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## ABSTRACT

### Explicit Pronunciation Instruction in the German Language Classroom

In a time when the communicative approach is the teaching methodology of choice in most foreign language classes, certain aspects of language are often brought to the forefront: grammar and vocabulary. Falling by the wayside quite often is the explicit instruction of pronunciation. More researchers have only recently begun to challenge the current notion that foreign language pronunciation will be acquired incidentally only at a point when the student is ready (e.g. Plough et al. 2010, Rossiter 2009). Derwing & Munro (2005) emphasize the need for students to have the ability to understand the difference between what they are saying and what the target form is. They also assert that the ability to be self-aware of one's linguistic competence and to self-correct is crucial to acquiring new sounds in a foreign language.

This paper seeks to investigate the connection between students' perception of the pronunciation instruction they receive, their confidence in oral production, and their willingness to participate in class. Within a qualitative framework, 269 university students in the second, fourth and sixth semesters of German were interviewed about their current foreign language experiences. They were asked about their overall comfort in the classroom, their current instructor's teaching style with regards to pronunciation, and whether they felt the amount of focus on pronunciation was adequate. Additional factors such as language background and current German course levels were also examined. The results of this study indicate that most students possess a desire for accurate pronunciation although they are often unsure what the target form is. Moreover, most students prefer to be explicitly instructed and corrected in order to improve their pronunciation skills. Students at the lower level expressed more interest in knowing specific rules, but were less concerned about achieving native-like sounds. The findings of this study offer instructional strategies that facilitate a low-stress environment while increasing students' oral language production. Additionally, this study can provide a lens through which language program administrators and teachers might look to design curricula and methodologies that better relate to the needs of the students.