



# Language Learner Profile

# **Interview Analysis**

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# 1. Introduction

The Language Learner profile is an instrument which aims to recognize the background of a certain student regarding her/his performance and acquisition of the English language. This profile is developed from a deep analysis of a sample given by the learner, either oral or written depending on the objective of the profile.

According to Crothers and Hogarth (2008), a learner profile should include a certain framework for providing context; this framework goes as the following:

- background information (e.g., first language, country of origin, previous education etc);
- sample context (e.g., sample date, information about preceding lessons and/or activities, instructional approach using the Gradual Release of Responsibility);
- writing sample;
- student strengths based only on the sample;
- student needs based only on the sample; and
- *instructional focus.*(p. 1)

Through this analysis, teachers can have a detailed overview of the context where the student is immersed, from which they identify strengths and weaknesses for each Learner Profile. Therefore, they will be able to develop, suggest and carry out strategies for overcoming the weaknesses and firming up the strengths. (Crothers, B. & Hoarth, B., 2008).

The main purpose of this work is to analyze the speaking skill of the English Learner through an interview in order to recognize some phonological and lexical issues, for later suggestion of some advices and proposals to improve the level of English of the interviewee based on the outcome delivered by the student.



# 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Learner Background

The English learner we interviewed is a first year student from the English Teaching Program who is 19 years old. He studied at a technical school in Concepción, his English classes started at 5<sup>th</sup> grade having two hours per week. He has never taken an English course outside school or university. The interviewee says that at school the most trained skill of the English language was listening since they used to practice a lot, not only by listening to tapes, but also by watching videos. He also claims that although the teacher was good, he feels that they were only taught a basic level during their whole experience at school.

At school, the teacher mostly delivered worksheets, and she hardly worked with the text book delivered by the Ministry of Education. Furthermore, they had to prepare one oral presentation for the end of the semester. The classes were not designed from stating a main topic such as natural disasters, economy or environmental issues, but it was mainly based on developing dialogue situations in different contexts –bus trip, parties-.

Before starting this major, he was a student at the Social Work Program for one year. In this major, he never had English classes.

#### 2.2. Instruments

#### 2.2.1. Background Questionnaire

As the main aim of this work is to analyze the language profile of the learner, it was necessary to develop some questions for getting to know the background of the learner regarding to the previous experience he might have had with English. This questionnaire consisted of 12 questions which are relevant for having information about how he has experienced the English language through his academic life.

For making the student feel more comfortable when responding these questions, and as these were not going to be analyzed for stating mistakes, they were asked and answered on his L1 which is Spanish. Therefore, we decided to carry out the last part of the



interview after the first one which was in English, so he would not have to make an important effort when switching from Spanish to English.

# 2.2.2. Interview (Tasks)

For accomplishing the most important part of this work, we asked the student 9 questions about his personal life, his routine and his likes. These questions were developed in the targeted language –English- for analyzing his current capability for producing oral speech, taking into account both phonological and lexical aspects.

After recognizing his most common mistakes, we are going to provide some proposals and advices for him to work and start improving his level of English. Hence, this part of the entire interview is the most important one.

## 2.2.3. Procedures

For accomplishing this work, we contacted a student from first year of this major we had already met during the first days of the academic year, we asked him if he could help us and he accepted immediately. During the next days, the three of us agreed on meeting in an office in Tomas Moro building during one of his free periods.

The first part of the interview, which was carried out in English, lasted 2 minutes and 11 seconds. The second part, which was developed in Spanish, lasted 2 minutes and 41 seconds.

For starting the phonological analysis, we typed the interview and then we transcribed some parts for checking his pronunciation. We listened several times and every time we heard a different pronunciation, we highlighted it.

For the lexical analysis, each of us read separately the entire interview for checking vocabulary issues by highlighting them and then we compared them.

# 3. Data Analysis

### 3.1. General Analysis

Even though this work is mainly devoted to analyze some phonetic and vocabulary issues, the interview analysis evinced some problems on the grammar aspect for which we are going to give some advices in order to give him a proposal as complete as possible.

When it comes to the performance itself, even though he did not seem nervous when speaking, he did hesitate by constantly using the filler "eeh" or when he expanded the word "the" in the line 18, as it is shown in blue in the extract below. We think he mainly used them when he did not remember certain vocabulary for expressing what he was trying to.

According to a study developed by Rasekhi (2009), most of the pronunciation mistakes made by native speakers of Spanish when learning English, are caused by the interference between their Language 1 (L1) and the Language 2 (L2) their learning. When we analyzed this student's spoken discourse, we consider his mistakes were mostly caused due to a constant influence of his L1.

#### **3.2.** Phonetics and Phonology

For developing this analysis, we selected a part from the interview and transcribed it. We used this extract for selecting certain mispronounced words produced by the interviewee during the conversation. However, we not only used this extract, but we also selected other mispronounced words from other parts of the interview.

This analysis will be developed by presenting the words used by him which presented a wrong pronunciation. Next, the correct both British and American pronunciations will be shown, according to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary.



# 3.2.1. Selected Extract Lines 16, 17, 18

"Eem I saw serie eh call teen wolf. It's about eeh a boy who was scratch by a wolf and become on a werewolf and with he friends eh have to make a some adventures to survive the the monsters and the day by day."

# 3.2.2. Phonetic Transcription Lines 16, 17, 18

/eem ai so: siriə e ko:l tin wulf || its abaut ee a boi hu: wos skratţ bai ə wulf ənd bikom on a wa:wulf ənd wið hi frendz e hæv tu: meik æ som aventţərs tu: sərbaiv ðee ðe monsters ænd ðe dei bai dei/

### 3.2.3. Examples

Word	Learner's Pronunciation	British Pronunciation	American Pronunciation
serie	/ˈsɪr <mark>ɪə</mark> /	/ˈsɪəriːz/	/ˈsɪriːz/
teen	/tɪn/	/tiːn/	/tiːn/
was	/wps/	/wəz/ (weak form) /wɒz/ (strong form)	/wəz/ (weak form) /w∧z/ (strong form)
scratch	/skr <mark>a</mark> ţʃ/	/skrætʃ/	/skrætʃ/
werewolf	/ˈwɜːwʊlf/	/ˈweəwʊlf/	/'werwʊlf/
some	/spm/	/səm/ (weak form) /sʌm/ (strong form)	/səm/ (weak form) /s∧m/ (strong form)
survive	/sʊrˈbaɪv/	/səˈvaɪv/	/sərˈvaɪv/
the	/ð <mark>e</mark> /	/ðə/ (weak form) /ðiː/ (strong form)	/ðə/ (weak form) /ðiː/ (strong form)
sisters	/ˈsɪst <mark>e</mark> rs/	/ˈsɪstə(r)z/	/ˈsɪstərz/
movies	/ˈmʊvi <mark>s</mark> /	/ˈmuːviz/	/ˈmuːviz/

# 3.2.4. Analysis

For Spanish speakers, there is not a pronunciation distinction between the consonants "b" and "v", being usually pronounced with the /b/ sound, and this usually causes mistakes when spelling in Spanish (Case, 2012). Nevertheless, when speaking English, these consonants are differently pronounced since /v/ is a voiced fricative using teeth and lip, and /b/ is a voiced plosive using the lips (Hudson, 2013, ¶ 2). We think he has not started to be aware of this difference yet, so he produced a /b/ sound instead of a /v/ when saying the word "survive":

Student: /sʊrˈbaɪv/

BrE: /səˈvaɪv/

There are other mispronunciation issues we consider are due to the influence of L1. As Case (2012) indicates, Spanish speakers do not have distinctions between short and long vowels. In fact, Spanish has only five vowels: /a/, /e/, /i/, /u/, /o/ (Frías, 2001). Then, it is typical that they often stretch all vowel sounds out too much and confuse pairs of short and long English vowel sounds like "ship" and "sheep" both in comprehension and speaking. (¶ 4)

**Evidence** 

- Word: scratch
   Student: /skratʃ/
   BrE: /skrætʃ/
- In Spanish language there is only one sound related to the vowel "a", so instead of producing the /æ/ learners tend to always produce the previously acquired sound /a/.
- Word: the
   Student: /ðe/
   BrE: /ðə/ (weak form)

The English language has a particular sound known as schwa (/ə/), which does not exist in Spanish. Thereupon, it is difficult recognizing and acquiring this sound for the learners.



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- Word: teen
   Student: /tɪn/
   BrE: /tiːn/
- In Spanish language there is only one sound related to the vowel "i", so instead of producing the long sound /i:/ learners tend to produce the most known sound sound /i/ in Spanish, which is similar to the short sound /I/ in English.

The last issue we consider important to highlight is related the lack of the phoneme /z/ in the American Spanish. Indeed, when a Spanish word has the consonants "z" or "s", these are pronounced as /s/, making no distinction on the sound because of the spelling (Case, 2012). Hence, the /z/ has turned into a hardly used phoneme in Spanish in a Chilean context (Frías, 2001). Consequently, when he wanted to express plurality with the "s" suffix, he immediately related to his previous knowledge of Spanish and produced a /s/ sound instead of a /z/.

#### <u>Evidence</u>

Word: sisters	Word: movies	
Student: /ˈsɪster <mark>s</mark> /	Student: /ˈmʊvi <mark>s</mark> /	
BrE: /ˈsɪstə(r)z/	BrE: /ˈmuːviz/	

Finally, now that we have already covered the most repeated mistakes he made, we would like to stand out that he produced the correct pronunciation of the word "wolf" saying /wolf/ instead of relating the vowel "o" to the Spanish vowel and producing it with the phoneme /b/, as we would expect from our experience. This might occur because he is periodically watching a series where he is constantly hearing this word since the word is connected to the main idea of the show. As the Communicative Approach points put, a constant exposition eases the acquisition process of a language (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011), we think that this constant exposure is the main reason he acquired the correct pronunciation of this word.



# 3.3. Lexis

The lexical analysis we made was based on a study developed by Hemchua and Schmitt (2006) for analyzing the lexical mistakes that Thai learners made when producing English compositions. Even though our work is for a Spanish native speaker, the research presented similar errors to those we found in our analysis.

#### 1.- Extract

Line 7: "...I would like to see movies in English..."

#### Analysis

The student made a 'near synonym' mistake since, in this case, he knows the meaning of the word, but the usage is not appropriate. Moreover, the student is referring to a period in his life performing that action. Therefore, the correct way should be: "...I would like **to watch** movies in English...". Additionally, this mistake is also related to what Nation, cited by Read (2014), mentions as an issue of 'use' of words. This means that he understands the meaning of the word itself, but he is not capable of using it in the correct collocation.

1.1. It is important to highlight that when we asked him the fourth question Do you like watching series?, he used the correct verb when answering: Yes I like watching series. We consider this is due to it was a yes/no question, and, as he had already heard the word, he repeated the question but in the structure of an answer.

## 2.- Extract

Lines 7-8: "...and listen music in English."

#### Analysis

In this example, the student did not produce the appropriate collocation for the verb **listen** (Read, 2014). By definition, the verb "listen" is used with the preposition **to** when we refer to music: listen to somebody/something (Hornby, 2000). Hence, he should have said "…and listen **to** music".



### 3.- Extract

#### Line 10:

- a. "Eeeh...Improve the speak..."
- b. "...because I don't talk very **fluency** in English..."

#### Analysis

The student knows the root of the word, but he made a 'suffix type' mistake because he used a different suffix in each case. For this reason, the correct form in the first case should be **speaking** and in second case should be **fluently**.

#### 4.- Extract

#### Analysis

#### <u>Line 16</u>

- a. "Eem I saw serie call teen wolf."
   a. We can identify a 'L1 influence' mistake. The student is applying the knowledge that he has from his first language in a second language context. He confused the Spanish word serie with the English one series because both words have similar sounding; in addition, we think he unconsciously related the suffix "s" to plurality and so he does not use it when referring to singular nouns.
- b. "Eem I saw serie call teen wolf."
  b. The second mistake in this sentence is related to the form of the word since he did not use the proper derived form of the word call (Read, 2014). The word by itself is a verb, but in this case he should have used the adjectival form of the verb which is called. This adjective is referred to the particular name of something/someone (Hornby, 2000), in this case it would be the name of the series.



### 5.- Extract

Line 17: "...become on a werewolf..."

### Analysis

In the English language, prepositions can be used with verbs, noun and adjectives. If we focus on the verb **become**, he did not know how to "build" this phrasal verb by using the wrong preposition instead of the appropriate one, being also a "use" issue as Nation explains (Read, 2014). Thus, in this case the learner made a 'preposition partner' mistake because he used the preposition **on** instead of **into**, which in this case is more appropriate for the verb. Also, because the learner is referring to a physical change.

### 6.- Extract

Line 17: "...and with he friends ... "

### Analysis

This is a 'word choice' mistake considering the lack of sense in the sentence. When we analyzed it, we realized that the student should have used the pronoun in a possessive form. Consequently, the learner should have said <u>his</u> friends instead of he friends.

#### 7.- Extract

#### Analysis

#### <u>Line 17</u>

a. "... with he friends have to make a some adventures..."

a. In the first case we are in presence of a 'word choice' mistake. We think he chose the word **make** for referring to the fact that the boy and his friends have to **survive** the adventures they face. Furthermore, by definition, the word make is not related to the context he used it. (Hornby, 2000)



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b. "... with he friends have to

make ah/a some adventures..."

b. in the second part, we believe this could be a filler by hesitation. Nonetheless, we also think he might have been trying to replace the article **a** by **some**, and in oral speech it is not possible to "erase" a word as in written compositions.

#### 8.- Extract

Line 18: "...to survive the the monsters..."

#### Analysis

The hesitation problem that occurs here, we think is due to the lack of confidence in the learner or he does not remember the proper vocabulary to express the idea he has in mind. This entails that the student uses a filler for trying not to keep in silence while he remembers the lexis he desires to use. (Guilquin, 2008)

#### 9.- Extract

#### Analysis

Lines	22-23

a. "It's about a <b>women</b> and there	a. Firstly, we could find a problem with the form of the
is in a world with zombies"	word. In this case he introduced the noun with the
	article <b>a</b> , so we can infer that it should follow a noun in
	its singular form; nonetheless, he used the inflection
	women instead of the singular Lemma woman. (Read,
	2014)
b. "It's about a women and there	b. We can classify this mistake as a 'word choice'
is in a world with zombies"	mistake due to the fact the student used incorrectly the
	word ' <b>there</b> '. Thence, we can infer that he is talking
	about the woman and in this case he should have used
	the pronoun <b>she</b> for giving meaning to the sentence.



### 4. Proposed Treatment and Remediation

In the first place, because of the acquisition of the correct pronunciation we covered previously, we consider that it is important that the student continues being exposed to the language he is learning through series, movies and also listening music. Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), present the Communicative Approach which aims to constantly expose the students to the language since this will allow the learners to acquire pronunciation and also the correct grammatical structures through a meaningful input. In addition, he could use the webpage Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab (<u>http://www.esl-lab.com/</u>) since in this webpage he can listen to several audios and at the same time read the transcription of the audio for checking pronunciation and spelling. Furthermore, we recommend him to use the Softwares available on the Labs in Tomas Moro building (Pronunciation Power 1 and 2, Focus on Grammar and Straightforward), because they integrate vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation practice. Moreover, they have different complexities for the student to use the one according to his level of English.

Secondly, Guilquin (2008) says that *in order to keep the floor while we hesitate, we place dummy words in the empty spaces between our words (p. 121)* and this helps the speaker to maintain the communication and not stay silent while thinking the next idea or words; nonetheless, using fillers such as "eeh", "aah" or "mmm" could damage the speaking performance in and academic context, or even when having a colloquial conversation, since it could give the impression that he is not sure about the knowledge he has on a topic. Hence, for overcoming the problem of hesitation, we advise him to start using some small or vague words such as "well", "I mean" or "things/stuff like that" for keeping a more fluent conversation while he starts acquiring the confidence or attitude necessary for speaking English without the fear of making mistakes. (Guilquin, 2008)

Finally, as in our personal experience, we recommend him to start speaking or reading out loud in privacy for practicing fluency, and then, he could start doing the same but in front of his family, friends or classmates so he could start practicing how to deal with facing an audience



# 5. Conclusions

This analysis was aimed to recognize the main issues of an English learner during the production of oral speech through several questions about his life. To conclude this work, we can say that the mistakes committed by the student during the interview were mostly a consequence of the L1 influence into the L2 and a lack of confidence that the interviewee showed, but those mistakes are typical in EFL learners. In addition, we are aware that the interviewee began to have classes in 5th grade having only two hours per week, which influenced significantly in the acquisition of a second language, because among the earliest age a child is exposed to a second language, there are more chances to have a less complicated acquisition process. Moreover, the student was part of another major where he was not exposed for an entire year to a formal instruction of English; consequently, his only English input was through TV series and movies that he watched. We are agreed that with a prolonged exposure and an intensive use of the software in our faculty, the student can increase his level of English not only improving his vocabulary and pronunciation, but also his knowledge about grammatical structures.



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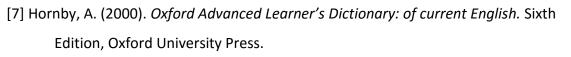
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# 7. Appendices

- 7.1. Background Questionnaire
  - 1. ¿Qué edad tienes?
  - 2. ¿En qué año de carrera estas?
  - 3. ¿En qué escuela estudiaste?
  - 4. ¿En qué curso comenzaste a tener clases de inglés?
  - 5. ¿Cuantas horas de inglés tenías a la semana?
  - 6. ¿Has tomado algún curso de inglés fuera del colegio?
  - 7. ¿Qué habilidad del inglés crees que se desarrolló más en tu colegio?
  - 8. ¿Esta es la primera carrera que cursas?
    - a. ¿Tuviste clases de inglés?
  - 9. Acerca de tu experiencia con el profesor de inglés en la escuela,
    - a. ¿qué tan eficiente crees que era?
    - b. ¿Qué materiales utilizaba para desarrollar su clase?
    - c. ¿Cómo organizaba o desarrollaba el ramo durante las clases?
       (actividades, tópicos)

## 7.2. Interview Questionnaire

- 1. Who do you live with?
- 2. Why are studying English Pedagogy?
- 3. Which skill do you think you need to improve? Why?
- 4. Do you like watching series?
- 5. What series are you watching nowadays?
- 6. Have you watched any movie lately?
- 7. What was the last movie you watched about?
- 8. What do you do in your free time?
- 9. Would you like to travel abroad? Where?



# 7.3. Interview Transcription

	(I): Interviewer. (St): Interviewee.	Line
(I) (I) (St)	I'm going to make you some questions about your personal life. Are you from Concepción? Yes. I am from Concepcion.	1 2 3
(I) (St)	<ul><li>1 Who do you live with?</li><li>I live with my parents and my two sisters.</li></ul>	4 5
(I) (St)	<b>2 Why are you studying English Pedagogy?</b> Because when I'm a little boy I would like to see movies in English and listen music in English. So I like the English.	6 7 8
(I) (St)	<b>3 Which skill do you think you need to improve? Why?</b> EeehImprove the speak. Because I don't talk very fluency in English so I have to eh improve.	9 10 11
(I) (St)	<ul><li>4 Do you like watching series?</li><li>Yes I like watching series.</li></ul>	13 14
(I) (St)	<b>5 What series are you watching nowadays?</b> Eem I saw serie eh call teen wolf. It's about eeh a boy who was scratch by a wolf and become on a werewolf and with he friends eh have to make ah some adventures to survive the the monsters and the day by day.	15 16 17 18
(I) (St)	6 Have you watched any movie lately? Yes.	19 20
(I) (St)	7 What was the last movie you watched about? Eeh the last movie was eem Resident Evil. It's about a women and there is in a world with zombies and have to survive to it.	21 22 23
(I) (St)	8 What do you do in your free time? In my free time I take care of my sisters in home, I make my bed and my bedroom every day or I study, I read or watch the movies.	24 25 26
(I) (St)	9 Would you like to travel abroad? Where? Yes, to arg- Agentina because I was there the four years ago and I love Argentina, so I want to travel there again.	27 28 29