

UNCOVERING FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION OF NATIVE SOMALI SPEAKERS.

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This study focused on uncovering the environmental and personal factors that influence the English pronunciation of adult native Somali speakers learning English. Two of the most important contributing elements derive from the learners' amount of daily exposure to English and the individual's attitude towards English pronunciation. This study was designed to further explore if and how much these factors affect a learner's pronunciation. Four adult intermediate level Somali students learning English volunteered to participate in a two-tiered investigation into their lives and their English pronunciation skills. All participants provided personal background information. Formal and informal speech samples were recorded. The results of this study indicate strong correlation between the environmental and personal factors and their abilities in English pronunciation. Implications for teachers as well as ideas for future research are discussed.

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NATIVE SOMALI SPEAKERS

by

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To my friends, colleagues and family who encouraged me to persevere and complete this project. To my greatest support, Jason, for his sacrifice and confidence in me. Thank you for allowing me the time to dedicate to this project. To Isaac and the baby on the way; I did this for you and for us. May your lives be filled with curiosity and wonder of the world. To the students who volunteered their stories; I hope this helps.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The following story was given to me by one of my students.

I remember last summer I had [a] car accident. I hit the traffic light after that I called '911'. When the police came they asked my how I feel and if I need an ambulance or hospital. I was nervous because it was first time I had an accident. I said, "No, I am ok." After that, the officer asked me if I came from my work. I was a few blocks from my home. I was turning left on 28th street, but it was slippery and snowing. And I pushed the brake it was out of the control; I didn't know what happened (when I calm down), I got out of the car. I saw the traffic light was down and everything was broken. Here is the problem, the police report say "driver fell asleep," but that is not correct. I said, "I feel *slippery*," I think that was a misunderstanding between me and the police because of my language. My insurance went up that is the bad thing I remember.

It is clear in this account that the writer was misunderstood because of his linguistic constraints, specifically his heavily-accented English. It is this story along with many other moving accounts that have encouraged me to read, research and write about Somali people. To give a name to their experiences and articulate their needs we, teachers, will be able to serve them more precisely to help them overcome their linguistic obstacles and succeed to their highest potential. With more research on the specific difficulties of Somali speakers on North American English I hope we will learn to teach them to speak better English so that they can get the fair and just treatment and respect that they deserve.

I am interested in this topic for many reasons. First, I see that many of my students, Somali and others, struggle with English pronunciation and become dispirited by its obscure subtleties. Secondly, there is not much pronunciation research that has been done on native Somali speakers up to now. There exists an abundance of research with other language groups such as Hispanic, French, and so on, but not with Afro-asiatic languages, particularly not Somali. This gap needs to be filled to better attend to the needs of these learners at all levels of education. And thirdly, I see the daily implications these linguistic shortfalls have on the lives of Somali speakers living here in the United States, especially here in the Twin Cities.

Presently, I teach Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes for English Language Learners (ELL) in the Minneapolis Public Schools. At my school, there are seven levels, level 0 (pre-literate) through 6. Some of the levels are divided into A, B, and C to accommodate large class sizes and also variations in proficiency within those levels. I teach level 4B, the “more advanced” class within the intermediate level. Many of my students are native Somali speakers, nearly half on any given night. Though many students have attained a comprehensible level of English speech, there is still a lot of room for improvement of these skills.

At this level, my students possess a proficient enough level of English to function in society with passable ease, though not without hassle. They have an adequate grasp of the structure of the English language, word order, and verb conjugation. But, many have not attained the level of pronunciation or articulation that gives them the freedom to maneuver in this society without rude comments, frustrated sighs or impatience from

strangers. I can only imagine what that must feel like on a day-to-day basis. I know from experience the impatience that does occur, despite their dedication to education.

My Somali students are very committed attendees of my class. Most of them have large families and therefore huge domestic responsibility, but still they attend my class, without fail, four nights a week, Monday through Thursday. Despite their successes in grammar and vocabulary, many of them still lack some of the subtle nuances of English that make their speech comprehensible. For this reason, I decided that I would implement a scheduled regimen of pronunciation instruction to complement the English they already know. From the beginning, my students have really enjoyed these lessons. For example, at the end of spring session, when I asked what they liked most in our lessons, or what they would like more of, many responded with, “more pronunciation work.” Clearly they understand their needs as learners and what is necessary for a more smooth transition into this society.

To further accommodate their pronunciation needs I have now designed a course to help all interested students in levels 4, 5 and 6 better their pronunciation skills. It started because I felt that the instruction I was giving in class, about forty-five minutes per week, was insufficient to attain the pronunciation goals that they and I have. So, once my supervisors gave me the support I needed, I invited students from the upper levels to join me. At first, I had quite a turn out of students, approximately fifty students signed up. I quickly made two sections for the class. This proved my idea that the students are very aware of the need to develop this particular component of their language acquisition. I have fewer students who attend, but those who do, come every Monday and Wednesday, or Tuesday and Thursday.

I would like to help these students improve their verbal communication and discourse abilities at my intermediate level rather than postponing that step in subsequent classes. I think that the earlier and the more frequent exposure that they have to the finer distinctions of English pronunciation, the more likely they are to attain a more comprehensible form of speech. My thoughts are echoed by Fraser (2000) who states that good pronunciation is something learners should acquire *as early as possible*. The fact that pronunciation is so often their weakest skill is cause for serious concern. In order for change and awareness to occur, we as educators first need to realize the value of pronunciation instruction. Then, we should understand what their specific needs are as English Language Learners (ELLs). We ought to pinpoint the origin of their limitations within English by looking at the conventions of their native language (Swan & Smith, 2004). From there we can devise a plan to help them overcome those marked challenges at any stage of their individual interlanguage development.

Background of Somalis in Minnesota

The population of Somali people in the Twin Cities has increased dramatically since the early 1990s. Most Somalis emigrated to the United States to escape the clan warfare that erupted after the collapse of the totalitarian regime lead by President Muhammed Siyad Barre (Meade, 2001). Before the civil war officially began, many Somalis had been leaving due to an upswing of chaos among the clans and the military. Those who were educated and privileged left first. Due to their connections, language skills, they were able to escape some of the worst yet to come (Farid & McMahan, 2004). For those who didn't leave, by 1992 nearly 1.5 million people were dying from starvation and 45 percent of the population had escaped the country or were displaced from their

homes in Somalia (Farid & McMahon, Putman & Noor, 1993). Most fled to Kenyan refugee camps and from there awaited sponsorship to leave.

The Somali community in the Twin Cities has continued to increase through continued immigration, secondary immigration from other states, and births to Somali women. The initial wave of immigrants was attracted to Minnesota by the presence of a strong economy and good schools. Others were sent directly from refugee camps in Africa or were attracted from other states by job opportunities and the already growing Somali community. The vast majority lives in Minneapolis, nearly four out of every five Somalis, with smaller numbers in St. Paul, Rochester, St. Cloud, Owatonna, Waseca, Marshall, Faribault, and Mankato. Since many men were killed during the war, many Somalis in Minnesota are single women with five or more children (Meade, 2001). Presently, an estimated 25,000 to 50,000 Somali refugees reside in Minnesota, the largest number in the United States (Teacher Guide background on Somalia, 2004). In the past three years, the number of Somali students has tripled in the Minneapolis public schools, making them the third largest group of non-English speaking students. One fourth of the student body at Roosevelt High School in Minneapolis is Somali. Half of Somali young people have been in the United States for less than three years (Teacher Guide background on Somalia, 2004).

With such dramatic increases, it is apparent that particular attention need be paid to this new group, especially in terms of their education. Of course, to ensure their own success in United States schools, it is imperative that they attain a certain level of English proficiency. Not only must they be able to understand (listen), read, and write in North American English, but they must also be able to speak with good pronunciation and

comprehensibility in order to maneuver more easily in the community. According to Florez (1998) from the National Center for ESL Literacy Education, limited pronunciation skills can undermine learners' self-confidence, restrict social interactions, and negatively affect estimations of a speaker's credibility. Fraser (2000) states pronunciation is arguably one of the most important of the language skills, in the sense that, with clear pronunciation, a learner can be easy to understand even when their grammar and vocabulary are not the best, while poor pronunciation can make a learner very difficult to understand even if their grammar is technically excellent. Furthermore, in her studies she references research by Cobb-Clark and Chapman (1999), which highlights the employment rates among immigrants 18 months after arrival according to (self-reported) proficiency in speaking English.

First language	70% Employment
Speak very well	59% Employment
Speak well	46% Employment
Speak not well	26% Employment
Speak not at all	12% Employment

In other words, the percentage of those employed who speak English as their first language is 70 percent. In comparison, only 12 percent of those who do not speak English at all are employed. From this chart, it is very clear to see the harsh implications of being an English Language Learner in the United States.

For this reason, it is necessary that these learners be exposed to as many aspects of the English language as soon as possible, including the subtle nuances of English

pronunciation. Before we can tackle such a project we need to have a framework to help us outline their linguistic needs.

Furthermore, I must attend to the passion and frustration I feel when I encounter stories of my students' mistreatment. As their teacher, I am often asked to help them understand correspondence concerning their immigration status, write papers to consulates to request their children be sent to them, or even help them find representation after a car accident. So when I asked them to reflect on their experiences with a new language and culture, I was not that surprised when I heard some of their stories and the negative treatment they have often received due to cultural constraints and linguistic barriers. I believe that the story that began this chapter highlights perfectly the social implications of being a non-native English speaker in the United States. More specifically, this story depicts a particular linguistic misunderstanding that with research and adequate pronunciation instruction could be avoided in the future.

In order to better understand the particular needs of these students I intend to research two particular areas. First, I plan to develop an inventory of common pronunciation errors that my intermediate-level adult Somali learners have by recording their speech in various formats, listening and evaluating the results. Second, I will examine how their individual learner characteristics, specifically the learner's daily exposure to English and their personal attitude towards English affect the accuracy of their pronunciation. I will be comparing the information from their speech samples to the information retrieved from the learner's personal information survey (Appendix A) to determine their most prominent features of their English pronunciation accuracy and then estimate reasons for their challenges or successes based on that information. I am

researching the learners' daily exposure to English and their personal attitudes towards English pronunciation because I feel those areas are the most significant variables related to North American English pronunciation by Somali speakers.

The second chapter, the literature review, describes some of the most salient research in the field of teaching and learning English pronunciation. It also discusses some of the characteristics of learners that affect pronunciation. Next, chapter two includes information about the role of the native language in second language acquisition and pronunciation. Finally, it provides a brief overview of the Somali alphabet and sound system.

Chapter three, the methods, describes how this research project was conducted, it gives more information about the procedures and evaluation tools used. The fourth chapter discusses the results of the research and then links results to existing research currently in the field. The fifth and final chapter, the conclusion, analyzes the outcomes of the research, discussed the implications of these findings and presents ideas for future research in the field of pronunciation research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Pronunciation is one of the most conspicuous features of a person's speech, yet so often it is not explicitly taught. Pronunciation is rarely taught in the foreign language classroom beyond the initial introduction to the language's sound system in the early stages of instruction (Elliot, 1995). Furthermore, it is one of the most difficult challenges that second language learners face – noticing the nuances of a foreign language and being able to reproduce them. The more that educators understand the characteristics that affect their learners' pronunciation, the more they can develop and enhance their instruction to augment the accuracy of their learners' pronunciation.

So, does the learners' exposure to English and the learners' attitude affect the accuracy of pronunciation of native Somali speakers learning North American English (NAE)? This chapter investigates what current research says about this question. First, some of the background information pertaining to pronunciation will be presented. Next, the current research on what affects pronunciation acquisition will be highlighted. Then, the role of the native language on pronunciation in English will be explored. Finally, this chapter will examine what is known about the Somali language, including its origin, the speakers and their residences and the alphabet and its sound system.

Pronunciation Features

One of the most prominent features of a language's sound system is its collection of sounds (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin, 1996). Linguists refer to this collection of consonants and vowels as the *segmental* aspect of language. In addition to this inventory, languages also have other unique features that surpass the segmental level.

Suprasegmental features involve such linguistic trends as word stress, sentence stress, and rhythm. In short, *word stress* refers to the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables within a word. Generally, there are three levels of word stress, which are often referred to as strong (strongly stressed), medial (lightly stressed), and weak (unstressed). The following example highlights this phenomenon (see Figure 2.1).

English	Spanish
• . . ● . or gan i ZA tion	• . . . ● or ga ni za ción

Figure 2.1. Comparison of word stress pattern differences between English and Spanish.

Sentence stress refers to the various stressed elements of each sentence. Therefore, word stress and sentence stress combine to create the *rhythm* of the English language. Rhythm is defined to be the regular patterned beat of stressed and unstressed syllables and pauses. The next sentences highlight significant differences between language sentence stress patterns (see Figure 2.2)

• ● . . ● ● . Spanish Los niños están afuera.
. ● . . ● . English The children are outside.

Figure 2.2. Comparison of sentence level stress pattern differences between Spanish and English.

As a result of the differences in stress level and syllable length, English language learners who come from language with different stress patterns tend to stress syllables in English more equally, without giving sufficient stress to the main (content) words and without reducing unstressed syllables as required in English.

It is worthwhile to note here that when we speak of stress in languages around the world, linguists refer to two types of languages, *stress-timed* and *syllable-timed* languages. English is a stress-timed language, which means that the length of an utterance depends not on the number of syllables but rather on the number of stresses within the utterance. In contrast, in languages that are syllable-timed, such as Somali, the length of the utterances depends more on the number of syllables within that particular utterance. The following example comes from Port and Leary (2000):

Thus, if we say, eg, 'He EATS poTAtoes toDAY', the stressed syllables seem equally spaced. One could tap a finger for each one. But if we say 'He's EATen the poTAtoes toDAY', it seems like the timing is the almost the same even though there are now two additional unstressed syllables inserted between EAT- and TA- (especially if you tap your finger on each stress). On the other hand, in French, for example, if we say 'Je ne parle pas francais', it seems like a finger could be tapped for each of the 5 syllables, and that all are about equally spaced.

The result of these differences in stress level and syllable length is that English language learners whose native language is syllable-timed tend to stress the English syllables more equally. Likewise, they often do not give sufficient stress to the main or *content words* and do not reduce the unstressed syllables. In English, we tend to stress the

words that are of most importance, called *content words* (the words that carry the most information) and reduce the *function words*, or words that signify grammatical relationship. Furthermore, learners whose L1 is syllable-timed tend to stress all elements without adequate reduction of unstressed syllables (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 1996).

Also included in the suprasegmental field are adjustments in connected speech such as linking, assimilation, dissimilation, deletion, and epenthesis. *Linking* can be described as connecting the final sound of one word to the initial sounds of the following. In nonnative English, the “choppiness” generally derives from the speaker’s inability to “connect” or link speech “smoothly”. The amount of linking that occurs in a native speaker’s speech is determined by many factors, including the formality of the situation, the rate of speaking, and the individual dialect (idiolect) of the speaker. Therefore, it is difficult to predict the occurrence of linking. However, there are five environments where linking more regularly occurs (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin, 1996).

1. Linking with glides: /y/ and /w/ glides¹. Commonly occurs when one word or syllable ends in a tense vowel or diphthong and the next word or syllable begins with a vowel.

Example: /ey/ + V: say^y it ⇒ /sey•yt/

2. When a word or syllable beginning with a vowel follows a word or syllable ending in a single consonant, the consonant is often produced intervocalically as if it belonged to both syllables.

¹ For information about the symbols used here, please see Appendix B: The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

Example: black_and white \Rightarrow /blæ •kæŋ•wayt/

3. In a similar fashion, when a word or syllable ending in a consonant cluster is followed by a word or syllable with a vowel, the final consonant of the cluster is many times pronounced as part of the following syllable. In many cases, this is called *resyllabification*.

Example: call/ed_in \Rightarrow /kal•dn/

4. When two identical consonants come together as a result of the juxtaposition of two words, there is one single, extended articulation of the medial consonant. That is, native speakers will not produce the medial sound twice.

Example: Quit_talking [t:] \Rightarrow /kwi•takɪŋ/

5. When a stop consonant is followed by another stop² or by an affricate, the first stop is not released³, which facilitates the linking:

Example: red car [d°k] \Rightarrow /rɛ•kar/

Assimilation is another example of an adjustment in connected speech in which a given sound takes on the characteristics of a neighboring sound. This is a universal feature of all spoken languages and in English it occurs frequently, both within words and between words. There are three types of assimilation in English: progressive, regressive, and coalescent. In *progressive assimilation*, the conditioning sound, or the sound that will modify the other sound, precedes the assimilated sound. This often occurs most commonly in the English plural endings /s/ vs. /z/. In these cases, the final sound of the

² Appendix C: Classification of NAE Consonant Phonemes

³ Released in the final position means the process of articulation is not completed, occurring most often with the six stop consonant sounds /p,t,k/ and /b,d,g/.

stem word determines the voiced or voiceless form of the suffix. For example, *pigs* \Rightarrow /pɪg > z/ and *picks* \Rightarrow /pɪk > s/.

Regressive assimilation is pervasive in English. In this feature of connected speech the assimilated sound precedes and is affected by the conditioning sound. The most insidious example of regressive assimilation occurs in the periphrastic modals *has/have to* (obligation) and *used to* (former habitual action). In these common examples, we often hear *have + to* \Rightarrow “hafta” and *used + to* \Rightarrow “usta”

And finally, *coalescent assimilation* is a type of mutual assimilation where the first and second sound in a series come together and reciprocally condition the formation of the third sound with features from both initial sounds. This type of assimilation is often referred to as *palatalization* because it most commonly occurs when a final alveolar consonant (/s,z/ and /t,d/ or final alveolar consonant sequences such as /ts, dz/) are followed by an initial palatal /y/ after which they become palatalized fricatives and affricates, respectively. In this next example, we see /s/ + /y/ \Rightarrow /ʃ/.

This_year \Rightarrow /θɪʃ •iyr/.

Another very prominent feature of North American English pronunciation, in terms of connected speech, is *deletion*. This is a fairly radical form of adjustment whereby sounds disappear or are not clearly articulated in certain contexts. Often difficult to distinguish even for native speakers, deletion is sometimes represented in English orthography but provides great confusion for those new learners, as the process is quite pervasive. Some of the more typical environments for deletion include: the loss of /t/ when /nt/ is between two vowels or before syllabic [l]; for example: *winter* \Rightarrow /wɪnɛr/. Another insidious form of deletion is the loss of an unstressed medial vowel (also

referred to as syncope), where the unstressed vowel /ʌ/ or /ɪ/ drops out in some multisyllabic words following the strongly stressed syllable (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin 1996). A popular example of this occurrence is *chocolate*, whereby the medial unstressed vowel is deleted thus producing something like \Rightarrow /tʃaklɪt/.

One final term worth mentioning is *epenthesis*. This phenomenon is characterized by the insertion of a vowel or consonant segment within an existing string of segments. Though less common in English than deletion, the most important type of epenthesis occurs in certain morphophonological sequences such as the regular plural and past tense endings. In these cases a schwa /ə/ or sometimes /ɪ/ to break difficult clusters of sibilants or alveolar stops. For example, place + [Z] (to pluralize) \Rightarrow /pleysɪz/.

All five of these adjustments in connected North American English speech reflect native speakers attempts to connect words and syllables smoothly in normal speech. Though smooth and somewhat natural for native speakers, nonnative English speakers have many problems with these suprasegmental features of speech. Learners often try to pronounce each word clearly thus making their speech sounds unnatural. We will see all of these features occur in the speech of the students later in this work.

Recent Suprasegmental Research

Most of the earlier research on the acquisition of English pronunciation by non native speakers focused heavily on the acquisition of individual consonant and vowel phonemes whereas more recent research has focused more on the acquisition of the suprasegmental features such as intonation, rhythm, connected speech and voice quality.

To understand intonation, first we must understand *pitch*, which is the relative highness or lowness of voice (Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin, 1996). In this case,

phonetic pitch is relative, relating to the differentiated pitch levels of a given speaker, and not the lower versus higher pitches of males versus female voices. Pitch in its phonetic meaning relates closely to the musical definition of pitch. For the purpose of phonological studies, four levels of pitch are referenced; 1= low, 2= middle, 3= high, and 4= extra high. Normal conversations move between middle and high pitch with low pitch distinguishing the end of an utterance. Extra high, however, is used to express strong emotion (e.g. surprise, enthusiasm, disbelief, etc.).

Pitch is a very important feature of teaching and learning English pronunciation because it does not change the meaning of words. For example, a speaker could say, stop in a middle, high, or extra high pitch and the meaning would not change, only the urgency of the command would be emphasized in the higher pitches. In contrast, many tonal languages such as Hmong or Chinese, the pitch of the word does change its fundamental meaning. Speakers of these languages often have difficulty adjusting to the intonational structure of English.

With pitch being the individual tones of speech, *intonation* then is the combination of the individual tones in an entire string of utterances. Intonation involves the rising and falling of the voice to various pitch levels throughout the duration of an utterance. This feature of pronunciation is essential to convey specific meaning, for example, notice the difference in the following examples:

1. Okay (neutral)
2. Okay (enthusiastic)
3. O k a y (sarcasm)

It is clear in this example that meaning is carried primarily through the intonation of each utterance. The movement of pitch within a unit of speech is referred to as intonation contour.

In many cases these intonation patterns are not taught to learners and therefore it is very difficult to attain. The result is that most speakers apply the patterns from their native language resulting in a form that is difficult to understand. Similarly, when a speaker of North American English (NAE) is speaking to an English speaker from another country, such as Australia, it is often challenging at first to clearly interpret what the speaker is saying. This is primarily due to the difference in intonation patterns among other English dialects.

The accuracy of intonation has been found to be directly connected to the accuracy of the rhythm. Rhythm is essentially considered the combination of word and sentence stress, or the patterned beat of the stressed and unstressed syllables and pauses of English (Celce-Mucia, Brinton, and Goodwin, 1996). In a study done by Anderson-Hsieh and Venkatagiri (1994), it was determined that intermediate Chinese speakers learning English failed to distinguish between stressed and unstressed syllables and that they paused longer, often too long. However, the high level learners had acquired near-native proficiency on rhythm thus making them more comprehensible.

Another facet of pronunciation research is the importance of voice quality. Voice quality is “certain audible characteristics that are present most of the time when native speakers talk (Abercrombie, 1967).” Laver describes three main types of settings: supralaryngeal (settings above the larynx –tongue position, lip-rounding or spreading, presence or absence of nasality, etc.), laryngeal settings (whether the voice can be

characterized as whispery, creaky, neutral, or falsetto), and muscular tension. Though research has not provided too much information, it is known that voice quality does contribute to a foreign accent and they stem from both linguistic and socio-cultural factors (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin, 1996).

Learner Characteristics

As most researchers in the field of pronunciation teaching and learning would say, pronunciation is not merely a linguistic matter. We cannot isolate the mere sounds of English or the sounds of their native language as sole reasons for their interlanguage obstacles. Especially with adult learners, we need to evaluate such factors as the amount of exposure to the target language, their attitude toward the target language, and the amount of instruction of pronunciation received by the learner.

Exposure to Target Language

When we speak of the exposure that a learner has to the target language, it may come in the form of their current day-to-day life as well as the amount of prior instruction a learner received in the target language. According to the language learning theories of Postovsky (1974), Asher (1977), and Krashen (1982), among others, learners acquire language primarily from the input they receive, and they must receive large amounts of comprehensible input before they are required to speak. Adult learners may have little opportunity to surround themselves with the native target language input. Whereas children who are possibly in English-speaking schools for hours during the day, their adult counterparts are likely to live and work in what these theorists call “linguistic ghettos” where they again have little meaningful exposure to the target language thus inhibiting their acquisition.

Learning a new language and speaking it is especially difficult for foreign language learners because effective oral communication requires the ability to use the language appropriately in a variety of interactions (Shumin, 1997). Verbal communication also affects the suprasegmental features of speech such as pitch, stress and intonation. Such features are often not learned from reading a textbook or dictionary. Beyond the suprasegmental features, are the non-linguistic elements involved in language such as gestures, body language, and facial expressions that carry so much meaning yet are not learned through explicit instruction, but rather through sheer experience in a language and culture. Consequently, due to minimal exposure to the target language and contact with native speakers, adult English language learners often do not acquire a native-like level of pronunciation, especially regarding fluency, control of idiomatic expressions and cultural pragmatics (gestures, body language, and facial expressions) (Shumin, 1997).

Among Somali speakers in Minnesota, there is a lot of “clustering”, where large groups live near each other and rely on each other to maneuver in this society. Most Somalis have chosen to live in specific Minneapolis neighborhoods because of low housing prices and the availability of public transportation (Farid & McMahon, 2004). Furthermore, people continue to move into these neighborhoods due to the concentration of services that are provided to the Somali community in the way of social activity, religious services and social support of the larger Somali community. This isolation, while more secure for the newly arrived, provides some linguistic barriers in terms of acquiring more fluent English pronunciation.

Attitude

It seems as though some learners are more adept at acquiring good pronunciation. Even within one homogenous classroom, there is often a large discrepancy among the pronunciation ability of the students. This phenomenon has led many researchers to study the personal characteristics of the learners that contribute to their success in foreign language acquisition. In a study on pronunciation accuracy of university students studying intermediate Spanish as a foreign language, Elliot (1995) found that subjects' attitude toward acquiring native or near-native pronunciation, as measured by the Pronunciation Attitude Inventory (PAI), was the principal variable in relation to target language pronunciation. In other words, if the students were more concerned about their pronunciation of the target language, they tended to have better pronunciation of the target allophones (Elliot, 1995). This study echoed earlier research done by Suter (1976), which found that students who were "more 'concerned' about their pronunciation (p. 249)" had better pronunciation of English as a Second Language (Elliot, 1995).

When discussing the attitude of the second language learners in relation to their pronunciation and second language acquisition, it is necessary to note the work done by Schumann (1986) on acculturation and its role in the process of language learning. His acculturation model defines that learners will acquire the target language to the degree that they acculturate (Celce-Murcia, et al., 1995). According to Schumann, acculturation refers to a learner's openness to a target culture as well as a desire to be socially integrated in the target culture. His research (1976, 1986) on acculturation examines the social and psychological integration of immigrant students as a predictor of the amount of English language they acquire and use (Tong, 2000). Schumann maintains that the acquisition and use of English is a measure of the degree to which students have become

acculturated to the host culture. Acculturation, according to Schumann (1986), refers to the social and psychological contact between members of a particular group and members of the target culture. The more interaction (i.e., social/psychological closeness) a group has with the target group, the more opportunities will result for the group to acquire and use English. Conversely, less interaction (i.e., social/psychological distance) results in less acquisition and use of English. The group's amount of contact with the target culture has an effect on the amount of English acquired and used.

Sparks and Glachow's work (1991) on personality found similar results. They state that students with motivation to learn with positive attitudes towards the target language and its speakers were more successful than were students with less positive attitudes. They refer to Gardner and Lambert's research on motivation wherein two types are highlighted. The first type of motivation is instrumental, which is motivation to learn the L2 for the value of linguistic achievement. Second is integrative motivation, which describes the desire to continue learning about the second language culture. According to Gardner and Lambert students with integrative motivation would be expected to work harder to develop communication skills in the second language because they are more likely than their less interested counterparts to seek out native speakers of the language.

Instruction

Foreign language instruction generally focuses on four main areas of development: listening, speaking reading and writing. Foreign language curricula emphasize pronunciation in the first year of study as it introduces the target language's alphabet and sound system, but rarely continues this focus past the introductory level (Elliot, Harlow & Muyskens, 1994).

Tarone (1978) states that the lack of emphasis on pronunciation development may be due to a general lack of fervor on the part of the second language acquisition researchers, second language teachers and students, that pronunciation of a second language is not very important. Furthermore, Pennington and Richards (1986) maintain that pronunciation, which is typically viewed as a component of linguistic rather than conversational fluency, is often regarded with little importance in a communicatively oriented classroom (Elliot, 1995). According to Elliot (1995), teachers tend to view pronunciation as the least useful of the basic language skills and therefore they generally sacrifice teaching pronunciation in order to spend valuable class time on other areas of language. Or maybe, teachers feel justified neglecting pronunciation believing that for adult foreign language learners, it is more difficult to attain target language pronunciation skills than other facets of second language acquisition. Possibly, teachers just do not have the background or tools to properly teach pronunciation and therefore it is disregarded (Elliot, 1995).

Traditionally, teachers have taught what they thought was pronunciation via repetition drills on both a discrete word or phrase level, or give the students the rules of pronunciation like the vowel in a CVC pattern, when given an e at the end, says its name. For example, when an *e* is added to the word *bit* (CVC) the pronunciation of the “short i”, becomes long and therefore “says its name”. This type of instruction is meant to help students with decoding words for the purpose of reading, rather than pronunciation. For example, students are rarely given information about the differences between fricatives and non-fricative continuants, or the subtleties between the trilled or flapped /r/ between

Spanish and English (Elliot, 1995). This particular information is often left up to the students to attain on their own.

Researchers have explored the question of whether explicit instruction helps these second language learners. Such studies have generated inconsistent results. Suter (1976) reported an insignificant relationship between formal pronunciation and students' pronunciation of English as a Second Language. Murakawa (1981) found that, with 12 weeks of phonetic instruction, adult L2 learners of English can improve their allophonic articulation. Nuefield and Scheiderman (1980) reported that adults are able to achieve near native fluency and it can be developed in a relatively short time without serious disruption to the second language teaching program with adequate pronunciation instruction (Elliot, 1995). It is necessary to note at this point that even though there seems to be quite a contradiction in the range of results presented, the diversity of those results may be due to the differing designs of the particular experiments.

Some pronunciation studies focus specifically on the instruction of suprasegmentals. Derwing, Munro and Wiebe (1997) conducted research in which ESL learners, who had been studying for an average of ten years, participated in a speaking improvement course that focused on the suprasegmental features of pronunciation (e.g. stress, rhythm, intonation). Thirty-seven native listeners transcribed speech samples (true/false sentences) taken at the beginning of a 12-week course in order to assess the learners' intelligibility. Each sample was rated in order of comprehensibility and degree of accentedness. In the end, there was a significant improvement in the intelligibility, and better ratings over time of comprehensibility and accentedness. They showed that long-

term language learners could alter their pronunciation in a reading task (Derwing & Rossiter, 2003).

Second Language Acquisition Theories and Pronunciation

There are many theories that attempt to define the role of the learners' native language on their pronunciation of their second languages. Their native language can affect their production of the target language on many different levels but in this section I will cover those that affect mostly the phonological acquisition and pronunciation or accent of the learner. There are six main theories that are proposed in this area: contrastive analysis, error analysis and avoidance, inter-language analysis, markedness theory, language universals, and information processing theory.

Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis

Contrastive analysis hypothesis (CAH) theory suggests that second language acquisition is "filtered through the learner's first language, with the native language facilitating acquisition in those cases where the target structures are similar, and 'interfering' with acquisition in cases where the target structures are dissimilar or nonexistent." In short, where there are similarities between the native language and the target language, the learner will acquire target language structures with ease, and where there are differences the learner will have more impediments (Lightbrown & Spada, 1999). While the originator of this theory (Lado, 1957) believed that CAH would be able to predict the degree of difficulty that any given learner would experience by knowing their native language and the target language, his theory has since been disputed. Another researcher, Wardhaugh (1970) rejected this theory's ability to accurately predict any and all mistakes that learner would experience and opted for a more loose version that would

account for some, “but far from all” systematic language interference (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Goodwin, 1996). *Interference* is basically the mistakes that occur where students assume a more complete correspondence between L1 and L2 than exists (Swan and Smith, 2001). For example, Arabic speakers may pronounce *climbed* as /klaymbed/ without omitting the /b/ phoneme. Or a Farsi speaker may pronounce words with the stress always on the final syllable of a word since that is generally how most Farsi words are stressed (Swan & Smith, 2001). Most researchers today believe that interference, or negative transfer, is a significant factor in accounting for accent, particularly with such features as aspiration (segmental) and intonation and rhythm (suprasegmental).

Error Analysis and Avoidance

One of the biggest problems with CAH was that it was not able to accurately determine what it originally claimed. CAH without a doubt could not accurately determine mistakes that a learner was going to make. Another problem was that in order to relate this information to language teaching, this theory was incomplete and not accommodating. It was not enough to be able to predict where the problems were going to arise. Contrastive linguistics can only point toward the potential learning problem or difficulty. On the other hand, error analysis can tell us the intensity of the difficulty or the size of the problem (Celce-Murcia, et al., 1996). In 1971, Richards proposed a three-tiered classification of language learning errors. He thought that this model would better serve those who intended to use the error analysis for teaching and learning. (1)

Interlingual errors: errors caused by negative transfer from a learner’s first language. For example, *Is the book of my friend.* (2) Intralingual errors: errors resulting from marked or difficult features in the target language that are common to all learners of the target

language regardless of their native language. For example, *I studied English for two year.* Where the speaker has simplified and reduced the number agreement. (3) Developmental errors: second language errors that reflect the same problems and strategies that young children encounter while acquiring the target language of their first language (Celce-Murcia, et al., 1996) like over-generalizing rules such as past tense formation, *I putted the book on the table.*

Critics of error analysis state that those who support this theory are more focused on the mistakes of the learner rather than their accomplishments and that they are neglecting the strategy of avoidance. Avoidance is literally when learners avoid a particular word or structure they find difficult. This avoidance can occur on the phonological level by individual sounds or at higher more complex levels by avoiding entire syntactic structures. An example from Heller (1976) highlights Spanish-speakers avoiding words in English that are Spanish cognates (e.g. quality – calidad) because they believe these words are Spanish words and not English. This is an example of how avoidance occurs on the phonological level as well as the syntactic level (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin, 1996).

Interlanguage Hypothesis

There are many researchers who adhere to the hypothesis of interlanguage. Interlanguage is a term used to describe the codes that second language learners often obtain. The interlanguage (Selinker 1969, 1972) functions independently of the learner's native language or the target language and it follows a system of its own based on first language, target language input, language universals and communication strategies (Celce-Murcia, et al., 1996). After Selinker came Corder (1974) who further developed

this theory. Corder states that interlanguage is a continuum along which a second language learner can move toward an increasingly target-like system. In this view, the learner is constantly processing input from the target language and redefining the rules in the direction of the target language until there is *fossilization* (Celce-Murcia, et al., 1996). Fossilization is described as a plateau in language learning beyond which it is difficult for learners to progress without extraordinary effort or motivation. This is one of the first theories that shows another element to language learning. Interlanguage takes into account that second language learners are never really “done” learning the target language and that it is essentially a process. With respect to pronunciation skills, interlanguage theory claims that a second language learner would be continuously moving and honing their pronunciation skills.

Markedness Theory

Another significant theory in the field of second language acquisition is *markedness theory*, which supposes that for every linguistic opposition – phonological or semantic- there is one member of any pair of opposites that is psycholinguistically unmarked (more basic or neutral, more universal, more frequent, first acquired) and one that is marked (more specific, less frequent, more limited, later acquired). This theory is helpful in explaining phonological differences among languages. In an example given by Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin (1996), according to markedness theory, English (which allows both voiceless /p,t,k/ and voiced /b,d,g/ stop consonants in the final positions of words) is more marked than are German and Russian (which permit only voiceless stop consonants /p, t, k/ in this position).

This theory is a direct response to CAH and the main researcher, Eckman (1987) claims that this theory can more accurately predict the “directionality of difficulty” a learner may have. More specifically, with respect to German and English, CAH can establish that these two languages place very different limitations on the positions in which the voiced stops and fricatives /b, d, g, v, z/ occur, with German allowing them in only syllable-final positions and English allowing a much more varied occurrence (Celce-Murcia, et al., 1996). In this particular case, CAH could predict that learners would have difficulties with pronunciation, voicing and unvoicing the final stops and fricatives in the other languages, but is not able to establish whether the English learners would have more difficulty learning to pronounce the final consonants of German or if the native German speaker would have more difficulty pronouncing the final consonants of English. Markedness theory attempts to solve this dilemma by offering a hierarchy of difficulty for phonological acquisition. In this English and German scenario, Eckman predicts that a German speaker will experience more difficulty producing the more marked voiced-consonant forms in final positions than the English speaker because English allows either voiced or voiceless final stops and fricatives (Celce-Murcia, et al., 1996).

This reasoning should help us to enhance the previous research, such as CAH and error analysis, to predict not only the sounds that learners will have difficulty with, but also which problems will be more difficult for a particular group of language learners.

Language Universals

The study of language universals involves a more global perspective in researching language acquisition. This model assumes that all languages share common properties and that superficial differences are somewhat insignificant. The universalist

hypothesis starts from the observation that given all the sounds a human can possibly make, the languages of the world draw on a astonishingly finite inventory of sounds as well as hierarchical principles that explain spoken language (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin, 1996). For example, all languages have vowels and consonants and within these categories there are sounds that contrast with each other in predictable ways.

There universals not only about the sound systems, but also about phonological acquisition that can predict that a particular sound is generally acquired before another. Some of the most prominent work on phonological acquisition was done by Jakobson (1941). He proposed an implicational hierarchy of phonological acquisition that states that *Stops* are learned before *Nasals* and nasals are learned before *Fricatives*.

Stops → Nasals → Fricatives

With this implicit hierarchy we can assume that if a language has fricatives, it also has nasals and stops. Similarly, if a language has nasals, it will also have stops, however, the reverse is *not* necessarily true.

Eckman (1991) combines earlier work on interlanguage analysis, markedness theory and implicational universals in order to the *Interlanguage Structural Conformity Hypothesis* (ISCH). This theory holds that implicational universals can be used to explain certain facets about the form of interlanguages without any reference to the learner's first language. This work developed some key "rules" of languages without importance of their origin. For example:

Fricative + Stop principle: If any language has a at least one final consonant sequence with a stop + stop (e.g. liked ⇒ /laykt/), it also has to have at least one final consonant sequence with a fricative + stop.

These principles are hierarchical which means that they do not work in reverse.

The principles of language universals are not meant to nor will they perfectly predict phonological acquisition, rather they do help us to understand two major points. First, phonological acquisition, like all types of learning involves a delicate process of discovering patterns through form testing and revising hypothesis. And secondly, at least some universals are not solely due to an innate language facilitator, but rather the interaction between the input and the learner (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin, 1996).

Information Processing Theory

This field of study does not solely consider phonological or language acquisition, but rather a more general view of how the brain processes new information. Researchers such as Schneider and Schiffrin (1977) and Rumelhart and Norman (1978) believe that learners exhibit a distinct tendency to interpret new information in terms of their existing knowledge structures, commonly referred to as *schemata* (Celce-Murica, et al., 1996). Schneider and Schiffrin state that previously stored information can be processed in two ways, controlled processing (i.e. requiring attention and awareness) or automatic processing (i.e. not controlled or modified processing). These two modes of processing oftentimes work in tandem. Applying this theory to phonological acquisition determines that learners will show a tendency to interpret sounds in the second languages in terms of the set of sounds that they manage as a part of their first language.

Information Processing Theory includes three modes of general learning.

1. Accretion: The learners add new structures to their existing schemata or knowledge structures.

2. Restructuring: Learners reorganize already existing structures and create new schemata on the preexisting patterns.
3. Tuning: Learners modify the new and/or old schemata to make it more accurate, general or specific (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin, 1996).

Though this seems to be much like Krashen's contrastive analysis hypothesis, second language phonologists who subscribe to this theory claim that speakers compromise a "middle ground" rather than substituting a native language phoneme for that of the target language.

In more concrete terms, Informational Processing Theory helps to determine the areas of difficulty for language learners and modes for tackling the problems. For example, if a learner's native language has a set of particular vowels /a, e, o/ and they are learning English they would notice that English has these similar vowel sounds. They would then notice that English has additional unfamiliar vowels. According to this theory, the learner would then try to add new vowel sounds to the existing vowel schemata (accretion). Since what already exists is inadequate, the speaker would be encouraged to restructure the existing schemata arriving at a "middle ground". With additional time and input, the learner would then hone this system coming closer to a more target-like production of the vowel sounds.

So far we have discussed some of the most salient information linked to pronunciation research and theories. We learned about segmental (consonant and vowel sounds of a language) and suprasegmental (stress, intonation, pitch, etc.) features of pronunciation. Next, we learned how the characteristics (exposure to the target language, a learner's attitude towards pronunciation, and pronunciation instruction) of the learner

contribute to second language acquisition, namely pronunciation acquisition. We learned about such theories as Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, Error Analysis and Avoidance, Interlanguage Hypothesis, Markedness Theory, Language Universals Information Processing Theory and the contributions they have made to the extensiveness of research done so far in second language pronunciation acquisition. In the next section, information about the Somali language will be introduced and discussed.

The Somali Language

The Afro-Asiatic language family consists of approximately 250 languages spoken by about 175 million ethnically and racially different people. These people occupy primarily the Middle East, North Africa and much of North East Africa (Comrie, 1987). Afro-asiatic is composed of several branches including with the most prominent being Egyptian, Semitic, Cushitic, Omotic, Berber and Chadic. The Somali language is a part of the Cushitic language group, which consists of some 40 or more other languages. Fifteen million people in Ethiopia, northwestern Kenya, Djibouti and Somalia are the speakers of this language family.

Except for a few communities along the southern Somali coast where Swahili and Arabic dialects are spoken, Somali nationals speak one of several Somali dialects. Of the Somali dialects, the most widely used is Common Somali, a term applied to several subdialects, but the speakers can understand each other easily. Common Somali is spoken in most of Somalia and in adjacent areas. The remaining dialects cluster into four main groups relating to rough geographic areas. The Dir dialect in the northwest is spoken by the Dir, Isaaq, Daarood, and Gadabursi-Esa clans. Hawiye or Mudugh in the northeast

and inland regions and as far south as the Scebeli River, Benadir along the Benadir coast, and the port towns. Rahanwin is spoken by the Sab cultivators and mixed farmers around the Scebeli River and further south (Kaplan, 1969). These dialects are mutually intelligible dialects.

Until the establishment of the Somali script in 1973, there were two main languages of government, Italian and English. Prior to the revolution, English was the dominant language in the school system and government. Since this time, Somali people have been very cognizant of the social stratification created by language and literacy differences. Therefore, the 1972 decision to designate the Somali script required its use in government and hence demolished the associated language barrier. Before its inception, Somali was traditionally an oral language. Following the institution of the Somali script, officials were required to learn it and fervent attempts were made to indoctrinate mass literacy. By the late 1970s, sufficient materials were available to permit the language to be the primary medium of instruction at all levels of schooling (below university). However, since the Italians were the senior faculty at the universities until that late 1970s, Italian was still primarily used.

Since that time, the Somali language has taken a stronghold in the country. It is being taught as a subject and medium in the primary schools and secondary schools. There are now twenty radio and television stations that broadcast some of their programs in Somali. So the language usage is new, but is being embraced by all in the country as a primary language of instruction as well as other formal means of communication. Although many students continue to learn Somali, Arabic, and English, Arabic is still firmly established as the Somalis' second language (Rabi, 2000).

Somali Alphabet and Sound System

With the adoption of the national language came also the switch from the Osmanya alphabet to the Latin-formed letters. The Somali alphabet is written from left to right and in horizontal rows. The names of the letters are based on Arabic letter names. Another fascinating feature of this language is that it is a tonal language with four levels of tones, but it is not as complex as in Chinese. The Somali tones rarely alter word meaning. The tones provide grammatical purposes in that they indicate number, gender and case. Consequently, the tones are not likely to create a problem for the Somali speaker learning English (Ager, 2005). Below is a complete collection of Somali sounds and the English counterparts (see figure 2.3).

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (LZW) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Figure 2.3. The Somali Sound System.

The Somali sound system includes all but three sounds of the English language. They do not use /p, v, and z/. Of the thirty-three sounds, fifteen are very much like their English counterparts. Those parallel sounds are /b, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, s, ʃ, t, w, and y/. Somali has seven consonants sounds that do not match English and those are represented by the following Latin letters; /c, dh, kh, q, r, x and ' (glottal stop)/. Therefore the sounds

most likely to present difficulties for Somali speakers are those that do not exist /p, v, z/, and /c, q, r, and x/, since those sounds are pronounced quite differently in Somali. The Somali consonants /b, d, dh, g, l, m, n, and r/ can be doubled to indicate a sound which is pronounced with much more force than its single counterpart. Therefore, Somali speakers often pronounce doubled English consonants with more emphasis.

Somali vowels have fixed value, meaning they have single letter correspondence. Each letter has only one sound. To express a long sound in Somali the sound is actually pronounced twice as long as the single counterpart. For example, a Somali speaker might pronounce *boat* as /bowat/. Furthermore, a Somali speaker might also pronounce such words as “may” as “my” since /ay/ is the representation of that sound in Somali (Refugee fact sheet, 2004).

The Somali Grammatical System

One significant difference between Somali and English grammar is that the definite articles (*the* and *a*) in Somali have gender suffixes. The definite articles are determined in masculine and feminine forms. Many Somalis have difficulty mastering this English indefinite articles *a* and *an* because they have no equivalent. In Somali, the noun alone expresses the concept of indefiniteness. This can affect pronunciation and comprehensibility as a native Somali speaker may potentially omit such articles and therefore decrease their fluency.

Somali nouns are more highly inflected than are nouns in English. In English, nouns are inflected only for number that is, they have different forms for singular and plural. In Somali, not only does each noun have number, with eight kinds of plural forms; a noun is also inflected for gender (masculine or feminine) and case (nominative,

genitive, absolutive, and vocative). In Somali, differences in gender, number, or case are marked by grammatical tone (Figure 2.4).

Ínan	<i>boy</i>	inán	<i>girl</i>	(gender)
Díbi	<i>ox</i>	díbí	<i>oxen</i>	(number)
Múuse	<i>Moses</i>	Mu'use	<i>Hey Moses!</i>	(vocative)

Figure 2.4. Examples of Somali word changes to express gender, number and intensity.

The system of case marking is so distinct in Somali that mistakes are inevitable.

Typically, a Somali speaker will drop the apostrophe –s possessive in favor of a tone change, e.g. “Mary book”, with a rising intonation on the first syllable of “Mary”. This trend also affects their pronunciation and comprehensibility and certainly marks their English in an accented (Refugee fact sheet, 2004).

In Somali, most adjectives are formed by adding *–an* or *–san* to a verb or noun. Thus, *gaab* ‘shortness’ becomes *gaaban* ‘short’ and *qurux* ‘beauty’ becomes *quruxsan* ‘beautiful’. Somali adjectives often occur with a short form of the copula verb *to be* suffixed to them. For example, *yar* ‘small’ becomes *yaraa* ‘he was small’. As a result, Somali speakers of English tend to add *aa* to adjectives. Instead of saying ‘small’, they might say ‘small-ah’ (Refugee fact sheet, 2004).

Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed the most pertinent information regarding the teaching and learning of North American English pronunciation. Features of pronunciation such as

segmental and suprasegmental features were introduced. Later, I investigated the learner characteristics that can affect the acquisition of fluent pronunciation for foreign language learners. Then, I explored information about Somali language, alphabet and sound system. It is relevant to understand the background information in order to have a greater understanding of the topic being researched. Do a learner's exposure to English and their attitude about English influence the accuracy of their North American English pronunciation? In the next chapter I will introduce the paradigm for the method of research and discuss why I chose it. I will also discuss who, why and how I chose the participants of this research as well as the data collection and analysis pieces that I used.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The previous chapter described research related to the acquisition of pronunciation of second language learners. Literature shows that exposure to English, whether in the workplace, in school, or on the street encourages the acquisition of pronunciation by any English language learner. Others say that the more social or affective learner characteristics, such as motivation, attitude, and socio-cultural alignment influence the acquisition of foreign language pronunciation more than any other factor (cited by Celce-Murcia, Schumann, 1986). Moreover, many believe that pronunciation is one of the most overlooked facets of language instruction (Elliot, 1995). I am researching these personal learner characteristics that influence the English pronunciation of native Somali speakers. Specifically, I am investigating characteristics such as learner's daily exposure to English and their attitude towards English.

I have chosen the particular characteristics because I believe these factors most dramatically affect a learner's pronunciation, as I have witnessed in my classroom. Understanding what affects the acquisition of pronunciation for native Somali speakers may influence educators to focus their pronunciation practice more, therefore assisting these learners to better attain more native-like English pronunciation. With more fluent speech comes more opportunity for these students and future generations of Somali immigrants.

Next, I will be discussing the setting of the research, introducing the participants, the paradigm for the research, and explaining the processes of data collection that were used.

Setting

The study was conducted at a large school in Minneapolis that provides Adult Basic Education services. Adult Basic Education provides General Equivalency Diploma (GED) preparation classes, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for adults, and adult high school diploma classes. Its English language learner program teaches adults the skills and provides the support necessary to pursue educational and employment goals.

Seven levels of ESL classes are offered-- from levels 0 and 1 for learners with little or no schooling in their first language and pre-literate learners, to level 6 for students who are refining their English skills by working on resume and interviewing skills. Levels 2-5 cover everything in between. There is also a transitions class that moves students from the English Language Learning classes into the GED diploma program.

Participants

I am interested in attaining a deeper understanding of what affects pronunciation of English language learners. I have chosen to focus on native Somali speakers in order to start to fill in the gaps of information concerning Somalis in the United States, particularly adults learning English. I worked with four native Somali students who are currently in an intermediate level, namely level 4 or 5 class. All are very regular attendees of class meaning that they are dedicated to learning English. I chose two women and two men. They all came to the United States with different levels of familiarity and fluency in English as well as differing levels of education in their native countries. The average age range is from 26-34 years old. For the purpose of confidentiality will change the names of the participants (see Table 3.1). For the

remainder of this research I will refer to them as follows:

Table 3.1

Participant Information

Name	Gender	Age	Years in the U.S.
Mohamed	male	31	10
Abdi	male	34	5
Farah	female	34	2
Asha	female	26	4.5

I chose these participants because I believe there is a sizeable range in their pronunciation abilities yet they have all attained a similar level of English given that they are all in the same level. In addition, they have also all been students of mine so there is a degree of comfort that already exists.

Research Paradigm

To find out how exposure to English and attitude towards pronunciation affect an English language learner's pronunciation two main pieces were necessary. First, a sample of the learner's speech was needed and then a personal survey to obtain information about the learners' background. For this reason, I chose a case study of four Somali speakers learning English.

According to Brown and Rodgers (2002), case study research consists of an intensive study of the background, current status, and environmental interactions of a given social unit: an individual, a group, or community. For the purpose of my question, background information about the learners was needed as well as their current status and environmental interactions so this paradigm was an appropriate model. As stated by

Patton (1990), case studies become particularly useful where one needs to understand some special people, a particular problem, or a unique situation in great depth, and where one can identify cases rich in information, in the sense that a great deal can be learned from a few exemplars of the phenomenon in question. My study focuses on adding a focused piece of data to a growing field of study that being Somali language and its people. More specifically, my study is about their challenges and strengths of learning the English language pronunciation. This study does not however, intend to solve pronunciation difficulties as noted in the results nor does it make pedagogical suggestions for classroom teachers. I am interested in the education and success of Somali English language learners. I want to focus on how their pronunciation of English is affected by their individual learner characteristics. I wanted to be able to go into depth with each learner and evaluate his or her speech samples with precision; consequently, a case study model was the most suitable.

Data Collection

I will be correlating personal information from the learners to their pronunciation abilities or challenges of English. Therefore, I was interested in collecting information using two different formats: a learner interview and recording of learners' speech. I started with a personal learner interview with each student. I used the Personal Information Survey (PIS) (Appendix A) to guide my questions and to keep my questions consistent with all of the participants. If there were areas that I needed more information, I asked to students to expand more on that issue. This portion was not recorded. The students wrote all of the information on the forms while I asked each question and clarified responses. This process was done individually with each of the students. The

Personal Information Survey included questions about their age, origin, marital status, as well as their educational background. Students were also asked to disclose information regarding their daily exposure to English at work, in school and at home.

The last phase of the interview portion of the research included a piece that assessed the learners' attitude towards pronunciation. This piece is adapted from The Pronunciation Attitude Inventory (PAI) (Elliot, 1995). This inventory is a questionnaire developed by Elliot to assess the attitude towards English pronunciation toward English Language Learners. The Personal Information Survey in addition to the PAI will be used to assess the background information needed from the learners. I will be using the information from this interview to see how these characteristics affect their comprehensibility and accuracy of their North American English pronunciation.

The PAI asks for each participant to rate his or her attitude of English pronunciation by associating a number with each question. For example, number one states, 'I would like to sound like a native speaker when I speak English.' The participant must then circle a number below with 5 = strongly agree, 4 = somewhat agree, 3 = neither disagree nor agree, 2 = somewhat disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree. In order to correlate a number score to the PAI, I added the scores. In some questions I needed to reverse the score and give a 5 when the number circled was a 1. The result was a number that describes their attitude about learning English pronunciation, with the higher number equaling a more positive attitude about English pronunciation. The highest number possible is a forty-five, which shows the most positive attitude about learning English pronunciation.

The next phase of the study was the speech sample. In this phase, the focus was the speech of the learners. There were two sections to this phase. First, they were recorded reading a standardized diagnostic passage and secondly, speaking freely in a conversation. As stated by Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin (1996), it is best to obtain two types of spoken production to obtain a well-rounded sample from the learners. The first type is a diagnostic passage, which is a standardized passage that assesses the student's command of pronunciation features that may not occur in a natural speech context. In particular, diagnostic passages are designed to include all or most of the segmental and suprasegmental features of English, including consonant clusters configurations, appropriate intonation and question formation (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996)(see Appendix D).

Each student was given a copy of the diagnostic passage (see Appendix D). As part of the diagnostic passage reading, the learner was allowed to hear a native speaker read the passage first. Then, they were given time to practice before the recording began. The reason for giving them oral and visual help with this is that even for articulate native speakers, reading unfamiliar text, especially when being recorded, can be quite daunting which can result in unnatural flow, pauses, or stumbling over words that may not occur otherwise (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996). While not exactly authentic, this process allows the student to feel more comfortable and provides the truest sampling of individual errors. Once they agreed they were ready I started the recorder and signaled the participant to start reading.

In the second portion of the recording phase the students were asked to draw on their ability to use their free speech (see Appendix E). The students chose from a list of

topics to discuss. Some of the prompts were: discuss your first day in the United States, tell me about your favorite thing to do in your free time, or tell me about your most favorite city. This gave the learner the option to choose the topic so that they felt more comfortable discussing something familiar to him or her. This piece is crucial as it provided an opportunity for the student to use language that they chose and give a more personal tone to the testing process as well more precise information about what their strengths as challenges are in English pronunciation. The two parts of the speech portion of this research gave the learner the opportunity to show their skills or challenges in a variety of formats.

Data Analysis

In order to assess and evaluate the students' speech, I have chosen two assessment pieces. The first one is the Analysis of Problems (Dauer, 1993) and second is the Speaking Performance Scale for UCLA Oral Proficiency for Nonnative TAs (SPS) (Celce-Murcia, et al., 1996). The Dauer evaluation tool assesses vowels, consonants, nasals and glides as well as stress placement, vowel reduction, rhythm, length and timing, linking and pausing, intonation, and pitch, which served as an outline to guide me in what to listen for specifically. Then, I used the Speaking Performance Scale to assign points to these specific areas.

The Speaking Performance Scale (SPS) establishes concrete guidelines associated with numerical values, which therefore helped to assess and compare the information derived from the students' speech samples. This scale rates speaker's speech from 0-4 with 0 being the lowest and 4 the highest. There are seven areas of speech that is assessed by this scale. They are pronunciation, speech flow, grammar, vocabulary organization,

listening, comprehension, and question handling. I used only the ‘pronunciation’ and ‘speech flow’ portions of this scale to establish a point system for the participants’ speech samples. More specifically, when assessing the segmental features of the participants’ speech, I used only the ‘pronunciation’ portion of the SPS. For the segmental features of the participants’ speech I used the ‘speech flow’ section of the SPS. Table 3.2 is a sample of the numbers that correspond to the ratings used in this portion of the research from the SPS.

Table 3.2
Rating System used for assessment of segmental and suprasegmental features

<u>Rating</u>	<u>Segmental</u>	<u>Suprasegmental</u>
4	Rarely mispronounces	High degree of fluency effortless, smooth
3	Accent may be foreign Never interferes	Speaks with facility, rarely has to grope . . .
2	Often faulty but intelligible with effort	Speaks with confidence but not facility, hesitant
1	Errors frequent only intelligible to NS	Slow, strained except for routine expressions
0	Unintelligible	So halting that conversation is impossible

Adapted from Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin (1996, p. 404).

The rest of the chart was not used. For example, if a learner consistently epenthesizes consonant clusters by adding a /ɪ/ or /ʌ/ a number 2 could be given which indicates that the participant’s pronunciation is “often faulty but intelligible with effort.”

While listening to the speech samples of the learners, I used the Dauer tool to help guide my evaluation. I marked all mistakes that I heard. After each sample, I decided which mistakes affected the pronunciation the most and then rated them using the SPS to establish how much it affected their pronunciation. This was used in order to compare the learners speech as well as assist in relaying the affect those characteristics of their pronunciation had on their speech.

After colleting all pieces of the data from all of the learners and assessing their speech, I analyzed and compared each of the evaluations to try to find major similarities and differences among the learners' recorded output. From the similarities and differences, I drew conclusions about the learners and made correlations and connections to the learners' personal characteristics. I evaluated each learner individually and gave an opinion based on research and observation as to why they retain certain features of a foreign accent that effect his or her comprehensibility.

In conclusion, the research that I conducted will provide me as well as the readers with a clearer picture of the personal characteristics that affect native Somali speakers learning North American English. The various tools used, the questionnaire and the recording samples from the learners provided a comprehensive look into the abilities and challenges of each of these learners.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the results of the research I conducted. I will introduce each participant. I will provide salient data about each learner from his or her learner questionnaire. I will also explain information about their challenges and strengths found in their speech and discuss trends found in the speech samples and correlate all

information necessary to make assumptions about which characteristics have affected their pronunciation.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

I am researching how Somali learners' amount of daily exposure to English and attitude towards learning English affect their pronunciation of North American English. In this chapter I will give a brief overview of each of the participants' personal information. I will then describe the information each participant provided about his or her attitude towards English pronunciation obtained from the Personal Attitude Inventory. Following that, I will illustrate the most prominent inaccuracies detected from the formal diagnostic speech sample as well as the informal speech piece. I will then present an overall score for each learner derived from the Speech Samples. Then, I will summarize the data found. Finally, I will correlate all pieces of information to postulate why or why not some features appear to cause difficulties the subjects' pronunciation of English deferring to past and current research as well as my own personal experience with each of these learners. All of this information was collected in an attempt to answer the question that I am investigating.

Participant Information

Two male and two female native Somali speakers, between the ages of twenty-six and thirty-four, were assessed in this process. Their names are Mohamed, Abdi, Farah, and Asha. These names have been changed to protect the anonymity of the participants. The following information was obtained from the personal information survey (see Appendix), as well as the PAI.

The Pronunciation Attitude Inventory was modified from its original version authored by Elliot (1995). The original piece was designed for a similar study in which

Elliot examined the acquisition of a nonnative phonological system by adult language learners studying Spanish at Indiana University, Bloomington. The objective of the study was to determine the success of supplementing intermediate Spanish courses with formal instruction in pronunciation. Since the original inventory was created to assess adults learning Spanish, the PAI was modified for the purposes of this study. The format remained the same so that each question asks the participant to choose 1 through 5 to rate the participant's attitude or concern for accurate pronunciation of the target language, which in this case was North American English.

For ease of scoring, tabulating and comparing, a smaller scale was created. Each answer rendered a maximum of five points. With 9 questions, the total high score was a 45. More specifically, if a learner's score was 45 this showed he or she has the most positive attitude or concern for learning accurate English pronunciation. In addition, as a part of the Personal Information Survey, the participants were asked to rate their English on a scale of one to five with five being the highest, in four areas: listening, speaking, writing, and reading. Figure 4.1 is an example of what the participants filled out for this portion of the research.

How would you rate your English from 1 to 5 (with 5 = best)?

Listening	1	2	3	4	5
Speaking	1	2	3	4	5
Writing	1	2	3	4	5
Reading	1	2	3	4	5

Figure 4.1. Sample of student rating questionnaire from Personal Information Survey (PIS).

The intent of this section is to determine the learners' experience with learning English as well as their level of confidence in the particular areas of language learning. In this next section, I will be paraphrasing the information obtained from the personal information survey about each participant individually.

Mohamed

Mohamed was born in Somalia. He is currently thirty-one years old. He has lived in the United States (US) for ten years, since 1996. He has lived in Somalia and Kenya before moving to the US. His first language is Somali, but he also speaks Swahili, which he learned in Kenya. He did not learn Swahili in a school setting; rather he studied it from a book, but does not currently use the language. He also speaks English at an intermediate level, but had not studied English before coming to the United States. He is currently in level 5A at his school. He was asked to rate his English on a scale of one to five with five being the best, in four areas; listening, speaking, writing, and reading. He rated his strongest area was listening (5), and writing was his worst (3), with speaking and reading being equivalent (both 4s). He did not start studying English until six months ago in a school setting, but stated that he has learned most of his English from his jobs in the United States.

Mohamed completed twelve years of primary and secondary education and graduated high school in Somalia. He currently works as a cashier and has worked in this position for three months. There are other Somali people who work with him and he does speak with them mostly in Somali throughout the day. However, he typically speaks English nearly 75% of his normal workday. He speaks English for about eight hours each

day while at work. While in the community, Mohamed rarely uses English, only at work and school he stated.

Mohamed lives alone. He is not married nor does he have children. Therefore he does not speak to anyone in his home in English. The friends and family that he does have mostly speak Somali so that is the language he uses with them. He uses 0% English with friends and family.

In general, Mohamed's attitude about learning English pronunciation is positive. His relative score on the PAI was 37, with 45 being the most positive. This means that most of his answers showed that he has a positive attitude towards English pronunciation. One area that he did not agree with the question from the PAI showed that he does not care to sound like a native English speaker, however all other questions highlight his belief that good pronunciation is vital.

Abdi

Abdi is a thirty-four year old male from Somalia. He has been in the United States for five years. Before moving to the United States, he lived in Ethiopia for two years and then Kenya for two months. Somali is his first language, but his family also used Amharic when he was young and therefore speaks that fluently as well. Currently, he does not use Amharic on a daily basis.

Abdi had studied English for one year prior to coming to the United States; he practiced in Ethiopia anticipating this arrival here. Currently, he uses English only at school which he regularly attends two and a half hours four days per week. He studies in a 5A class as well at his school. When asked to rate his level of English in four areas, listening, speaking, writing, and reading from one to five (5 = best), he gave himself all

threes with a five in listening only. While in Somalia, Abdi completed the coursework to achieve his high school diploma, but did not go on to any post-secondary education until coming to the United States where he has attended English classes regularly.

Abdi works full-time in a health care facility and has for nearly two years. He works with many other Somali people and therefore speaks mostly Somali all day except for an estimated thirty percent of the day he spends speaking English. In total, including work and school, he speaks English for four hours per day on average. Abdi also lives alone which means he is not speaking English at home. He has no children or a spouse. When he is with friends and family, he says he speaks English about fifty percent of the time.

Abdi's attitude about speaking English with good pronunciation is overall positive. His cumulative score on the PAI is a 37 out of a potential 45. This means that Abdi answered with the most positive answers in most questions. Two areas that he did not strongly agree with indicated that while good English pronunciation was important to him, sounding just like a native speaker was not.

Farah

Farah is a thirty-four year old Somali female who has lived in the United States for only two years. She has also lived in Kenya, but for a short time just before departing for the US. Her first language is Somali and she does not speak any other languages other than the English she has learned. She is currently in level 5A in her school and regularly attends school four days a week for two and a half hours per night. When asked to rate her skill areas in English in listening, speaking, writing and reading from one to five (5 =

best), she said that listening and reading were her best areas both receiving fives and speaking and writing were both given threes.

Farah completed high school in Somalia including eight years of primary education and four years of secondary. She started learning English there when she was fourteen in high school where she would learn English for one hour every day. After that she continued to study English on her own over the course of three years by reading and studying English in books. She has not had any post-secondary education beyond the English classes she currently attends.

Farah works full-time in a home health care facility and has been working there for one year. She works with many other Somali people and spends most of the day speaking in Somali to her co-workers. She speaks English about thirty-five percent of her workday. However, when she is out in the community she often speaks English for a total of about eight hours each day.

Farah's living situation is unique. She lives with friends who are native English speaking students studying to become nurses. She lives with four other people, three women and one man. For this reason, she spends a lot of time speaking and listening to English in any given day. They also watch television and movies in English (nearly 75 percent of the time). She is single and does not have any children.

When asked about her attitude towards teaching and learning native English pronunciation her response was extremely positive. She scored a 45 out of 45 on the PAI. In short, native-like pronunciation is very important and is a goal she aspires to attain.

Asha

Asha is a twenty-six year old Somali female who has lived in the United States four and a half years. Before coming to the United States, she lived in Nairobi, Kenya for ten years. Although her first language is Somali, she also learned Swahili in Kenya. She learned it in school and at home with a tutor; she studied for a total of five years. To this day, she still uses Swahili when she is with friends. In addition, because she reads the Quran she can also read Arabic.

Asha had no formal education while in Somalia; not in primary or secondary. However, She studied English for three years, while she was in Kenya, before coming to the United States. She is currently in level 4B. When asked to rate her English on a scale of one to five (5 = best) in the four main areas of language; listening, speaking, writing, and reading, she rated listening and speaking with threes. Writing is a four and reading is a five.

She is married and lives with her husband and their son who is two years old. Asha does not work outside of the home therefore she does not spend any time in the house speaking English until her husband comes home from work. Her husband speaks English more often than she; one hundred percent of his day. He works in a medical lab with all native English speakers. He has also completed his GED from the same school she attends. When they are together in their home they try to speak English, which averages out to be around fifty percent of the time. They watch television in English, watch movies, and listen to cassettes all in English.

When asked about her attitude towards learning native like English pronunciation her response was completely positive. She scored a 45 out of 45 and therefore regards pronunciation as an important part of her English learning process.

These are four very different learners with four very different backgrounds and experience. For ease of review, the Figure 1.1 revisits the preliminary personal information retrieved from the Personal Information Survey.

Table 4.1
Participant Information

Name	Gender	Age	Years in the U.S.
Mohamed	male	31	10
Abdi	male	34	5
Farah	female	34	2
Asha	female	26	4.5

In this next section, I will be highlighting some of the information obtained from the recorded speech samples from both the diagnostic passage, which was read by the students, as well as the free speech sample.

Speech Samples

The speech samples were recorded as the participants read a formal diagnostic speech sample and then we discussed an informal topic of his or her choosing. They each had time to review and ask questions about the diagnostic speech sample and pronunciation of particular words, as well as time to formulate their responses to the

informal speech topics given. They all chose the topic they felt most comfortable discussing from the list of informal speech topics and I helped guide that discussion to obtain a complete sample of his or her informal speech makeup.

I found that most of the learners had similar challenges and strengths in their English pronunciation. However, not all were consistent, and they all existed to differing degrees. For example, all of the participants pronounced /p/ as /b/ in the initial, medial and final positions of words. In some cases, one participant would produce /b/ instead of /p/ in one word, but not the next. In the following section, I will give a detailed overview of each participant's speech.

For each participant, I assessed three of the most prominent segmental features and three suprasegmental features. I gave a score for each area based on the Speaking Performance Scale (SPS) (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, adapted from *Interagency Language Roundtable Proficiency Test*). For the segmental features I used only the segmental column, and for the suprasegmental features, I used only the suprasegmental column to give scores (see Table 4.2). Again, the following is a paraphrased version from the SPS, which was used to give point values to the segmental, and suprasegmental features found most impairing in the speech samples of each participant.

Table 4.2
**Rating System for Assessment of Segmental and
 Suprasegmental features**

<u>Rating</u>	<u>Segmental</u>	<u>Suprasegmental</u>
5	Rarely mispronounces	High degree of fluency effortless, smooth
3	Accent may be foreign Never interferes	Speaks with facility, rarely has to grope . . .
3	Often faulty but intelligible with effort	Speaks with confidence but not facility, hesitant
1	Errors frequent only intelligible to NS	Slow, strained except for routine expressions
0	Unintelligible	So halting that conversation is impossible

Adapted from Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin (1996, p. 404).

Therefore, each participant will have two scores that will be totaled in the final stages of comparison. The combined segmental and suprasegmental scores are out of a total of twelve.

Speech Sample Scores

Mohamed

Segmental features. First, in the diagnostic passage, in a few cases Mohamed pronounced /ey/ as /ay/ especially in the word ‘may’, it was pronounced /may/.

Furthermore in both occurrences of ‘learn’, instead of the vowel sound being /ɛ^r/ it was pronounced as /iy^r/. Even more notable was the consistent replacement of /b/ for all utterances of /p/. He also often omitted final /s/ endings. For the vowel replacement, a

score of 2 was given. For the replacement of /b/ for /p/, a 2 was given as well. And finally, for the final position omission of /s/, a 3 was given. His overall score for the segmental features is therefore a 7 out of a possible 12.

Suprasegmental features. The most perceptible attributes of the suprasegmental features were epenthesized consonant clusters, incorrect word and sentence stress, and releasing of the final voiced and voiceless stops. In many cases, consonant clusters were given an extra syllable. For example, ‘changed’ was pronounced /tʃeyngid/ with the additional /t/ which added an extra syllable as well. Then, there were numerous examples of incorrect word or sentence stress. And, finally, in most the final positions voiced and voiceless stops /b, d, g/ and /p, t, k/ these sounds that are typically not released were released and often times were aspirated to create an extra syllable therefore affecting the stress patterns of the word as well as the sentence. This was a noticeable characteristic that greatly affected the rhythm of the passage.

For the epenthesized consonant clusters, a 2 was given. For the occurrence of incorrect consonant clusters a 1 was given. And finally for the releasing of the final voiced and voiceless stops, a 3 was given. In total then, an overall score for the suprasegmental features was a 6 out of a total of 12. Mohamed’s overall score of the segmental and suprasegmental portions derived from the diagnostic passage and the free speech sample is a 13 out of 24.

Abdi

Segmental features. Most apparent in Abdi’s diagnostic speech samples as well as the free speech sample were a flapped /ɾ/ in place of a NAE /r/, /p/ consistently pronounced as /b/, and final position /s/ omission. The first error, the flapped /ɾ/, is notable in all of

the participants' speech, however, in Abdi's case, it was much more prominent and greatly affected the overall pronunciation. Again, /p/ was pronounced as /b/ in almost all occurrences. This does not affect the comprehensibility of the word, but does disturb listening, and marks the speaker as having a 'foreign accent'. Finally, the final /s/ omission does similarly not affect comprehensibility but does mark the speaker as non-native. For the /r/ a 1 was given due to its ubiquitous nature. For the /p/ and /b/ replacement, a 2 was given meaning often faulty but intelligible with effort. And finally, for omitting the /s/ in the final positions, a 2 was given for a final total for the segmental features, a 5.

Suprasegmental features. Abdi's most obvious challenges in the suprasegmental sphere were epenthesized consonant clusters, released and often aspirated final position voiced and voiceless stops, and incorrect stress patterns at the word and sentence level. These were consistent and ubiquitous throughout his speech sample. In nearly all of the consonant clusters that contain two or more consonants an /i/ sound was inserted. For example, 'changed' was pronounced /tʃeɪŋɡɪd/ and 'noticed' was pronounced /nɒwtɪsɪd/. In the final voiced and voiceless stops, they were systematically released and often aspirated. For example, 'most' was pronounced /mɒwstɪy/ and 'accent' was /æksɛntɪy/. And finally, the incorrect stress placement was often caused by insertion of an additional syllable (epenthesis, as stated above) but more often was just given stress on the incorrect syllable or word. For example, 'telephone' was stressed on the second syllable instead of the first, 'issue' was pronounced with the stress on the second syllable, and on the sentence level in many cases a commonly reduced word was not reduced but rather, was stressed. Or in the case of the following, the entire sentence did not include stress. Such is

the case in ‘Does this mean that accents can’t be changed?’ A native speaker would stress three main words in the question; ‘this’, ‘accents’, ‘changed’, with the stress in ‘accents’ being on the first syllable. On the other hand, Abdi did not stress any of the words; rather they were all spoken with the same rhythm and stress.

For the suprasegmental features, the following scores were given. The epenthesized consonant clusters, a 1 was given because it was omnipresent and consistent. For the release of the final position voiced and voiceless stops, a 1 was given as well. And for the incorrect stress placement on the word and sentences levels, a 1 was also given. This leaves an overall score of 3 for the suprasegmental features. In total, Abdi received a 5 for the segmental features and a 3 for the suprasegmentals for an overall score of 8 on the diagnostic speech sample as well as the free speech samples.

Farah

Segmental features. For this section, Farah had very minor issues. Only two areas were detected as being consistent enough to be considered affecting of her comprehensibility. She consistently pronounced /p/ as /b/ and /v/ as /f/. These were the only two areas that were detected. For the /p/ and /b/ replacement a 3 was given, as it rarely interferes with intelligibility. And for the /v/ and /f/ error, a 3 was given as well. For the third area that did not appear in her speech, I will assess an even 4 since it did not exist. A 4 states that she ‘rarely mispronounces’. Farah’s total score for the segmental features of her diagnostic and free speech samples is a 10 out of a total 12 points.

Suprasegmental features. Similarly, there were only two areas where significant errors were detected in the suprasegmental features. They were incorrect intonation on the word and sentence levels as well as epenthesized consonant cluster groups. While these

findings did exist, they were not consistent, meaning they did not occur in every situation where there were consonant clusters or changes in tone. More specifically, in the following statement followed by a tag question, the tag question was not intonated correctly. The statement was, “But old habits won’t change without a lot of hard work, will they?” On the final, *will they?* her stress was monotone and did not fluctuate. A native speaker would have raised the tone of his or her voice to indicate a tag question.

With reference to the epenthesis of consonant clusters, this was also not consistent, meaning it did not occur in all areas where consonant clusters occurred. For example, ‘changed’ was pronounced /tʃeɪŋgd/ (correct) but ‘several’ was pronounced /sevɜral/ with an additional /ɛ/ in the middle to add a syllable. Therefore, Farah’s errors did occur, but not frequently or consistently.

For the suprasegmental scores, a 3 was given for the incorrect intonation, and for the epenthesis of consonant clusters, a 3 as well. Since only two areas were found to be substantial enough to require a score, the third area will receive a full score of four meaning, ‘rarely mispronounces’. The total for Farah’s suprasegmental features is therefore a 10. In total for the segmental and suprasegmental features together gives a total of 20 out of a possible 24.

Asha

Segmental features. In Asha’s diagnostic passage speech as well as the free speech samples, similar trends appear. The most prominent errors were /b/ replacement where /p/ occurred, /æ/ was pronounced as /a/, and she often pronounced NAE /r/ with a flapped /r/. The /b/ replacement with /p/ was consistent and occurred nearly every time there was a /p/ in the text. ‘Applied’ was pronounced /abləyd/. Next, Asha usually pronounced /æ/

with /a/. Many of the learners did this as well, but in Asha's case, it was much more prevalent and marked her as a nonnative speaker. The flapped /r/ in place of the NAE more round /r/ occurred in nearly all cases where /r/ was presented. This is an obvious and ubiquitous error throughout all of the participants' speech but since Asha's was omnipresent, this is one of her most prominent errors.

For the three main segmental errors the following scores were given. For /b/ replacement for /p/ a 2 was given since it was consistent but generally does not affect intelligibility. For the /æ/ replacement with /a/ a score of 3 was given. And finally, for the flapped /r/ in place of the NAE rounded /r/, a score of 2 was given. This occurs so frequently that the score must reflect that. Asha's total score for the segmental features is 7.

Suprasegmental features. The features most significant in Asha's suprasegmental features of the diagnostic passage and the free speech sample were incorrect placement of stress on the word and sentence level, aspirated and often release of final voiced and voiceless stops, and epenthesis of consonant groups. First, was the incorrect stress on the word and sentence levels. For example, in the sentence, 'Several theories address this issue' a native English speaker would have stressed the following syllables; 'Several theories address this issue.' However, in Asha's utterance, she did not stress any of the words, rather she read them disconnected from each other and all with the same stress. Then, was the aspirated and release of the voiced and voiceless stops in the final position. For example, 'can't' was pronounced /kænti/ as 'just' was pronounced /j^stij/. And finally, Asha typically and consistently epenthesis of the consonant groups that contained two or more consonants. In her pronunciation of 'lots' she uttered /latʃs/, this was

common in many of the participants' speech samples, however occurred nearly all the time in Asha's speech.

The scores given for the suprasegmental features were as follows. For the incorrect words and sentence stress, a 2 was given. For the aspirated or released final voiced and voiceless stops, a 2 was given. And for the epenthesized consonant clusters, a score of 2 was given as well. Asha's total score for the suprasegmental portion of her speech sample was therefore a 6. And her overall score for the segmental and suprasegmental features is a 13.

Table 4.3

Summary chart of speech sample results

Errors ⇒ Names ↓	/ɛ ^r / ⇒ /iyɾ/	/p/ ⇒ /b/	omit final /s/	flap /ɾ/	/v/ ⇒ /f/	/æ/ ⇒ /a/	Epenthe- sized consonant clusters	Incorrect word/ sentence stress	Release final V and VL stops	Incorrect intonation	Final speech sample score
Mohamed	•	•	•				•	•	•		13
Abdi			•	•	•		•	•	•		8
Farah		•			•		•			•	24
Asha		•		•		•	•	•	•		13

Table 4.3 shows a summary of the results obtained from the diagnostic and informal speech samples. The categories along the top row are those that were designated as the most prevalent and uniform among all of the speakers. It is clear that some features appeared with more uniformly among the speakers than others. For example, all of the learners epenthesized consonant clusters. Nearly all of them substituted /b/ for /p/, used incorrect word/sentence stress and released final voiced and voiceless stops. However,

not as common were the /ɛ^r/ to /iyr/ switch, /æ/ switch to /a/, and incorrect intonation as the most prominent features found in their speech samples. This does not, however, mean that these features did not exist at all in the other participants' speech, rather it means the feature's effect was not as noticed as much for that particular learner. For example, Farah was not the only learner who used intonation incorrectly, but she was the only for whom this feature affected her comprehensibility.

Summary of Data

In reviewing the results, there are similar trends in the English pronunciation of nearly all of participants. However, there is quite a bit of variation in the degree to which those trends, or characteristics, of their speech affect their overall comprehensibility. The question under investigation in this work is: does the amount of daily exposure to English and a learner's attitude about English pronunciation affect the learner's pronunciation in North American English? Since the two main areas of research are amount of exposure to English and attitude, the Table 4.4 highlights those vital components.

In the first column are the names of the participants; next is the number of years each learner has been in the United States. This piece is not directly being assessed in this work, however, is indirectly related to the results in that the percentage of English exposure over time (i.e. # of years in the US) increases the effect of the amount of daily exposure to English and hence their pronunciation is affected.

The next column therefore highlights the percentage of day each participant spends speaking or using English. This number was calculated by using the information provided in the personal information survey. These questions were asked: "What percentage of your day do you speak English at work?" and "What percentage of each

day do you speak English with your family (at home)?" I took those two percentages as well as the information provided about how much the participants speak English in the community and at school studying and averaged them to attain the number in the *% of day in English* column.

The number in the column labeled Attitude (PAI) was attained from the portion of the Personal information survey. Again, this survey was derived from the Pronunciation Attitude Inventory (PAI) (Elliot, 1995). It was later modified to fit the purposes of this study. The numbers were added from the scores from the survey. In most cases the numbers directly corresponded to the score of each answer, however, in some cases, the scores had to be reversed in order to get an accurate score. For example, for the most positive assessment of attitude about English pronunciation in the following statement, "I will never be able to speak English with a good accent", a score of 5 was given if the learner circled the number one. Otherwise, the scores directly correlated to the number selected.

Finally, in the last column, speech sample total, the numbers from the participants' speech samples were added together and collected to display here. There were two numbers given to each participant, one for their segmental features and one for the suprasegmental features. For each set, segmental and suprasegmental, a point value was given to three of the most prominent features in their speech. The points were rated from 0 to 4, with 0 being the most unintelligible and 4 being the closest to native North American English. Therefore, a higher number meant an overall closer approximation of NAE. In one case there was not three prominent features, therefore a score of four was given.

Table 4.4
Participant information and results from Personal Information Survey (PIS) and speech samples

Names	# of years in US	% of day in English	Attitude (PAI)	Speech Sample Total
Mohamed	10	50%	37	13
Abdi	5	30%	37	8
Farah	2	55%	45	20
Asha	4.5	40%	45	13

Discussion of Data

There does appear to be a direct correlation between the factors in question and the learner characteristics. For example, it appears that the higher the percentages of day spent in English, the higher the Speech Sample total scores the learner achieved. As well, there is evidence of correlation between the PAI score and the Speech Sample total scores. The percentage of day spent in English appears to be the most significant predictor in the total score, even more so than the number of years spent in the United States. In Farah's case, she has only spent two years in the United States, but her English pronunciation yielded the highest overall score. On the other end of the spectrum, the participant who has been in the United States the longest, Mohamed, still has only a

medium score. This phenomenon highlights the reality that even though a person lives and works every day in the United States, he or she may or may not obtain a high level of English pronunciation. There are other more salient factors that contribute to a learner's pronunciation.

In the following section, I intend to elaborate further on the results within each factor. Those main factors will be exposure to English both in a day-to-day setting as well as cumulative time spent in English over long periods of time. The second main factor is the attitude the learners have about learning accurate English pronunciation. The final section will include any further individual factors that I believe contributed to or hindered the production of accurate English pronunciation of these particular learners.

Factors

Exposure to English. There are two aspects to this factor: the amount of English that the learner is exposed to on a daily basis as well as the amount of time spent in the United States. I am including both of these because they are intertwined as the amount of daily English exposure each learner experiences is cumulatively compounded over time. For example, if a learner listens to and speaks English 75% of his or her day but has only been in the United States for one year, their level of accurate pronunciation may not be as high as another learner with the same amount of daily exposure who has been in the U.S. for 20 years. For this reason I will discuss and compare not only the daily exposure to English each learner has, but also the number of years each one has been here in the United States.

The most remarkable results found derived from this category. This is somewhat predictable but nonetheless remarkable. First, the lowest and the highest overall Speech

Sample scores were derived from the learners who had the least and the most amount of daily exposure to English, respectively. Farah had the highest overall Speech Sample score with a 20 out of a total of 24 points. She is the learner who lives and studies with American English speaking students. However, she is also the learner who has the least amount of time in this country. So in her case, the accumulation of English over time does not seem to have affected her, she has learned quickly while here.

In comparison, Abdi who has been in the United States for 5 years and is exposed to English thirty percent of his days received the lowest overall score. His score was an 8 out of a possible 24. He has been in the country more than twice as long as Farah, but spend nearly half the time exposed to English. Comparing these two learners highlights perfectly the importance of being exposed to English on a daily basis, and not how long they have actually been within the target language environment.

Florez (1998) believes a learner's degree of acculturation or exposure to target language can greatly affect pronunciation skill development. Furthermore, according to Avery and Erlich (1992), the more strongly second language learners identify with members of the target language culture, the more likely they are to 'sound' like members of that culture. Conversely, if it is important for the learners to preserve their cultural identity, they may hold on to their foreign accent as a marker of this identity. While I do not believe these participants are trying to maintain their cultural identity, I do believe that Farah is a perfect example of the research findings of Avery and Erlich (1992). She lives with and spends most of her day with native English speakers. She has therefore attained a level of English that 'sounds' more native-like.

As stated by Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin (1996), learners must receive large amounts of input in the target language before beginning to speak. Therefore, the exposure to target language is an extremely critical factor in determining their success. However, even in English as a Second Language (ESL) settings, where the learners are surrounded by the English-speaking world, many speakers live in “linguistic ghettos” with relatively little exposure to native speakers of the target language in their homes and even in their work sites. This is certainly the case for Abdi. He lives and for the most part works in a “linguistic ghetto” with his only exposure being the ten hours per week that he attends English classes. These two learners, Farah and Abdi, bring to light perfectly the importance of and the influence that daily exposure to English has on learners’ accuracy of pronunciation of English.

Attitude. The results from the Personal Attitude Inventory (PAI) were not as definitive as those from the previous section. There were two learners who scored 45 out of 45 and two learners whose scores were 37 out of 45. Farah and Asha scored highest, and Mohamed and Abdi were the lowest. All of the scores are considered high with all four learners scores being above an 80 percent out of the total score. Comparing the scores from the PAI with the overall Speech Sample scores shows modest correspondence. The highest PAI results come from the learners with the highest overall Speech Sample scores, but there is not enough variation among the PAI scores to draw specific parallels. However, this does not mean that a learner’s attitude towards accurate English pronunciation does not affect his output. Rather it shows that a more discriminating tool should be used to elicit that information from the learners. It seems as though the learners

gave the information they thought I wanted from them rather than information that accurately reflected their beliefs on English pronunciation.

Even though the tool did not accurately predict the actual attitude of the learners, there is plenty of research that states attitude as an important factor in second language learning. According to Florez (1998), personality can greatly influence a learner's achievement in pronunciation. Their attitude toward the target language, culture, and its native speakers can support or impede pronunciation skill development. As stated by Sparks and Ganschow (1991), students with motivation to learn with positive attitudes towards the target language and its speakers were more successful than were students with less positive attitudes. The results rendered from the PAI measured the learners' attitude about learning English and their confidence in attaining native-like English pronunciation. It also shows that if a learner stated they would like to speak like a native speaker, a high level of motivation.

Individual factors. There are two other factors that were not part of this study, which seemed to have made an impact on the results. They are: whether or not the students studied English before coming to the United States and personality. Again, the highest and lowest overall scorers underscore these factors precisely. Farah is the student who has been in the United States the shortest time, whereas Abdi has been here for five years. Their scores are the highest and lowest overall Speech Sample scores, respectively. Farah noted in her Personal Information Survey (PIS) that she had studied English for many years prior to coming to the United States. More specifically, she studied English for four years in high school in Somalia for one hour everyday. After high school she studied English independently from English textbooks and dictionaries. Her motivation to learn

this language started far before any of the other students. Actually, most of the other students had studied English at least a year before coming to the United States, but none to the extent that Farah has. This is evident in her overall Speech Sample scores. On the other hand, Abdi did not start learning English until a few years ago here in Minnesota at his current school. In fact, he is the only learner who did not learn any English until his arrival in Minnesota five years ago. Having studied the language gives more exposure to the target language as well as more confidence to the learners. In addition, Farah was the youngest when she started to learn English. If the Critical Period Hypothesis holds credence, then it certainly applies in this case.

Whether there is a biological “critical age” to learning languages in humans or if children learn faster because they typically get more time and opportunities to devote to learning the target language via school, social settings and work, there does appear to be some validity in this group of learners. Another salient feature of the research done in the area of adult second language learning and pronunciation, in particular with the Critical Period Hypothesis is that most studies of the relationship between age of acquisition and second language development have focused primarily on the learners’ phonological achievements. In general, these studies have concluded that older learners almost inevitably have a noticeable ‘foreign accent’ (Lightbrown & Spada, 2003).

The second individual factor that appeared to have some significance in this research was the personality of the learner. According to Avery and Erlich (1992) Learners who are out-going, confident and willing to take risks probably have more opportunities to practice their pronunciation of the second language simply because they are more often involved in interactions with native speakers. This piece is particularly

relevant because I know these students individually. All of them were, at some point, my students. I do not claim to know them on a personal level, but I do know how they are in class. More specifically, there are learners in this group who are very extroverted and some who are introverted. There are some who are more willing to take risks and answer questions in class and volunteer to speak to the group, and some who are very reluctant to speak at all. This is of great importance because there seems to be a considerable correspondence with the learners' personalities and their overall Speech Sample scores. To put the learners in order according to their level of extroverted-ness, first would be Farah, Mohamed, Asha, and last, Abdi. This order directly corresponds to their scores from highest to lowest.

It seems, in my experience as a teacher that extroversion is well suited to language learning, however research inconclusively supports this claim. Some studies have found that success in language learning is correlated with learners' scores on characteristics often associated with extroversion such as assertiveness and adventurousness, others have found that many successful language learners do not get high scores on measures of extroversion (Lightbrown & Spada, 2003). Nevertheless, an aspect of personality that has been shown to affect language learning is inhibition. This is true, especially in the case of Abdi.

This student is extremely shy. It takes quite a bit of coercion to get his participation in class. Once he participates, it is very difficult to understand his speech because he talks under his breath a lot. This seems to be a part of his personality as I see him being very shy in social settings with other native Somali speakers as well. It does

appear that this facet of his character is in part, reason for his low results in his overall Speech Sample score.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the individual learner information was introduced and discussed. Next, the results from the formal and informal Speech Samples were presented for each learner including both their segmental and suprasegmental inaccuracies and an overall Speech Sample score was calculated for each learner. Next, the data was summarized. Finally, the data was discussed and the Speech Sample results and the PAI results were correlated to the learners' individual characteristics. Conclusions were drawn and research was referenced to make connections between the existing research on acquisition of accurate pronunciation and the results found in this study.

The most conclusive results were the associations between the learners' daily exposure to English and their respective overall Speech Sample scores. There was a high degree of correspondence in this area, which highlights the significance of this particular attribute.

In the next chapter, I will reflect on major learnings from this research. I will discuss the connections to current and past research in the field of pronunciation and second language acquisition. I will also consider the possible implications for this study as it pertains to the field of teaching and learning. Finally, I will reveal the limitations encountered in this study as well as recommend ideas for future research on this subject.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

In the previous chapter, the results of this study were reported and analyzed in order to answer the question: does the amount of a learner's daily exposure to English and the learner's attitude towards English pronunciation affect native Somali speakers' North American English pronunciation? In this chapter, I will reflect on my personal experience with this study. Then, the findings are revisited with regards to their implications for ESL teachers and English language learners. Furthermore, the limitations of this study as well as future recommendations on research in this field will be discussed.

Personal Reflection

On a personal note, this process has been one of tremendous growth in my academic career. I have learned to view things from a more pluralistic perspective. More specifically, I not only see a aspect of a students' pronunciation as being linked to one particular characteristic or trait, but rather as a combination of the being he or she is. For example, if a learner typically epenthesizes a medial consonant cluster or pronounces /b/ in place off /p/ in their speech, instead of immediately attributing those features to some lack of existence in their native language or lack of extroversion of the part of the learner, I now see the multiple possibilities and combinations of a person's character that contribute to these factors. To me it seems impossible to ever derive a general theory that encompasses all learners to explain how or why certain features exist or not in their pronunciation. Rather, what seems even more relevant is for learners to be able to identify for themselves what seems to have affected their learning and for teachers to

assess what works for their learners. I finally arrived at what all good instructors already know which is that good instruction comes from being able to reflect on their instruction to constantly evaluate its efficacy and success. Nevertheless, this research has given me a new perspective from which to derive inspiration for my own pedagogical practice. I hope that this sentiment resonates with other teachers as they either read this work or embark on a similar task of research and inquiry to enhance their own practice.

The most exciting aspect of this study stemmed from the unexpected results. For example, I did not expect to draw connections between the participants' personalities and the results, although in retrospect it seems quite obvious. Though it was not something I intended to include in the results chapter, in the end it seemed nearly as big of a factor as those I set out to evaluate. I was pleased with the correlation between the overall Speech Sample scores and the daily exposure to English. Though it was what I had anticipated, the results came out to be very clearly connected. The most prominent theme did show that, in the case of these four learners, the amount the exposure to English on a daily basis does most certainly affect their English pronunciation. I did, however, expect to find a more solid connection between their overall Speech Sample scores and their attitudes.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The fact is that a more solid connection between the attitudes of the learners came from the PAI and the overall Speech Sample scores was in part due to the limitations of the PAI itself as well as the setting where the information was gathered. For example, since the learners had all been students of mine in the past, I believe they answered questions on the PAI with responses that they thought I would want from them and not so

much from their opinions. I think that given the opportunity to attempt this study again, I would either ask a bilingual Somali speaker to administer the Personal Information Survey as well as the PAI in order to obtain more candid answers from the learners.

Another aspect that I feel may be beneficial to include in future studies is the personality of the learners as this surfaced during the results chapter and seems quite influential a factor to overlook. In this particular study I knew the learners as students of my class in previous semesters so I had a background with each of them. I knew, to a certain extent, their personalities, their level of inhibition, as well and their characters. For future research it might seem more authentic to either have anonymous students or students who the researcher has never met or to include their personality traits as a part of the research. This information could be retrieved in the form of an interview with either close personal friends of the participant or with their current teacher. This may provide a more accurate account of the learners' character and personality to therefore be able to link those aspects with their accuracy of English pronunciation.

Another limitation to this study was the size of the sample of learners. I think that given a more diverse group of learners a researcher could obtain more definitive connections between the character of the learners and their actual English pronunciation. It might also be interesting to see if these same results are found at different level of English acquisition. This study was done with learners at a high-intermediate level. It would be interesting to see if similar results would be found at lower and higher levels as well.

Implications

The most palpable implications found seem to relate to the teachers and their practice. First, it is necessary for teachers to understand where the learner come from, literally and the specific needs of that group, but also to remember that all learners are different. They come from a large, variable collection of experiences that combine together to make that student who they are and how they learn. So to say that all Somali speakers will replace /b/ for /p/ will only limit the teacher's efficacy. However the student chooses to live, with a lot of daily exposure to English, or in a 'linguistic ghetto' this is not something that can be controlled or taught in a classroom. On the other hand, pronunciation of English is. This is a part of their education that we educators can influence.

As stated by Tarone (1978) the lack of emphasis on pronunciation development might be due to a general conviction on the part of the second language teachers and students that pronunciation in a second language is not very important (Elliot 1995). However, how a person enunciates his or her words and expressions is the most conspicuous aspect of language.

It seems as though there is an increased emphasis on learner-centered, communicative language teaching and user-initiated language, frequency of incomprehensibility may increase (Avery & Ehrlich 2003). Therefore, English pronunciation should be taught at the early, intermediate and upper levels of all English instruction. This is the most important component in their education today and in the future. What will the student learn from now on? We are obligated as teachers to impart all areas of language skills to our students so that they may synthesize their accurate

pronunciation in order to increase their comprehensibility. With an increased comprehensibility, it is my hope that there will be more fair treatment of non-native speakers from all language and cultural backgrounds.

This sounds a lot simpler than it really is. This involves district and all centers who teach English to adult learners to include in their curriculum research not only an acceptable program for implementing such pronunciation teaching, such as books and audio materials, but also to train the teachers in carrying out the practice in their classrooms with comfort and ease. This is a problem for many adult basic education centers. Many are not funded nearly enough, especially in comparison to their K-12 counterparts which as are markedly under-funded as well. If we are serious about raising the standards for all non-native English speakers then we must invest in our future as well as theirs.

In addition to the purchase of the materials and the training for the teachers, districts would also need to assess a learner's speech upon entrance to the program using an evaluation tool that gives specific information about each student and their linguistic background and experiences. Furthermore, it would fall on the teachers to continue to assess and evaluate the success or lack of success of each student and develop a plan to better attend to each individual's needs.

If this sounds daunting, it may be, but it does not have to be. In the end, teaching pronunciation, no matter how involved or not, is beneficial to the students. When I was teaching a pronunciation class at this facility I was amazed how one hour per day in addition to their two and a half hour class was enough to raise their awareness of the English phonological system, increase their ability to discriminate sounds, and even more

importantly, to raise their confidence enough to give them an edge in class and out in the real world. This was witnessed by me and echoed in the voices of my students.

Pronunciation is often left untaught, but should be not only because it betters their ability to communicate and navigate in the world, but also because the students want a better chance at success. And, they deserve it.

Summary

In the end, this experience of developing, researching and writing this Capstone has rekindled my desire to advocate for and continue to instruct these individuals to help them attain a better quality of life. The students' life experiences and dedication to learning English is unparalleled in any other instructional setting. I believe that refugees and immigrants from all regions have an astounding level of motivation to strive to enhance the quality of their lives, more than any other group of people. They understand wholeheartedly the importance and value of education, and that it is the key to accessing this for a brighter future. This is an invaluable aspect of any learner, that he or she knows the value of a commitment to education.

APPENDIX A
Personal Information Survey

PERSONAL INFORMATION SURVEY

Date: _____

Personal:

Id. No. _____

Age: _____ **Sex: Male Female**

Native Country: _____

How long have you lived in the United States? _____

Please list other countries that you have lived in and time you were there:

Language

What is your first language? _____

Do you speak other languages (not English)?

If yes, please answer the next questions:

- **Where did you learn it?** _____
- How long have you studied it? _____
- Do you still use it today? When? _____

English

Did you study English before you came to the United States? **Yes No**

If yes please answer the next questions:

- Where did you learn it? _____
- How long did you study it? _____
- How often did you use it? _____

What level of English are you at here at the Lehman Center? _____

How would you rate your English from 1 to 5 (with 5 = best)?

Listening	1	2	3	4	5
Speaking	1	2	3	4	5
Writing	1	2	3	4	5
Reading	1	2	3	4	5

Education

Please describe the education that you completed in your native country or other countries before you came to the United States.

1. Primary education: yes no

-How many years? _____

2. Secondary education: yes no

-How many years? _____

3. Post-Secondary education? Yes no

-How many years? _____

- ❖ If you have post-secondary education, please describe where you studied, what you studied and for how long.

Where? _____

What? _____

How long? _____

Do you speak English with them at home? Explain:

What percentage of each day do you think that **you** speak English with your family?

English Attitude

Please answer the questions using the numbers below, circle the number that fits your feelings best:

5 = **Strongly** agree

4 = **Somewhat** agree

3 = **Neither** disagree or agree

2 = **Somewhat** disagree

1 = **Strongly** disagree

1. I would like to sound like native English speaker when I speak English.

5 4 3 2 1

2. Good pronunciation in English is important to me.

5 4 3 2 1

3. I will never be able to speak English with a good accent.

5 4 3 2 1

4. I believe I can improve my pronunciation skills in English.

5 4 3 2 1

5. I believe my teacher should teach pronunciation more.

5 4 3 2 1

6. I try to imitate native speakers of English as much as possible.

5 4 3 2 1

7. For me, communicating is much more important than sounding like a native English speaker.

5 4 3 2 1

8. Learning good pronunciation is NOT as important as learning grammar and vocabulary.

5 4 3 2 1

9. Sounding like a native English speaker is VERY important to me.

5 4 3 2 1

APPENDIX B

THE INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET (revised to 2005)

CONSONANTS (PULMONIC)

© 2005 IPA

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
Plosive	p b			t d		ʈ ɖ	c ɟ	k ɡ	q ɢ		ʔ
Nasal	m	ɱ		n		ɳ	ɲ	ŋ	ɴ		
Trill	ʙ			ʀ					ʀ		
Tap or Flap		ⱱ		ɾ		ɽ					
Fricative	ɸ β	f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ	ʂ ʐ	ç ʝ	x ɣ	χ ʁ	ħ ʕ	h ɦ
Lateral fricative				ɬ ɮ							
Approximant		ʋ		ɹ		ɻ	j	ɰ			
Lateral approximant				l		ɭ	ʎ	ʟ			

Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a voiced consonant. Shaded areas denote articulations judged impossible.

APPENDIX C

Classification of NAE Consonant Phonemes

Manner of articulation	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stop							
Voiceless	/p/			/t/		/k/	
Voiced	/b/			/d/		/g/	
Fricative							
Voiceless		/f/	/θ/	/s/	/ʃ/		/h/
Voiced		/v/	/ð/	/z/	/ʒ/		
Affricate							
Voiceless						/tʃ/	
Voiced						/dʒ/	
Nasal							
Voiced	/m/			/n/		/ŋ/	
Liquid							
Voiced				/l/ /r/	/r/	/ɹ/	
Glide							
Voiceless							
Voiced	/w/				/y/		

*Adapted from *Teaching Pronunciation: a reference guide for teachers of English to speakers of other languages* from Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin (1996) page 47.

APPENDIX D

Diagnostic Passage

If English is not your native language, people may have noticed that you come from another country because of your “foreign accent.” Why do people usually have an accent when they speak a second language? Several theories address this issue. Many people believe that only young children can learn a second language without an accent, but applied linguists have reported cases of older individuals who have mastered a second language without an accent. Another common belief is that your first language influences your pronunciation in a second language. Most native speakers of English can, for example, recognize people from France by their French accents. They may also be able to identify Spanish or Arabic speakers over the telephone, just by listening to their pronunciation. Does this mean that accents can’t be changed? Not at all! But old habits won’t change without a lot of hard work, will they? In the end, the path to learning to speak a second language without an accent appears to be a combination of hard work, a good ear, and a strong desire to sound like a native speaker. You also need accurate information about the English sound system and lots of exposure to the spoken language. Will you manage to make progress, or will you just give up? Only time will tell, I’m afraid. Good luck, and don’t forget to work hard!

From Celce-Murcia, Goodwin & Brinton (1996).

APPENDIX E

Informal Speech Topics

1. Describe your **family**.
2. Tell me about the **city where you were born**.
3. Tell me about **your favorite city/place**.
4. Tell me about your **best day when you were a child**.
5. Tell me about **your job**.
6. Tell me what **you would like to do in the future**.
7. Tell me about **the most important day in you life**.
8. Tell me about your **first day in the United States**.
9. Tell me about your **most embarrassing day**.
10. Tell me about your **favorite thing to do in your free time**.

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