunciation seem to impede intelligibility and focus on them in the pronunciation component of a course. Unfortunately, at present little is known about this but a recent study by Anderson-Hsieh et al (1992) seems to lend support to the importance of prosody (i.e. features of spoken language which are not easily identified as discrete segments such as lexical stress, rhythm and intonation) with regards to the intelligibility of L2 speech.

Having defined comfortable intelligibility as a target in pronunciation for learners, the next question to be addressed is how we can help learners to achieve this. The teaching profession believes that instruction does help; however an intuitive belief is not reason enough to plan a course of instruction. The next section will look briefly at research on the effects of second language instruction in general and then turn to the area of pronunciation instruction in particular.

1.3 Research into the Effects of Instruction

1.3.1 Second Language Research

Within the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research there are a number of theories about learning. One of the most known theories is Krashen's Monitor theory (1982), which claims that formal instruction results in conscious knowledge of rules but not acquisition. The learner can only access this knowledge when they have time, know the rule and are focussed on form. Most of the second language is acquired through the processing of comprehensible input, which is at a level just above that of the learner. (i+1) Within this theory, instruction is useful primarily in the provision of comprehensible input for the learner. Another theory is the parameter-setting model in which all people are born with an identical language acquisition device which contains a number of parameters. As a person learns their mother tongue, the parameters are set to marked or unmarked positions. When learning a second language the learner will carry over these parameters from L1 and therefore needs to reset them for successful L2 acquisition (Pennington 1994.) In such a framework, learners who are able to reset their parameters early on will achieve better results and therefore instruction in the early stages is very important. The Noticing hypothesis of Schmidt (1990) claims that conscious awareness (noticing) is a necessary condition for learning. A learner notices something in the grammatical input provided and that enables the input to become

intake. Noticing is often associated with the notion of consciousness raising (e.g. Rutherford 1987.) By focussing on elements of a language, the teacher is attempting to raise the learners' awareness of that element. This should, in turn, increase the possibility of noticing taking place and thus facilitate intake.

Despite its importance to the teaching profession, empirical studies of the effectiveness of instruction are relatively inconclusive with some claiming it does not help and others claiming it to be beneficial. In a comprehensive paper discussing research into the effects of instruction on general language proficiency, Long (1983) re-examines a number of studies. He finds that there seems to be quite good evidence to 'tentatively' support the hypothesis that second language instruction does make a difference, particularly 'in the early stages of SLA.' (ibid: 379) He does, however, add the proviso that further research is necessary to increase certainty, not only to address the question of whether instruction is beneficial but also to assess whether the type of instruction and the type of learner are factors.

In a comprehensive discussion of the effects of formal instruction on several aspects of learning, Ellis (1994) claims that although there is little support for formal instruction being necessary in the learning of L2, it does seem to facilitate the learning process. With respect to studies into the effects of formal instruction on production accuracy, he concludes that formal instruction results in greater accuracy in the use of grammatical structures only when the learner is able to process them. This is because a learner's ability to acquire new structures is constrained by internal processes which control the sequence of acquisition. The findings of research into the effects of instruction on the sequence of acquisition are more varied and inconclusive but seem to suggest that formal instruction may not be able to alter the sequence of acquisition. It may; however, enable learners to progress through the sequence more quickly and it might help learners to understand the meanings of structures even if they are unable to produce them (ibid.) Motivation appears to be a significant factor in the durability

of instruction (ibid.) If a learner is motivated by the need to communicate, then they are likely to retain only the features they believe to be necessary for communication. On the other hand, a learner is more likely to retain features which are not necessary when communication is the only goal, when motivated by factors such as the necessity to pass an exam, which requires grammatical accuracy, or by a wish to integrate into the target language culture.

Having considered the main findings of research into the effects of formal instruction on second language learning, the next section will present a discussion of research into the effects of instruction on pronunciation.

1.3.2 Pronunciation Research

Turning to research into pronunciation instruction and its effectiveness, the number of empirical studies is fewer and:

'Studies examining the effects of formal instruction in pronunciation have yielded inconsistent and even contradictory results.' (Elliott 1995:531)

One of the important early studies is that carried out by Suter (1976). In this study 61 subjects from a number of different countries were graded on a 6-point scale as to the overall impression of English pronunciation by specially trained but otherwise non-specialist native speaker judges. Using fairly simple statistical analysis, the results appeared to show that the most important factor was L1 with instruction having little importance. The results were re-examined in a later paper by Purcell and Suter (1980) using more sophisticated analyses but instruction was again found to have little significance in the variance of pronunciation accuracy. The important factors were identified as L1, strength of concern for pronunciation and length of stay in English environment. They also claimed that the attainment of accurate pronunciation in a second language is something which is for the most part not within the control of educators. These results are questioned by Pennington (1989) on the basis that the factors of formal training and the quality of that training, if not taken into account, could affect the results of any research. Further, she says that there is:

'...no firm basis for asserting categorically that pronunciation is not teachable or that it is not worth spending time on.' (Pennington *ibid.*:20)

A study by Elliott (1995) found that attitude to developing native or near-native pronunciation was a significant factor in target language pronunciation accuracy, lending support to Suter's results which show 'concern' about pronunciation to be a significant factor in the pronunciation of ESL. 'However, it was not an effective predictor of improvement in pronunciation.' (*ibid.*:538) Moreover, in contrast to Suter's results, Elliott reported that his results suggest that pronunciation instruction was a significant factor in the improvement in pronunciation of the experimental group. (*ibid.*) The most extensive research into the roles of attitudes and motivation in SLA has been conducted by Gardner and Lambert (1972). Based on the framework of these studies, a number of studies have been undertaken and Ellis (*op.cit.*) claims that the findings show motivation and attitudes to be important factors in helping to determine the level of proficiency achieved by different learners.

Two studies reporting that instruction caused significant improvement in both foreign language production and perception of prosodic features are those carried out by Gilbert (1980) and de Bot and Mailfert (1982); however, these studies are limited by the fact that they only provided a very short period of instruction and assessed speech production immediately after training. Such a method does not allow for learners who appear to undergo immediate deterioration or no change (Yule & McDonald 1994), which may be attributable to the 'restructuring' of the learner's interlanguage. The lack of change or deterioration may actually be evidence of learning occurring with beneficial effects appearing at a later date.

A study by Perlmutter (1989) found improved intelligibility on ESL learners during 6 months of instruction with particular emphasis on pronunciation. However, the subjects were all newcomers to the US and so could be expected to show significant improvement regardless of instruction. Despite this, the study seemed to show that instruction did cause an improvement. Further, instruction favouring prosodic features such as rhythm, intonation and

stress seemed to enable students to transfer their learning to spontaneous situations whereas instruction with only segmental content did not produce such ability.

A study by Zborowska (1997, as discussed in Leather 1999) is reported as finding that explicit instruction helped both the learners' perceptual and productive acquisition of specific phonostylistic processes in comparison with a group which received no instruction.

In a study of the effects of different types of instruction (teacher correction, self-study in a language lab and interactive modification), McDonald et al. (1994: 94) reported 'that no single intervention was beneficial to all learners who experienced it.' This finding appears to support Pennington and Richards's (1986) contention that a one to one relationship between pronunciation teaching and acquisition is unlikely.

In a more recent study, Derwing et al. (1998) compared three methods of instruction; one focused on instruction at the level of the word or smaller units. The second method placed a broader emphasis on pronunciation, 'extending to the level of discourse' (ibid: 397) and the third method being that of no specific instruction in pronunciation. The results seem to indicate that, although a segmental focus appeared to have the strongest impact on accent, the only group showing improvement in comprehensibility and fluency was that receiving a broad approach to instruction. They claim that the results do not suggest that a segmental focus is not necessary, but rather that attention to both segmental and suprasegmental factors would benefit learners. These findings would seem to support those of Perlmutter (1989).

The above studies provide us with neither a definitive answer to the question of whether pronunciation instruction does in fact help improve L2 proficiency, nor to which kind of instruction is most effective. Pennington and Richards (1986) claim that there is very little evidence as to whether one form of instruction is superior to another or even if any form of instruction is beneficial at all. However, more recent studies would seem to suggest that instruction may be beneficial with the importance of learner attitude and concern for

pronunciation accuracy also being important factors in the process. (Elliott 1995) Further studies into this area are needed to provide a stronger basis on which to plan a course of pronunciation.

1.4 Other factors involved in the learning process

The previous two sections considered the research into effects of instruction on learning and also mentioned the importance of learner attitude, concern for pronunciation accuracy and motivation as being important factors in the process. Attitude can be described as an evaluative reaction to a factor. This reaction or belief is based on a judgement made by an individual as to how much they like or dislike that factor. The second language learner may have positive or negative attitudes about the target language, its native speakers, the target culture, the social value of learning the TL, particular uses of the TL and their identity as a member of their own culture. These differing attitudes may provide a positive or negative effect on pronunciation development, with positive attitudes being expected to enhance learning and negative attitudes impeding learning (Ellis 1994). This effect is increased by the fact that a learner with a positive attitude who achieves success will have their attitudes reinforced whereas a learner with a negative attitude who does not achieve success may have their negative attitude reinforced. Another important factor to be considered here is that of motivation. Motivation is defined by Gardner (1985:10) as:

'...the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes towards learning the language.'

Therefore, motivation refers to the amount of effort a learner makes to learn the language, but this is affected by the learner's reasons for learning the language, which in turn act as the goal for the learning process. Gardner (ibid) claims that the main determinants of motivation are the learner's attitudes to the TL and their need to learn L2, with a more positive attitude giving stronger motivation. Motivation can be further divided into intrinsic motivation (i.e. the learner has their own personal reasons for wanting to improve) and extrinsic motivation

(i.e. the impetus for improvement comes from a source outside the learner.) Intrinsic motivation usually causes more significant improvement in a learner than extrinsic motivation (Stern 1983). Pennington (1994) identifies several other factors which have been shown to positively influence both the learning and teaching of pronunciation. Firstly the age of the learner needs to be considered. There are different views about the effects of age on language acquisition; however, many researchers seem to agree that most adults find mastery of L2 pronunciation harder than children and will be unlikely to achieve native-like pronunciation.

Another consideration is that of L1, which is generally agreed to have a considerable influence on the pronunciation of L2. L1 interference or negative transfer may cause a variety of errors both at the segmental and suprasegmental level. (ibid) Other considerations are the amount and type of previous instruction, as well as the individual's aptitude for language learning (Florez 1998). Finally, the effects of memory need to be included in the learning process. Because age causes an increase in cognitive processing abilities, adult L2 learners have access to a more developed memory capacity than L1 learners and this can cause differences in the language they produce. Cook (1977) found that when the memory process depends on syntax, the same restrictions apply to the L1 and adult L2 learner and both will use their speech processing memory. When the memory process is only slightly dependent on language; however, the adult L2 learner uses their general memory capacity rather than their speech processing memory. There is, unfortunately, no precise information as to which aspects of language learning are affected by cognitive processes. Any individual may be affected by a different combination of these factors, which makes it very difficult to find conclusive evidence in favour of any particular factor from research. Clearly, there is a need for more research into which factors have the strongest influence on pronunciation

acquisition. Having considered the other factors which may affect learning, the final section of this chapter will define the features of pronunciation to be examined in this study.

1.5 Specific Features of Pronunciation

Some of the literature to date has indicated that prosodic features are an important factor in speech (Anderson-Hsieh 1992; Munro and Derwing 1995; Wong 1987). Further, words do not occur in isolation during real communication. When a speaker produces an utterance, the individual words may undergo several modifications, which are collectively called connected speech processes. To understand native-speaker talk, the learner needs to be aware of these processes in English. This study will be investigating the effects of instruction on a number of features of connected speech as well as the prosodic features of stress and intonation.

1.5.1 Strong and Weak forms of Words

When a word is pronounced in isolation, and at least one syllable is fully stressed with no reduction in the vowel quality, this is called the citation form (Ladefoged 1983). In connected speech, however, many changes can take place to the word. It may be completely unstressed, the vowel may be reduced to [] or even disappear completely and one or more of the consonants may be dropped or altered.

e.g. When stressed in a sentence **and** has the form [] but it also has the reduced forms [], [], and [].

The importance of weak forms for the learner is principally for the understanding of native speakers. Because German does not contain many weak forms; however, there is a tendency for learners to stress all words (Kenworthy 1987) and this can result in speech which puts a strain on the listener. For this reason, it would also be desirable to improve the learners' production of weak forms.

1.5.2 Contractions and Elision

Elision occurs when under certain circumstances a phoneme is realised as zero and is typical of rapid connected speech (Roach 1991). The importance of elision for the learner is principally for the understanding of native speaker talk.

e.g. windmill is pronounced []

Contractions of grammatical words have special spelling forms, which separates them from the typical elision.

e.g. had → I'd would → He'd like to

1.5.3 Assimilation

We can describe assimilation as:

'...the process of replacing a sound by another sound under the influence of a third sound which is near to it in the word or sentence.' (Jones 1960:217-218)

Assimilation can be regressive i.e. a final consonant changes to become like an initial consonant in some way or progressive i.e. the initial consonant changes to become like a final consonant (Roach 1991).

e.g. *can* has the pronunciation [] when appearing in its reduced form
bake has the pronunciation [] when appearing alone
In the sentence *He can bake cakes* assimilation causes the pronunciation of *can bake* to be modified to [].

1.5.4 Liaison

Without the use of liaison, all words would be separate units; however, in real connected speech we sometimes link words together (ibid.) The most common case is the linking r which occurs when a word's spelling suggests a final r and it is followed by a word beginning with a vowel.

e.g. *here* [] but *here are* []

It is also possible to find linking [j] and [w].

e.g. *she answers* [] go away []

1.5.5 Stress

A basic definition of stress is given by Ladefoged (1983: 249) as:

'A stressed syllable is pronounced with a greater amount of energy than an unstressed syllable.'

Some definitions relate stress to loudness, thus making it possible to distinguish the stress of a syllable (its perceived relative loudness) from its tone (its perceived relative pitch.) A more common usage of the term stress is:

'...the prominence of certain syllables relative to others in a linguistic system.'
(Clark and Yallop 1990:340)

When a learner meets a word the stressed syllable or syllables should be identified, as well as any differences of stress placement in the word family.

e.g. 'photograph pho'tography photo'graphic

The stress that may occur on a word sometimes becomes modified when used in a sentence, (Ladefoged 1983) with the most common modification being the loss of some of the stresses. In an English sentence, 'stresses tend to recur at regular intervals of time' (ibid:119) and the stress occurs on what is deemed to be the important part of the message.

e.g. The **TRAIN** to **LON**don leaves at **SIX** p.m. from **PLAT**form **FOUR**.

(stressed syllables are indicated by **CAPITAL** letters)

Unstressed syllables are mainly grammatical words which do not carry the important or new information. Sentence stress, or rhythm, is the area of stress that was included in this study.

1.5.6 Intonation

It is very hard to give a comprehensive definition of intonation, but certainly the pitch of the voice plays a very important part. (Roach 1991) Using a different intonation pattern can change the meaning of any utterance in English. Tench (1996) identifies six functions of intonation (and mentions a sociolinguistic function as a possible seventh function).

1. The first function is the organisation of information a speaker wants to present. The speaker needs to present the information in pieces that are manageable for the listener and to decide which information should be made prominent.
2. A second function is the realisation of communicative functions. A speaker needs to convey their purpose for saying something and intonation is used to distinguish between statements, questions, requests, etc.
3. The third function is the expression of speaker attitude, where intonation is used to convey the mood or attitude to the audience or message e.g. angrily, politely.
4. The fourth function identified is the use of intonation to signal syntactic structure. There are many syntactic patterns that can only be identified in speech by intonation e.g. defining and non-defining relative clauses, transitive and intransitive verbs.
5. The fifth function is the use of intonation by the speaker to make separate units of intonation hang together to form the text of discourse and is called the textual function.
6. The final function is the identification of speech styles or genres. Intonation plays a role in the way we identify different speech styles that depend on various factors such as level of formality and number of participants. Different styles vary in the proportion of rises and falls, the length of the intonational units and the degree of textual structure.

Within these functions, the speaker can choose from a number of nuclear tones such as *fall-rise*, *rise*, *level*, *rise-fall* and *fall*; however, a definitive description of the meaning of each pattern is very difficult. Brazil (1977) suggested that the choice of tone marks the discourse status of the tone group, e.g. a falling tone ('proclaiming') indicates the information is new whereas a rising tone (referring) shows the experiential content of the tone unit. It is, unfortunately, not too hard to find examples which contradict this description. Despite the difficulty of providing a comprehensive description of the uses of different tones, there are

some uses that can be identified and taught to the learner. A brief description of possible communicative functions associated with different tones will be given here. The fall is used for statements, wh-questions, question tags, commands etc. The fall indicates that the speaker knows something, is telling something or expressing their own feelings and could be more generally described as indicating that something is complete or finished. In contrast, the rise is used for Yes or No questions, contradictions, concessions, challenges etc. In such cases the speaker does not know something and is asking or implying that there is something more to follow. The fall-rise is used quite a lot in English and common functions are to call for attention, to imply limited agreement or to respond with reservation. The rise-fall is mainly attitudinal in meaning and is used to show strong feelings of approval, disapproval or surprise. A level tone is used in a restricted context in English and almost always conveys the idea that something is routine, uninteresting or boring.

1.6 Summary

This chapter has discussed the historical background to pronunciation instruction and some of the major studies into its effect on acquisition. There are still many questions and there is a need for more research to find more concrete answers. A brief discussion of other factors involved in the learning of pronunciation showed that the acquisition process is a very complex one, which needs further research for better understanding. Finally, the features of pronunciation under consideration in this study were outlined. The basic question under examination in this study is whether students who receive instruction in specific features of pronunciation perform better than those who do not.

The next chapter will describe the research conducted into the effects of instruction on a group of adult German learners of English and analyse the findings with respect to the hypotheses given above.