The Role Of Explicit Instruction in the Acquisition of English Syllable Structure among Ghanaians

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Abstract

The debate between effectiveness of explicit and implicit teaching has taken a center stage in the second language acquisition literature over a long period of time. Most of such debates center on grammar teaching and very few discuss suprasegmental features especially, syllable structure. All languages have some sort of syllabicity; however, the phonetic characteristics of syllables differ across languages. The difference can be seen in onset and coda. The current study examines the effects of explicit instruction on the acquisition of English syllable structure among Ghanaian learners of English. The paper investigates the efficiency of interventions through explicit teaching on the English syllable structure in a classroom setting. English syllables have some structures that are absent in the first language of the participants and these structures pose difficulties for speakers who learn English. This paper explores those structures and adopts explicit instruction as an intervention to remedy the difficulties. The investigation is done on participants who are Ghanaian speakers learning English. The study discovers that in disyllabic words there is a preference of trochaic syllables over iambic syllables, the acquisition of onsets is easier than acquisition of codas and finally, explicit teaching is very effective in the classroom.

Keywords:
Explicit instruction, language acquisition, syllable structure, pronunciation, Ghanaians

INTRODUCTION

It is an undeniable fact that English is one of the most used global languages in the world. This height could not be achieved without the use of proper pronunciation of the English

words by both first and second-language speakers. Unfortunately, some instructors do not see the need to teach pronunciation in their lessons and this unfortunate situation is attributable to so many factors including a lack of final examinations on pronunciation at the various levels of education (Cunningham, 2009). In Ghana, pronunciation is not examinable at the Basic Examination Certificate Examination (Junior High School) and in the universities. This makes the teachers ignore the teaching of pronunciation at those levels (Harmer, 2005).

Cunningham (2009) attests that acquisition of pronunciation is more difficult for Vietnamese learners of English than the acquisition of grammar. She attributes it to the fact that pronunciation test is not included in the national university entrance examinations therefore, the teachers do not teach pronunciation in schools. Again, practicing pronunciation activities are not found in some of the English course books. According to Harmer (2005), many EFL teachers concentrate on teaching of grammar and vocabulary but abandon teaching of pronunciation. Tenant (2007:1) opines that "Pronunciation is one area of teaching which is often neglected." He enumerated three reasons: the first is that teachers claim that many aspects of pronunciation are difficult to teach. Secondly, building a lesson around pronunciation is quite difficult unlike the other aspects of language such as the grammar. This is because pronunciations are considered as add-ons to a unit in a textbook. The third reason is that some teachers themselves struggle with the phonemic alphabet let alone teaching it. They eventually do not prepare well during pronunciation lessons.

Moreover, some classrooms' timetable sees a little or no slot for pronunciation. According to Kelly (2007, 13), teachers obviously neglect pronunciation when planning a timetable of English lessons. He added that their focus is on the organization of grammatical structures and lexical syllabi. In addition, Baker (1990:1) confirmed that the majority of lesson planning is devoted to vocabulary and grammar lessons, and very little or no time is allocated to teaching pronunciation. Fraser and Macdonald (as cited in Pardede, 2018) stated that pronunciation tends to be excluded due to teachers' inadequate preparation to teach it; its lack of emphasis in curricula, and the unavailability of appropriate materials for teaching it. It is a global phenomenon. In Ghana, especially at the basic level, there is no time for teaching pronunciation. The argument the teachers normally make is that pronunciation is not examinable. Their concentration has always been on vocabulary development and grammar usage.

In order to develop learners' interest in pronunciation, more pronunciation activities must be given to them. The activities can be designed in a way that students will see it as fun and this may arouse their interest in learning pronunciation. Laroy (1995: 5) is of the view that the pronunciation activities that help learners to acquire the right pronunciation skills should involve fun activities. Teachers of second language need not teach learners with the mind that they will be native speakers but they should rather focus on intelligibility. Tennant (2007:2) claims that intelligibility is the key element teachers must look at in teaching. In other words, learners' speech must sound intelligible and that should be the ultimate aim. Pronunciation is integral part of communication and learners needs to understand it. There is the need therefore to teach pronunciation because a lot of people use English as a second language. It means there will be variations in the pronunciation of these people. Lichtkoppler (2008) confirms that the users of English as their second language are more than the number of first language speakers.

The international character of English has made it develop different kinds of pronunciation based on the speakers' background. However, one needs to sound intelligible in order to fit properly in the international communication circle. In doing so, lots of second language learners are still prone to mispronouncing sounds, misplacing stress and misusing intonation patterns. Another point is that most of the materials used in the second language classroom are foreign materials written mostly from the UK or USA. This makes learning process difficult for the second language learners. In this regard, the use of local materials in the classroom is encouraged because it will make the learners see themselves as part of the teaching and learning process and that enhances understanding of the item thought in class.

In this direction, Crystal (2010) advocates that the foreign materials need to be complemented with other local varieties that will expose learners to other various English varieties. This will make the learners aware of the existence of other varieties other than the variety in their text books. Even though, Crystal (2010) admits that students cannot be shown all the varieties that exist but they should be exposed to the variety around them and this should be a variety they hear on the streets. In fact, this will ease and facilitate intelligibility among learners because they would be familiar with those ones because of their intelligibility.

It is quite clear that the role played by pronunciation in language acquisition cannot be underestimated. Pronunciation forms the basis upon which other aspects such as vocabulary and grammar rely on for intelligibility. Therefore, there is the need to pay particular attention to pronunciation. Tenant (2007) is of the view that teachers should first of all think about the main aim of pronunciation; received pronunciation or intelligibility. The former is not achievable for many students but the later can be achieved. Therefore, the main aim of pronunciation should be intelligibility.

Pronunciation increases confidence level of a speaker. According to Gilakjani (2012), there is no doubt that pronunciation teaching is an essential part in language acquisition. He added that pronunciation does not only increase the confidence level of speakers but also it improves their spoken ability therefore it needs to be considered as an essential part of communication. Knowledge of pronunciation will definitely increase the confidence level of a speaker in a conversation especially, public speaking. Crystal (2010) argues that confidence encourages a learner to speak and this will prepare the learner to face the English speaking world.

Teaching pronunciation increases the receptive skills of learners. Tenant (2007) encourages that pronunciation teaching should not only target speaking, but also listening skills. This will definitely increase the listening ability of students. In that case they can understand any communication well and this will bring about effective communication. Pronunciation is an integral part of communication. There will not be intelligibility without a good pronunciation. There is a misconception that pronunciation cannot be effectively taught in the classroom. This is because some teachers do not include it in their lesson plan at all, let alone teach it. However, research has proven that pronunciation can be taught in the classroom (Tenant, 2007) and leaners can understand it and gradually improve upon their pronunciation difficulties.

Considering above discussions, it is undeniable fact that pronunciation is very crucial in intelligibility. This paper seeks to use explicit instruction as an intervention on Ghanaian learners of English in their quest to acquire intelligible pronunciation of syllables.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to maximize students' academic progression, one of the best tools available to educators is explicit instruction. Explicit instruction is a structured, systematic, and effective methodology for teaching, Anita and Charles (2011). Anita and Charles (2011:1) describe explicit teaching as "unambiguous and direct approach to teaching that includes both instructional design and delivery procedures." Explicit instruction is therefore a systematic technique of teaching which follows steps by examining student's understanding. This is done by allowing and achieving active and successful participation by all students." Explicit knowledge consists of the features of language that are learnable. In other words, there are facts about language that speakers have made conscious effort to learn. We therefore have explicit and implicit knowledge. Ellis (2006:102) describe implicit knowledge as "procedural, held unconsciously, and can only be verbalized if it is made explicit. It is accessed rapidly and easily and thus available for use in rapid, fluent communication.

In looking at the efficacy of explicit knowledge in teaching, Ellis (2006:96) supports the view that learning explicit knowledge is not effective if there is absence of opportunities for practicing the target feature. There is a debate whether explicit knowledge can be transferred into implicit knowledge. Ellis provides three positions to this debate: non- interface position, interface position and weak- interface position.

In addition, Ellis (2006:98) differentiates **input-based** and **production-based** instructions. According to Ellis (2006:98), the input- based takes place when the learners comprehend and process the input they have acquired. On the other hand, the production based occurs when learning occurs out of social interaction. This approach aids learners to produce new structures in their environment. Ellis is also of the view that corrective feedback plays a vital role in learning. It is best conducted using a mixture of implicit and explicit feedback types that are both input based and output based.

Again, the issue of implicit and explicit learning is discussed in adult second language acquisition. Implicit learning is linked with children while the explicit learning goes for adults. DeKeyser (2000) examined the perceptual structures that are easy or hard among Hungarian learners of English. These learners arrived in the U.S with different ages. In the study, DeKeyser (2000) considered word order and pronoun gender in simple sentences as examples of easy structures. On the hand, articles and subcategorization were examples of difficult structures. The findings indicate that there are no age-related effects with easy structures however there is age difference in the difficult structures. DeKeyser therefore argue that children possess implicit learning ability but adults possess the explicit learning ability.

In addition, aptitude plays a key role in adult second langue acquisition. Aptitude is one's ability to learn new things. According to Gass and Selinker (2009:417) language aptitude "refers to one's ability to learn another language; there is no talk of language aptitude for learning one's first language, at least not for children without cognitive deficits." However, it is generally agreed that aptitude has not always been the focus of language research. There is no doubt that some aspects of pronunciation are more difficult than others. In the case of a second language learner, it is always effective to target those aspects that are not found in the learner's sound system, In the light of this, it is prudent for an instructor to study the similarities and the differences between the leaner's first language and their target language. This may lead to a fruitful learning of pronunciation.

Cunningham (2013:3) confirms that "some of the features appear to be more difficult to learn to avoid than others". This is when the phonotactic constraints in one's native language appear to be persistent in L2. In other words, there are some of the features in L1that may interfere in the L2 acquisition of pronunciation.

Even though, pronunciation is generally neglected but it is even forgotten in the adult class. According to Levis (2005), pronunciation is often not addressed in adult instruction by the instructors even though it is part of the curriculum in many adult education programs. In addition, Levis (2005) laments that some ESL teachers who teach adult learners do not have training in teaching pronunciation. This is very problematic because if the instructor is handicapped how can he or she impart knowledge to the learner. As a result, teachers may not even make an attempt to teach pronunciation in their classroom and this leads to mispronunciation by the learners. In order to achieve our aim as teachers, Schaetzel and Low (2009:3) have outlined the following instructional strategies for teaching pronunciation that can help students meet their personal and professional needs:

a) Cultivate positive attitudes toward accuracy.
b) Identify specific pronunciation features that pose problems for learners.
c) Make learners aware of the prosodic features of language (stress, intonation, rhythm).
d) Focus on developing learners' communicative competence.

METHODS
First of all, the biodata of the entire population size of the first year students of a high school were collected through questionnaires in order to get the target participants. Then, an observation was carried out in the classroom to ascertain the participants' performance in pronunciation with emphasis on syllabification. After the observation, ten first year students from a private high school situated in Accra, Ghana were purposely selected to take part in the study. They speak Ghanaian Hausa as their first language. This number was chosen not only because of the importance of class control in teaching pronunciation but also the numerous exercises the participants were engaged in. This offered the time and the chance for the participants to receive the needed feedback. I had a brief interaction with the students and their English instructor. In the course of the interaction with the students, my interest tilted towards their syllabification difficulties and I decided to find out which of these features can be remedied through explicit teaching. All participants used in this work were healthy and had normal or correct hearing and speech ability. After explaining the nature and the reason of the study, they gave their informed consent. They were not given any monetary compensation for taking part in the study.

After using the questionnaire to ascertain the biodata of the participants, pre-intervention exercises were given to the participants and the scores were measured. A tape recorder was also used in all the processes of the data collection. I then observed teaching and learning process in their classrooms and I went through their syllabus and acquainted myself with the topics being taught. I then conducted a pre-test on segmental pronunciation and suprasegmental pronunciation. I measured the test and compared the result with the post-tests I conducted.

There were three testing times: a pretest, an immediate posttest, and a delayed posttest after the treatment. The target phonological forms were syllable structure. I planned a set of classroom activities which were focused on the acquisition of English

syllable. Every activity was planned separately and it was prepared before the beginning of each lesson. Some of the activities were inspired by pronunciation course books while others were created by me. I started with the segmental acquisitions before suprasegmental acquisition. This is because segmental features are the bedrock of suprasegmental (Fries, 1952:16). The activities were orderly executed according to their focus and the level of difficulty. All the activities used in this work were implemented in the classroom. The activities were incorporated in a lesson plan adopted by the Ghana Education Service with some modification to suit the needs of the participants and their classroom setting. The lesson plan was organised taken into consideration the topic, available time and the objective study.

Participants were introduced to the importance of pronunciation and identification of syllabification. It is important to know that in language acquisition, while some features may seem to be particularly difficult for speakers of a given language to acquire other features may appear easy to acquire. I largely incorporated aspects of DeKeyser's (1998) output-based instruction whereby explicit instruction is followed by form-focused activities. The form-focused instruction is a pedagogical practice that offers the second language (L2) teachers the opportunity to draw their students' attention to language form. This provided the opportunity to notice the target forms needed for intelligibility (syllabification).

Exercises were given to the participants in the course of the intervention and after the intervention, the results were compared to see those syllable structures that can be easily acquired. The taught course was organized in sessions. Each session concentrated on a particular aspect of the pronunciation of English, such as vowel quality, vowel duration, consonant articulation, final consonants, final clusters and initial clusters, stress etc. I compared the pronunciation features of Lingua Franca Core (LFC) with the pronunciation difficulties of the participants. This helped me target the features that are important for maintaining intelligibility in Jenkins (2005) data. I then matched those areas to the needs of the participants. I skipped the irrelevant pronunciation difficulties that will not affect intelligibility and focused more on LFC priority areas, such as syllabification, nuclear stress, and by taking extra pronunciation activities into the classroom.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Syllabification plays a critical role in intelligibility. During the pre-intervention, it was startling to observe the difficulty the participants encountered in counting syllables. Counting syllables posed the greatest challenge for the participants and this is attributable to their local language because of its syllable structure. Participants demonstrated both internal and external epenthesis in their pronunciation. According to Fischler (2009), internal epenthesis happens when a speaker adds vowels to break up a consonant cluster (e.g. substitution of [alɪbɔm] for [albəm]) while external epenthesis occurs when a speaker adds a vowel, and consequently a syllable, to the outside of a consonant (e.g., substitution of [mɪlk for mɪlkɪ]).

Knowledge of syllabification is a bedrock for understanding word stress. Therefore, syllabification requires absolute 'noticing' that is necessary to decipher boundaries of syllables and count out syllables. Participants began with simple exercises on syllabification. In order to promote group work which is one of the positives of explicit teaching, participants worked in pairs taking turns to pronounce polysyllabic words while their partners counted the syllables on their fingers. As expected, participants made

numerous errors in counting at pre-intervention stage, but they improved significantly at the post intervention stage.

Participants were then given worksheets for practice. They were asked to divide words into syllables. The activity begun orally, and followed by the written form (e.g., pa-la-ver). After practicing for a while they were presented with worksheets containing spaces for words ranging in length from one to five syllables.

In order to limit them by allowing them to focus on a particular group of words, they were then given classifications such as fruits or sport teams. The aim here was to write as many words as possible within the given category with the proper number of syllables. They were then timed for three minutes and no points were given if syllables were miscounted. This activity was repeated throughout the intervention period because the participants enjoyed the activity. Figure 1 shows their performance*: pre, post and delayed*.
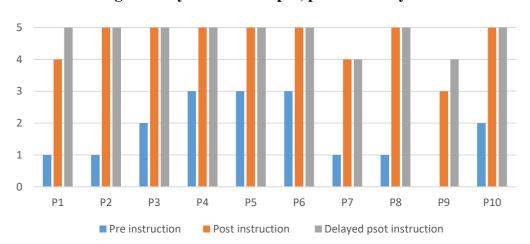
Figure .1: syllabification: pre, post and delayed

The results indicate a significant recognition of syllable boundaries. Even though, participant nine scored zero during the pre-intervention, but there was a significant improvement in his performances on syllable recognition after the treatment. This activity created the awareness of the participants on syllabification. They were able to notice that there is always one syllable within a word that receives the strongest stress and length. The power of Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt, 2010). made the participants to become more comfortable with counting syllables and at the end created happiness in them. Moreover, Noticing Hypothesis stimulated their attention towards the syllabification and thereby lowered their anxiety. This facilitated the rate of acquisition as argued by Krashen and Terrell (1983). Participants were able to internalize the sound and feel of syllabification. The results showed a significant improvement in the performance of all the participants. What really helped was the elements of repetition. This really increased their awareness skills and in turn yielded the needed results.

Disyllabic words
It was realised during pre-intervention that participants were faced with difficulties in assigning a stress on the right syllable. It is widely known that L2 learners of English find difficulty to acquire word stress (Guion, 2005; Guion, et al., 2004; Wayland et al., 2006).

Wrong assignment of primary stress may cause change in word class and meaning of a whole sentence. Basically, stress is the relative emphasis that may be given to certain syllables in a word, or to certain words in a phrase or sentence. Stress may also be noticed in properties such as increased loudness, vowel length and changes in pitch.

Here, the participants were made to understand that:

- A syllable is a beat.
- But not all syllables (beats) are equal.
- Some syllables are strong (stressed), and some are weak (unstressed).

Following Murphy and Kandil (2004), Stress Pattern Notation System was adopted. This system assigns two numbers on a word: The first number indicates the number of syllables while the second number indicates where the primary stress falls. For instance,

BEAting	2,1
PICture	2.1
HEAting	2.1
toDAY	2.2
aHEAD	2.2
aLLOW	2.2

After taking the participants through syllabification and stress, they were introduced to the unstressed syllable. Participants were made to understand that in looking at unstressed syllables, the following will be observed:

1. Spelling doesn't matter.
2. The vowel sound in an unstressed syllable sounds like the vowel in the word "but" or in the first syllable of "about."
3. Unstressed syllables can sometimes be difficult to hear.

After the practice, the participants realized that function words usually contain unstressed syllables therefore are not as loud as the content words. According to Reed (2014:200), "The prosody of English begins with the alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables in disyllabic and polysyllabic words. The complexity of the English syllable poses challenges." Paunović & Savić (2008:72) added that "Students often do not have a clear idea of why exactly 'the melody of speech' should be important for communication, and therefore seem to lack the motivation to master it, while teachers do not seem to be theoretically or practically well-equipped to explain and illustrate its significance"

Table 1: Disyllabic words

Participants	Word 1	Word 2	Word 3	Word 4	Word 5	Word 6	Word 7	Word 8	Word 9	Word 10
P1	pencil ½	table ½	blackboard ½	classroom ½	teacher ½	madam 1/2	ground floor 1/2	staircase ½	whiteboard 1/2	crayon 1/2
P2	table ½	crayon ½	pencil 1/2	table ½	blackboard	classroom 1/2	prefect 1/2	duster ½	front roll 1/2	back roll 1/2
P3	classroom ½	teacher ½	madam 1/2	prefect ½	cupboard ½	maker 1/2	breakover 1/3	lesson 1/2	window 1/2	math set 1/2
P4	pencil ½	table ½	blackboard 1/2	classroom ½	prefect ½	groundfloor ½	staircase ½	whiteboard 1/2	lazy 1/2	clever 1/2
P5	madam ½	prefect ½	cupboard 1/2	pencil ½	table ½	under ½	teacher ½	classroom 1/2	clever 1/2	lazy 1/2
P6	blackboard ½	classroom ½	prefect 1/2	ground floor ½	staircase ½	upstairs 2/2	clever ½	teacher 1/2	madam 1/2	students 1/2
P7	teacher ½	madam ½	pencil 1/2	exam 2/2	classroom ½	prefect 1/2	ground floor 1/2	staircase 1/2	learning 1/2	lazy 1/2
P8	writing	clever	madam	exam	teacher	pencil	table	blackboard	classroom	students
P9	teacher	break time	table	exam	brilliant	madam	students	clever	prefect	pencil
P10	teacher	lazy	pencil	madam	teacher	marker	madam	students	classroom	clever

The above table buttresses the preference for strong-weak syllable over the weak-strong in disyllabic words.

Participants were made to understand that whenever they learn a new word, they should know the following:
1. meaning (not just translation)
2. part of speech
3. etymology and/or related words
4. usage (phrasal verb, count/non count noun, transitivity, irregular forms, etc.)
5. number of syllables
6. stress pattern

Since the objective of this paper cantered on acquisition of syllables, the attention of the participants was drawn to the last two above (5 and 6):
a. How many syllables does a word have?
b. Which syllable gets the (primary) stress?

Participants were asked to list new words they have learned, how many syllables they have and their stress patterns. By the use of the Stress Pattern Notation System, participants were to identify the stress pattern of the disyllabic words for things they see around their classroom. Again, they were to identify which syllable is stressed and clap as they say them. Lastly, they were asked to stand up as the mentioned stressed syllable. All the participants performed well. This is because the exercise on syllabication had been done several times. The use of the Stress Pattern Notation System also eased matters for the participants. They were able to mention the two-syllable words around them. Table 1 below shows the words the participants mentioned. They were then instructed to use the notation system to indicate the pattern. Here the participants were able to list the words with the correct number of syllables and the primary stress. This indicates the effectiveness of explicit teaching which drills the participants with mimicking. They were able to identify various words with their stress patterns. Here are the words used by the participants in Table 1.

Distinguishing between trochaic and iambic
Participants were taught the difference between trochaic and iambic. Trochaic and iambic are two stress patterns in English. The common between the two is the trochaic. The participants were made to understand that in the trochaic stress pattern, the first syllable is stressed while in the iambic stress pattern the second syllable is stressed. Again, they were taught that the trochaic stress pattern is also known as strong/weak pattern while the iambic stress pattern is referred to as weak/ strong pattern.

Participants were asked to arrange the following words under **strong**-weak and weak-**strong**
1. differ
2. defer
3. ego
4. ago
5. awkward
6. occurred
7. person
8. percent

The participants performed well in this exercise. Gradually, I observed the impact of the explicit teaching on pronunciation which I consider very effective in teaching and learning process. Figure 2 presents the results.
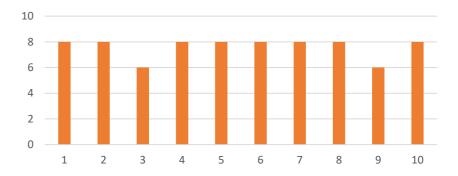

Figure 2: trochaic and iambic

Stress pattern

Considering their performance in the activities so far, I decided to test them on unguided activity. This is an activity that makes learners more independent in their mind. I provided a stress pattern and asked the participants to find words that match those stress patterns. I provided the following stress pattern and asked the participants to produce the word. The table 2 below shows the stress patterns.

Table 2: Stress pattern

Words	Stress patterns
1	**1/1**
2	**½**
3	**2/2**
4	**1/3**
5	**2/3**
6	**3/3**

The performance here too was encouraging. Table 3 indicates their performance on the unguided exercise. The denominators show the number of syllables. Seven of the participants were able to provide the needed words that match the number of syllables system given for each column. Participant 2 had only one wrong, while participants 3 and 9 had two wrong. The syllable type they had wrong was the three syllabic words.

The main objective of this work is to test the efficiency of explicit instruction in acquiring English syllable structure among Ghanaian speakers in a classroom setting. In applying explicit instruction, it was demonstrated that the main challenge faced by the participants was syllabification. It was also shown that some of the syllable structure challenges are created by the phonotactics of their first language. This syllable structure constraint has affected the learning of L2, especially the pronunciation. Obviously, the phonotactics of a language are an integral part of the sound system, and they are language specific phenomena. Phonotactics dictate the possible sound sequences and syllable

structures in a language. Differences in phonotactics between an L1 and an L2 can impede language learners to successfully learn an L2. L2 learners are prone to L1 interference in their quest for learning an L2. The L1 interference may affect every part of the syllable: onset, nucleus and coda. The results in this study support the idea that differences in production of speech sounds can be partly attributed to differences in the L1 sound system. This interference may lead to accented speech. However, the performance of the participants suggests that constant provision of explicit instruction in the classroom can help mitigate the accented speech of L2 speakers.

Table 3: Stress pattern

Participants	1/1	1/2	2/2	1/3	2/3	3/3
P1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
P2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
P3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
P4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
P5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
P6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
P7	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
P8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
P9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
P10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

The data also revealed that English syllable structures posed particular difficulties to participants. Before the intervention, the participants used to break the consonants clusters by inserting vowels between them to conform to the phonotactics of their native language. This situation was resolved through the explicit instruction. This indicates that some pronunciation difficulties of L2 learners can be remedied through the explicit teaching. Again, it is very clear from the discussions that explicit teaching is effective on the acquisition of syllable structure of a second language. This is because the participants scored very high marks during the immediate test and delayed test. Moreover, intervention really helped in solving the pronunciation difficulties of syllable structure of the learners of English. The intervention was a series of concrete measures, approaches or techniques put in place to solve problems of pronunciation. In language acquisition, some aspects of pronunciation are more difficult than others. In the case of a second language learner, it is always effective to target those aspects that are not found in the learner's native sound system. In the light of this, it is prudent for an instructor to study the similarities and the differences between the learner's first language and their target language through the use of Contrastive Analysis. This may lead to a fruitful acquisition. This is when the phonotactic constraints in L1 appear to be persistent in L2. In other words, there are some of the features in L1 that may interfere in the L2 acquisition.

The complex nature of English syllables arises from the number of onsets and codas in the syllable structure. According to Reed (2014:190), "the complexity of the English syllable allows onsets of up to three consonants phonemically and codas of up to four consonants phonetically in monosyllabic words." This poses a great challenge to L2

speakers whose language do not have such complex onset and coda. Gimson (1970) added that English has a very complex structure. This position was affirmed by Maddieson (2013) who maintained that out of 486 languages surveyed, English is reported among the languages as having a complex syllable structure. It is undoubted that the speakers of a language whose syllable structure is moderately complex will face some difficulties when learning a second language with complex syllable structure. Ghanaian languages have a moderately complex structure while English has a very complex syllables structure. Through interventions in the classroom, the pronunciation difficulties of the participants were resolved considerately.

In relation to the challenges faced by the participants, Reed (2014:191) also observed a similar situation when she researched on intelligibility of Thai, Japanese and Chinese. She found out the following two possible strategies were used the participants: (1) Final consonant deletion or consonant cluster reduction, eliminating some or all coda consonants; and (2) Epenthesis, inserting vowels to restore a C-V syllable structure.
She added that learners use these phonological processes unconsciously as they seek to conform to their L1 syllable structure and this has an adverse impact on intelligibility, either singly or in combination with morpho-syntactic errors.

CONCLUSION

Explicit instruction is very effective because it offers the teacher the chance to test students with a variety exercises as Crystal (2010) admits that students cannot be shown all the varieties that exist but they should be exposed to the variety around them and this should be a variety they hear on the streets. The current work investigated the acquisition of syllable structure through explicit teaching in the classroom. There are other aspects such as motivation, classroom atmosphere teachers' experience, etc. that affect acquisition in the classroom. This study recommends that future studies look at those aspects. This would add knowledge to the various factors that affect language learning in classrooms.

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