TESTING AN APPROACH TO TEACHING ITALIAN LYRIC DICTION TO OPERA SINGERS:
AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
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Abstract

Using the qualitative framework of action research (AR), this thesis empirically tested my five session, Italian Lyric Diction Course for Opera Singers by examining the validity and efficaciousness of its design, materials, course content, and pedagogical approach of explicit articulatory instruction (EAI). Data collection instruments included: semi-structured participant interviews, audio recording and transcribing of the classes, and an invited panel of eight observer-feedback experts from the fields of foreign language pedagogy, pronunciation instruction, and Italian language instruction.

The data analysis uncovered that my teaching approach was based on a Seven Point Circle (7PC) pedagogical framework which emerged from a set of Twelve Principals governing my teaching process: 1. listening/observing, 2. diagnosing, 3. evaluating the degree of L1 transfer into the L2, 4. spontaneously creating a personalized plan-of-action, 5. determining required background knowledge, 6. determining the ease of attainability by the student, 7. assessing the student's comfort zone.
Acknowledgements

Enrica Piccardo (M.A. Thesis Supervisor)
Thank you so much for supervising this thesis and helping me to find my way through the pertinent literature. I am so grateful for your patience with me, my emotions, and my transformation as I underwent major changes as a person, a student, and a teacher in developing another facet to my already plurilingual identity, i.e. that of "researcher", or more specifically, "researcher-teacher". I am grateful for your support and encouragement as I learnt not only a new language but a new lens through which to see myself, my work, my approach, and my students.

Julie Kerekes (M.A. Thesis, 2nd Committee Member)
Thank you for your support, your feedback, comments, your patience with me during my "emotional challenges", and your gift of knowing the one question which would stimulate a research "domino effect". I am so grateful for your explicit instructions, your patience with me, and your guidance.

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)
Thank you so much to The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for awarding me the Joseph Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Master's Scholarship. I am very grateful for your acknowledgment of my work's relevance and importance in the field of Social Sciences and education within the arts.

My Observer-feedback providers and participants
Thank you so much to the anonymous group of young-professional opera singers, researchers, professors, and colleagues who gave so generously of their time to offer their expertise to this study.

"The Original OISE Gang"
Thank you to:
Eleonora Maldina whose brilliant mind, work ethic, great attitude (and patience with me...) inspired me through all of our projects and essays during our two year M.A. together, Yecid Ortega for being the best unofficial OISE mentor, friend, and colleague, Angelica Galante, a great friend, a great support, and a great and kind colleague, Amir Kalan, for always being there to support, help, and encourage me.

OISE Support
Thank you to:
Lisa Rupchand, Michelle Pon, and Terry Louisy who made, what I thought were so many impossible things, possible.
Mariana Jardim and Monique Flaccavento our amazing LLE library support system.

Lisa Faieta & Johnathon Kirby
Thank you both so much for believing in me from before the beginning. I could never have done this or got through this without the two of you. ILBTP!
Joan Dornemann
Thank you for introducing the discipline of opera lyric diction to me and for helping me find my place in the world of opera.

Jennifer Tung
Thank you for all of your support, encouragement, and belief.

Catherine Tait
Thank you for always believing in me.

The Rohowskys
Thank you to Karl, Rose, Birgit, and Herman who gave me a safe, nurturing, and supportive home in which to develop my voice, my technique, and my life. Look what happened!!!

A special thank you to my close friends who have put up with my isolation:

• **Rukshana Khambata** - Thank you for your support, patience, and listening skills, I couldn't have done this without you!
• **Samantha Aminadav** - Thank you so much for your friendship.
• **Judith McCaffery** - Thank you for your spiritual peace, love, and support
• **Julie Nesrallah** - Allo! Thank you so much... For all these years... And all that support... Allo!
• **Nairy Guirguis** - For being my "Ustaza" from whom I have learnt SO much over the years and **Dr. Samir Guirguis** for keeping me healthy
• **Manuela Scarci** - Thank you so much for all the countless hours of learning, teaching, patience, and friendship

This research was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.
Dedication

To Maaa

Who supported this lifetime training period through all the language schools, books, tutoring, alphabet charts on the wall, piano lessons, competitions, hours of piano and vocal technical exercise practice, voice lessons, coachings, acting classes, movement classes, Alexander lessons, and trips to New York, San Francisco, London, and Tel-Aviv, and Montreal, and several universities....

To Maaa, who has told me for years, "You need to write a book...!!"

Zay gezunt! Biz hundert un tsvatsik!

One more degree to go!!! (Bli neder...)
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Chapter 1 - The Diction Course's Inception

In 2010, The Royal Conservatory of Music's (RCM) Glenn Gould School (GGS) hired me to teach two courses for their Performance Diploma Program (PDP) students: (a) a full-year, Italian language course, and (b) a half-year, Italian diction course. The design of these two courses, however, necessitated balancing this gesture of academic sovereignty with the required level of responsibility and accountability to the students, the academic institution, and the art form which it served.

Of the two courses, planning and designing the Italian diction course was of particular interest to me since the understanding, function, and sounds of languages and dialects, as well as the mechanics of pronunciation and its effect and influence on the operatic voice, have all been lifelong passions of mine. I realized that the design of this diction course would not only draw upon my educational and professional backgrounds in the fields of music, opera, language learning, and pronunciation pedagogy, but it would also test my ability to create a course which would anticipate the needs and requirements of its learners. The creation of this diction course necessitated fusing my professional background as an opera singer with my current work as a language diction coach, while capitalizing on many years of pianistic training, all informed by my formal education in music, languages, and linguistics at both McGill University and the University of Toronto. Additionally, I wanted the course's content, structure, and form to have as positive an effect as possible on the students' operatic career path.

To ensure the course's academic validity, its content and materials needed to be derived from and based on, empirical data and scholarly, academic sources, while including both theoretical and practical components. Furthermore, since these students are in a time-sensitive
field where competitions, university graduate programs, as well as young artist programs all have upper age limits, this diction course needed to effect the maximum amount of change within the shortest period of time.

**My Background and Qualifications**

**Private study.** As a young-professional opera singer, I trained with some of the world's greatest operatic and language coaches, voice teachers, and internationally renowned singers and directors. However, working with these high profile international masters had an unexpected effect on me. I began finding the operatic preparatory work more captivating, fascinating, and intellectually stimulating than the end result, i.e. the performance. The pedagogue who had the greatest effect on me and who introduced me to the idea of opera coaching through language - beginning from its smallest, "micro" phonemic units, i.e. vowels and consonants, to the largest, "macro," socio-linguistic, pragmatic, cultural units of human emotion, identity, and expression - was Joan Dornemann, Assistant Conductor and Coach at the Metropolitan Opera, with whom I studied for seven years. Joan revealed to me the inextricable interconnection between language and the composer’s realization of human expression in the musical setting of that language. Joan also taught me the coach's pivotal responsibility in assisting a singing artist to find and integrate these components with their voices.

**University.** After many years of working as an operatic performer, coach, and teacher, I obtained a Licentiate Diploma in Music Performance (Lic. Dip.) with distinction (Outstanding Achievement in Voice) from McGill University. I then returned to the University of Toronto to complete my 4-year B.A., graduating with distinction, majoring in Second Language Learning (Italian) and a double minor in: Near & Middle Eastern Studies (Arabic Language and Linguistics) and Italian Culture and Communication Studies.
Designing previous diction courses. The first unofficial pilot testing for the GGS's Italian diction course took place over the winter break of 2006 at McGill University when I was asked to design an Italian diction workshop. I expanded the McGill workshop into a 2-week, daily diction course, in the summer of 2009, for Opera on the Avalon, a summer program offered in St. John's, Newfoundland, in its first year of operation. Since I was developing the diction courses while concurrently pursuing my B.A., I seized the opportunity to search for and extract materials, contents, and methods of instruction from my university course work. I gauged the effectiveness of my choice of approach and supporting materials from the efficacy and accuracy of the students' results, their reactions, and by requesting their feedback. Additional course reactions and comments came from the students' voice teachers and coaches, who either directly or indirectly through their students, commented on the link between their singers' improvement in pronunciation and vocal production which consequently enabled them, as coaches and voice teachers, to better concentrate on their own technical and musical work.

Why Did I Choose the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE)?

My pedagogical approach. I have an insatiable fascination with knowing how and why things work as well as discovering new concepts and acquiring knowledge. But I believe that the learning process can only optimally take place through information-itemization which has been broken down into logical, sequenced, progressively serialized elements, following a logical, cumulative order. Because of the inter-dependence of these critical learning units, steps cannot be skipped and must be explicitly instructed. In my own learning, failure on the part of the instructor to provide me with these critical explicit, stepwise instructions meant that the onus fell on me to create them. I believe that teaching is supposed to be the clear, purposeful, and methodical communication of instruction through which a teacher mentors, inspires, and
encourages her or his students to a place of better understanding, performance, and ultimately, self-reliance. I developed this approach to lyric diction instruction because I saw a need for a stepwise, methodical, and attainable approach leading to self-reliance in the instruction of lyric diction to opera singers.

**OISE.** In order for my course and the approach through which I teach it to be legitimized, they would need to be empirically tested and held accountable within a graduate degree program in a faculty of education where I could empirically test my approach and examine Italian lyric diction instruction from a pedagogical point of view. This meant:

1. Researching the field of (Italian) opera diction instruction.
2. Looking at the descriptions of courses currently being taught at universities and conservatories.
3. Investigating the methods and/or approaches currently in use.
4. Examining current course textbooks.

The University of Toronto's Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE)'s Languages and Literacies Education (LLE) Program (formerly the Second Language Education (SLE) Program) filled all of my requirements, offering courses in the areas of foreign language pedagogy, language education research methods, and curriculum design.

**The Role of the Diction Instructor**

**Singers' training.** An opera singer is equal parts stage actor, musician, and linguist. Opera singers do the bulk of their training between the ages of 20 and 30, during which time they may earn, for example, a Bachelor of Music Degree (B. Mus.) and possibly a Master of Music Degree (M. Mus.) or the equivalent diplomas. During these crucial 10 years, they are typically expected to: (a) win several (inter-)national voice competitions; (b) attend summer opera
programs; (c) enter a young artist (apprentice) program; while, (d) gaining experience working for smaller, regional opera companies. Time is not on the side of a young professional opera singer. For this reason, opera singers have acting coaches, voice teachers, opera coaches, language coaches, and movement coaches (how to move on stage). The costs involved in opera performance preparation are prohibitive. We instructors are the singers' educational support system and are there to effect the maximum amount of change in the minimum amount of time.

**The purpose of stage language.** An opera singer's "workplace" is a huge stage, on which she or he sings, without amplification, in a vocal range which can be well above the "normal speaking range," while competing to be heard over an orchestra comprised of 50-80 instrumentalists. Because they need to be heard and understood, the primary purpose of having a system of pronunciation specifically designed for the stage is clarity.

**The Objective of Stage Language.** My concept of "Stage Language" and "Pronunciation for Stage" extends from Derwing & Munro's (2005) discussion of intelligibility, comprehensibility, and accentedness (Derwing & Munro, 2005, p. 385).

I believe that a singer must be as fully intelligible as possible to her or his audience, and achieve as much ease of comprehensibility as possible. With regards to an opera singer's accentedness rating, my opinion is that a profession-specific variation or addition to Derwing & Munro's (2005) chart is required. I design my opera diction courses with the idea that diction for the operatic stage is based on a utopic, neutralized pronunciation whose phonemic inventory's excludes (to the extent that this is possible) the sounds indicating social register, specific place of origin, or level of education. Instead, stage pronunciation's purpose and primary function is to ensure that the singer is as intelligible and comprehensible as possible to their audience while having as little marked accentedness as possible.
**Standard Italian (SI) pronunciation.** Italian has a theoretical, ideal, neutralized pronunciation (NP) called Standard Italian (SI). It is sociolinguistically neutral and does not discriminate based on colour, creed, sex, orientation, place or country of origin. SI, as a neutralized pronunciation, has no native speakers and is only used by those people (usually stage, television, and opera performers) who have purposefully and specifically learned it. While SI can trace its origins in Florentine Italian (SI is called a "cleaned up Florentine pronunciation"), even a native of Florence would have to learn SI pronunciation as a foreign (or even affected) accent. In other words, for a native of Italy to follow the pronunciation rules of SI's NP means their having to phonetically disassociate themselves from their geographic and familial point of origin.

SI has a regulating body called The Academia della Crusca “founded in 1583 [and] ... accepted by Italians as authoritative in linguistic matters” (Clivio & Danesi, 2000, p. 18); and whose authorized publications include the Zingarelli dictionary, the Dizionario d'ortografia e di pronunzia (The Dictionary of orthography and pronunciation) or "DOP" which is available in both print and online at http://www.dizionario.rai.it. Each of these Academia della Crusca publications begins with a letter by letter overview of the use and function (and in some cases, pronunciation evolution from Latin) of each letter in the SI alphabet. Adhering to SI's rules of pronunciation means that every opera student has access to the same uniform, scholarly-based, NP of Italian.

Although SI as a written language has existed since its written codification by Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, its diffusion as a spoken language only began at the time of Italy's unification in the late 1800s. But more significantly, SI only saw mass dissemination through television and radio in the mid 20th century when Italians began hearing SI transmitted by the country's national radio and television broadcast company, Radiotelevisione Italia or RAI
(Clivio & Danesi, 2000). How much, and to what extent, an Italian may choose to 'neutralize' or disassociate themselves from their point of origin by adopting this sterilized, non-affiliated form of speech is theoretically possible through learning SI's pronunciation rules but, because of its sociolinguistic implications, would be a very personal decision on the part of the learner.

**Pronunciation.** On any given night, an opera singer can be expected to look and sound like a native-born Italian, French, German, English (or possibly Russian, Czech) actor. It is not reasonable to expect that a 20-something year old be fluent in all of these languages. In contrast to the course content and pedagogy of a typical foreign language course, a lyric diction course content is not responsible for the instruction of spontaneous speech. Since the operatic texts are all pre-written, the need for "spontaneous speech" is not a factor since the texts can be learnt, coached, and rehearsed. The challenge of language prosody, i.e. the ability to convey exclamations, anger, love, hatred, etc., are aided through the musical setting of the language through rhythm, the speeds (tempi), and the musical phrasing. To a certain extent, the composers have taken care of the language at a macro level. However, on a micro level, the authentic sound of a language can only be attained through the crucial acquisition of the language's phonetic inventory.

**Diction Instructor**

**Job description.** A diction instructor’s job description requirements mirror the three main components which comprise an opera singer's "trilogy of training", i.e. language, music, and drama:

1. Language
   a. "Origin" - What is the student's phonemic inventory background? The instructor must acquaint her/himself with the students' phonemic inventory in order to know
which of the target language's (TL) sounds the singer already possesses, which will need to be adapted for the TL, and which will need to be acquired as "new sounds"?

b. "Goal" - The instructor must have a clear understanding of the range(s) of acceptability of the TL's phonemic inventory (in this study's case, Italian).
c. "Origin to Goal" - There must be a method or approach to aid and facilitate the singer's transition from their personal phonetic inventory to that of the TL.

2. Music
   a. It is the diction instructor's job to assist the singer in the linguistic understanding and/or rationale of the composer's adaptation of the libretto (the play, the poetry, the book) and its musical setting. This is done by showing the composer's use of musical line, phrasing, rhythm, tempo (speed), and tessitura (setting a phrase in a high/low/medium part of the voice) as a means to reflect the language's emotion, drama and rhythm.

3. Drama
   a. Lyric diction instruction also includes helping the singer understand, feel, and project language-appropriate (pragmatic) non-verbal body language while singing.

**A non-regulated field.** The field of opera lyric diction instruction is pedagogically and academically unregulated. There are no graduate university degree programs leading to the qualification of opera diction instructor. Consequently, there are no regulatory boards to:

1. Set industry standards and best practices.
2. Enforce practitioners' maintenance of these standards.
3. Conduct ongoing research into the development of course content and methods of instruction.

4. Design pedagogical, peer reviewed textbooks according to empirically tested methods and/or approaches.

Ironically, opera diction courses are program requirements in all vocal studies programs in university faculties of music or conservatories (See university and conservatory course examples in Appendix A). Typically, diction classes are offered either as one full-year course covering all four languages (i.e. Italian, German, French, and English) or as four, separate, one-semester, courses.

**A suggested qualifying opera diction instructor course of study.** Opera lyric diction instruction is a specialization within the field of pronunciation pedagogy. Therefore, lyric diction instruction should attract instructors with cross-disciplinary educational backgrounds that have not only focused on language (Italian, French, German, English, dialectology, sociolinguistics, phonetics) but also music (piano, theory, history, styles and conventions of the various composers and their periods), voice (production), and drama.

A potential future candidate for a university program of study leading to accreditation as an opera diction instructor may already have a background in piano, voice, and/or language classes which they took in their teenage years and which has led them to pursue an undergraduate degree majoring in one of the standard operatic languages and have included courses in linguistics, sociolinguistics, and phonetics. If available at the undergraduate level, the future diction instructor candidate should already begin taking language teaching/learning pedagogy courses at that time. By her or his 4th year, a practicum, in conjunction with a faculty of music's voice program, should be incorporated into the program of study and include sitting in on voice lessons and observing opera rehearsals. Having graduated from this proposed inter-
disciplinary (music + language) undergraduate degree, at the graduate level, the student would further specialize her or his program of study to include courses in pronunciation pedagogy, and foreign language education courses.

Most of the courses I describe above are offered at the University of Toronto. Several additional field specific, lyric diction instruction qualifying "core courses" would need to be developed which would specifically train the apprenticing diction instructor to:

1. Listen to and analyze the singer's phonetic production, and physically-empathetically, 'sentire' (a verb which, in Italian, includes all of the receptive senses, i.e. hearing, listening, feeling) the physical production of the student's vowels/consonants;
2. Aurally detect, recognize, pinpoint, and ultimately explain to the singer, the current state of their place/manner of articulation (consonants) and the height/backness/roundness/tenseness of the tongue (vowels) and be able to guide the singer to within the target language's acceptable range;
3. Instruct and guide the student in the physical articulation of the correct target sounds.

**Current diction instructors.** University and conservatory diction courses are usually taught by opera coaches, current/former singers, and/or native speakers of Italian. While instructors of these backgrounds each bring a wealth of knowledge and personal experience into the diction instruction class, their personal and/or educational backgrounds are neither profession-specific nor holistically complete.

**Opera coaches.** Opera coaches are pianists with specialized, additional training, gained through university training programs, young artist programs, and/or apprentice positions within opera companies. Opera coaches are trained in music conventions, traditions, performance practice, and style (e.g. the difference between Mozart, Puccini, and Wagner). A coach's job can also have included training as a rehearsal pianist, during which they substitute for a full orchestra
in staging or music rehearsals, playing the orchestral part which has been 'reduced' for piano (with or without the conductor). As the 'factotum' of the opera house, they will also have varying amounts of knowledge in voice production, vocal technique, language, pronunciation, and the general rehearsal process. Opera coaches also work one-on-one with singers and, depending on their experience, exposure, training, and education, can be a lifelong and indispensable aid to a singer's career. Their work is a specialization within the field of music and not linguistics, or more specifically, pronunciation pedagogy. Since an opera coach and a diction coach's work are complementary, many of my private students have been referred to me by opera coaches whose musical-dramatic work with the singers becomes more seamless and fluid subsequent to my language-specific vowel and consonant work with the singer.

**Opera singers.** The passing of knowledge, and the sharing of experience and the operatic "oral tradition" by experienced opera singers who have reached high levels within the industry to the next generation of young professionals, is invaluable. Over the course of an international operatic career, each opera singer goes through an intensely personal journey of learning and will have had one-on-one work with many specialists from varying fields, including: actors, conductors, coaches, language teachers, accompanists, voice teachers, and movement instructors. The professional development of an opera singer is a reflective study of "the self" and, even when working in a group scenario, it is the artist's responsibility to personalize, internalize, and ultimately express their art. This is the reason that singers develop a unique, intimate, and personal relationship with their voice teacher in whom they have entrusted the oral expression of their innermost thoughts, emotions, and life experiences, i.e. their voice.

A successful, professional opera singer will have had her or his own personal language pronunciation journey which does not necessarily translate into the skills, education, or experience required for lyric diction instruction in a classroom or one-on-one setting.
Native Speakers (NS). The concept of the NS is highly controversial, bringing with it ideas of linguistic ownership, entitlement, and privilege. For example, Canagarajah (2006) discusses Kachru's (1986) three circles of English:

- **the inner circle:** where ownership of English was claimed and norms originated;
- **the outer circle:** where English was a second language with its own well-established varieties since colonial times;
- **the expanding circle:** where English was beginning to be used as a foreign language (Canagarajah, 2006, p.22-23)

Davies (2011) says: "Whatever else they are about, native speaker questions are about identity. Who is a native speaker? What is it one is a native speaker of? These are not far from the 'who am I?' question" (Davies, 2011, p. 292). Davies adds that this fight for ownership is important "because it speaks closely to the questions of power and identity" (Davies, 2011, p. 294).

Rampton (1990) explains:

Being born into a group does not mean that you automatically speak its language well - many native speakers of English can't write or tell stories, while many non-native speakers can. Nobody's functional command is total: users of a language are more proficient in some areas than others. And most countries are multi-lingual: from an early age, children normally encounter two or more languages. Yet, despite the criticisms, the terms native speaker and mother tongue remain in circulation, continuously insinuating their assumptions. (Rampton, 1990, p. 98)

Additionally, according to de Beaugrande:

Each real speaker of the language has internalized not the entire language (as we might find it described in a comprehensive abstract grammar), but rather a model of the language, with the limitations and approximations peculiar to that speaker’s experience and abilities. In this sense, learning a language means revising one’s model of it through a succession of model stages. (de Beaugrande, 1983, p. 126)

The primary function of an opera diction coach/instructor is to guide a singer from that singer's phonetic inventory to the target language's phonetic inventory (in this study's case, SI), and all within the context of operatic performance. The instructor's skill set must include the
ability to hear, identify, and be aware of the mechanics of the finite variations of each singer's phonetic inventory as well as the target language's inventory, while making allowances for the fact that the singer is on a stage, their audience is a certain distance away, and they will be singing this language over the sound of an orchestra. The end goal is language clarity. Since SI is an artificial, utopic, ideal pronunciation, being a "native speaker" of Italian is not an applicable credential for this job.
Chapter 2 - Literature Review

I began my study's search for literature by seeking previous empirical studies on the structure, form, and approach to teaching an Italian diction course. To the best of my knowledge, there are no such empirical studies on these aspects of Italian diction pedagogy. I then expanded my literature search outwards, looking for Italian diction textbooks and Italian diction reference books currently used by English language universities or conservatories in North America as either diction course reference or textbooks. I am also including, in this chapter, a review of Monsen & Shaughnessy's (1978) study in which they examined the effects of explicit articulatory instruction on the production of five specific vowels in deaf adolescents. I have included this article because the approach they used in their quantitative study most resembles my approach to teaching vowel production. Finally, I have included three articles which discuss and support various pedagogical concepts which I use in my course.

The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)

Prior to beginning the literature review, I will discuss the International Phonetic Association and the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) which they created. This background information is necessary since I use the IPA in various parts of this thesis.

The International Phonetic Association was founded in 1886 and created a system of notating human sound using a one-symbol to one-sound ratio. This alphabet is called the International Phonetic Alphabet or IPA. IPA is mostly comprised of Latin based letters but, since they required additional symbols, they also borrowed from the Greek and Icelandic alphabets, in addition to creating a few, new symbols.
IPA can represent sound on several levels. On a basic level, it is possible to notate a word's (or words') vowel and consonant sounds in a "broad transcription". It is also possible, through the use of IPA's notation of suprasegmentals, tones and word accents, and diacritics, to account for tones of voice, and (language specific) variations in vowel and consonant production through a more ornate "narrow transcription". When differentiating between the two levels of transcription, broad transcription is shown between slashes // and narrow transcription is shown between square brackets, i.e. [ ]. Under general circumstances, however, and in the case of this thesis, IPA is typically transcribed using square brackets.

As an example of the difference between broad and narrow transcription, I will contrast the English verb: "to say" with the Italian, 2nd person, singular, indicative, present tense of the verb essere (to be): "tu sei." In broad transcription, both are transcribed: /tu sei/.

Italian, "tu sei", in narrow transcription, would detail:

- Italian's dental [t]
- a more rounded [u]
- the syntactic doubling caused by the word, "tu", causing the initial [s] of "sei" (which in some regions of Italy is apical, i.e. having a more "hissing sound") to be lengthened
- the comparative length of [ɛ] to the [i] which also, as the word's nucleus, bares the stress

Rendering: [tu 'ssɛ:-i]

English "to say" in narrow transcription, would show:
• An aspirated [t]
• the English, unstressed reduction of [u] to a schwah vowel
• the tongue's lower position for the final [i] (as compared with Italian [i])
• word stress

Rendering: [tʰə 'sɛɪ]

While the diction coach/instructor must be aware of the differences in detail ability of the two levels of transcription, the diction class is not a university phonetics course. It is acceptable, by convention, to use square brackets when using IPA, to pre-indicate that the transcription being used represents SI in IPA transcription.

**Colorni - A Manual of Diction and Phonetics**

Within the biographical information contained in Evelina Colorni's *A Manual of Diction and Phonetics* (Colorni, 1970), there is no mention of a formal educational background. The reader is left to assume that her career as an Italian diction instructor came about from a fortuitous association with Maestro Arturo Toscanini, one of the great conductors of the 20th century, whom she credits with “introducing her to the world of opera” (Colorni, 1970, p. ii). Maestro Toscanini asked Colorni to coach the Italian pronunciation of “singers [who were performing with him] in the National Broadcasting Company's (NBC) opera productions under his baton” (Colorni, 1970, p. ii).

According to the Dizionario d'ortografia e di pronunzia (DOP) (Migliorini, Tagliavini, and Fiorelli, 1981) and the Zingarelli Dictionary (Zingarelli, 1991), all orthographic /e/ and /o/ in Italian represent the closed [ɛ] and closed [ɔ] sounds except: “the oppositions of closed/open: /ɛ/ versus /ɛ/ and /ɔ/ versus /ɔ/, exist(s) only in stressed
syllables” (Rogers & D’Arcangeli, 2004, p.118). In some words, this opposition creates minimal pairs. Unless someone has specifically studied and memorized the rules of SI, (whether born in Italy or elsewhere) it is necessary to verify the SI pronunciation of the orthographic /e/ and /o/ (i.e. closed/open) in the stressed syllable by consulting an authentic source.

Lepschy & Lepschy (1977, p. 63) present a list of minimal pairs in SI where /e/ and /o/ are contrastive, e.g. "colto", when pronounced with closed /o/, means "educated", when pronounced with open /ɔ/, means "gather" (indicative, past participle); "pesca", when pronounced with closed /e/, means "fishing", and when pronounced with open /ɛ/, means "peach" (Lepschy & Lepschy, 1977, p. 63).

Colorni reverses this rule, effectively creating her own "Colorni dialect." Her justification is that “the opening of unstressed /o/ and /e/, including the finals, is practiced by many prominent singers, and sounds most convincing." She further (incorrectly) explains that “according to (her) Rule I, final /o/ is open, whether accented or unaccented. There are no exceptions” (Colorni, 1970, p. 146).

The author also falsely claims that Italian /a/ is pronounced [a] which “is identical with the German low vowel" (Colorni, 1970, p. 28). The Zingarelli dictionary clearly defines the vowel sound of the SI orthographic letter /a/, transcribed as the IPA symbol [a] as: "È la vocale più aperta di tutte, e non appartiene né alla serie anteriore né a quella posteriore" (It is the most open of all the vowels and does not belong to the back nor front series of vowels, my translation) (Zingarelli, 1991, p. xii). The symbol [a], as described by Colorni above, is a low, back, unrounded vowel and not part of the SI phonemic inventory.
The subjects of aspiration (one of the more challenging aspects of Italian pronunciation for the Anglophone opera student) as well as the comparison of English and Italian plosives are insufficiently discussed. On the subject of the orthographic intervocalic /s/ in SI, which can be voiced [z] or unvoiced [s] depending on various factors, Colorni, in presenting opinion as fact, offers that “since the voiced s has greater carrying power, it is best for a singer to voice intervocalic s, which is what is usually done on the lyric stage” (Colorni, 1970, p. 147).

“The (SI) vowel subsystem has seven main phones: [i], [ɛ], [ɛ], [a], [ɔ], [o], [u]” (Clivo & Danesi, 2000, pp. 47-48). North American English (NAE) only includes four of those seven vowels as monophthongs: [i], [ɛ], [ɔ], [u] (Rogers, 2000, p. 75).

An approximate example of each of these four, NAE monophthongs sounds is:

seat [sit], set [set], sought [sɔt], suit [sut]. The SI vowel [a] only exists in NAE as the diphthongs: [aj], e.g. sky, and [aw], e.g. cow (Rogers, 2000, p. 75).

Since opera originated as an Italian art form, the phonetic training of singers necessitates the mastering of all 7 of SI’s monophthongs, which includes the ability to produce the mid, tense, front and back, SI monophthongs: [ɛ] and [ɔ]. The challenge for NAE speakers is that in “General American English” (Rogers, 2000, p. 18), these two mid, close front and back vowels are generally produced as diphthongs...consisting of a nucleus and an offglide” (International Phonetic Association, 2005, p. 42). In the case of [ɛ] it is usually produced as the diphthong: [ej] or [ɛj] and [ɔ] is typically produced as the diphthong: [ɔw] or [ɔw] (Rogers, 2000, p. 34). The importance of mastering these two vowel sounds is compounded by their frequency in SI since “...the tense/lax distinction is
neutralized in unstressed syllables in which mid vowels are always tense...” (Krämer, 2009, p. 51), meaning that these vowels' occurrences are high frequency in SI.

**Nico Castel.** Nico Castel wrote a series of reference books in which he has translated the libretti of the Italian (French, and German) operatic repertoire word by word, and line by line. He has also transcribed each word into IPA. This monumental series of books is a great legacy by Castel.

With respect to phonetic transcription, as mentioned in Chapter 1, the two purposes of a "standard language for stage" are linguistic clarity, and to provide a uniform and universal system of pronunciation based on an authentic, scholarly source. For these reasons, I source my course content entirely from authentic, scholarly sources, e.g. *Sounds, forms and uses of Italian - An Introduction to Italian linguistics* (Clivio & Danesi, 2000), *The Italian Language* (Migliorini, 1984), *The Italian Language Today* (Lepschy & Lepschy, 1991). The information contained within these sources are non-conflicting and support each other in their discussion of the unique history of the Italian language, the role of SI as compared to Italian dialects, and the delineation of the pronunciation of SI as an evolution from Latin via the Florentine dialect from which SI is derived.

Correct pronunciation is not a rival to opera nor does it detract from opera's artistic beauty. Composers, in most cases, have set a text to music, rather than vice versa. In Volume 1 of Castel's two volume *The Complete Puccini Libretti* (Castel, 2002), Castel writes on the subject of SI’s /o/ and /e/: “As for the unstressed and final /e/ /o/, some texts state that they are always closed, and others state categorically that they are always open. I say that they are neither. They are open or close depending on vocal needs,
tessitura and the colour of neighbouring vowels (vowel harmonization)” (Castel, 2002, p. xviii).

Castel later adds, “Furthermore it is a known fact that the Italian school of singing recognizes only five vowel sounds: [i-ɛ-a-ɔ-u]” (Castel, 2002, p. xvii). Later, despite having excluded /e/ and /o/ from SI's phonemic inventory, he writes: “…when syllables with closed vowels fall on very high or problematic passaggio notes, or in a constantly high tessitura, I may suggest more open vowels to accommodate the singing process” (Castel, 2002, p.xvii).

As I have previously mentioned, opera singers offer a wealth of knowledge in the form of their real-world, operatic experience. Castel's website (http://www.castelopera.com/nico.asp) boasts over 48 years of experience working with the greatest artists of his time as both a singer and as the Metropolitan Opera's diction coach. I also have benefitted from one-on-one work with Castel. My concern is that the line between linguistic facts and phonetic opinions is not delineated. Castel, like Colorni, has in effect created another Italian dialect whose authenticity can only be confirmed in consultation with his authored volumes.

Diction - As a Single, Full Year Course

Some universities and conservatories offer a 1-year comprehensive diction course, covering all four of the standard operatic languages. Part of this thesis’ empirical testing is to see if an entire semester is, in fact, needed for each of the four languages. Based on my experience in the field, a comprehensive, full-year diction course could be offered in the fourth year of an undergraduate vocal studies program (in North America) with
certain pre-requisite courses, i.e. one full year of language study in each of the operatic languages (assuming English as the L1): ITA100, GER100, FRE100 with minimum grade standards required (e.g. >70% final mark). Having completed a 1-year language course, the diction course would only need to concentrate on the fine tuning of the students' pronunciation.

I would like to interject that the success of any diction course is, in no small part, contingent on the capabilities, background and, perhaps most importantly, the motivation of the students themselves. After one year of language study in each of Italian, German, and French, the students will have a basic knowledge of not only those specific languages, but a meta-knowledge of "language". By their fourth year, they will also have completed three years with a competent voice teacher, and coach, and will have enough vocal facility and flexibility required for the finite work within a diction class. Part of the problem or challenge which stems from the dearth of research in vocal studies curriculum design, is that schools' curricula do not necessarily reflect the natural evolution of vocal studies; neither do they benefit from (or are even aware of) the natural, evolutionary progress of a voice student. To offer diction courses in a singer's first year is premature and does supply the benefit a singer would have gained in their fourth year.

After having completed three years of vocal, music, and language study, the student will enter the diction class with a basic knowledge of three additional languages' orthographic, phonetic, phonemic and grammatical systems. They will have a functional vocal facility including breath technique, dramatic training, which indirectly teaches pragmatics and body-language awareness, and a basic knowledge of performance practices, musical styles and conventions. With this amount of background training and
education, I believe that a diction course could be taught as a one-year course. This thesis will test what will ultimately be the Italian Diction section; the first unit of the one-year course.

The two diction textbooks which deal with all 4 languages which I will now review are: David Adams' A Handbook of Diction for Singers and Joan Wall's Diction for Singers: A Concise Reference for English, Italian, Latin, German, French, and Spanish Pronunciation.

**Adams, David, A Handbook of Diction for Singers**

David Adams' *A Handbook of Diction for Singers* devotes a chapter for each of: Italian, German and French. His chapter on Italian diction serves as an Italian reference depository. Adams correctly states, in his section entitled, *Dictionaries*, that: “With the two vowels, unstressed e, and o, are considered closed and will therefore have no special indication” (Adams, 2008, p. 11). His treatment of SI's seven vowels is done through comparing and contrasting them to English.

Voice onset time (VOT), consonant and vowel length, glides, diphthongs are all succinctly explained making this chapter a good reference guide. However, to use this book as a diction course text, I believe that the subjects would need to be divided into weekly chapters and include step-by-step explanations and possible approaches for each topic.
Diction for Singers - Book Review

In the book, *Diction for Singers: A Concise Reference for English, Italian, Latin, German, French, and Spanish Pronunciation* (Wall, Caldwell, Gavilanes & Allen, 2005), the authors provides one chapter for each of: English, Italian, Latin, German, French and Spanish diction rules. In the Italian Diction chapter, Wall et al. attempt to provide a comprehensive list of the rules of Italian phonetics and phonology. I am concerned with both the form and content of this chapter. Opera singers, in my experience, do not typically approach transcribing their operatic texts from having memorized phonetic and phonological rules.

Additionally, there are fundamental errors in this chapter. While SI is based on the Florentine dialect, this dialect is not, contrary to what the authors suggest, "considered the national standard for Italian diction for stage and singing" (Wall et al., 2005, p.35). It is misleading to say that "you can pronounce vowels (other than a) as open, closed..." (Wall et al., 2005, p. 35). As mentioned before, SI is comprised of a seven vowel system. The only vowels having a tense/lax distinction are the mid vowels [e] and [o].

Wall et al.'s treatment of [a] is incorrect. SI does not include the [ɑ] vowel. On the subject of the SI mid-closed vowels, Wall et al. recommend that the Native English Speaker attempt to stop the naturally occurring glide mid-way through its production, stopping on the first vowel. I have never seen or heard this recommendation successfully executed. The additional challenge is that the SI, mid-tense vowels are higher than their Standard English counterparts. For this reason, in teaching through explicit articulatory instruction, I request that the students lower their tongue positions from the high, tense,
back/front vowels [i] and [u] into the correct tongue height position for SI [e] and [o]. The book's explanation for [ʎ] and [ɲ] is also very complicated. These consonants can be easily taught as an extension from [a-ja-ja-ja-ja] to establish the correct tongue to palate place of articulation.

If a diction coach/instructor is seeking to provide a comprehensive list of SI phonetics and phonology, they would be better served to translate the introductory chapter of either the DOP or the Zingarelli dictionary, both of which were written by teams of Italian language scholars and members of the Accademia della crusca. In these volumes, the Italian scholars correctly discuss every Italian letter, its pronunciation rules, and an explanation of the sounds' evolution from Latin.

**Explicit Instruction in Vowel Production (Monsen & Shaughnessy, 1978)**

My diction instruction explicit articulatory instruction (EAI) approach is similar to the one used by Monsen & Shaughnessy (1978) in their quantitative testing of vowel production improvement in deaf adolescents through explicit articulatory based instruction. In Monsen & Shaughnessy's (1978) study, they tested five North American English (NAE) vowels: [i], [ɪ], [æ], [ɔ], [u]. The challenge that the authors were trying to address was vowel production clarity in 5 deaf children.

The participants were three 11-year-old, male children, 2 of whom had borderline severe hearing impairment/profound deafness and one child with profound deafness. These children received instruction twice a week, for thirty minutes, over the course of 5 months. The training “emphasized the articulatory relations between vowels” (Monsen & Shaughnessy, 1978, p. 417). This established the cardinal vowel boundaries as
reference points and located mid-vowels by tongue, jaw and mouth position. The results, pre- and post-experiment, were measured and charted on spectrograms which indicated that the vowels overlapped in pre-treatment production but were much clearer and distinct in post-treatment production. The authors demonstrated that “the ability of children #1 and #2 improved substantially after training; child #3 improved also, but the improvement was not as great” (Monsen & Shaughnessy, 1978, p. 421).

Vowel quality is described in terms of: (a) tongue position, i.e. height, backness, tenseness and, (b) rounding (of the lips). Today, tongue position can be easily measured on free computer software like Praat and Audacity, which will give the tongue's position as a "formant frequency". Each generic vowel can be described within an acceptable range. Each language, however, has a smaller, language-specific, range of acceptability. As a result of the authors' study, they reported that, post-instruction, “the appropriateness of the formant frequencies of individual vowels...showed improvement [and that] after training, the ([i] and [u]) vowels were much more adequately separated” (Monsen & Shaughnessy, 1978, p. 423).

Since improvement was achieved in working with deaf children, I believe that explicit articulatory instruction should be very effective in leading to the accurate production of SI mid-close vowels by opera performers with normal hearing.

**Pronunciation - Pedagogy, Content, and Approach**

In this section, I will review articles which are not specific to opera diction instruction but inform and support the pedagogy, content, and/or approach of my Italian diction course.
Production and Perception

Standard language courses typically include instruction in both language production and perception. For example, a learner whose L1 does not include English's minimal pair: [i] and [ɪ], will have to learn to differentiate, perceive, and produce minimal pairs like: "heat" [hit] and "hit" [hɪt]. In Paul Tench's 2003 study, Non-native speakers' misperceptions of English vowels and consonants: Evidence from Korean adults in UK, he "shows the importance of an adequate phonological competence and importance of adequately designed teaching materials" (Tench, 2003, p. 145). The study examines his participants' "phonological misperceptions of British English by Korean adults in higher education in the UK" (Tench, 2003, p. 146). He chose Received Pronunciation (RP) as the version of Standard English Pronunciation to test. Tench rightly explains that "effective, intelligible, communication relies on competence at all [sic.] levels of language combined" (Tench, 2003, p. 147). The study is done by native speakers of British English reading lists of words to a group of native-speakers of Korean. In his conclusion, Tench demonstrates that by the "procedure as described in this paper, it is possible to gain specific information on general problems of phonological perception, but also on individual profiles, enabling teachers to focus attention accordingly" (Tench, 2003, p. 167).

When I work with a singer, I typically ask them about their linguistic background and I always stress that I do not care if they can actually "speak" the language or not. I am interested in their personal, phonemic inventory, i.e. what sounds do they know how to make through family contacts, family friends, etc.? If their L1 (or L2) is one I do not yet know, I will research that language's phonemic inventory before our next session.
Knowing the functionality of a language's phonemic inventory is indispensible in working efficaciously with a singer who is always on a limited timeline, either because of their age and the need to win competitions and/or be accepted into young artist programs, or young professional singers who are performing on stage within a short amount of time. This procedure is supported by Marton & Puppel:

unless one has a fairly precise idea of what the native speaker is actually doing in terms of activating his/her phonology, one cannot venture to show exactly what the stumbling blocks are in learning L2 phonology. (Marton & Puppel, 1991, p. 91)

To save time, the EAI approach transfers the onus of language perception from the responsibility of singer, to the instructor. Neither the singer nor I have the time to wait, for example, for a speaker of North American English (NAE) to perceive the difference between SI [a] and NAE [ɑ]. Instead, I precede introducing non-NAE sounds by saying, for example, that we do not have sound x in English, our closest sound is y, therefore, we have to acquire this new sound into our phonemic inventory. I will explicitly explain the physical production of the required sound, (e.g. SI [o], [e]), or if it is a variation on a NAE sound, I will explicitly describe the difference between the NAE and SI varieties, e.g. NAE alveodental, aspirated [t] versus SI, dental, non-aspirated [t]. Phonemic perception is explicit and deliberate by anticipating L1 transfer into the target and is minimized through EAI's employing the singer's full phonemic inventory, capitalizing on their ability to mimic, and finally refining the sound with the aid of the instructor. In this type of instruction, (referred by Marton & Puppel as the rehearsal) (Marton & Puppel, 1991), the control process of matching (the target language's phonemic inventory) is necessary if the entire operation is to lead, through a number of correction paths, to an appropriate reformulation of the primary L1 sound and subsequent
installation of a successful schema of the L2 sound in the learner’s repository of sound types. "It is only then that the target sound can be assumed to lie ‘within the range’ of the learner’s speech production capabilities" (i.e., it becomes available to him/her) (Marton & Puppel, 1991, p. 95).

Language Experience - Lexical

Pavel Trofimovich (2011) investigates "language experience in second language phonological learning" from several perspectives: "lexical frequency, attention to form, and ethnic identity" (Trofimovich, 2011, p. 135). From the lexical point of view, Trofimovich argues, "When discussing effects of experience in L2 phonological learning, lexical frequency could be used as a measure of language experience in terms of the input learners receive. The logic here is that certain aspects of L2 phonology (e.g., sounds, stress patterns, intonation contours) are easier to learn from frequent exposure to them in the input" (Trofimovich, 2011, p. 140).

When working with a singer, it is not helpful or pedagogically practical to correct every single phonological error, as they occur. It destroys the singer's confidence and overwhelms them. For this reason, I work with very short phrases. Until the final stages of aria or song preparation, I rarely hear the piece from beginning to end. I prefer to use the singer's errors, as they occur, as opportunities to teach through EAI. I cannot wait for the time it would take, through repetition, perception, and comparison with the target sounds, for the singer to notice their deviations. The premise of EAI is straightforward and follows the following steps:

1. I explain to the singer that in their L1, they either:
a. do not have the target sound

b. or have a variant of the target sound.

I go through this step because "it seems that many learners are intrinsically unable to select from their L2 input appropriate bundles of distinctive features defining the target L2 sounds and translate them into corresponding neuro-motor complexes" (Marton & Puppel, 1991, p. 98). And by having done this for the singer, because in many cases, "they either do not realize that the quality of a given target language sound they have just produced is not good, or, even if they realize it, they do not know what they should do in order to improve this quality, in spite of many further rehearsals" (Marton & Puppel, 1991, p. 98).

2. I will ask the singer to produce the target sound to the best of their ability and demonstrate to them:

a. how close they are to producing the target sound

b. what they need to do to reach the target

c. that whatever "shortcomings" they may have in their ability to mimic the target sound is not their fault and that she or he are not expected to perceive or produce the target sound on their own without my assistance.

By having taken these steps, I attempt to "help the learner become attuned to a particular set of spatial parameters which uniquely characterize a given L2 phonological segment, mostly by helping him/her to distinguish this set from that defining the corresponding native segment and from the sets characterizing the neighbouring units in the phonological space" (Marton & Puppel, 1991, p. 98).
Ethnic Identity

Trofimovich (2011)'s section on ethnic identity discusses the idea of language identity and the extent to which a language learner may or may not want to be identified as a member of that language group's inner circle. In the world of opera, inner circle language membership is a requirement. A singer who exhibits negative L1 transfer (from English, French, German, etc.) in their Italian piece, while auditioning for a role or competing in a competition, will likely not succeed. Correct pronunciation, rhythms, notes, dynamics, character, interpretation, body language, appearance, and presentation are all parts of the job. Singers are expected "to become" the person they are portraying.

Passible Pronunciation

Jenkins (2002) discusses the shift from teaching "British English" Received Pronunciation (RP) or General American (GA) English to the newer, global concept of English as an International Language (EIL) for which a non-native speaker's intelligibility in English is key. (Jenkins, 2002, p. 83) "English is being learnt for international communication rather than for communication with its NSs" (Jenkins, 2002, p. 85). This concept of "a globalized" form of a language is the polar opposite to my own personal goals, beliefs, and ideologies in language learning and is certainly the opposite concept for opera diction work. I do not believe that you can clinically separate a language from the people who speak it. English, for example, is not a list of lexical dictionary entries organized according to linguistic rules. Languages are organic and are the means by which the human experience is communicated. For this reason, single line translations of operatic texts can only represent the translator's representation of language
on a superficial level. The author's context, epistemology, educational background, and
religion, are all factors influencing people's choice of language. For example, in high
school English classes, in reading authors like Shakespeare and Dickens, the works have
to be historically and geographically situated to fully understand that when the author
said $x$, they were referring to $y$. In my own communication in English, I refer to pop
culture, music, current and past events, commercials, jingles, etc., which have all
informed and influenced the way I communicate in English. When I am in London,
England, or speaking to someone from the UK, I use completely different references
because I am no longer speaking "Canadian-English", I am speaking "British-English".
To create a "Globalized English" is to sterilize the language, disassociating it from the
human experience which informs, colours, and contours that language.

The operatic text must be realized through the balancing of the librettists words,
with the composer's musical setting and orchestration, as expressed through the opera
singer's voice which becomes a magical amalgamation of language and music. It is my
job to assist singers, through the clarity of SI pronunciation, to express both the
segmental (phonetic) and suprasegmental (prosodic, pragmatic) aspects of the language.

**Passing for a Native Speaker**

It may be more appropriate when discussing the objective of a diction class to
speak in terms of "passing for a native speaker" (Piller, 2002), rather than the idea of
being native-like. In addition to an opera singer's texts which are pre-scripted and
grammatically correct, the production, character, and interpretation of these texts are
heavily rehearsed. This is another stark contrast to typical language courses in which, "in
accordance with the communicative trends in language teaching, learners are pushed into early communication in the second language and have to use the full range of its phonological segments right from the very beginning of the learning process" (Marton & Puppel, 1991, p. 101). Conversely, in an opera diction class, students can fully focus on pronunciation.

Each opera singer rehearses and memorizes their role (solos, duets, and ensembles) on their own. Only after that does the cast meet in small or large groups in which they will rehearse their lines musically with varying combinations of coach, conductor, director, and language coach. Each singer, over the course of their career, will gain a repertoire of roles which they will repeat, sometimes several hundred times over the course of their careers. The young professional's focus of pronunciation on a segmental level soon gives way to the multiple suprasegmental variations which emerge based on the singer's ever evolving understanding of the interconnections between character, text, and music through the singer "living" the role each time they go on stage. This pre-planned, pre-scripted, rehearsed "spontaneity" is similar to Piller's 2002 study in which she examined "L2 users of English and German (who claimed) that they were passing for native speakers in some contexts" (Piller, 2002, p. 179).

Piller's article argues "that adult L2 users, i.e. people who learnt their L2 after the onset of puberty, can, and often do, achieve high-level proficiency. However, they and their achievements are often overlooked by SLL researchers and educators" (Piller, 2002, p. 180). Piller adds that "the methods typically employed in ultimate attainment research have, as a whole, served to render successful L2 users and their ability invisible" (Piller, 2002, p. 185). Ultimate attainment, the ability to pass for "speakers to whom the
language belongs through heritage and expertise" (Piller, 2002, p. 181), "has rarely, if ever, been studied holistically, as embedded in a range of meaning-making systems and social processes" (Piller, 2002, p. 185). Piller continues by saying that she believes "that highly proficient L2 users are not extremely rare exceptions, but more common than is generally assumed" (Piller, 2002, p. 186).

Piller's section on "Passing as a Performance" (Piller, 2002, p. 191) almost serves as the raison d'être for, or ultimate goal of, an opera diction course. The study's "interlocutors suggest that passing is an act, something they do, a performance that may be put or sustained for a limited period only" (Piller, 2002, p. 191). "Many of the bilingual couples in (Piller's) corpus discuss for how long they can sustain a passing act" (Piller, 2002, p. 191). With rehearsals, education, and EAI, singers should be able to sustain this passing act for the rest of their careers.

**Base of Articulation - Language Postures**

Teaching a language's phonemic inventory serves as a pronunciation foundation but students must also be taught the concept of a language's base of articulation or "where the language lives." In class, I usually demonstrate an example of an Anglophone, bilingual English/French flight attendant making French announcements using the correct French phonemic inventory but speaking with the base of articulation of English. I then re-say the announcement using the correct, French base of articulation and ask the class to describe the difference.

Esling and Wong (1983) suggest that in describing what characterizes and specifies a speaker's accent, we can move beyond the segmental and supersegmental
levels and describe an accent in terms of the "long-term postures" (Esling and Wong, 1983, p. 89) of a speaker's speech producing organs. It is insufficient for an opera singer to sing in an L2 using their L1's sound inventory and I typically explain in my classes that the singers are going to have to "linguistically inconvenience themselves". They will have to both make new sounds as well as adjust some of their L1 sounds to accommodate the L2.

Using the setting of an ESL classroom, Esling and Wong (1983) describe what an ESL instructor may encounter among their ESL students. This may include the "extreme retroflexion of the tongue and open jaw in some accents of India; close jaw, nasal voice, and a dentalized or alveolarized tongue body setting in Chinese; uvularized tongue body position in Hebrew and in some dialects of Arabic" (Esling and Wong, 1983, p. 90). The authors warn that "the second language learner may impose the new phonemes of English on the old background posture of a non-English, and perhaps inappropriate, voice quality setting. As a result, the identity of segmental contrasts may be obscured or masked by the old posture" (Esling and Wong, 1983, p. 90). "If the voice quality of the learner's native language differs from the setting normally found in the target language, both intelligibility and comprehension in spoken communication may suffer" (Esling, 1983, p. 93).

**The Perils of [a]**

An additional significant difference between teaching language pronunciation in a typical language class and an opera lyric diction class is that a singer already has a background, training, and awareness of the speech articulators and breath. EAI is
premised upon and builds from the vocal training singers typically will have undertaken with their voice teacher and coach. Singers will have varying levels of awareness of the sound production role(s) of the tongue, vocal cords, soft and hard palates, and breath through having already performed extensive vowel vocal exercises. When I teach EAI, part of my instruction is to clarify each individual vocal articulator's specific role and function. Esling (2005) offers an in depth look at the back vowels, (in the case of SI, i.e. [u], [o], and [ɔ]), modifying the standard IPA vowel chart which "usually describes (vowels) as lingually high or low and front or back" (Esling, 2005, p. 13). The author suggests that this "does not conform with a growing body of articulatory evidence on pharyngeal phonetics. Neither is it as useful an image as it could be for understanding how sound quality is shaped by articulator movement, vocal tract postures, and resulting cavity resonances" (Esling, 2005, p. 13).

Many years ago, when I was working with Joan Dornemann, we spent a considerable amount of time discussing and working on my [a] vowel. I did not realize at the time that she was addressing Esling's statement of: "The key problem is the issue of how to link the oral articulator with the laryngeal articulator and to explain their combined influence on vowel quality and voice quality" (Esling, 2005, p. 16). Laryngeal constriction is the antithesis of operatic training. The singer is always in search of ease of production and ease of sound quality.

Esling's paper presented "a series of illustrations of various articulations in the larynx, taken laryngoscopically so that all the principal articulating structures (were) visible from above during speech" (Esling, 2005, p. 17). What he observed was, in describing the "back" vowels, "the position of the tongue in the oral vocal tract and the
state of the laryngeal constrictor in the laryngeal (including the pharyngeal) vocal tract both have to be considered in specifying vowel quality" (Esling, 2005, p. 16).

Esling's most significant statement comes at the end of the article. One of our challenges as native-English speakers is the acquisition of SI's neutral, front [a] sound. I spend a great deal of time with my students helping them to produce, replace and substitute NAE's, back [ɑ] with SI's, front [a]. Esling explains in his summary why NAE's [ɑ] adversely affects a singer's sound not only on this vowel but negatively affects the neighbouring back vowels: "[ɑ] is not just a low back vowel. It is related to the laryngeal constrictor mechanism in a complex chain of events that, ultimately, lead to the complete closure of the airway" (Esling, 2005, p. 40).

Derwing & Munro

Researchers Derwing and Munro have written extensively on pronunciation. I have already made reference to their 2005 article in which they define intelligibility, comprehensibility, and accentedness (Derwing & Munro, 2005). In that article's introduction, they write that "the study of pronunciation has been marginalized within the field of applied linguistics. As a result, teachers are often left to rely on their own intuitions with little direction" (Derwing & Munro, 2005, p. 379). They later add that "much less research has been carried out on L2 pronunciation than on other skills such as grammar and vocabulary, and instructional materials and practices are still heavily influenced by common sense intuitive notions" (Derwing & Munro, 2005, p. 380). Support for teaching pronunciation through EAI is echoed in their claim that "students learning L2 pronunciation benefit from being explicitly taught phonological form to help
them notice the differences between their own productions and those of proficient
speakers in the L2 community" (Derwing & Munro, 2005, p. 388).

My research in the field of opera diction also responds to the authors' 2 claims:

1. As a result of pronunciation’s marginalized status, many ESL teachers have no
   formal preparation to teach pronunciation.

2. Relying on experiences and intuitions sometimes serves teachers well. Those who
   have strong observation skills and who are phonologically aware may address
   learners’ needs satisfactorily. These same teachers may develop critical
   evaluation skills so that they gain a sense of what will and will not work for their
   students. Their intuitions may well be confirmed by research findings. However,
   expecting teachers to rely solely on intuition is unrealistic and unfair (Derwing &
   Munro, 2005, p. 389).

In Munro & Derwing's 2011 Research Timeline, the authors say that the "focus on
accent and on accuracy of production is clearly at odds with a long-standing observation
that it is intelligibility – rather than native-like pronunciation – that is most critical for
successful communication in an L2" (Munro & Derwing, 2011, pp. 316-317) and
continue by claiming that "identifying native-like production as the central goal in
pronunciation teaching inevitably leads to the conclusion that pronunciation is probably
not worth teaching because of the limited likelihood of achieving that end" (Munro &

Unfortunately, in the case of the professional opera singer, L1 transfer into their
operatic performance is not an option and will affect their career. They also represent a
very small sub-group within the language learning community. To their benefit, opera
singers' training gives them a command over the language articulators (i.e. tongue, jaw, soft palate) and it is this facility on which my approach of EAI is based. Therefore, their operatic training alone puts them ahead of the typical language learner in accessing (near) native-like pronunciation.
Chapter 3

Part I - Methodology

Because I work in Toronto's small operatic community as an opera diction coach and a course instructor at the Glenn Gould School, I was approached by present and former students, as well as work colleagues, who knew of the research I would be conducting for my M.A. thesis study, requesting to participate in this study even before I had completed my M.A. course work. Once my Ethics Protocol Document application had been approved, I officially contacted those people to see if they were available and if they were still interested in volunteering to participate in my study.

Originally, I had been able to recruit four participants from among the singers who had already informally indicated their desire to participate in this study, but the fourth participant had to withdraw after the first class because she was hired for a professional singing engagement.

My three remaining participants were 24+ year old, semi-professional opera singers (participant details appear in the next section of this chapter). I chose this demographic because a certain amount of "professional attrition" would necessarily already have taken place and meant that my participants would be proficient in their singing technique and be:

1. Actively engaged in their operatic careers.
2. Sufficiently advanced vocally that they were getting hired professionally.
3. Highly self-motivated in their career advancement and therefore take the study's work seriously.
Additionally, the participants would previously have been in numerous masterclasses and be accustomed to performing/learning in front of an audience as well as the audition process itself in which a panel sits at a table and takes notes during their audition/performance. It is also common practice for singers to record lessons.

Prior to my meeting with each of the potential participants, I emailed them a copy of the document entitled: Information Email and Informed Consent Document (Appendix B).

At the first one-on-one meeting with each potential participant, I:

1. Explained this study and its purpose.
2. Clarified that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without consequence or repercussion.
3. Was upfront about the fact that, while all data would be collected and reported under a pseudonym, the opera community of Toronto is small and therefore the other participants (and/or observers) may already know them.
4. Discussed any concerns that they had.

After they had voluntarily consented to participate in the study and signed the voluntary consent form, I conducted and recorded the one-on-one, semi-structured interview.

Semi-structured pre-study interview. Data collection began with the pre-study, one-on-one, semi-structured interview which I audio recorded. (Appendix C) I chose to do semi-structured interviews because, in order to measure the effects of the course, I needed to ascertain the starting point of each participant.
I was interested in discovering the participants' productive phonetic ability, meaning, the sounds that each participant could make (i.e. phonetic inventory or "sound repertoire") as opposed to measuring their proficiency in the language.

I have had experience working with singers who spoke their parents' L1 until a certain age, (e.g. until they went to school) after which they either stopped speaking their parents' L1 or began answering their parents in English. These singers, however, could still "mimic their parents" speaking English or say certain phrases in the L1. It was this information that I required for the study.

I was also interested in the participants' receptive phonetic ability; the extent to which they could recognize and identify accents. Sometimes singers' parents would come from two different regions of the same country or from two different countries. The singer might not be able to speak those languages but their audio discerning ability could potentially affect their phonetic production.

The Data Collection Classes. The Italian diction data collection class took place daily, from Monday, June 15th to Friday, June 19th, 2015, from 19:00-21:00 in a classroom at the RCM. The three participants are described below in order of their appearance in the first one-on-one session. I have assigned each participant with an operatic pseudonym to protect her identity.

Participant 1 - Floria

Floria was a 26 year old soprano, the granddaughter of four L1-Italian grandparents from central-southern Italy. While both of Floria's parents speak their respective regional dialects and SI, Floria was raised in a predominantly English speaking
home in the Greater Toronto Area. In junior kindergarten, she attended an after-school French language program. From senior kindergarten until halfway through grade 3, Floria attended a Francophone school but then continued her elementary school education at an English medium school. Floria had a Bachelor of Music degree (B. Mus.) from a major Canadian university whose program had included formal diction classes.

Because Floria has been studying voice with me privately for almost two years, I considered whether that would adversely affect her participation in this study. I determined, however, that since she has never been in one of my formal diction classes, and this study's focus was the evaluation, reflection, and feedback on the pedagogical validity of this course's approach to teaching diction, her participation would constitute a conflict.

**Repertoire.** Se tu m'ami - Parisotti; Vergin tutt'amor - Durante; Vissi d'arte - Puccini

**Participant 2 - Azucena**

Azucena was a 29-year old mezzo-soprano whom I had heard in two operas but with whom I had never worked either one-on-one or in a class setting. Azucena was a 3rd-4th generation Canadian-Anglophone married to a Canadian-Francophone. She has studied French formally and taken opera diction classes as a part of her university studies.

**Repertoire.** Parto, parto, ma tu ben mio - Mozart; Amarilli, mia bella - Caccini
Participant 3 - Elsa

24-year-old soprano, Elsa, was the youngest of the three participants. Elsa grew up living in both Ottawa and Toronto and was raised in an English speaking family. Although she did learn French in school in both Ottawa and Toronto, she does not consider herself fluent. At the time of this study, Elsa was completing her Master's degree. In her undergraduate program, she had studied German formally for two years and felt that German was her strongest language after English. She had also taken language diction courses in her undergraduate studies.

**Repertoire.** O smania! O furie! - Mozart; O del mio amato ben - Donaudy

Observer-Feedback Providers

The study was attended by eight observer-feedback providers who generously gave their time and expertise to this study. Their role in participating in this study was to provide feedback on the course, its structure, content, pedagogical approach, and sequencing in addition to helping me introduce accountability to this pedagogical field, and the students it serves. These observers were each given a semi-structured questionnaire (Appendix E) and asked to provide feedback on the course's structure and content. Below is a brief description of each observer.

- Observer 1 - PhD candidate
  - Fields of research: linguistics, phonetics, foreign language pedagogy, and plurilingualism
  - Attended Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday's classes

- Observer 2 - University professor
• Fields of research: linguistics, phonetics, applied linguistics, and L2 acquisition
  o Attended Tuesday's class

• Observer 3 - Opera administrator
  o fluent in several languages including Italian
  o Attended Tuesday's class

• Observer 4 - University professor (Italian native speaker)
  o Fields of research: Second/foreign language acquisition (English, French, Italian, German) and assessment, plurilingualism, and cognitive and emotional aspects of language acquisition
  o Attended Wednesday and Thursday's classes

• Observer 5 - University professor
  o Fields of research: applied linguistics, second language acquisition, and second language teacher education
  o Attended Thursday's class

• Observer 6 - M.A. candidate (Italian native speaker)
  o Italian language instructor
  o Attended Thursday's class

• Observer 7 - University professor
  o Fields of research: second language acquisition, classroom research in L2 teaching and learning, applied linguistics, English as a second language
  o Attended Friday's class

• Observer 8 - PhD Candidate
Class Structure

Ongoing audio analysis. The primary source of data analysis was the five, two-hour, opera diction instruction classes. These classes followed the same basic structure which I have developed/refined over the last 10 years, in which each class starts with a 30-minute lecture on that day's topic (see below) and continues in a masterclass format during which I work one-one-one, with one student, for 20-30 minutes, in front of the other participants and observers. Before each class on days two, three, four, and five, I listened to the recording of the previous evening's class. It was this daily reviewing and reflecting on the previous day's recordings which guided, directed, and or informed (to a certain extent) my subsequent day's class instruction. Listening to my interaction with the participants, and their interaction with me, helped me to get to know them, their learning style, and their areas requiring more attention, in a more timely fashion. This was particularly relevant considering the short time span between classes.

Daily lecture topics. The lecture topics were presented in the following order:

Class 1 - The World’s Fastest History of the Italian Language
Class 2 - Italian vowels
Class 3 - Italian single consonants
Class 4 - Italian double consonants
Class 5 - Review - Using the template of a "final exam"

Typically during the one-on-one sessions, each participant starts by singing a piece of their own choosing after which I attend to what I feel are that singer's most immediate linguistic needs. Unlike a typical language class, it is impossible to assess, place, and homogeneously group the students of a lyric diction class. The individual nature of the profession will mean that each singer will have had a different educational, linguistic, and/or professional background. This diction course has been designed to capitalize and benefit from this inherent student diversity. The topics in the 30-minute lectures were selected and extracted from not only my educational background, but also my in-class and one-on-one language work with singers, from which basis I have created and prioritized the course's topics. Typically in the diction course's one-on-one sessions, each of the major theoretical components naturally and spontaneously presents itself as a learning point. This reinforces learning through intentional, course-embedded, theoretical-practical overlap.

**Part II - Action Research (AR)**

Teacher research, as defined by Borg (2010), is a:

systematic inquiry, qualitative and/or quantitative, conducted by teachers in their own professional contexts, individually or collaboratively (with other teachers and/or external collaborators), which aims to enhance teachers' understandings of some aspect of their work, is made public, has the potential to contribute to better quality teaching and learning in individual classrooms, and which may also inform institutional improvement and educational policy more broadly. (Borg, 2010, p. 395)

I chose to examine my Italian diction course, its course materials, and the EAI approach which I use for its instruction using the theoretical framework of AR because
my study needed "a form of practitioner research which [was] characterized by particular procedures, [and would have the potential to] broadly involve the introduction and evaluation of new practices...through a number of investigative cycles" (Borg, 2010, p.394). My goal was to find a research framework which would allow me to introduce, as immediately and as comprehensively, the many facets of an Italian lyric diction course into the field of pedagogical research through an empirical study's theoretical framework. The most efficient method for the implementation and execution of this research was AR. Since I had created the course, designed its pedagogical approach, and selected the materials on which the course would be based, I would have to conduct this study as both the teacher and its researcher. Crookes and Chandler (2001) explain:

In education, teachers who reflect on their teaching and conduct such action-oriented investigative projects are known as teacher-researchers. Typically, they begin with a general area of concern or an aspect of their practice that they want to examine; thus, research questions emerge from a teacher's immediate needs and concerns, and through an initial phase of reflection on their work. Data is collected and analyzed. This constitutes a further manifestation of reflection, and a plan or decision is made to alter procedures or in some way take action to address the concern. Once the action is taken, its effects on the problem (as to whether it is solved or ameliorated) are evaluated. Further cycles of action may then ensue. The cyclical or spiral aspect is a distinctive characteristic of action research. (Crookes and Chandler, 2001, p. 132)

AR is also known by other interchangeable terms, i.e. practitioner research, and teacher research. Borg clarifies that:

practitioner research is similar in purpose and conduct to teacher research (and is often used as a synonym for it); it refers to systematic inquiry by professionals in any discipline who are investigating their own practices (so the practitioners may be, for example, nurses). (2010, p. 394)

It is this kind of action, practitioner, teacher-research that I needed to allow me to simultaneously triangulate my study from disparate points of view: my own, as the
teacher-researcher, the participants', as equal stakeholders, whose careers the course had been designed to advance, as well as an invited panel of experts in the fields of language acquisition, phonetics and phonology, and Italian language instruction. From my own teacher-researcher point of view, AR allowed me to examine and reflect upon my own teaching practice. As Mertler (2012) explains, "AR allows teachers to study their own classrooms - for example, their own instructional methods, their own students, and their own assessments - in order to better understand them and to be able to improve their quality or effectiveness" (Mertler, 2012, p. 4). Norton (2009) adds that "reflecting on practice as a part of an AR cycle is essential if any enduring change is to be effected, because it involves some transformation from previously held assumptions to adopting a new framework" (Norton, 2009, p. 23). Mills' (2011) definition of AR further supports my choice of this research framework saying that:

AR is any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers...in the teaching/learning environment to gather information about how their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how well their students learn. This information is gathered with the goals of gaining insight, developing reflective practice, effecting positive change in the school environment (and on educational practices in general), and improving student outcomes and the lives of those involved. (Mills, 2011, p. 5)

My study was purposefully designed to elicit both internal (teacher, researcher, participant) and external (observer) feedback and reflection, while allowing for "study-in-progress" change and improvement, based on that feedback. Through the research framework of AR, I gave equal voices to the participants, the observers, the instructor, and the researcher.
Kurt Lewin

"The term *Action Research* was coined by Kurt Lewin, a social psychologist, to describe work that did not separate the investigation from the action needed to solve the problem" (McFarland & Stansell, 1993, p. 14). Lewin developed this type of research in the field of social sciences in the 1940s as a form of experimental enquiry to investigate groups experiencing social problems. Lewin devised a theoretical model of AR consisting of action cycles of analysis, fact-finding, conceptualization, planning, implementation, and evaluation. He also argued for the inclusion of practitioners from the target research communities in the work of professional researchers. (Burns, 2007) Johnson (2012) adds the significance of "teacher empowerment" resulting from AR studies saying that:

Action research...facilitates teacher empowerment [who are then] able to bring their talents, experiences, and creative ideas into the classroom. They can implement programs and strategies that best meet the needs of their students. Empowered teachers also are able to use the methodologies that complement their own particular philosophy and teaching style. (Johnson, 2012, p. 21)

In the 1970s, Stenhouse (1971, 1975) stated that teaching should be based on research, and advocated for an active role of teachers in research and curriculum development (the teacher-researcher movement). Johnson (2012) expands on the *research* part of AR saying that:

Action research is not an 'anything goes' type of methodology. Nor is it simply a matter of describing what you think about an issue, reporting about an interesting project or unit you have created, or explaining a pedagogical method that works well in your classroom. Action research is a planned, methodical observation related to one's teaching. (Johnson, 2012, p. 16)
Koshy (2005) adds that the purpose of AR is to "support practitioners to seek ways in which they can provide good quality education by transforming the quality of teaching related activities, thereby enhancing students' learning" (Koshy, 2005, p. 1).

**AR - Cycles**

The work of the action researcher is cyclical in nature. Crookes (1993) defines two types of AR. In the first kind of AR, he explains:

> There must be some problem or question which acts as the impetus of the work, and then after that, various regular steps can be taken: observation of one's students or one's own teaching, some form of data collection relevant to the research question, or...the revision or development of the initial research question; finally followed by some attempt to utilize the data to answer the question and thereby solve the problem. (Crookes, 1993, p. 132)

There are several models of AR cycles and spirals, one example is the Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) four phase model of: Plan, Action, Observation, and Reflection. This four phase model was specifically designed for Educational AR. Although Johnson (2012) expanded the four phase model to a five step/part model (see below), the two models are very similar.

> First, ask a question, identify a problem, or define an area of exploration. Determine what it is you want to study. Second, decide what data should be collected, how they should be collected, and how often. Third, collect and analyze your data. Fourth, describe how your findings can be used and applied. You create your plan for action based on your findings. And finally, report or share your findings and plan for action with others. (Johnson, 2012, p. 16)

In this study, I will use Kemmis and McTaggart's four phase model, and customize each of the four phases to the present study.

**Plan – identify a problem and develop a plan of action.**
The concerns within the field of Italian lyric diction instruction which I am addressing in this study are, themselves, cumulative, cyclical, and aggregate, all stemming from an absence of: (a) uniform standards of practice, (b) professional, educational, and pedagogical accountability, and (c) regulated educational and professional standards. This has generated non-uniform approaches of instruction, texts containing errors, and a dearth of empirical studies in lyric diction instruction pedagogy. Through AR I would be examining not only my course, but the field in which that course was situated. As Crookes (1993) explains:

Action research, therefore, must start with the ideas and concepts of teachers, but it must be recognized that these are quite likely to embody the unexamined assumptions of the school culture which play a role in causing many of the problems teachers face ('false consciousness'). Consequently, these must be developed through reflection and enquiry... (Crookes, 1993, p. 134)

In response to Crookes, my intended modest contribution to this field was to:

1. Bring empirical research into the Italian lyric diction classroom.
2. Enlist in-class, observational feedback from experts in various fields within language, and music education.
3. Involve the students themselves by requesting feedback and reflection on their own learning experience.

As Borg (2010) states, "research engagement...has the potential to be a powerful transformative force in the work and professional development of language teachers... [however] such engagement remains a minority activity in our field" (p. 391). It was also my hope, in performing this study, to begin the conversation on lyric diction courses, and their pedagogical approach.

Action - deliberate, controlled and critically informed intervention.
This AR study followed the same course template I use in teaching my Italian diction course. I followed the same approach that I devised over many years of private and in-class instruction which I will discuss in greater depth in the first Italian diction class, I briefly discuss the Italian language's unique evolution from Latin. I introduce the concepts of dialect, standard language, and stage language. My purpose in doing this is to prepare and forearm the students for the range of information which they will receive from subsequent Italian and non-Italian diction coaches, directors, conductors, and "native speakers" with whom they will work and/or meet in both professional and non-professional settings. My reasoning for beginning the Italian course, and challenging some of the "status quo", in which opinion and fact are often so freely interchanged, is supported by Crookes' (1993) second (of his two definitions) of AR:

The second [definition of AR] is a newer, more progressive line where the term 'action research' is used to refer to aspects of critical education practice, that is, education and educational research which is committed to emancipating individuals from the domination of unexamined assumptions embodied in the status quo. (Crookes, 1993, p. 131)

These "unexamined assumptions", which, in the case of Italian diction instruction, include the qualifications of course instructors, the approaches and course materials used, have, in my own experience, often lead to Italian language coaches "correcting" previous Italian language coaches' information, as well having high profile Italian language coaches "correcting" the Zingarelli dictionary itself. As non-Italian, singers must be made to understand the historical and sociolinguistic reasons behind this all too common phenomenon, and be prepared.

Through "explicit articulatory instruction" (EAI), I teach my students how to physically make vowels and consonants. The first phase begins with identifying the
cardinal vowels, [a], [i], and [u] before discussing the production of the other four (SI) vowels: [o], [ɔ], [e] and [ɛ]. Vowels are described as having ranges of acceptability rather than pinpoint co-ordinates. In conjunction with their physical, oral production, I introduce the International Phonetic Alphabet as a system of notation for the sounds of SI's vowels and consonants.

Having discussed, produced, and charted vowel production, I teach the SI consonants beginning with the production of the short (single) consonants, leading to the double (long) consonants. Other concepts that are introduced include: aspiration or Voice Onset Time (VOT), Italian diphthongs and triphthongs, contrasting the alveolar consonants of English with their dental Italian counterparts, the Italian vowel as the nucleus of the syllable, and Italian's stressed syllables which are a function of vowel length compared with English's loud-soft, and base of articulation. These theoretical concepts are introduced in the first portion of each class, i.e. the first 30-minutes of a 2-hour class. In the remaining class time, I work one-on-one with students in 20-minute time slots which has a double function: 1) I address each singer's specific language needs while they 2) become a practical example of each theoretical concept, in front of the class. I believe that this method of instruction is the most educational, practical, and efficient. But in order for it to become a "critically informed intervention" I must empirically test its validity.

iii) Observation - systematic documentation of the action and its effects (data collection phase)

Friedman (2012) says that "observations can be broadly divided into two types [i.e. closed and open]. In *open observations*...the researcher develops categories based on
what emerges during the observation itself; rather than fill[ing] out a form, the observer takes detailed field notes" (Friedman, 2012, p. 186). In the case of this study, the feedback was in the form of semi-structured, audio recorded, interviews, and in-class observer semi-structured questionnaires. The classes themselves were audio recorded which allowed for me to reflect on what I had observed in class. Freeman (1998) lists in his "Methods and techniques used in action research": "journals/diaries, teaching logs, document collection, observation, field notes, recording, transcription, surveys/questionnaires, interviews/discussions, stimulated recall" (pp. 93-94).

iv) Reflection - evaluation and description of the action and its effects

During the study, as well as upon its completion, I listened to the recordings, read my observers notes and comments, and actively elicited suggestions, and recommendations from the participants, and the invited panel. Through AR, I hoped to "create greater potential for the knowledge [I would] generate through [my] inquiries to have influence beyond the contexts in which this knowledge is generated" (Borg, 2010, p. 394).

**Teacher-Practitioner, two sides of the same coin.** In his 2012 article, Academic integrity in action research, Morten Levin provided a solid argument legitimizing AR as a research method. In Educational AR there is great concern and discussion regarding the researcher's ability to impartially distance themselves from the research. Levin says:

To write up AR is to walk a fine line, combining what conventionally is understood as contradictory positions in research. Deep empathic and political involvement must be confronted with critical and detached reasoning. Being able to combine empathic involvement, engagement, local problem solving, and critical analytical capacity could create a social science that would balance rigor with relevance. (Levin, 2012, p. 136)
Qualitative research is informed by a researcher's education, experience, knowledge, and curiosity. Friedman (2012) in her explanation of the concept of "authenticity" in qualitative research, says that it requires that the "researchers be honest (both to readers and to themselves) regarding their value systems, possible biases, and stances and how these might affect what they see and how they interpret what they see" (Friedman, 2012, p. 194). A researcher's background stimulates, directs, and supports her or his decision to conduct the research, define the research question(s), choose the framework within which the research will be conducted, and choose the literature motivating the study.

I have taught this Italian diction course many times as a teacher. On this occasion, however, I had to change the lens through which I taught this course. My relationship with this study's students was both as teacher-student as well as researcher-participant. Therefore, I became increasingly mindful, while teaching, of differentiating between fact and opinion, or "the law" and "my interpretation of the law". If I were offering an opinion or interpretation, I identified it as such and endeavoured to substantiate my thoughts with references to other scholars, or teachers. I realized that, as a researcher, I had an obligation to the study to mindfully filter, cautiously evaluate, and then only through having made a conscious decision to do so, bring my life's experiences, years of schooling, interactions with people from all over the world in a multitude of languages, decades of experience as an opera singer, a voice student, a stage performer, a pianist, and a coach, into the classroom and into this research study. This idea of mindful, conscious teacher-researcher teaching is supported in Piccardo's 2007 article, *Il ruolo della ricerca-azione nella didattica delle lingue-culture: verso una visione*
sistemica della classe (The role of action-research in language-culture pedagogy: towards a systematic view of the classroom), in which she explains that because the (language) classroom is such a complex, interconnected system, each individual component has an effect on the larger, organic unit as a whole. The classroom is affected by an unquantifiable list of organic elements; e.g. its students, their mood, any absences, the instructor, equipment that may fail to function, the instructor's wording of that day's lesson, etc. In the case of opera singers who are expressing and exposing their most private and personal feelings through their voices, it is possible within a lesson, rehearsal, or the present study, for them to have emotional moments of self-discovery ranging from laughter to tears. The classroom can host a student's transformation and action research provides a framework in which the human experience can be shared, as a participant, and accounted for, as a researcher.

È difficile e delicato intervenire dall'esterno in un sistema complesso come quello della classe, dove ci sono individui la cui personalità è in fase di sviluppo e ci possono essere situazioni di fragilità culturale, sociale, economica, psicologica. (Piccardo, 2007, p. 98)

(It is both a difficult and delicate situation, as an outsider, to intervene in a complex system such as a classroom where there are individuals whose personality is in a stage of development and in which there can be situations requiring cultural, social, economic, and psychological sensitivity.) (My translation.)

AR involves all parties as equal partners, and "non può esistere fuori del contesto oggetto della ricerca sul quale essa è tenuta ad intervenire" (Piccardo, 2007, p. 98), (cannot exist outside of the context of the research object about which it is required to intervene, my translation). Friedman (2012) adds that:

Qualitative research tends to operate on a small scale with the goal of providing a detailed and nuanced picture of individual settings, participants, or instances of
interaction. It does not aim to generate statistically significant findings or report on research participants in the aggregate as representatives of a category (e.g., Japanese learners of English), but instead endeavours to bring out individual characteristics or differences and to explore these in depth. (Friedman, 2012, p. 183)

In order to minimize my own "negative biases", responding to Levin's statement that "the essential challenge in AR is the unique combination of deep empathic and political involvement coupled with critical and reflective research, which expects the researcher to treat his or her own experiences at 'arm’s length'," (Levin, 2012, p. 134), I chose to triangulate my research soliciting external accountability through (1) inviting a panel of experts in various relevant fields to observe and give feedback regarding all aspects of my course and, (2) requesting in-class feedback, and journaling from the participants. I do this, agreeing with Levin that "the integrity of the research must secure that ‘findings’ documented in the text are not merely stories told by the researcher, but are a transparent text from which the reader can distinguish data in the broadest sense, including analysis of these data and how it is reasoned, in order to frame arguments for new insights" (p. 143).

Piccardo (2007) suggests that controlling researcher subjectivity is possible by having a structure already in place, for example, "introspective" type instruments (Piccardo, 2007, p. 102). In this study, I had external observer-feedback providers as well as feedback from the participants themselves. This provided introspective feedback from within the course itself, giving voice to the students for whom this course was designed, in addition to adding external evaluation from the academic, pedagogical, and research worlds.
Research Questions

Levin (2012) explains that in AR,

the research focus (which might be different from the initial pertinent problem) emerges through the researcher’s involvement. High relevance emerges simply because the actual research focus originates from what Dewey (1938/1991) named "an undetermined real life situation that is made determined (understood or explained) through (active manipulation) research activity." (Levin, 2012, p. 137)

Freeman adds that:

It is important to reiterate that the inquiry and the research question are not one and the same. The research question or puzzle is a point of entry into the inquiry. It expresses the inquiry in a form that allows you to investigate it, take action to understand it, and collect information that may shed light on it...Thus the question or puzzle may well redefine itself; however, the inquiry remains constant. (Freeman, 1998, p. 91)

As seen in Figure 1, my research questions are cyclical.

![Figure 1. The Cyclical Pedagogical Effect of Explicit Articulatory Instruction](image)

1) What are the effects of explicit articulatory instruction (EAI)?

2) What are the effects of the pedagogical sequencing of this course?

   i) Is it effective?

   ii) In what way?

   iii) What can be improved?
3) What do the students take from this course? (Generalizability of this course.)

As a result of having been exposed to EAI:

i) What tools does the learner/participant have?

ii) How will that help the learners' post-class self-reliance?

iii) How effective was the course?

iv) How can I make the content of the course more transferable/applicable to other opera diction courses (i.e. German, French, and English)?

4) What do I learn and take with me? (Self-development as an instructor.)
Chapter 4 - Data Analysis

The audio recordings of the five sessions were the main sources of data. I spent one month analyzing the audio recordings which I did using the following various configurations:

- I listened to the recordings of each of the five classes, in chronological order, i.e. day one (from start to finish), day two (from start to finish), day three (from start to finish), day four (from start to finish), and day five (from start to finish)
- I listened only to the first 30 minutes (i.e. the theoretical discussion portion) of each of the five classes, in chronological order, i.e. the first 30 minutes of day one, the first 30 minutes of day two, etc.
- Skipping the first 30 minutes of each of the 5 days of classes (i.e. the theoretical discussion), I listened to the last 90 minutes of each of the five day's two-hour classes (i.e. the entirety of the three, one-on-one segments of each class), in chronological order, i.e. class one, after the theoretical discussion; class two, after theoretical discussion; class three, after the theoretical discussion, etc.
- I then listened to each of the three participants over the course of their participation over the five days, i.e. Flora-day one, Flora-day two, Flora-day three, Flora-day four, Flora-day five
- I then repeated the above four steps, making notes

As a result of this 30 day period of analysis, I noticed that there were three "operating systems", or pedagogically, inextricably linked, concentric circles which governed my work with the singer.
1. The Twelve Principles

2. The Cause of the Origin of my working through explicit articulatory instruction (EAI)

3. The Seven Point Circle (7PC)

**Author's note.** As I mentioned in Chapter 3, Action Research (AR), provides a theoretical framework within which the teacher-researcher can reflect on his or her own teaching and teaching approach. However, when I inverted my thinking to that of "researcher-teacher," I was able to perceive the mechanisms governing my teaching, at which point I realized that my approach, which I had thought, as a teacher-practitioner to be completely "spontaneous," was, in fact, methodical and step-wise. Because in this chapter I am introducing three new pedagogical lenses as well as reporting both my data and the teaching environment from which it emerged, I have included in this chapter the reporting of my teaching sub-text as well as the data which emerged from it because I am not only the researcher-teacher but I am also part of the study and as such "I am inextricably an insider in [my] project" (Casanave, 2014, p. 135). Since this is an AR study, I felt it necessary to report not only what emerged from the data but also the unspoken, pedagogical stimuli driving the pedagogical actions. As Casanave (2014) writes, "you will either situate yourself openly as an insider, acknowledging who you are and how your choices and involvement influence your study, or as a faux-outsider...". I believe that this style of full disclosure adds to the transparency of the study.

**The Twelve Principles**

My data analysis have shown me that EAI, both as an approach to teaching lyric diction and as a pedagogical framework, has emerged from a set of Twelve Principles by
which I teach. These Twelve Principles represent the "first domino" or "birthplace" of my pedagogical ideology. These principles are as circular, inter-connected, and inter-dependent as the idea of the inter-connection of the concept of time, i.e. past, present, and future.

Figure 2. The Twelve Principles

1. I do not expect the singers to know something if I haven't covered it in class.
2. If someone does not understand something, it's not their fault or problem. It's mine!
3. Students are to be treated with dignity and respect. They are not "doing me a favour" by studying with me.
4. Students deserve an answer to each and every one of their questions. If I do not know the answer, I will research and find an answer for them.
5. My opinions, while based on knowledge, education, and experience, are my "opinions" and must be differentiated from empirically proven facts.
6. "Mistakes" are not usually unfounded especially in a diction class where there is a lot of L1-transfer. L1 influence or "L1 wiring" is not the student's fault and they must be made to realize that this is normal. Facilitating their journey to the L2 pronunciation is my job.
7. It is not enough to tell a student that they have "done a good job", I have to explain why and to what extent.

8. There is no hierarchy in my class. The singers and I work together. We are on the same team.

9. I did not make up the information, I am simply "the instruction manual". It is my job, and my great privilege, to connect each singer with the information they need at that moment for their best and most immediate improvement.

10. It is my job to ensure that the singers look, sound, and feel better about themselves.

11. I am not allowed to identify a problem that I am not in a position to help the students fix.

12. I love my job. I would rather do this than anything else in the world.

**The Emergence of Explicit Articulatory Instruction (EAI)**

Because of Principle 1 and Principle 2, I felt it was my responsibility, as an opera diction instructor, to:

1. Provide singers with a step-by-step approach which would enhance, train, and sharpen their abilities both in the perception as well as the production of a target language's (in this case, SI's) sounds and characteristics at both a segmental and suprasegmental level.

2. Facilitate the integration of this information into their vocal technique.

3. Expedite fusing the language's linguistic, pragmatic, socio-linguistic properties with the composer's musical setting.
Though clearly delineating SI's phonemic inventory, theoretically and practically is a good starting point, the course's ultimate success is contingent upon the meticulousness in the content and sequencing of the approach. With the added pressure of the profession's time-sensitivity factor, the singers require an expedient approach through explicit instructions, logically organized in a progressively cumulative, deductively interlinked order, sourced from accessible scholarly references, thereby eliminating the tedium of mindless memorization. My approach was designed to fulfill these requirements.

The Effects of EAI

![Diagram of the Effects of EAI](image)

Figure 3. The Effects of EAI

EAI benefits the student on three interconnected and interdependent points: improved vocal production, improved confidence, and self-reliance through tools gained from the course. By covering profession-specific information contained in a standard,
university, introductory Italian phonetics course, and then explicitly connecting this information to their operatic training, singers gain a deep understanding of Italian pronunciation for stage, and the tools needed for work beyond the course. EAI reinforces and works in conjunction with what they are learning in the voice studio. Through EAI, their vocal production improves through a deeper theoretical-physical understanding of correctly producing the SI phonetic inventory, SI on a segmental and suprasegmental level, the sociolinguistics of SI, and the relationship of the language to the composer's musical setting of the language. Students' confidence and their performance always improves.

**The EAI Approach - Combining Theoretical, Practical, and Experiential**

On a macro-level, this is a single unit, 5-day Italian diction course. But this course divides into 2 smaller micro units:

a. The 30-minute lecture;

b. The individual one-on-one sessions in masterclass format.

At both the macro- and micro-levels, the EAI approach proves to be non-linear, continuously and cyclically oscillating between three, self-reinforcing, interconnected points: the theoretical, the practical, and the experiential:

![Figure 4. Theoretical, Practical, and Experiential](image)
The 30-Minute Lecture - Theoretical-Practical

The 30-minute, theoretical lectures at the beginning of each day's class provided the framework and foundation for the course as whole. While they could function as "stand alone" theoretical lectures, they were purposefully designed to interconnect and overlap with the one-on-one masterclass work to form 2 micro-units of the larger 5-day macro-course. These theoretical, 30-minute topics cannot be fully understood by the singers until physically embodied and applied practically during the one-on-one work with each singer. The audience members, although seemingly taking the role as "passive observers", benefit from seeing the theoretical information kinaesthetically applied by their classmates, i.e. the theoretical becomes experiential and, therefore, its practical application is understood. As is usually the case, I noticed during the classes how the observing singers begin attempting certain sounds from their seats while I am working with the "active" singer at the front of the room. I regularly engage the observing singers by asking for their feedback and comments as well as asking how they understand what I am doing with the singer at the front of the room. This is in keeping with Principle 8 - we all work together, on the same team.

I purposefully designed the five 30-minute theoretical topics to contain necessary, profession-specific information. Day 1’s topic, The World's fastest history of the Italian language, introduces students to: language philology and evolution (specific terminology like/including pidgin, creole, dialect, language), codification through written language, socio-linguistic identity, the concept, purpose, and function of standard pronunciation contrasted with stage pronunciation, the existence and function of a language academy (l'Accademia della Crusca), and the possible causes and sources of the disparity of
information currently diffused by Italian diction instructors and coaches, additionally it prepares the singers for the dangerous intermingling of and non-discrimination between opinions and factual information. After having defined SI, its pronunciation, and the differences between spoken language, sung language, and stage pronunciation, the singers were given a list of authentic, scholarly online and print reference sources from which to correctly and confidently source, authenticate, and substantiate, their Italian pronunciation.

I chose SI vowels as Day 2's topic because vowel exercises are the foundation of a singer's training. While Day 1's one-on-one session provided an introduction into diction instruction through EAI, Day 1 is more introductory and diagnostic in nature. During Day 2's vowel lecture, the singers began to experience the full sequential, domino, and cumulative nature of EAI's approach. The inherent design deliberately ensures that each new learning point is supported, informed, understood, and incorporated by the student, not as a multitude of single pieces of disparate information but by a cumulatively growing, interlinked cluster of knowledge.

Day 2's topics began with an introductory understanding of human sound production from a phonetician's point of view, beginning with the idea of phonation in which I identified the disparate roles of the vocal cords' function in sound/vowel/pitch production versus the vowel shaping roles of the tongue.

One of the challenges for the English speaking singer is the acquisition of the SI [e] and [o]. As per Principle 11, having identified this problem or challenge, I developed an approach (which I followed in this study) which, through EAI, provides a step-by-step method for producing these vowels by first directing the students' attention, physically,
and visually through handouts, and diagrams on the whiteboard, to the tongue positions of the cardinal vowels: [i], [a], and [u]. I typically ask the students to turn on their metaphoric "internal video cameras" in their mouths and notice what is happening to the tongue as they alternate between: [i] - [a] - [i], [u] - [a] - [u], and [i] - [u] - [i]. Having felt the raising and lowering of the front and back of the tongue between the high and low front/back vowels, I ask them to lower their tongues from the [i] position into [e] and then from the [u] position into [o]. This EAI approach not only provides them with the correct target vowel but also an explicit, step-by-step approach for their re-location.

Included in the study's first day lecture was a brief history of the International Phonetic Association and the alphabet they created in which each (mostly Latin alphabet derived) IPA character (with additional characters borrowed from Greek, Icelandic, and other sources) represents one, specific, vowel or consonant. Additional language-specific customization of the IPA characters can be achieved through the use of IPA's diacritic marks above/below the IPA characters indicating stress, voice rising-falling, tongue position variation, etc.

To explain vowels being defined within a range of acceptability along a continuum rather than a specific point, I used the metaphor of the paint colour section of a hardware store where there will be an entire wall of "yellows", but there is a certain point when yellow stops being yellow and starts being orange. It is my job to assist the singers in determining the range of acceptability of each language's vowels range, as compared the vowels in a person's L1 range which may be different or overlap. To facilitate our work on vowels, I introduce the four vowel qualities: height, backness, tenseness, and rounding. The students were given an IPA chart of the 7 SI vowels. To
further explicitly demonstrate the continuum vowel sounds, pointing to an IPA vowel
diagram on the board, I orally demonstrate all of the front and back vowels in a "vowel
glissando" in their order from high to low and back. We then have a brief discussion of
the idea of "tuning a vowel", i.e. what is the difference between a closed [o] in Italian and
a closed [o] in German?

Although we had not yet discussed consonants, I chose, at that point, to hand out
my "Steven Leigh Method to IPA-ing a Piece in Italian." (Appendix F) Observer 2
remarked on my use of materials that:

these were great (IPA charts, The Steven Leigh Method to IPA-ing a Piece in
Italian) and included nothing more than what the singers needed to know. I think
this last point is very important, because the materials could easily become
overwhelming in both quantity and depth. (Observer 2)

At the end of the discussion on vowels, Elsa asked: "At what point, vowel-
clarity-wise, does it become acceptable for the vowel to be less understandable?"

When students ask questions, it means that they are personally engaged in the
learning process and are trying to incorporate my lecture into their existing body of
knowledge. I understood Elsa's question and following Principle 4, I decided that, rather
than simply giving her an answer, I wanted us to have the opportunity to discover the
answer "on the job", through EAI. So I answered her question by rephrasing her
question: "Is it necessary for vowels to be unintelligible at a certain point?" I will show
my approach to answering Elsa's question in my discussion of that day's one-on-one
session with her.

My belief is that it is not necessary to centralize vowels above the staff (i.e. high
notes; well above "the speaking range"). While I acknowledge that sopranos, for
example, will not sound the same on an [u] on the F above middle C as on a high C,
sound cannot be pre-diluted by the singer at the point of origin because it neutralizes clarity by reducing the SI 7 vowels into a series of schwahs [ə] that have been "flavoured" (or not) by [i], [ɛ], [ɛ], [a], [ɔ], [o], [u]. The vocal cords and the articulators are still required to produce the target vowel sounds even when singing at the top of and above the staff and must perform their respective functions to the best of the singer's ability within the comfort of their vocal technique. Since I acknowledge that this is my opinion, according to Principle 5, I preferred for us to discover the answer to Elsa's question, practically, during our one-on-one session.

The topics covered in Day 3's 30-minute lecture included: SI single consonants, base of articulation, the sources and authors of popular SI transcription sources, lyric verse and syllabification. In discussing the idea of poetic lines of 5/7/9/11 syllables long, I began to unite the idea that the suprasegmentals of Italian are incorporated and inextricably linked to their musical setting.

Sources for authentic SI IPA transcriptions are more fully described than on the first day, i.e. the Zingarelli app., and the DOP, both in print and its website. I handed out photocopies of the first few pages of the DOP showing how the pronunciation of each orthographic letter in Italian is described in great detail. I also introduce the wordreference.com website, not as an official pronunciation source, but as an aid in locating the roots of conjugated verb forms and inflected noun forms.

The rest of the 30-minute segment was a description of the SI single consonant chart. I explained the function of the 2 axes: the x-axis, or place of articulation which describes where the consonant is physically produced, contrasted with the y-axis, or manner of articulation, which describes the manner of the obstruction. I then covered:
• the relevant SI places of articulation;
• the idea of voiced and voiceless consonants and their effect on singing
• differentiating between natural consonant assimilation versus affectation;
• the variation on the tongue position for SI [s] and [ʃ] versus English;
• the difference in the SI velars versus English;
• nasals and the problems associated with their production especially as they relate to singing;
• the SI [r], trilled versus the flipped using a sandwich metaphor, i.e. "intervocalic r sandwich on vowel"

I finished the presentation with a short discussion on the base of articulation and connected SI's base of articulation with why and how the Italian language gives birth to the operatic art form. To exemplify the concept of base of articulation, I demonstrated making airport announcements with "correct pronunciation" but with the language "living in the English place" and then changed my base of articulation to match that of the target language.

Observer 1 commented: "These are very clear explanations and quite amusing. Students seem to be having a great time and they smile and laugh at times." Class atmosphere is very important. Principle 10 ensures that the singers will perform at their best which reinforces the acquisition of the new concepts.

On Day 4, I went through the IPA double or "long" consonant sheet and discussed the interconnection, effect, and relationship of consonant vowel length within a word. I talked about the conceptual difference between a "double consonant" which refers to its orthography, as opposed to consonant lengthening, which is what the singers will actually
have to "do" or "sing," and the effects of those voiced and voiceless long consonants on their singing and legato line. I presented the "exceptional long consonant phonemes" which are always lengthened when they are intervocalic and gave an EAI step-by-step approach to their physical production.

On the final day, I handed out a copy of one of my RCM diction course's final exams which we went through orally. I wanted to demonstrate to the participants how much they had learnt over the past 4 days. They had no problem answering all of the questions on the exam. I finished the lecture by going over what is always my "bonus question". Ever since Joan Dornemann taught me about syntactic doubling, it has been my favourite feature of the Italian language. I used her example of:  

*Cosi fan tutte* and asked: "How many long consonants are there in the title of that opera?" (There are three sets.)

**30-Minute Lecture - Experiential**

As a researcher, I am interested in the students’ experience of the course and their ability to operationalize the knowledge it is designed to impart. In this section, I will comment on the rationales behind the 30-minute lectures and, wherever possible, I will interpolate the observer feedback.

I have strategically embedded certain stimuli in this approach to evoke particular experiential effects beyond the tangible, practical, and factual, because in order for the singers to gain maximum benefit from this course, they will have to take risks in going through the steps of exploring, acquiring, and refining their new Italian language identity for stage. Experimenting, making errors, learning, and perfecting these new language
sounds can only take place in an atmosphere of trust and security. The students' courage, tenacity, and motivation will be continuously tested in a class comprised of their colleagues or piers, in front of a teacher. Therefore, from the beginning of the course, I need to create a safe, friendly, non-judgemental atmosphere in which it is clear to all present that we will be working together towards a common goal. I achieve this, at the beginning of the first 30-minute lecture, by humorously recounting my own Italian learning experience, discussing and exemplifying, through improvisational monologues, some of the regional Italian dialects which I learnt from my first generation Italian-Canadian friends. I talk about acquiring SI for stage through my work with Joan Dornemann and Maria Cleva, again, giving oral examples. Having set this relaxed tone, I slowly become more "professorial" in my approach as I briefly cover the evolution of the Italian language and its pronunciation from Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarca, through the Questione della lingua, unification, and the 20th century diffusion of the language through TV and radio. At the end of the lecture, I introduce the concept of language identity, and campanilismo as I explain that we, as non-Italian stage performers, are not concerned with the idea of having a particular Italian identity and its dialectic history, but rather, our goal is that of linguistic clarity, neutrality and socio-linguistic general acceptability. For this reason, we use the utopic, neutral, codified, SI pronunciation.

In my following of Principle 9, Observer 1 commented that:

The instructor was very knowledgeable and he was very confident when teaching about the history of the Italian language. What I find fascinating is that he has great rapport with the students, even though the first part of his class (first 30 minutes) is exclusively teacher-centered with no participation from students. He could be viewed as somewhat “Mr. know it all” but he is so humble that he gains respect from his students. (Observer 1)

Observer 1 later commented on my "teacher-centred lectures" saying that
this goes against several recent pedagogical recommendation in teacher and language education. However, it is extremely effective and is a good example that not all classes should be learner-centred. I believe it is effective also because Steven already knows what his students need: they need to know why Italian diction is extremely important when singing opera and how their Italian accent may influence their performance (positively or negatively). (Observer 1)

I was not brought up in an age of interactive video games with a constant need for interaction and active participation. I believe that if a teacher is engaging, knowledgeable, and entertaining, and brings elements of their life's experiences into their teaching, their students will pay attention, learn, engage, and ask questions. I do not talk "at" my students nor do I read to them from notes or a book nor do I create distracting visual Powerpoint pyrotechnics. I speak slowly and clearly from a place of experience and knowledge while looking directly at them. And, although I am the one speaking, we are in a conversation, certainly one that I have started, but one in which they will very soon actively engage. I lecture for 30 minutes because I have a vast amount of information to cover in that period of time. However, in the second and larger part of the class, i.e., the one-on-one sessions, the course becomes completely student-centred. For the student with whom I am working one-on-one, the work is obviously centred around that particular student. For the rest of the class, the theoretical information is presented as a live example and the class is continually invited to provide feedback, support, and to vicariously experience the learning of the theoretical information through the active observation of their colleagues.

At the conclusion of the first day's lecture, I asked if there were any questions or comments. Azucena commented that the lecture had been "very illuminating" to which the rest of the class agreed. Although there had not been any direct interaction between the students and me during the lecture, the students were very engaged and laughed at my
attempts at humour. No one left the room or appeared unengaged from the class at any time.

**The Security of structure.** By day 2, I had established the class's routine of: 30-minute lecture, one-on-one session, break, followed by 2 one-on-one sessions. This structure also contributes to the students' comfort zone. The participants felt comfortable enough to "take ownership" of the course by deciding that they would stick to the original order of: Floria, Azucena, Elsa.

**Italian Language, Linguistics, and Pronunciation for Professional Purposes**

Since most of my undergraduate and all of my graduate studies took place after I had already begun teaching diction classes, even as a student I was examining, analyzing, scrutinizing, prioritizing, or "diagnosing" which parts of the course contents of my Second language acquisition of Romance phonology class or my Italian linguistics, phonetics, and sociolinguistics classes would be of the most practical use for a singer. While preparing the course readings, participating in the class discussions, and listening to the class lectures, I recruited ideas for my diction course by constantly asking myself three key questions:

1. How would these concepts best be presented to someone with no background in linguistics?
2. What would reinforce the same concepts the singers were learning in their vocal technique?
3. What metaphors or terminology would I use to show the equivalencies between the academic and the practical?
I was encouraged by the observations made by Observer 2 who noted: "What impressed me the most was that your explanations were perfectly targeted to non-specialists (i.e., people who, I assume, have never had any real training in speech phonetics) yet very accurate. I’m used to sometimes hearing pronunciation teachers say things that, while understandable to learners, [the content is] not quite right or even wrong."

**Student Commitment**

There were particular circumstances and events that emerged on Day 3, which I found significant. Previously that day, I had noticed that Elsa had posted pictures of her Master's convocation ceremony that had taken place earlier that day. I was surprised that she hadn't mentioned in the previous day's class, that this major milestone would be taking place the next day. I was very excited for her and assumed that she would be out celebrating that evening and was glad that I had booked our classroom for a couple of extra days in anticipation of any absences during the study. At 19:00 that evening, I was shocked to find Elsa, right on time for class, in her usual spot. After congratulating her, I mentioned that it had never occurred to me, after seeing her pictures on Facebook, that she would be attending that evening but she explained that she was very happy to be present in class. While discussing this, I also learnt that the last three evenings, Floria had left work early; time which she would have to make up later. Azucena also never missed a class. Everyone arrived to start promptly at 19:00, never left during class, and stayed until the class ended at 21:00. One of the participants answered my constant gratitude for their attendance by saying, "I would not want to be anywhere else."
Dedication and Motivation

To build an operatic career, natural talent and ability are only the starting points. Only through the combined forces of attitude, motivation, tenacity, dedication, enthusiasm, and determination can an artist hope to succeed in a competitive field like opera. Although each of the three participants had had "opera diction courses" in their undergraduate studies, they saw something different in my approach and its content to make it valuable, practical, beneficial, and useful enough to make attending these five sessions a priority in their lives. They saw the practical benefit, applicability, and transferability of the skills and knowledge they were acquiring from the course as critical building blocks which would put them ahead of the competition.

Mid-Course - Passing the Torch of Ownership

From a pedagogical point of view, on Day 3, I deliberately began to change my role. While I do not believe in a two-tiered, condescending separation between a "Don't you know who I am!?" teacher and the "children should be seen and not heard" student, at the beginning of a course, I am the instructor and it is my job and my great joy to impart information, motivate learning, inspire self-reflection, and provide a reassuring safety-net through the idea that we are working together as a team. As the course progresses, however, the students, both individually and as a group, need to begin taking ownership of the newly presented and acquired information through self-reflection, the reflection of their colleagues' work and their improvement, and by providing thoughtful and supportive feedback to each other. My role of "teacher" begins to give way to that of
"class mediator." While the 30-minute lectures are still teacher-centred, the one-on-one sessions become more class-participatory.

By the final class, we had formed a kind of "family unit." Observer 8 commented that I was:

a master of building up rapport in the classroom. I loved the way you welcomed the students into your class at the beginning of the session: the small talk, jokes, and references to past conversations. The students knew each other and you (to different degrees), and there was a sense of ease and community in your class that I loved. (Observer 8)

**The Seven-Point Circle (7PC)**

One of the most significant realizations that I observed from my data analysis was the underlying "pedagogical engine" through which I did my seemingly spontaneous, one-on-one work with the singers. I observed that there were seven, continuous points of reference guiding my work which I have called the Seven-Point Circle or 7PC.

![Figure 5. The Seven Point Circle (7PC)](image)
The 7PC Steps

When I listen to people speak or sing, I hear their finished sound as the sum of the disparate physical processes through which those sounds were made. My reaction to the slightest L2 invasion or transfer into the exclusivity of a particular language's phonemic inventory is similar to someone with perfect pitch hearing music played or sung slightly out of tune. Diagnosis requires that listening and observing come from a place of understanding, knowledge, and familiarity with the entire speech/singing instrument.

Once past the diagnosis stage, which necessarily includes an observational understanding of the singer's current proficiency level, I evaluate the degree or extent of the L1 transfer into the L2 target. As I will show in this analysis, this can include: Voice Onset Time (VOT), vowels and consonants outside of English's phonemic inventory, a singer's suprasegmental knowledge of Italian, insufficient or incorrect engagement of breath support, jaw, tongue, or neck tension, incorrect tongue position, non-specific vowel articulation at the vocal cord level, incorrect soft palate position (causing nasality in the sound) or non-target language base of articulation. Having completed this evaluation, it is my job to create a personalized plan of action for the singer.

Personalizing the plan of action necessitates acknowledging each student's learning style, i.e. visual, aural, or kinaesthetic. The plan of action may require, or be expedited by, the student having additional background knowledge. Presenting the information in a sequential, deductive, domino-effect pattern provides the information to the students in a "pre-processed" form. An additional advantage to this pedagogical approach is that the steps which have led to the macro-learning points can always be retraced following the micro-steps along the domino chain.
**Knowledge-Dominoes.** I am a strong proponent of deductive reasoning, which I liken to a chain of dominoes. I dislike mindless memorization. I have taken many courses whose pedagogical approach was "memorization and regurgitation" which, unfortunately, led to the last stage, amnesia. For a student to retain knowledge, they need to understand how they arrived at that knowledge, and how to deductively "retrace the steps" which led to that knowledge. For me, learning happens in small, interconnected stages, not unlike a row of dominoes. As one "knowledge-domino" is acquired, it affects the next "knowledge-domino", and so on. If one knowledge-domino is missing, a student can work their way backwards until they find the missing knowledge-domino. This way of learning ensures that the student has actual substance behind their knowledge rather than an overdeveloped, and easily emptied, short-term memory.

**One-on-one session spontaneity.** I consider the 30-minute lectures and the one-on-one sessions as two trains leaving opposite stations, passing each other in the middle, and finishing at each other's original starting point. My rationale for extracting topics only after they have organically presented themselves from within the context of a participants' one-on-one session is that the topic emerges as a practical, live example enabling the singer and the class, as a unit, to experience the following: (1) identifying that learning point; (2) defining the content and source of the background information required to rectify and/or improve; (3) the steps leading to the acquisition of the new skill; and (4) seeing and hearing the before and after effects of the new skill. In this way, each topic from the syllabus is personalized through a particular student, and the learning process becomes meaningful for both that singer and the other class participants.
While it may seem, at times, that I am inundating the students with information at the beginning, I believe that this provides the students with a feeling of security through knowledge. It is important that the students understand that they are not responsible for figuring things out by themselves. If their actions are grounded theoretically, either during the 30-minute lecture or in their one-on-one session, they will have the confidence to take greater risks in their in-class performance. As this confidence increases through gained knowledge and successful performance, and as they take ownership of the information, my amount of instruction begins to noticeably wane.

**Day 1 - EAI - Points 1, 2, 3**

Floria sang the first verse of Pergolesi's *Se tu m'ami*. I let her sing through the entire first stanza, then I asked her to sing just the first phrase. I heard her sing the first two words as: [sɛ tu]. Since she and I already had a strong working relationship, I decided that her comfort level would allow me to immediately delve into several subjects: tense/lax vowels, syntactic doubling, the use of the Zingarelli app.

I could simply have told Floria that the orthographic letter e in the word *se* is pronounced as a closed [e] and mentioned something cursory about syntactic doubling. Instead, because of the participants' age, level of education, and professional backgrounds, I generally allowed myself to launch into greater detail from the first session. I took the opportunity to talk about some of the differences between Italian orthography and its pronunciation focusing on closed/open *e* and *o*, explaining that in all non-stressed syllables *e* and *o* are pronounced as [e] and [o] and in the stressed syllables, it is unpredictable and must be verified through an authentic source, such as the
Zingarelli dictionary which is available as a smartphone app. Rather than only offering an explanation, I went through the same process which they would have to do on their own, of looking up the word, *se*, in front of them. I showed them how to find the word, using the app, and that the dictionary provided an IPA transcription right beside the word. This led to a short introduction on IPA, which included the distribution of an IPA chart printed, for dramatic effect, on legal sized paper. Observer 1 noted that the "students were so excited to receive the IPA chart that one of them said, "Oh my God, I’m going to frame this!'"

I returned to the Zingarelli display of *se* showing that the IPA transcription had an asterisk beside it indicating that the word triggered syntactic doubling. This perfectly tied in to Azucena’s question which she had asked at the end of the 30-minute lecture referring to syntactic doubling which elicited my enthusiastic response which Observer 1 noted: "You have no idea how excited I am about your question!’’

With [se] triggering a long initial [t:] in the following word, [tu], i.e. [se t:u], I briefly also introduce the concepts of voiced and voiceless consonants. Finally, I discuss the difference between the dental consonants of Italian and their alveolar English counterparts.

**Day 1 - EAI - Points 1 and 2 (post-treatment effects)**

Floria then sang through the entire first stanza of the song again. The effects of EAI were immediate. Not only was the initial [se t:u] correctly executed, but all of the [t] in the first stanza were dental, the [e] in [me] was correctly sung, and her general legato
line was improved. In this new assessment, working chronologically through the piece, I noticed the L1-interference of [a] instead of [a], and the missing [r] at the end of [pastor].

**Day 1 - EAI - Points 4 and 7**

I used humour in discussing the difference between [a] and [a] and introduced the idea of "linguistic wiring" and our need to press a kind of "linguistic override button". I also demonstrated the difference, while playing the piano and singing, between singing in Italian using an English base of articulation and the vowel [a] and contrasted that immediately by singing with an Italian base of articulation, correctly using [a]. I substantiated the importance of this difference in my brief explanation of the evolution of the operatic sound as connected to and a result of Italian's phonemic inventory and its base of articulation.

Floria sang the same verse again, immediately incorporating the new information.

**Day 1 - EAI - Working with a Student for the First Time**

In working with a singer for the first time, it is critical during the initial one-on-one session to ensure that the singer feels confident and secure in their learning environment. Because the 7 points on the 7PC are cross-connected, they do not necessarily have to occur sequentially. In the case of a new student, each step is taken in consultation with the student's comfort zone as I constantly cycle, sweep, and cross-check through the other 6 points. I am always sensitive to the fact that singers are allowing me access to their voice, the link to their soul and identity, and I take this very seriously and work with great mindfulness. These actions are evidenced in Observer 1's notes: "Steven
made sure to establish a good relationship with Azucena by making her feel comfortable”.

**Day 1 - EAI - Points 1 and 2**

Azucena sang Caccini's Amarilli. What I determined required the most immediate attention was, at the macro-level, the L1 interference from Canadian English's base of articulation, and at the micro, phonemic level, the substitution of [ɑ] for [a] and its negative influence on the production of [o] and [ɔ] which, influenced by [a], caused constriction of the tongue root. An additional example of Azucena's specific L1-interference included the use of [ə] (reduction) on unstressed syllables, e.g. [amərili] versus [amarili]. And, finally, Azucena did not differentiate in the disparate vowel production functions and responsibilities between the vocal cords versus the shaping in the mouth. My plan-of-action was to explicitly differentiate between the two through a theoretical explanation and a practical demonstration.

**Day 1 - EAI - Point 5**

I try not to exhaust singers' voices through needless repetition. My "information overload" and demonstrating using my own voice generally means that I have done as much of the "trial and error" on behalf of the student as possible. Observer 1 noted that "after very explicit instruction similar to classes in Linguistics courses", I had explained sound production from a linguist/phonetician's point of view. This necessitated showing the difference between producing the cardinal vowels [i, a, u] with minimal tongue shaping, as compared to those same vowel sounds produced using correct tongue
shaping, i.e. +/- backness, +/- height, +/- tenseness (as appropriate). I then demonstrated the difference between singing Amarilli using unshaped vowels and singing Amarilli with the shaping of the jaw, tongue, and palate. I returned to Azucena, who then sang just the first phrase. I asked the class if they hear a difference and before I had even finished asking the question, one participant yelled out, "100%!!"

**Day 1 - EAI - Transferability of knowledge**

Despite not having discussed or practiced any additional [a] vowel sounds within the piece, Azucena sang the first page of Amarilli and I noted that through EAI, which included my before and after demonstrations, the information had been accepted, incorporated, and made ready to be executed in every subsequent occasion.

**Day 1 - EAI - First participant feedback - no conflict with current technique**

I asked Azucena for feedback as to how she felt after her performance.

It feels really good. It's funny, I think a lot of us experience this. I feel exactly the way that I feel when my teacher says, "Ah! That's how you do it!" But it's just a completely different language about going about it. It feels great, is what I'm trying to say. (Azucena)

**Day 1 - EAI - Identity**

Elsa sang Verdi's *In solitaria stanza*. In our pre-study interview, Elsa had mentioned that she felt less comfortable in the Italian repertoire than in the German. This made me very sensitive that Elsa's comfort zone was tied to her sense of identity and belonging within the Italian repertoire. As I listened to and observed Elsa singing the first verse of *In solitaria stanza*, I could hear that her voice was very much at home in the
Italian repertoire and that this piece, in particular, framed her voice quite beautifully. My diagnosis for Elsa was quite different than it had been for the previous two participants. Elsa needed a plan-of-action that welcomed, validated, and supported her voice as an authentic, legitimate, and valued member of the Italian operatic repertoire community. In Elsa's case, it was critical for me to "cross-connect" within the 7-point framework; i.e. the plan-of-action and the required background knowledge would all have to serve, support, and build her comfort zone.

Day 1 - EAI - Point 4 - background knowledge

Rather than the longer, fuller "information overload" explanations I had given with the previous two participants, with Elsa, I worked in small micro-units, using a lot of humour, to exemplify the learning points. I deliberately did not teach through explicit error correction. Rather, I told a humorous story about [i], [i] differentiation, discussed the concept of +/- tenseness, and then talked about the difference between the English [in] versus the Italian [in].

Elsa then sang the beginning of the piece again and only because I had already given a lot of background information, I began the EAI by singing/demonstrating the difference between [in]/[in] on a single pitch. At first, Elsa said that she had thought she had sung an [i]. This is a typical situation since vowels in Italian are higher (or more tense) than in English. Because my entire course-of-action plan was to make her feel welcome and comfortable in the Italian repertoire, Observer 1 noted that, before working on this tense/lax, mid, front vowel differentiation, I had told Elsa: "If you can’t produce the sound, it’s not your fault. Don’t worry. I’ll come up and show you.” I never want
any of my students to feel like they are on their own. We are working together as a unit and it is only through this pedagogical safety net that they will have the courage to test and discover new things. I do not think that it was a coincidence that, when we resumed working after this reassurance, Elsa produced a perfect [in] on her first attempt.

The word, solitaria, and the fact that it is pronounced [so-li-'ta-rja] as opposed to [so-li-'ta-rri-a], brought about a discussion on syllabification, open and closed syllables, syllable nucleus, and semi-vowels and semi-consonants. Again, I approached the Italian language concept of one-vowel-per-nucleus through humour, beginning with an English example showing how we, by contrast, can syllabify consonants, e.g. for sure pronounced as: [frərə].

I let Elsa sing longer sections than the previous two participants to give her time to feel comfortable. When she completed a section, I immediately "checked-in" with her asking her how she felt. She said that she felt fine and asked questions about syllabification which I took as a sign that she was taking an active role in her own learning. We discussed the pronunciation and syllabification of the word: senza. I deliberately took out my iPhone again, opened up the Zingarelli app and used the opportunity to demonstrate again how to look up a word.

The final concept we worked on was another Italian phenomenon which, in a language without glottal stops, occurs for the sake of clarity when the last vowel of a word is also the first vowel of the proceeding word called: ribattere le vocali (literally, re-smacking the vowel). Observer 1 noted my use of "metaphors to illustrate the use of the vowels". I teach this particular phenomenon through a driving metaphor of my own invention. I explained that if you have finished driving through a school zone at 40 km/h
and the new speed limit is 70 km/h, you do not take your foot off the accelerator from the 40 km/h position and then reapply your foot in the 70 km/h position. You simply push the accelerator down from the 40 km/h to the 70 km/h position. In Elsa's piece: *doglia atroce*, I demonstrate how, without leaving the final [a] of *doglia*, you "resmack the same vowel" to begin *atroce*.

**Elsa - Path to Italian Identity**

Elsa's plan-of-action gateway into finding her Italian repertoire identity was inspired by her own interest in the effects of tessitura on vowel. Rather than engaging in a discussion, I decided that we would discover the answer to her question together, working through EAI. Elsa sang her second piece, *O smania! O furie!*. We worked slowly and purposefully through the beginning of her recitative. Observer 1 noted:

Elsa sang and Steven stopped to teach her a particular vowel. He went right in front of Elsa to show the position of the mouth, lips, and tongue necessary to produce the sound. He then used (the newly discussed) technical terms such as: 'mid', 'lax', 'back', 'front', and 'rounded' to clarify the sound. (Observer 1)

I had already covered the theoretical side of vowel production. What I felt would be the most useful for Elsa and the class was a physical demonstration of vowel production. Typically, I turn on my smartphone's flashlight, shine it in my mouth and produce the vowel sounds right in front of the singers, having them observe the change in my tongue position while hearing its effects.

In the middle of our work, Elsa commented that "sometimes people say that you can't..." After a silence she started her thought again, "There has to be a way to make vowels understandable up there. And sometimes people say that it's not true. But it's TOTALY true!!!" The more we worked, the clearer her diction became. If a singer
produces the vowel and pitch at the vocal cords, shapes the vowel correctly in the mouth, relaxes the jaw from the hinge thereby allowing the jaw to relax open, the appropriate vowel sound for that pitch will come out. I agree that a vowel on a high A will not sound the same as it will an octave below, but one cannot abandon vowel production altogether, saying that it is not necessary or possible because of the tessitura (i.e. vocal range). At the end of our session, I asked Elsa to sing through the entire passage we had worked on, from the beginning. The improvement in vowel quality and comprehensibility was so dramatic that, because she had just provided herself with the answer to her own question, she laughingly said, "Ok... I'll just go back... and work out all the things... Ya... Cool!"

Observer 3 noted that "the results were immediately obvious" through the use of "very clear and vivid illustrations", allowing the "sound to become much more open, unobstructed, more natural, and very importantly, nothing was at odds with what voice teachers would teach a student. This is not always the case with diction coaches!"

**EAI - Pragmatics, Italian sociolinguistics**

On Day 3, Elsa sang: *O del mio amato ben*. In my work with Elsa, I am trying to do two contradictory things at the same time. I am trying to keep Elsa comfortable while needing to coax her outside of her comfort zone. The problem is that Elsa barely opened her mouth to sing. I explained to her that "there was so much 'gorgeous' that was trying to come out. Let it get out!" And finally, I made a deal with Elsa telling her that she was completely "off duty" and absolved her of all responsibility for vowels and consonants. I said: "I don't care if you are completely incomprehensible. I would like the mouth as open as possible just to know what would come out." As always, I did a caricature, over-
the-top version in an attempt to desensitize her by demonstrating, *O del mio amato ben*, with my mouth overly open. "I want the cords to do their job which is to provide pitch and the 'uncooked version of the vowel', the tongue has to do its job which is to shape that 'uncooked sound' into clarity." She then did her version, outside of her comfort zone. The irony was that the difference in comprehensibility, legato line, and general vocal quality was enormous. Observer 1 wrote that I had said: “Can I say? Major improvement!” after which Azucena said to Elsa that she "sound[ed] real sexy", to which I responded: “Wait! We’ve just started! We still have 20 more minutes!”

The students laughed. Observer 1 wrote: "Steven said that all this was really hard and that’s why he was going bit by bit. He tried to make her feel more comfortable and is sympathetic to how she feels." Elsa continued singing. Voice quality, sound production, and legato line all improved.

At that point, I asked Elsa to show me while she was singing, everything she knew about breath support. She jokingly answered, "Oh ya, ya, so I can't just ignore this (breath support) because I'm doing something else?" The class laughed. And I said: "It's funny, but it's not funny." As an opera singer you have a voice teacher, a coach, a conductor, a director, a costume person, a makeup person, and you're trying to simultaneously multi-task. I know that it's really hard and that's why I'm going one step at a time."

Elsa sang through the verse and at a certain point stopped because she was laughing and I heard her say, "Ya... Ok..." and I looked up from behind the piano to see that both Azucena and Floria were elongating their mouths at her. Elsa was officially part of the Italian class group who were all working with her.
Floria said that Elsa "definitely had a whole new space for making all that Italian sound and when you added the breath, it filled that space."

Azucena added that she "felt that it was both warmer, clearer and had more volume."

Elsa then sang the entire second verse without running out of air, with very clear vowels and consonants, with a consistent and beautiful sound. She interrupted finishing her last note by commenting while laughing: "It feels like more on the breath than usual, which is the idea, but I can't (yet) feel the sensation of diction being accurate."

I told Elsa that she sounded fantastic and at that point, having successfully worked on Italian on a segmental level, I wanted her to really understand Italian on a suprasegmental level. I asked her if we could play around with the piece and said: "This is a very high cholesterol piece of music and your version doesn't have enough cholesterol because we haven't addressed that yet."

Starting from Or per le mute stanze, I sang the same verse in the most over-the-top way possible, getting more and more over-the-top as I went along. (I have no problem embarrassing myself if it's for pedagogical reasons...). The class erupted in applause, Observer 4, as she was laughing, said, "È vero italiano!"

Language is so much more than vowels and consonants. As stage actors singing in Italian, they have to consider the sociolinguistics of Italian, Italian pragmatics, customs, body language, etc. I asked Elsa if she would like to try her attempt at an over the top version of the last verse. She instantly agreed and I instantly said: "What a good sport!!!
Elsa then sang a phenomenally supported, pronounced, and interpreted last verse. I am so endlessly proud of her courage in taking such a big risk. Applause erupted complete with "wows!"

**Prima la parola, poi la musica - Words first!**

After Day 3's tremendous success, Elsa returned to her Mozart piece. I introduced the idea that, rather than having the music in the foreground and the words as the condiment the three of them should think, instead, in terms of having the words in the foreground and the music as the condiment. Observer 4 noted that my explanation was a "very good metaphorical explanation (like music or words being the condiment)." In this scenario, the words were communicating the information, as opposed to the pitches.

After working a while, Elsa explained that, "it was choosing to focus on the vowels as an expressive tool of Elettra's anger instead of the pitches. The pitches are high enough. We get it. She's angry. Because people yell when they're angry."

Once again, during her *Ah il cor nel seno*, I got my iPhone, put on the flashlight function, and stood right in front of Elsa while flashing the light in my mouth and spoke the words: *Ah il cor nel seno*, showing the physical difference between [e] and [ɛ] on [se-ɛ-e-ɛ-e-no] while she looked into my mouth.

Elsa sang: *Sarò in queste contrade* and said: "I know that that wasn't clear but that was still way clearer than I would usually do." Because on that [i] vowel on that g (pitch). I don't even know what that would have been like!"

While EAI effects immediate change, I do not ever want to put the pressure on students of the expectation of achieving instant perfection. Adjusting someone's
"linguistic wiring" takes time, patience, and practice. We had a long discussion on the vowel change between the words sarò and in i.e. [ɔ-i]. I told Elsa that there was a quarter of a millimetre more that she needed to do but maybe that was not going to happen that day, which was fine. "But maybe by tomorrow, we'll find that extra quarter of a millimetre." I demonstrate again. "It's ok if that happens tomorrow. But it will happen!"

By the final day, Elsa's performance was noticeably different. She sang O del mio amato ben. Her [a] was better, she sang to the ends of phrases without running out of air, the long [k:] sound of occhi [ok:i] was clear. I noticed something different, though.

I asked her: "Are you trying to sing quietly?"

"Yes."

"Please don't try and fit a size 10 foot into a size 8 shoe. You're going to be on a huge, football field sized stage, then the orchestra, then the front row... obviously don't push or scream, but don't under-produce."

Once she had "received permission" to sing with her whole voice, she was significantly more interpretative. By the end of the piece (ma cerco in van, chiamo in van) she was doing the tasteful, musical version of the caricature version I had done.

She commented: "It's allowing all of the sound to be there all of the time. Instead of managing it in the way I think it needs to be managed."

Elsa was enthusiastically cooperative. We were all working with her, showing her how she belonged in the Italian repertoire through EAI continuously cycling through the 7PC. In the end, she sounded better, sang better, and sounded more authentic or "true" in her performance.
Finding the First Domino

One of the more stimulating, invigorating and mentally challenging parts of my job is the fourth point on the 7PC, i.e., spontaneously creating a personalized plan-of-action. This I do based on discovering and attending to the one feature which will have the greatest, progressively cumulative, deductively interlinked cause-and-effect thus addressing as many of that singer's issues as possible. In Azucena's case, I had determined that addressing the L1 transfer from Canadian English into her L2 Italian target via the base of articulation would result in the greatest amount of change.

Base of Articulation

On Day 2, Azucena sang, *Parto, parto, ma tu ben mio*. While vowels and consonants constitute the "micro" components necessary for diction work, they need to be discussed within the larger, "macro" context of a language's "base of articulation", i.e. Where does a language "live"? Acquiring SI's phonemic inventory is only a starting point in the acquisition of SI's linguistic attributes from which the operatic form has evolved. The need for having this discussion in the course was reinforced by Observer 2 who attended on Day 2 and suggested that I:

might want to make more use of the idea of ‘language settings’ or ‘base of articulation’, including using such terms. By this I mean the idea - that you did discuss - that each language has an overall setting that defines some of the sound of individual settings. Along with talking about general qualities of ‘speaking Canadian’ versus ‘speaking Italian’, you could introduce the concept and explain that, in Romance languages, the whole vowel system tends to be more closed so that vowels are relatively higher compared to their English/Germanic counterparts. These could also be done with fronting (I found that Azucena, at least when she started, tended to have overly backed vowels). (Observer 2)
Observer 2's comments reinforced and supported my diagnosis and plan-of-action.

Azucena's "personal, inner circle" plan-of-action was also taking place within the larger "outer circle" of the course itself in which she was actively observing-participating in both my 30-minute theoretical lectures as well as in the "personal, inner circles" of the other members of the class. Azucena was being exposed to the phonemic work that I was doing with Elsa on her journey to citizenship within the Italian repertoire. In Azucena's case, I limited her vowel work to really differentiating between the Canadian English \([\alpha]\) and the SI [a] but generally, if I needed to work on previously covered topics with Azucena, I deliberately approached them from a personalized-Azucena perspective which for the rest of the class, as a deliberate side-effect, served to reinforce the new information.

I systematically guided Azucena's change of base of articulation from Canadian English by highlighting each respective language's suprasegmental features, such as: (1) comparing the disparate systems of each language's intonation, English through the consonants, versus Italian use of vowel and vowel length; (2) discussing the concept of "linguistic wiring", and the need to press an imaginary linguistic override button to accommodate L2's base of articulation; (3) emphasizing that this difficulty is not the student's fault. I then have her and the class notice how Italian prosody is accounted for and set musically by the composer. Voice onset time (VOT) or aspiration is another L2-English transfer concern which I explain in great detail and then demonstrate. At the end of Azucena's performance of her piece that day, Elsa commented that Azucena's singing was "super clear and super consistent."
On Day 3, Azucena sang *Amarilli mia bella* and I wanted to begin the transfer of "ownership of knowledge" over to her so I asked her: "Now that you have a lot of information, what do you think the first thing is that I'm going to say? What is the first 'override' button situation?"

**Internalizing the Information**

Azucena jokingly produced an over-Canadianized English pronunciation of "amarilli": [ɑːmaːrilli].

I then asked her: "If you were going to say this in SI, rather than sing this, what would you do?"

She then pronounced a textbook, SI version of: [amaril:i mia bɛl:a]

I then added to her body of knowledge through EAI. I described the letter [m] in SI as "the two lips begrudgingly coming together for the minimal amount of time required, as opposed to English where they come together and press."

On her third attempt, it was perfect: [amaril:i miːa bɛlːa]

After working through the piece for a while, I asked Azucena: "How was that for you?"

"Good. I felt like I might be coming a bit forward. Elsa, what do you think? Am I staying in 'the place'?"

Elsa told Azucena (Elsa and Azucena both have the same voice teacher):

"I think you're staying in the [name of their voice teacher removed]'s spot."

[Some voice teachers teach through giving their students particular physical points of focus.]
Elsa continued:

But I was just sitting here having an epiphany. Get ready! When you put it 'there' [i.e. in that focus 'spot'], you don't lose the rest of it. You aren't sacrificing colour which is kind of what I assumed happened. But it doesn't happen that way. You don't lose this part of it, you add more!

Azucena answered:

"I just needed to hear that. But it felt great! It felt good... and I felt Italian!"

Observer 1 commented:

"It is interesting how the pronunciation can be a tool for identity."

It is also interesting that, although that was my focus with Elsa, it was also happening for Azucena.

Azucena began to sing [kredi lo pur] but stopped because, as she explained to me, "the VOT was too long between the [k] and the voicing of the rolled [r]."

I was very proud of her taking ownership of the new information. That had been one of my goals. I responded with, "and we're only on day 3!"

After working on few more bars, I asked her how she was doing. She said that she was finding it difficult to appropriate everything. So I asked her to tell me about the difficulties she's having.

"It's just the Canadian in me and the training that it needs to be (she exaggerates an [ɑːː] sound)."

I demonstrated singing a few bars of the piece using the constriction of the [ɑ] vowel as my basis. I tie this into the subject of the evolution of opera from the Italian language and how opera could never have emerged from that kind of vocal constriction.
Elsa said: "That was awesome. I think our teacher would go at it by asking to put the vowel above the tongue."

To this Azucena added: "Which is what I feel like translates to the front of the back (of the tongue) being more forward in Italian."

Azucena and Elsa are translating, personalizing, and equating what they are learning in my class with the concepts and terminology of their teacher, which I encourage. Part of the reason for my asking how students are feeling is so that I can learn how they are capturing (and making sense of) what is happening to them. It is my responsibility to learn the student's vocabulary and to accommodate their learning.

Observer 1 noted:

[Steven] says the reason why he asks students, 'How are you feeling?', is because he wants them to explain what they feel, in their own words. For example, [Steven explains] some people say when they sing a vowel, they can feel it in their knees. He says whatever the student says, he has to know, so he uses the same terminology as the student.

Having incorporated all of the concepts, and only after the student feels confident in what they can do, I can begin to add more. I used the example of adding more candied fruit to a Christmas cake. I begin to ask for overly-dental, dental consonants, e.g. [t], [d], [l]. Using humour, I say that this is the difference between what they have in England at four o'clock, which is, and we both said together: "tea" as opposed to SI "ti".

"Upstairs" and "Downstairs"

On Day 4, Azucena sang *Amarilli* and I asked her to tell me about her "gas supply" to her sound.
When I work with singers, I divide their mechanism into "upstairs" (the vocal cords, throat, tongue, palates, etc.) and "downstairs" (breath support). Because of the nature of what I do, most of my work takes place "upstairs" but, at certain point in my work, the "downstairs" may require attention or recalibration in light of the work done "upstairs."

Azucena answered: "Oh yes! I just wasn't thinking about that at all."

To which I responded: "Because you were thinking about everything else, everything else was perfect. Now I would like to see what would happen if we were to supply the 'upstairs' with a higher amount of breath."

Azucena sang from Amarilli to l'amor mio.

Floria yelled out, "that was really good!"

I asked Azucena: "Do you have a side and back portion of your support mechanism?"

She said that she did and we continued to work. At a certain point, Azucena stopped so I asked the audience how things are going. I got nods and thumbs up but I wanted more specific feedback so I asked what they are getting out there in the audience.

Elsa said, "You get clarity along with", at which point, Floria interjected, "Colouuuur!" Elsa continued by saying: "the vibrancy of the tone being so full yet so resonant. It's warm and clear."

Azucena's work that day prompted a very interesting and significant response. She was so pleased with her work, performance, progress, and the steps we had taken to achieve our goal, that she asked if it would be possible to have a copy of the class
recording and was prepared to sign any waiver necessary. She said, "I would really love
to hear what that sounds like."

When I was studying voice, I recorded every single lesson, recital, and
masterclass on my portable cassette recorder. Recording one's lessons is something of an
"industry norm" in the field of opera. I used to replay the lessons over and over and,
often time, transcribe the entire lesson and/or the exercises which I had done. In today's
world where every smartphone is also an audio and video recorder, it is even easier to
record and do so with much higher quality than the old audio cassettes. Singers, when
they have a breakthrough in their lessons, like to retrace the steps leading to that great
learning moment. Azucena's request was very reasonable, so I wrote to the Ethics
Review Board and they authorized each participant to receive a copy of the recording of
her own, individual one-on-one sessions.

On Day 5, we continued our work on _Amarilli_. After singing through it the first
time, I noted, "That's majorly different from where we started!"

Azucena and I spent the session reviewing everything she had learnt through EAI,
both theoretically and practically. Her voice began to "unlock" out of the constricted [ɑ]
position, and, as she began to acquire the macro features of SI's base of articulation and
the micro features of the vowels and consonants, the words became clearer, her sound
became richer, and her legato line improved.

**Linguistic Boundaries**

Floria's tri-lingual background of (1) Canadian English, mixed with (2) intensive
French schooling until grade 3, and (3) L1 Italian grandparents, has had an interesting
effect on her ability to identify, compartmentalize, and isolate her vast phonemic inventory repertoire into each language's specific inventory. Floria had already acquired the full range of each language's phonemes but sometimes had challenges in compartmentalizing the sounds within their respective language's inventory and not 'borrowing' sounds between languages. My job, on a phonemic level, was to help her police which sounds belonged and which ones did not. Floria's larger challenge was understanding Italian suprasegmentals and their treatment and setting by the composer.

On Day 2, Floria sang *Vergin tutt'amor*. Using EAI, I helped her to notice and differentiate between singing an [i] (as in English and Canadian French) and SI [i] in *vergin*, to clearly time the unvoiced [tː] of [tutː:o amor] which causes, what I call, "a moment of silence" and differentiating between what is acceptable for speech and what is necessary for clarity, on stage. I offered a suggestion of how to avoid the shadow [a] vowel of *ascolta* [askɔləta*] by doing what I refer to as "a 2-fer". In SI, [l] and [t] are both dental consonants. As the tongue rises to touch the bottom of the front teeth, it creates the [l] and as it then leaves that position, we have the [t]. This brought about a discussion on SI syllabification, open and closed syllables, broad versus narrow IPA transcription, and the effects of consonant length on preceding vowels within a word.

Observer 2 noted: "I was very happy to see you discuss prosody (e.g., coarticulation/compensatory timing of vowel-consonant sequences in a word like ‘Musetta’). One can’t focus on segmentals alone because some of the required changes in consonants and vowels only happen when they are correctly realized as units."

The challenge for Floria in producing SI [a] versus Canadian English [ɑ] was different than with the other two participants. Floria already had [a] in her phonemic
inventory, but to her, it "sounded out of place" or "weird." At the end of Floria's session, Observer 1 made a comment on the subject of [a] versus [ə] that, as a native speaker of Portuguese, for Observer 1, it was very obvious to her when Floria was singing an English [a] and when she was singing an Italian [a] in the same way that, for an English speaker, seat and sit are two different words. Floria mentioned that it felt very weird for her to say such an open [a] and Observer 1 said that it was equally weird for her to say "sit" [sit].

**Prosody**

On Day 3, Floria sang the opening phrase of *Se tu m'ami* and it was blatantly obvious that she had done a lot of work since the previous day. She sang the first verse with detailed linguistic precision: [se t:u] - perfectly formed [e] triggering the syntactic doubling of [t:u], [ma:mi] had the correct SI [a], and [se t:u sospiri sol per me gentil pastor] were all pronounced "by the book."

I was enthralled and jokingly said: "Oh! You're going to make it difficult for me today! Ok... So. You've been working!"

I had her repeat the first verse and that time, since the vowels and consonants were all fine, I noticed that her VOT between the unvoiced [s] and [e] of [se] was too long, which we addressed through EAI.

Since Floria had mastered the phonemic work we had done until that point, I felt it was then time to work on the larger picture, i.e. the suprasegmentals. To teach this point, I have created a comedic example which I usually write on the board but since we
did not have one in this class, I said the sentence orally with as little intonation as possible: "I have to go to the bathroom."

I then said the sentence in 5 different ways:

1. I have to go to the bathroom.
2. I have to go to the bathroom.
3. I have to go to the bathroom.
4. I have to go to the bathroom.
5. I have to go to the bathroom.

Observer 1 wrote: "the students were amused and they laughed. Steven stressed the fact that they mean different things." Observer 4 said that "that would be a great exercise for teaching the language! Giving 5 different sets of instructions and explaining each one."

Later on, Observer 1 noted that: "He interrupted Floria when she was not clearly pronouncing the vowels and said: “You’re not allowed to go to Opera Land.” Then Steven imitated an opera singer who was simply making sounds but no words could be heard. Students were very amused and laughed. This was a very good way to relax [the] students, especially knowing that they were under pressure to produce the sounds very accurately."

Say [a]!

On Day 4, Floria sang *Vergin tutto amor* very accurately through the first verse. I discussed the SI idea of flowing from vowel to vowel by using the image of a salmon swimming upstream. The flow is not linear. I used the [o a] relationship in *tutto amor*
Floria was still producing [a] so I decided to offer a very explicit articulatory instruction-explanation. Quoting the Esling 2005 article, I discussed the relationship between [o] and [a] and constriction and I contrasted this with [a] which is, in fact, below [ɛ] on the IPA vowel chart! It is a longer journey of the tongue from [o] to [a] because:

1. English does not have [a], English has [a].
2. [o] and [a] are both back vowels
3. [o] to [a], therefore, requires 2 changes in vowel quality: mid to low and back to front

After this extensive EAI, Floria sang the two words correctly.

On the final day of the study, Floria sang Vissi d'arte. I asked her, before we began, what did she think I was going to be looking and watching for?

She correctly answered, "The [i] being [i] enough; [a]; and legato."

I added that since it started with the letter [v], a voiced, pitched consonant, the [i] vowel and the consonant [v] happen at the same time.

To prevent nasalization on con man furtiva, [kon], I explained the physical production of nasal consonants and how they affect vowels both before and after them. In this case, we had an example of a "pre-infected, nasalized" [o] in anticipation of the forthcoming [n] giving [kô mâ]. Armed with the EAI, Floria had a plan of action.

The final segmental topic was the idea of replacing unvoiced consonants with their voiced counterparts which I find very irritating. Often the two words are minimal pairs, for example, the boys in La Bohème do not live in a "carrot" (garret), the "vocal" point may not be the "focal" point, and you can have “beer by the pier” but not the other
way around. You cannot re-write a language because unvoiced consonants are inconvenient for you.

In working with Floria, I kept oscillating between the micro-segmental and the macro-suprasegmental. I had her group her sentences into their small phrases and then produce them as a larger sentence unit using the music as the guide. This is the most challenging part of diction work since pragmatics of a language is, regrettably, usually the last unit a typical language student learns. Unfortunately, as a stage actor, the singers are required to be able to portray their characters correctly within the framework of that language's socio-linguistic range of acceptability. Not speaking the language means that the singer is dependent on the composer's setting and the aid of a knowledgeable language coach.

**Feedback - Participants**

I would like to give a voice to the study's participants and the participant-observers by including some of their comments, beginning with the participants.

This Italian diction course was conducted as an action-research study which, in addition to testing my approach and framework, also endeavoured to assess its practicality and "learner-friendly" value as a course within an academic institution. On the last day, at the end of the course, I said to the class: "This was a course FOR you and each one of you sacrificed to be here over the past 5 days. Is there something you would like to have had/not had?"

Azucena replied:
"First of all, it wasn't a sacrifice to be here. I've gotten SO much from this. Secondly, I am a real picture-person, I love pictures, diagrams, and graphs. It would have been great to have got few copies of a blank face diagram so that we can fill in."

The three participants agreed that a course that had had time between each day would have been beneficial. Twice a week was seen as the best-case-scenario. Floria mentioned that language diction courses at universities that are one-language-per-semester are offered once a week. If I were to design a course covering all 4 languages in one year, (as I am hoping to do) then, she felt, I could justify the course meeting twice a week. Theory, history and musicianship classes at Floria's university were all twice a week.

Elsa had had Italian diction in her first year at university, when she was 18 years old, when it was not the optimum time since she felt that she did not yet have control over what her voice was doing.

"While it was useful at 18 to learn about IPA and how language worked, 10 minutes later, you didn't remember anything because your voice had changed."

Floria provided an example of the frustration a singer typically encounters in a diction class by giving an example from one of her undergraduate diction classes when she was told that her [i] needed to be more [i:].

Floria's response to that was:

"So, what do you do...?! You just make it up!"
Feedback - Observers

The Observer-Feedback providers gave a lot of feedback on the course, its content, and the approach of the course. As a teacher within a teaching institution, students are asked to fill in Student Evaluation Forms at the end of a course. This feedback is taken seriously by schools and can influence whether a teacher continues or not within that institution. I am including this section as an addition source of triangulation attesting to the success of this Italian Diction Course and its pedagogical approach and choice of materials. I have grouped and categorized some of the participants' comments below into themes.

The EAI Approach

Observer 7 commented after class that she "particularly enjoyed the one-on-one [work] which was where it all happens: the communication, the focus, and the precision! It's really interesting."

Your class has taught me that instruction in singing & instruction in opera diction are inseparable [and] I can see how the content of your instruction in the masterclass must be organic, not pre-determined. I like the IPA stuff and transcription exercise! (Observer 5)

"The change is visible between the start and the end of the session [and] it is very good that he goes step-by-step." (Observer 4)

"The second part of the class with individual students singing was great!"

(Observer 6)

I loved your meta-diction conversations. You connected the diction lesson to their professional future, stage performances, and your own experiences. I think these are extremely important conversations to have. They help students realize why they are learning what they are learning. (Observer 8)
A Positive, Student Centred Environment

On Day 1, Observer 1 noted my enthusiastic response to Azucena's question on syntactic doubling, "You have no idea how excited I am about your question!" Observer 1 continued by saying:

That was one of the many types of interactions Steven had with his students that showed how passionate he was about teaching and, most importantly, how passionate he was about helping his students. (Observer 1)

Observer 1 noted that "although Steven praises students constantly, he aims at helping them with particular sounds that need to be perfected."

You really know how to give constructive criticism kindly and encouragingly! (Observer 5)

He's very attentive during each student's performance [and showed himself to be] very reflective and analytical, [e.g.] 'Tell me about the difficulty [you are having.]' Steven explains the background, implications, and context very well and then asks the student: 'show me what you think.' A characteristic of his teaching is his personal involvement and his self-deprecating manner. He builds up the successes of students, taking them a step further. 'This is what everyone does, so don't worry' - he's very reassuring in his manner of providing constructive feedback. (Observer 4)

You are a master of building up rapport in the classroom. I loved the way you welcomed the students into your class at the beginning of the session: the small talk, jokes, and references to past conversations. The students knew each other and you (to different degrees), and there was a sense of ease and community in your class that I loved. I think what I saw was more than teaching “Italian Diction.” I think you’re a rare package of talent (language, music, voice, and communication skills). Can your syllabus be taught universally by all teachers of Italian diction? (Observer 8)

I love the way you give feedback to the students. You do a delicate job of strictly correcting them without harming their self-confidence. I admire your communication skills. I think your powers as a teacher more than anything else lie in the deliverance of your feedback. (Observer 8)

There were many types of interactions Steven had with his students that showed how passionate he was about teaching and, most importantly, how passionate he was about helping his students. (Observer 1)
The Chain of Concentric 7PCs Continue

The Twelve Principles which inspired this study’s pedagogical framework, the 7PC, the observers, the participants, the feedback, and the entire 5-day course as a single, macro-unit, will now take its place as the first rung on the 7PC. As a researcher-teacher, I have observed all the participants in this study (Point 1) and, with their participation and feedback, I diagnosed the pedagogical value, effectiveness, and strengths of this course, while having been alerted to its shortcomings (Point 2). In the following chapter, I will evaluate (a "modified" Point 3) how I will improve upon and adapt this course to form the basis from which, during my PhD, I will design the larger, full-year diction course covering all four standard operatic languages. Based on the knowledge and experience I have gained from this study, I will create a plan-of-action for the larger, new course, (Point 4) determine the required background knowledge (Point 5) which I will pursue during my PhD program, always bearing in mind the ease of student attainability and comfort (Points 6 and 7).
Chapter 5 - Researcher-Teacher Reflection - 7PC

The 1-Year Course Plan

This study was conducted to investigate my Italian diction class on two levels: on a micro level, I wanted to examine the course's approach, structure, and content, and on a macro level, to evaluate the transferability of course's approach, structure, and content as a basis for developing a full-year, Italian, German, French, and English opera diction course. Continuing with the theme of the 7PC as my pedagogical framework, I will now subject the aggregate of knowledge, insights, suggestions, and experience which have emerged from this entire study to the same scrutiny, beginning with the 7PC's first two points: (1) listening/observing, and (2) diagnosing points.

Part I - Listening, Observing, Diagnosing (7PC - Steps 1, 2, and 3)

The data collection for this study started several days after my University of Toronto Ethics Review Board application had been approved. Within less than a week, I met with each of the participants, performed a pre-study interview, co-ordinated availability, found a venue, invited the observers, and began the study. The course itself took place over 5 days. This economy of time management was necessary to ensure that I finished my data analysis over the remainder of the summer before beginning my PhD, in September.

In my personal experience as a singer as well as in my professional experience as a language diction coach in summer programs and in schools, singing every day under close scrutiny has definite developmental merit. For example, as an opera student, I
worked under similar conditions at Joan Dornemann's original 4-5 week, summer program in Israel, in the 1990s. Like the daily regime of a high-performance athlete, daily voice lessons, coachings, stage rehearsals, and music rehearsals with a conductor, all build, reinforce, and strengthen a singer's vocal, musical, and stage technique. The participants in this study showed a similar steep learning curve through this kind of daily instructional reinforcement. However, there is a different kind of knowledge incorporation that takes place when a singer has time between sessions to absorb, internalize, and actualize a new skill set into their vocal technique, discuss it with their voice teacher and coach, and even to have the luxury of "going astray" as they make mistakes which are so important in learning and development. I agree with Floria's observation that this course would be optimally taught twice a week which, while providing singers with the time needed to experiment on their own and get feedback, the sessions would still be close enough to reinforce the neutralization of L2 transfer.

Class Size

The teacher-centred lectures and the one-on-one session student-centred parts of the class are of equal pedagogical importance. Because of the small number of participants in this study, each singer had a daily, half hour, one-on-one session with me, in class. This is not a luxury which I could reasonably expect in a typical conservatory or university class. At the GGS, I teach this 2-hour course, once a week, dividing the class into the 30-minute lecture part followed by a 10-minute break, and then 4, 20-minute one-on-one sessions. I have, as a result of class size and time constraints, worked with 15-minute, one-on-one sessions but that short time period always proves to be too rushed.
In either of those scenarios, the students rotate in a pre-determined order, usually singing once every two weeks, which, although not ideal, is unavoidable.

**Class Structure**

Through both the participant and observer feedback, I am satisfied that the two parts of the course work well as two independent sections and as two complementary, interconnected sections. While the first part may seem to be too "teacher centred", it provides a substantial amount of necessary background information in a short period of time in preparation for the ensuing "student centred" sessions. According to some of the feedback, curiously not from the participants themselves, but from the observers, I needed to have provided more opportunity for class involvement. During the 30-minute lecture, this is impossible. If I had less than 30-minutes of information to cover in a given class, I would open up an extra one-on-one time slot. However, as the days progressed, not only did I begin to involve the class more, by asking for feedback and initiating class discussion, but the participants themselves began to spontaneously offer support and guidance to each other. Part of the class's deliberate design is to encourage collaboration, support, discussion, questioning, all leading to student-empowerment through noticing, knowledge building, and application, i.e. "see one, learn one, teach one".

**A Plan-of-Action (7PC - Step 4)**

**IPA.** One of the components of the course which suffered due to the brevity of this 5-day study was the practical use of IPA. While the participants each received a
copy of *The Steven Leigh Method to IPA-ing a Piece* (Appendix F), they did not have time to take one of their pieces and go through the steps and then hand it in and have it marked. In a typical, 12-week semester, this is not a problem. However, if the Italian diction course is, in fact, the first section of a full-year course, dedicating only 5 sessions to Italian is not sufficient. I think that 7 would be more appropriate since this first part of the course while primarily concerned with Italian, is also providing general information and skills which will be required for the course as a whole. I am anticipating that each subsequent language will take less time within this course.

**Assessment and Testing.** I had originally intended that the participants give a final recital in front of a panel of judges. This was not possible due to time and availability. As a course within a conservatory or university, an instructor would have to assign the students a course mark. In my classes, this final mark is based on both a written test [example given in the appendix] as well as an assessment of a piece which the students have prepared on their own which they sing for me in a final class performance. I have been reflecting on the latter, practical part of the class testing and I feel that it should be expanded further. It should be divided into several parts: the preparation, the practical knowledge, the IPA, and the performance.

In addition to presenting their test piece (or pieces), students should hand in a copy of their IPA transcription of the test piece(s). Additionally, if any non-Italian, L-1 interference is still occurring in their performance, it should be addressed as a theoretical subject. If, for example, a native English speaking singer's VOT is too long because, as a young singer, they may need additional time to incorporate this into their technique, rather than penalizing them, I would ask them to describe the process of VOT. If they
were able to articulate the steps, they should not be penalized (or only minimal marks deducted) for not having had enough time to acquire this new language skill.

**Visual Learners.** The RCM classroom had a whiteboard on 2 of the 5 days of the study. Because I am such an aural learner, I did realize that the diagrams and charts which I handed out in class, while helpful, were not sufficient for visual learners. Based on comments from the study's participants, visual support should be added to the lectures. I believe it would be helpful for the students to see the informational thought process through step-by-step drawings on the whiteboard in addition to handing out pen-and-paper exercises. For future classes, I will develop worksheets, make sure that I have a whiteboard in class to support the 30-minute lectures.

**Background Knowledge (7PC Step 5).** In the same way that this course has been set up as a guided collaborative instruction in which the instructor and the students work together as equals, the ultimate success and level of effectiveness of the course itself is affected by the age, educational background, motivation, and years of vocal study of its students.

Opera singers typically begin their training in their late teens through a plethora of vowel exercises and Italian art songs. Depending on their teacher, they may also sing German, French, and English art songs. Once a certain level of vocal proficiency has been attained, the teacher may introduce operatic arias. During this initial training period, the student will have been introduced to Italian, French, and/or German. If the student wishes to pursue their studies at an academic institution, their language training should include (non-singer specific) basic language courses.
Opera diction courses should not be a student's first contact with Italian (French, or German). This Italian diction course has assumed that its students will have followed the typical operatic training path and have gained a basic familiarity with the standard operatic languages. My recommendation (since universities typically offer first year courses in Italian, French, and German in their language departments) is that once I have designed a one year, 4-language diction course, that it only be in 4th year of a singer's undergraduate studies. Only after having completed the 3-language prerequisites, will the students be able to derive maximum benefit from the 1-year diction course.

Additionally, in their fourth year, singers should have a better understanding of their vocal mechanism, breath, and music styles. Armed with this background knowledge, they will be properly equipped to incorporate, in the case of the Italian diction unit:

1. SI's phonemic inventory (the correct production of SI's individual vowels and consonants)
2. SI's prosody (how those sounds effect each other within the context of a word, a phrase, or a sentence)
3. SI's pragmatics (how to express the composer's setting of the words, indicating shades of meaning through the words, rhythm, pitch, and body language)

and not require time to be spent on learning SI's orthography, sentence structure, verb conjugations, and noun declensions, etc. In other words, the diction class can do its job without having to be a poor substitute for an actual language class.
Beyond this Study

**Language learners, pronunciation, and pragmatics.** While opera diction instruction is a niche field, it does fall within the larger field of pronunciation pedagogy and, as such, has many transferable qualities to offer within the field of foreign language instruction. In many of the courses I took as a language student, I was given endless vocabulary lists to memorize, verbs to conjugate, and rules to obey. The problem is that this synthetic, soulless approach to language learning fails to acknowledge that oral language is imbued with prosody through which we describe, recount, and reflect our wealth of emotions from happiness to anger, love, disappointment, and betrayal, to name but a few.

Teaching the pragmatics and prosodic elements of a language should start in the beginner's language class. Nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs, along with their literal meanings, should also be demonstrated orally, infused with several prosodic variations showing the myriad of meanings possible by altering the tone, facial expressions, and body language using the same series of words. Often, a person's tone of voice conveys more meaning and subtext than the actual words. For example, if a single, monosyllabic word like, "fine", can express a range of meaning from: "I'm well, thank you.", to the suspicious, "Why are you asking me that, and what do you actually want?", simply by a person's changing their tone of voice and body language, then discussing the pragmatics, body language, sociolinguistics, and suprasegmentals of a language can become equally as important as rules like: "i before e except after c."

Opera singers have to express an expansive range of human emotion in a language in which they were not necessarily raised while sounding and looking as
nativelike as possible. This diction course, because its function is not to teach vocabulary, grammar, and syntax, concentrates completely on the singer's prosodic, dramatic, interpretation of the text and works systematically from the smallest, individual phonemic level to the larger, suprasegmental through EAI. This approach could easily transfer to the typical language classroom as a unit through which the vocabulary items are brought to life.

**Identity**

When I learn a language, my goal is to, as quickly as possible, enrol as a member of that language's inner circle. In the past few years at OISE, I have met colleagues who have voiced concerns about "losing their identity" through the process of learning an additional language. However, Trofimovich and Turuševa (2015) explain that, on the contrary,

One common finding across several learning contexts is that L2 users can successfully maintain the ethnic identity of their primary (home) group while acquiring an L2, suggesting that they can adopt a new cultural identity as part of L2 learning. (Trofimovich and Turuševa, 2015, p. 239)

Piccardo (2013) adds that language learning enriches the learner's pluralistic identity and:

occurs when a new reflective, active process takes place and information can be linked to already existing knowledge. The mother tongue(s) is/are not excluded from this process: every (new) language acquisition modifies the global language competence of individuals and shapes their linguistic repertoires. (Piccardo, 2013, p. 603)

I had never considered the acquisition of a new language, and being exposed to the culture it represents, the sounds its speakers create, and the new ways of seeing and
understanding the world conjured up by its unique expressions, sayings, and idioms as a negative, subtractive experience. On the contrary, the acquisition of another language's phonemic inventory and prosody at a (near-) nativelikeness level changes the level of acceptance, forthrightness, and even fear or uneasiness right from the first encounter by forming a verbal alliance with its native speakers. I have had many enriching, bonding, and barrier-free conversations with people, speaking in their mother tongue, during which I was immediately heard by them as being "one of us" rather than one of "them".

Conclusion

Opera diction instruction is a multi-disciplinary specialization uniting the fields of pronunciation pedagogy, music, and drama. While the relevance, transferability, and application of this study to other fields might be seen as limited, I would argue that since we live in a world which, through satellite television, online videos, live feed radio, high-speed trains, and air travel, we can be in touch with anyone, anywhere, at any time, learning about each other's pronunciation, the phonemes we have in common, and the phonemic inventories that give us each our own linguistic identities, can be a way of breaking down the phonetic barriers that may separate us. My identity is my plurilingualism. It doesn't change where I was born, my family of origin, or my culture. It allows me to sit with people from all over the world and learn from them, in their own language, with their own expressions, with the sounds of their own voices, what they think, how they feel, and what they dream about. EAI is a method that can bring us to a deeper understanding of not only "what we are saying" but what we actually "mean".
References


Cummins & C. Davison (Eds.), *The International Handbook of English Language Teaching*. Volume 2. Norwell, Ma: Springer Publications.


Appendix A - Diction Courses Examples

1.0 University of Toronto

Website:  http://www.music.utoronto.ca/Assets/Faculty+of+Music+Calendar+2013-14.pdf

1.1 General One Year Undergraduate Course

PMU135Y1 Lyric Diction
A study of diction and the expression of text in song. The course deals with Italian, German, English and French in concise format, using the International Phonetic Alphabet.

1.2 Diploma in Operatic Performance Program

(Includes: Operatic Performance, Operatic Répétiteur, and Student Stage Director)

1.2.1 Italian

OMU508H1 - Italian Diction
Practical approach to phonetics and diction, as applied to the performance of Italian operatic repertoire.

OMU608H1 Italian Diction 0.33
Practical approach to phonetics and diction, as applied to the performance of Italian operatic repertoire. (Continuation of OMU508H1)

OMU708H1 Italian Diction
Continuation of OMU608H1

1.2.2 French

OMU505H1 French Diction
Practical approach to phonetics and diction, as applied to the performance of French operatic repertoire.

OMU605H1 French Diction
Practical approach to phonetics and diction, as applied to the performance of French operatic repertoire. (Continuation of OMU505H1)

OMU705H1 French Diction
Continuation of OMU605H
1.2.3 German

OMU510H1 German Diction
Practical approach to phonetics and diction, as applied to the performance of German operatic repertoire.

OMU610H1 German Diction
Practical approach to phonetics and diction, as applied to the performance of German operatic repertoire. (Continuation of OMU510H1)

OMU710H1 German Diction
Continuation of OMU610H1

1.2.4 English

OMU511H1 English Diction
A practical approach to phonetics and diction as applied to the performance of operatic repertoire in English.

OMU611H1 English Diction
Practical approach to phonetics and diction, as applied to the performance of operatic repertoire in English. (Continuation of OMU511H1)

OMU711H1 English Diction
Continuation of OMU611H1

2.0 Royal Conservatory of Music, Glenn Gould School (Toronto)


2.1 Diploma in Performance Studies

Italian Diction (608-008)
Italian diction will be studied with written and sung examples from the song and operatic repertoires.

English Diction 1 (608-001)
The introduction of the International Phonetic Alphabet as a tool for learning the basics of pronunciation. English diction and repertoire are the focus.

English Diction 2 (608-005)
Continued study and application of English language with grammar and written work.

French Diction (608-007)
French diction is studied with written and sung examples from the song and operatic repertoires.

German Diction (608-004)
German diction will be studied with written and sung examples from the song and operatic repertoires.

2.2 Artist Diploma Program

French for Singers (703-014)
French diction and language is studied with examples from the song and operatic repertoire.

Italian for Singers (703-013)
Italian diction and language is studied with examples from the song and operatic repertoire.

German for Singers (703-012)
German diction is studied with examples from the song and operatic repertoire.

3.0 McGill University (Montreal)


3.1 Bachelor of Music or Licentiate in Music (Undergraduate)

MUPG 209 - Introduction to Lyric Diction
Performance: Rules of lyric diction and the sounds of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

MUPG 210 - Italian Diction
Performance: Study of International Phonetic Alphabet. Study of Italian pronunciation in singing using song and opera texts.

MUPG 213 - German Diction
Performance: Study of German pronunciation in singing using song and opera texts.

MUPG 211 - French Diction
Performance: Study of French pronunciation in singing using song and opera texts.

MUPG 212 - English Diction
Performance: Study of International Phonetic Alphabet. Study of Standard English pronunciation in singing using song and opera texts with a special emphasis on problematic vowels, diphthongs and consonants.
3.2 Master of Music or Artist Diploma

MUPG 590 - Vocal Styles and Conventions
Performance: Emphasis on vocal performance practices through practical application: text, language, inflection, pronunciation and interpretation considered with individuality of each student's voice and technical development. After examining historical treatises, students will discuss and present musical selections utilizing modern performance standards yet remaining true to stylistic demands of each period.

4.0 - Juilliard (New York City)

website:
http://catalog.juilliard.edu/search_advanced.php?cur_cat_oid=19&search_database=Search&search_db=Search&cpage=3&ecpage=1&ppage=1&spage=1&tpage=1&location=33&filter%5Bkeyword%5D=Diction

4.1 Bachelor of Music

VAMUS 161 — Phonics
An introductory course dealing with the elements of lyric diction. Singers become familiar with the International Phonetic Alphabet (I.P.A.) and the similarities and differences found in Italian, German, French, and English diction.

VAMUS 591-2 - Italian Diction
The fundamentals of Italian phonetics and sound production. Special emphasis given to the application of the theory through art songs and operatic arias.

VAMUS 561 — English Diction
The study of Neutral American English pronunciation and its correct vocal production, followed by Oxford British English pronunciation and application of both pronunciations to solo vocal repertoire with regard to clarity, expression, and interpretive values.

VAMUS 581-2 — German Diction

VAMUS 571-2 — French Diction
A thorough study of the phonemes of the French language from the points of view of phoneticization (I.P.A.), vocalization, and interpretive expression of the text. Application of these to the song and operatic repertoire with stress on declamation of translations and healthy, intelligible, expressive singing in French. Open-class recital at the conclusion of the spring term.

4.2 Master of Music
VAMUS 560X — English Lyric Diction: Graduate Review
A one-semester review of English lyric diction.

VAMUS 570X — French Lyric Diction: Graduate Review
A one-semester review of French lyric diction.

VAMUS 580X — German Lyric Diction: Graduate Review
A one-semester review of German lyric diction.

VAMUS 590X — Italian Lyric Diction: Graduate Review
A one-semester review of Italian lyric diction.
Appendix B - Information Email and Informed Consent for Participants

Dear ____________________,

Introduction:

My name is Steven Leigh. I am a Master of Arts student in the Language and Literacies Education program, in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at OISE/University of Toronto.

I am writing to see if you would be interested in participating in a research project in which I will be empirically testing my approach to teaching Italian lyric diction to opera singers.

After reading the detailed information below, if you wish to participate in the research study, please complete and return the consent form attached to this document to me.

Thank you very much,

Steven Leigh

Title of Research Project:

Testing an Approach to teaching Italian Lyric Diction to Opera Singers:

An Action Research Study

Principal Investigator:
Purpose of the Study:

Although conservatories and universities' faculties of music within North America offer an Italian diction either as, 1) a 1-semester, independent, course, or, 2) a unit within a full year diction course, there has been no educational empirical research testing the approach or methodology for the instruction of these courses. This has occurred because of the nonexistence of graduate programs leading to qualification as a lyric diction instructor, the dearth of regulating bodies controlling: a) the content of the courses, their pedagogical approach or method, and, b) the validity of the contents of textbooks used for these courses.

After many years as a language diction coach and course instructor, I have developed my own approach to teaching Italian lyric diction. The purpose of this study is to empirically test the efficiency and efficacy of my approach, examine my course content, and the materials I use.

The Study's Procedure:

If you are interested in participating in this study, I will meet with you, explain the study, its purpose, answer any questions regarding participating in the study, and upon your written consent I will:
1) conduct a semi-structured questionnaire to get background information about your phonetic inventory (sound repertoire)

2) request your participation in 5, 2-hour, Italian diction for opera singers classes followed by a "final recital". Each class will comprise of a 30-minute lecture followed by 20-minute, one-on-one Italian coaching sessions with each participant, in front of the class

3) ask for you to keep a journal to provide course-feedback

Once I have finalized my list of participants, I will announce the dates and times of the classes (based on participant and venue availability)

Please be advised that:

1) the study will also include a panel of invited university professors, scholars, and OISE M.A. and Ph.D. candidates in the fields of: foreign language pedagogy, pronunciation instruction, and Italian language instruction to provide feedback to me on the content, structure, materials, and approach of the course

2) all interviews and classes will be recorded

Benefits:

Participants will:

1) learn a stepwise approach to Italian lyric diction based on authentic, scholarly materials which will improve clarity and the authenticity of their vocal production
2) learn to use the International Phonetic Alphabet as an orthographic system for notating, contrasting, and comparing the phonetic inventories of languages

3) learn self-reliant procedures for Italian role (aria, art song) preparation

Participants’ Rights

To Confidentiality:

Your identity will be kept strictly anonymous and confidential through the use of pseudonyms in both the analysis of the data and the oral and written reporting of the findings. Only my supervisor, Dr. Enrica Piccardo, and I will have access to these recordings.

All electronic information will be kept on an encrypted, case-sensitive, password-protected, external hard drive, stored in a locked, fireproof safe in my apartment. All data will be destroyed no later than five years from now.

To Ask Questions about the Research:

If you would like to ask questions about this research project, you may do so at any time.

Please contact me (Steven Leigh) or .

You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Enrica Piccardo, regarding questions or enrica.piccardo@utoronto.ca.

The University of Toronto also has an office specialized in research ethics if you want more information about your rights as a research participant, or to verify the
authenticity of this research. You may contact the Office of Research Ethics at (416) 946-3273 or ethics.review@utoronto.ca

To Withdraw at Any Time:

At any time, if you decide not to participate in my study, you may withdraw from the entire study by contacting me.

You may decide to end your participation in this study at any time, for any reason, at which point all information collected pertaining to you will be destroyed.

Please note that all classes will be recorded and while I will NOT use any of your participation in my data collection, it will not be possible for me to erase your specific portions off of the class's recording.

Please also note that once my research findings are reported or published, you CANNOT withdraw.

Risks:

There are no risks to you as a participant in this study. All of my data will be collected under pseudonyms.

Please be aware that this is an opera diction class in which there will be 5-6 participants plus external observers. I cannot control other participants' conversations or comments (outside of the class) which may lead to disclosure of your having participated in this study.

Please read and sign the attached consent form if you are willing to participate in this study and let me know if you have any questions.
Thank you again for considering my request.

Steven Leigh

PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF THIS LETTER FOR YOUR RECORDS

************************************************************************
***********
***********

I have read Steven Leigh’s letter describing the goals of the research project and I understand that my participation will involve participating in a:

1) pre-study interview

2) a 5-session, Italian diction course and "final recital"

I will be requested to provide oral feedback and journaling over the course of the study.

All sessions (pre- and post-) will be audio recorded.

There will be a panel of invited guests present during the classes.

Conditions:

Any information gathered about me (the participant), including my willingness to participate, will be kept strictly confidential and all participants’ identities will be kept anonymous by the researcher (Steven Leigh) during the collection, analysis, and
reporting of the research data; no identifying information will be used in the reporting of
the data either in presentations or in written research reports.

I understand that data collected about me (the participant) and the other
participants in this study may be used in academic publications or presentations.
However, no identifiable information related to participants will be included whatsoever.

I will receive a copy of the research report summarizing the findings of the study.

I may withdraw before the study is reported or published at any time with no
penalty. However, once the study is reported or published, I may NOT withdraw.

_______ YES, I agree to participate in the research

Name:______________________________________

Email:______________________________________

Signature:___________________________________

Date: _______________________________________

_______ NO, I do not agree to participate in the research
Name: ____________________________________________

Date: ____________________________________________

Signature: ________________________________________
Appendix C - Semi-structured Interview (Participants) - Protocol

1. In what language did your parents/guardians speak to you?

2. Did you respond in that/those language(s)?

3. Did you learn to speak this language?

4. How good are you at identifying accents?
   b) How good are you at identifying variations within a language?

5. In which languages have you had a formal education?

6. Have you had previous opera diction instruction?
Appendix D - Information email and informed consent for observer/feedback providers

Dear ____________________,

Introduction:

My name is Steven Leigh. I am a Master of Arts student in the Language and Literacies Education program, in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at OISE/University of Toronto.

I am writing to see if you would be interested in participating as an observer to provide me with feedback in my research project for which I will be empirically testing my approach to teaching Italian lyric diction to opera singers.

After reading the detailed information below, if you wish to participate in the research study, please complete and return the consent form attached to this document to me.

Thank you very much,

Steven Leigh

Title of Research Project:

Testing an Approach to teaching Italian Lyric Diction to Opera Singers:

An Action Research Study
Principal Investigator:

Steven Leigh, M.A. Candidate, Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.

Purpose of the Study:

Although conservatories and universities' faculties of music within North America offer an Italian diction either as, 1) a 1-semester, independent, course, or, 2) a unit within a full year diction course, there has been no educational empirical research testing the approach or methodology for the instruction of these courses. This has occurred because of the nonexistence of graduate programs leading to qualification as a lyric diction instructor, the dearth of regulating bodies controlling: a) the content of the courses, their pedagogical approach or method, and, b) the validity of the contents of textbooks used for these courses.

After many years as a language diction coach and course instructor, I have developed my own approach to teaching Italian lyric diction. The purpose of this study is to empirically test the efficiency and efficacy of my approach, examine my course content, and the materials I use.

I am requesting the presence of a panel of invited observers which will include: foreign language pedagogy, pronunciation instruction, and Italian language instruction professor-researchers, and M.A. and Ph.D. candidates, to provide feedback to me on the content, structure, materials, and pedagogical approach of this course.
The Study's Procedure:

1) Prior to the first class, I will have conducted a semi-structured questionnaire interview with each participant to determine their starting point

2) There will be a series of five, 2-hour, Italian diction for opera singers classes followed by a "final recital". Each class will comprise of a 30-minute lecture followed by 20-minute, one-on-one Italian coaching sessions with each participant, in front of the class

3) Once I have finalized my list of participants, I will announce the dates and times of the classes (based on participant and venue availability)

Please note: the classes will be audio-recorded

Benefits:

Participants will:
1) learn a stepwise approach to Italian lyric diction based on authentic, scholarly materials which will improve clarity and the authenticity of their vocal production
2) learn to use the International Phonetic Alphabet as an orthographic system for notating, contrasting, and comparing the phonetic inventories of languages
3) learn self-reliant procedures for Italian role (aria, art song) preparation

Observers will:
1) make a valuable contribution to pronunciation pedagogy
2) experience an opera diction course taught through explicit articulatory instruction
Participants’ Rights -

To Confidentiality:

Your identity will be kept strictly anonymous and confidential through the use of pseudonyms in both the analysis of the data and the oral and written reporting of the findings. Only my supervisor, Dr. Enrica Piccardo, and I will have access to these recordings.

All electronic information will be kept on an encrypted, case-sensitive, password-protected, external hard drive, stored in a locked, fireproof safe in my apartment. All data will be destroyed no later than five years from now.

To Ask Questions about the Research:

If you would like to ask questions about this research project, you may do so at any time.

Please contact me (Steven Leigh) @ or @

You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Enrica Piccardo, regarding questions @ or @.

The University of Toronto also has an office specialized in research ethics if you want more information about your rights as a research participant, or to verify the authenticity of this research. You may contact the Office of Research Ethics at (416) 946-3273 or ethics.review@utoronto.ca

To Withdraw at Any Time:
At any time, if you decide not to participate in my study, you may withdraw from the entire study by contacting me.

You may decide to end your participation in this study at any time, for any reason, at which point all information collected pertaining to you will be destroyed.

Please note that all classes will be recorded and while I will NOT use any of your participation in my data collection, it will not be possible for me to erase your specific portions off of the class's recording.

Please also note that once my research findings are reported or published, you CANNOT withdraw.

Risks:

There are no risks to you as an observer/feedback provider in this study. All of my data will be collected under pseudonyms.

Please be aware that this is an opera diction class in which there will be 5-6 participants plus external observers. I cannot control other participants' conversations or comments (outside of the class) which may lead to disclosure of your having participated in this study.

Please read and sign the attached consent form if you are willing to participate in this study and let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you again for considering my request.

Steven Leigh
PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF THIS LETTER FOR YOUR RECORDS

************************************************************************
***********

************
I have read Steven Leigh's letter describing the goals of the research project and I understand that my participation will involve observing and providing feedback in any or all of the five, 2-hour Italian diction course sessions and/or the "final recital".

I will be requested to attend, observe and provide written feedback regarding the content, structure, materials, and pedagogical approach of this course.

All classes and the "final recital" will be audio recorded.

Conditions:

Any information gathered about me (the observer/feedback provider), including my willingness to participate, will be kept strictly confidential and all participants’ and observer/feedback providers' identities will be kept anonymous by the researcher (Steven Leigh) during the collection, analysis, and reporting of the research data; no identifying information will be used in the reporting of the data either in presentations or in written research reports.

I understand that data collected about me (the participant) and the other participants in this study may be used in academic publications or presentations. However, no identifiable information related to participants will be included whatsoever.

I will receive a copy of the research report summarizing the findings of the study.

I may withdraw before the study is reported or published at any time with no penalty. However, once the study is reported or published, I may NOT withdraw.
______ YES, I agree to participate in the research

Name:________________________________________

_____________________________________________

Email:________________________________________

_____________________________________________

Signature:_____________________________________

__________________________

Date: ____________________________

______ NO, I do not agree to participate in the research

Name:________________________________________

_____________________________________________

Date: ____________________________

Signature: _______________________________
Appendix E - Semi-structured Questionnaire (Observer-Feedback Provider)

Thank you so much for participating in this study. Any information that you provide is confidential. Please be reminded that this class is being audio recorded.

This questionnaire is a guide. Please feel free to answer/not answer any questions on this page.

1. Are you a professor / graduate student?

2. What is your field of research?

Please provide any feedback on:

1. The structure of this class.

2. The approach used in this class's instruction.

3. The materials used.
Appendix F - The Steven Leigh Approach to ‘IPA-ing a piece in Italian’ (Phonetic Transcription)

IPA Transcription: Step by step

1. Write out, or cut and paste the text of your aria onto a Word Document. If you are cutting and pasting from the internet, make a note of the source. (If there’s an English translation - keep it! But don’t assume that it’s 100% correct!)
2. Format the text so that you have space to write between each line. (e.g. line spacing = 3)
3. Searching word by word, find and mark the stressed syllables of each word.
4. If the unstressed syllables of a word contains an 'e' or 'o', mark them as ‘closed’, i.e. [e], [o]
5. Go through the text, finding all instances of the letter 'r'. If they’re intervocalic - mark them as a flipped, i.e. [ɾ], all others mark as rolled [r].
6. Go through the text, and find all occurrences of the: [ts], [dz], [ʃ], [ɲ] and [ʎ] sounds. If they’re intervocalic, make sure to indicate them as ‘long’ or as ‘double’ consonants, i.e. [tːs], [dːz], [ʃː], [ɲː] and [ʎː] or [tːts], [dːdz], [ʃːʃ], [ɲːɲ] and [ʎːʎ].
7. Find all the double consonants in the piece - mark them as double
8. Find all the words that cause syntactic doubling - if they are followed by a word starting with a consonant, mark that word's initial consonant as double
9. Find all of the Italian word:
   a. e - (English 'and') - mark them as [e]
b. è - (3rd person, indicative, present tense of the verb *essere*) - mark them as [ɛ]

10. In the case of inflected nouns and conjugated verbs, look them up at:

    www.wordreference.com which will indicate the uninflected form which you can look up in your Zingarelli app.
Appendix G - Italian Diction Final Test (Example)

I - Vowels

1. There are three attributes which we use to describe the quality of vowels:

   a. ___________ / ___________

   b. ___________ / ___________

   c. ________________

2. Italian has ___________ (number) vowels whose symbols are:

   [__________________________________________]

3. Two vowels in SI's orthography represent 2 different phonemes:

   a. The (written) letter: _______ represents both the [_____] sound and the

      [_____] sound.
b. The (written) letter: _______ represents both the [_____] and the [____] sound.

4. In an unstressed syllable in which the vowel _______ or _______ appears
   (in writing), the pronunciation is always the ________________ version.

5. In a stressed syllable, the written letters _______ and _______ can represent
   either the ___________ or __________ version.

II - Consonants

The IPA consonant chart has both an \( x \) and a \( y \) axis, each giving different kinds of information.

1. The \( X \) axis which runs left to right or horizontally, shows the consonants’

   ___________________________________________________________________

2. In other words (explain that term):

   ___________________________________________________________________
3. Three examples are:

   a. ______________________________

   b. ______________________________

   c. ______________________________

4. The Y axis which runs up and down (or vertically) indicates the ______________________________.

5. In other words (explain that term):
   ______________________________
   ______________________________

6. Three examples are:
A native English speaker has a particular challenge in producing 3, SI Italian stops.

7. These three consonants are: _______ , _______ and _______.

8. These three consonants cause _______________ in English. This does not happen in Italian.

9. Another phenomenon that occurs in Italian is consonant lengthening or

_____________ consonants.

Consonants are sometimes affected by their surroundings in Italian. For example, certain consonants change their quality if they are intervocalic (between two consonants).

10. For example, the letter ____________ when it is intervocalic is flipped
IPA Symbol = [_______], otherwise it is ______________ - IPA Symbol = [______].

11. There are five sounds which, if they are intervocalic, are doubled (lengthened).

12. One example is the sound [_________] as in the word ____________________

13. There are two accepted ways of transcribing long or double consonants. Please give an example of one consonant written using both systems.

[_____________] and [______________].

III - Syllables

1. When syllabifying words in Italian, the nucleus will always contain a ________________.

2. If the syllable ends in a(n) ______________ it is called a(n) ______________ syllable.

3. If the syllable ends in a(n)____________ it is called a(n)____________ syllable.
4. If two vowels are in the same syllable, one will form the nucleus and the other will be ‘downgraded’ to a ________________.

5. An example of that is the word: ______________________________.

IV - Transcription

Please transcribe the following:

Caro mio ben, credimi almen, senza di te, languisce il cor.

[_____________________________________________________________]

_____________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________

[_____________________________________________________________]
V - Steven’s favourite phenomenon in Italian

As I have discussed with you (on probably too many occasions), Italian has a phenomenon known as syntactic doubling. Please explain this, in your own words to the best of your ability and please give one example of this occurrence.

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

VI - The Bonus Question

How many double letters (long consonants) are there in the following opera title?

Cosi fan tutte ________________

Please show where they are.
**Appendix H - Standard Italian Consonants (Single) [Pulmonic]**

Adapted from (Clivio & Danesi, 2000)

N.B. Where two symbols appear side by side, the symbol on the left = voiceless, the symbol on the right = voiced

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manner of Articulation</th>
<th>Place of Articulation</th>
<th>Bilabial</th>
<th>Labiodental</th>
<th>Dental</th>
<th>Alveolar</th>
<th>Postalveolar</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stop / Plosive</td>
<td></td>
<td>[p] [b]</td>
<td></td>
<td>[t] [d]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[k]</td>
<td>[g]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fricative</td>
<td></td>
<td>[f] [v]</td>
<td></td>
<td>[s] [z]</td>
<td>[ʃ]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affricates</td>
<td></td>
<td>[ts] [dz]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[tʃ] [dʒ]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasal</td>
<td></td>
<td>[m] [ŋ]</td>
<td></td>
<td>[n]</td>
<td>[n]</td>
<td>[ŋ]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lateral</td>
<td></td>
<td>[l]</td>
<td></td>
<td>[ʎ]</td>
<td>[ɾ]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flip / Flap</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[r]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B. Semivowels/Semiconsonants:

[w] = voiced, labiodental-velar approximant

[j] = voiced, palatal approximant

N.B. [ts] [dz] [ʃ] [ŋ] [ʎ] are always double when intervocalic

[z] is always single
Appendix I - Standard Italian Consonants (Double) [Pulmonic]

Adapted from (Clivio & Danesi, 2000)

N.B. Where two symbols appear side by side, the symbol on the left = voiceless, the symbol on the right = voiced

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manner of Articulation</th>
<th>Place of Articulation</th>
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<th>Labiodental</th>
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<th>Velar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td></td>
<td>[p:] [b:]</td>
<td>[t:] [d:]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[k:] [g:]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fricative</td>
<td></td>
<td>[f:] [v:]</td>
<td>[s:]</td>
<td>[ʃ:]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affricates</td>
<td></td>
<td>[tːs] [dːz]</td>
<td>[tːʃ] [dːʒ]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nasal</td>
<td></td>
<td>[m:]</td>
<td>[n:]</td>
<td>[nː]</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Approximant</td>
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<td>Lateral</td>
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<td>[lː]</td>
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<td>[rː]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

N.B. [ts] [dz] [ʃ] [ɲ] [ʎ] are ALWAYS double when *** intervocalic ***

[z] is always single