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Language Analysis Final  
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LING 392

## **Introduction:**

For my language analysis assignment, the consultant that I interviewed was Viviana Jimenez. Viviana is a 22 year old student at CSUMB. She has attended CSUMB for the last four years and currently resides in Watsonville, California. In Watsonville, there is a large Hispanic population who predominantly speak Spanish. As a result, Viviana always finds herself translanguaging because she uses Spanish and English languages “bilingually” to communicate with others in her community (Garcia, 2009, p.44). Viviana was born in the municipality of San Jose de Gracia in the state of Aguascalientes in Mexico. When she was 13 years old, her family and herself, immigrated to the U.S from Mexico. Her family, like many other immigrant families, decided to immigrate to the U.S. in the hopes to have a better life abundant with opportunities for employment and education. Since the moment that she entered the U.S., Viviana explained that she was put in English Language Development (ELD) courses. Therefore, as a newcomer in eighth grade, Viviana described that she was not only in regular courses with other English speaking students, but she also at one point participated in these English learning courses to start getting exposure to the English language. Viviana can be classified as a L2 learner because her home language is something other than English. And more specifically, she is an ESL student because she attended the various programs and classes that were established to assist in the process of learning English (California Pathways, 2000, p. 6). At the end of the interview, Viviana explained that she plans to attend more English courses because she wants to become a university professor one day and thinks mastering the English language is fundamental.

The interview took place at the Watsonville Public Library on March 14, 2018 in the late afternoon. The library was nearly empty which facilitated the clarity and the process of the

interview. At the beginning, we had some trouble with the device in which the interview was going to be recorded, but it was solved quickly. For the data analysis I chose to focus on the short vowel sound /i/, her use of past tense, and the use of articles. For the phonological aspect I chose the short vowel because I was really intrigued of the fact that, although she explained that she mostly uses Spanish, her use of sounds was really good. I chose to analyze the use of past tense in the discipline of morphology because there are irregular verbs that make it hard to learn English and I wanted to see how well Viviana mastered them. Lastly, I chose to focus on the use or lack of articles because I was intrigued to see if Viviana also didn't emphasize the use of this type of function words as we had discussed in class.

### **Background Research:**

Spanish is a romance language that like many of the other Romance languages, it has Latin as its ancestor (Penny 4). This Romance language is part of the Indo-European language family and is closely related to Italian and Portuguese. Currently, it is one of the major Romance languages in the world with nearly 400 million native speakers in USA, Latin America, and Spain (Frankfurt International School). In regards to Phonology, Spanish has five pure vowels and English has twelve (Frankfurt International School). English has different vowel sounds in comparison to Spanish such as /æ/, /ɛ/, /ɪ/, /ʌ/ According to Helman, Spanish doesn't have four short vowel sounds like in the case for *man*, *pen*, *tip*, and *up* (455). For that matter, some English learners might have difficulties distinguishing from words like *ship/sheep* and *cat/cut*. Although, Spanish and English share some consonant blends like *pl*, *pr*, *br*, *tr*, *dr*, *cl*, *cr*, *gl*, *gr*, *fl*, *fr*, Spanish has more consonant sounds (Helman 453). Helman explains that Spanish has more consonant sounds such as /s/, /r/, /ʎ/, /ɲ/, /ɰ/, and /ɲ/ but share some consonant sounds like *p*, *b*,

*d, t, k, g, m, n, f, s, w, y, ch, and l* (454). The venn diagram below shows that vowel sounds that both Spanish and English share, and also shows the vowel sounds that English has but Spanish does not.

Since I read that the major difficulties that English learners have are in regards to the short vowel sounds, I decided to analyze these short vowel sounds to see if Viviana also had difficulties mastering these vowel sounds. My prediction was that, she like many English learners, would also struggle with some of these four short vowel sounds. In terms of morphology, Spanish is more inflected than English. According to the analysis conducted by Maria de Lourdes Serpa, she defines morphology as the study of inflections of any language and how these inflections influence the main characteristics of a language (ELL, 2005). She also explained that morphemes are the smallest unit of meaning of language and vary according to the language. De Lourdes Serpa explains that since Spanish is a highly inflected language, these inflections may occur on nouns, adjectives, articles, pronouns, and verbs; where can be inflected for aspect, tense, mood,

indicative action, person and number (ELL, 2005). According to De Lourdes Serpa, the inflections mentioned can produce a possible 46 to 47 verb forms, whereas in English since it is not as inflected, only four or five distinct verb forms are found (ELL, 2005). Although syntax and morphology are two separate branches in linguistics, De Lourdes Serpa states that it is harder to separate syntax in Spanish because syntax varies varies in relation to morphologic structure (ELL, 2005). Further, the author states that since Spanish relies primarily on morphology to carry meaning, the word order in Spanish can be really flexible. Since I read that morphology really influences Spanish syntax quite considerably, I found that it would be interesting to analyze if Viviana had trouble with the inflections of English, since it appears that there are less than the ones in Spanish. I predict that Viviana will not have a lot of trouble with the English inflections because I would assume that the Spanish ones are more complicated for her since there are more variations for the past tenses of imperfect and preterite.

### **Body:**

#### Phonology:

In Viviana's phonological analysis of the short vowel /i/, I found that in only one occasion, on line 38, she pronounced the word *mistakes* with a long vowel sound for /i/. Phonology is defined as the study of speech structure within a language that includes the patterns of basic speech units and the accepted rules of pronunciation (The Components of Language 41). I personally believe that there should not be a "correct" way of pronouncing a word and perhaps I might be wrong myself, yet the variation that Viviana used for the word *mistake* was different. Even so, Viviana used the short vowel /i/ in 90 occasions and she only had one variation which gave her a 98.9% accuracy. Although this is only a brief analysis, it appears that Viviana has really mastered the

use of the short vowel sound /i/.

### Morphology:

Morphology is “the study of the smallest units of meaning, morphemes” (The Components of Language 41). Like mentioned earlier, since English is not a highly inflected language like Spanish, I analyzed how the various inflections like suffixes changed the meaning of certain words. For the analysis of Viviana’s use of past tense, in 28 occasions that she used the past tense, she only had one variation which gave her a 96.5% accuracy result . On line 28, she used the word *develop*, but she should have used the past tense of *develop* because she was describing the way her English has changed throughout time. It was really interesting to see that Viviana also did well with the use of past tense for verbs that were irregular.

### Syntax:

Syntax is the “study of how individual words and their most basic meaningful units are combined to create sentences,” (The Components of Language 42). In this section, I analyzed Viviana’s use of articles to see their relationship with sentence structure. Since we had discussed in class that English learners tend to drop the use of function words since they are not emphasized by native English speakers, I also wanted to see if in Viviana’s speech there was a lack of use of the determiners. After analyzing her interview data, I found that Viviana used determiners with perfect accuracy. In my opinion, and based on my personal experience, I think this is because in English learning courses, teachers tend to emphasize on academic “proper” English rules and don’t take into consideration that in social spheres determiners and other function words are not as emphasized.

### **Conclusion:**

My predictions regarding syntax and morphology were correct. Viviana showed that she really knew the rules that pertain to morphemes and sentence structure. Although she had one variation in her morphological analysis, Viviana had a high level accuracy. I was wrong in my phonology analysis because I thought that Viviana was going to have difficulties with short vowel sounds. In reality, Viviana showed that she was really aware of the differences that exist in English regarding long and short vowel sounds. Her language skills were better than I expected because although she has been exposed to the English language for quite some time, I thought that her social interactions would affect her English skills. For example, she mostly speaks Spanish at home and currently resides in a city where Spanish has a frequent use. Therefore, I thought that she would be at a disadvantage because she doesn't really have anyone to practice it with. Further, since her major is Spanish, she has found herself using more Spanish than English to communicate. Even with this, I really admire the fact that Viviana is considering changing her habits so that she could continue learning and developing her English skills.

**Reflection:**

This project, and this class in general, have allowed me to see language from a different perspective. As a second language learner myself, I found this project interesting because it helped me see that although English learners go through similar challenges, each individual experience is unique and should be analyzed as so. Also, since I am a Spanish speaker myself but did not receive formal education in this language, it was really interesting to see how complex it is. It was really intriguing to also see how various inflections really impact the structure of Spanish. Lastly, I really liked the recommendation that second language learning should be done so with the inclusion of the first language. I agree with this because as a young student I was

always asked to leave my Spanish at home or use it at recess only. This is a very scary perspective because it implies that any other language other than English is not as important in an academic setting. Therefore, I really hope that for future second language students, their first language is more included in the process of learning a new language.

## Works Cited

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- The Differences Between English and Spanish*. Frankfurt International School, <http://esl.fis.edu/grammar/langdiff/spanish.htm>.

## Appendix:

### Phonology: Short Vowel Sound /i/

1. I was like **thirteen** and a half. I was **in** eighth grade **in** **middle** school.
2. And that's when I started to learn and had to learn
3. because I moved from Mexico to the United States.
4. So before **starting** to learn **English** here **in** the United States, I took a class where I had
5. like **English** for beginners but **it** was different because I would just be like translating from
6. a book but **it is** not the same as like learning the sounds and more **in** detail.
7. And I would say that I had some knowledge just like from basic words like tree, or the
8. colors, the months, the days of the week, just **basic** stuff. **It's**
9. hard because **since** I am **in** the United States, I speak **English** but my major **is** **Spanish**.
10. And when I am at school I speak **English** but sometimes also **Spanish** **since it's**
11. my major and at home I speak **Spanish** most of the time. I **think** **Spanish**.
12. I **think** **it's** just the fact that **it's** my **first** language.
13. I would say that for my career I have to have like knowledge **in** both of the languages.
14. And yeah, I think I need like knowledge **in** both of them, **it's** like a balance.
15. Well I **think** learning **English** was an **important** part to reaching my **academic** goals
16. because **without it** I wouldn't be able to be where I am like I wouldn't be able to **finish**
17. high school and go on to college and **finish** all the general requirements.
18. **It is** very **important** to my career.
19. Yeah, I want to be a professor so I want to get my masters and a PHD **in** the future.
20. I think being embarrassed like to pronounce the words wrong and being like ashamed
21. because people like would notice that I wasn't speaking the right way.

22. I think that stops sometimes people from practicing English and learning the language.

23. I think classmates. No I don't have any like memory that happen like exactly but I was

24. afraid of like doing something like that, like someone making fun of me because I didn't

25. pronounce it the right way. I think the support was more from school because at home it

26. was just Spanish. No they don't. Well I received an award in middle school for like

27. English development so that was something important for me in making that transition to

28. go to high school. Yes. Well I think as I develop my Spanish I develop English.

29. I think a good way to do it through reading in English cause sometimes when I feel like I

30. used too much Spanish maybe I am like getting away from English or like I feel like my

31. skills are decreasing. But I think reading is a helpful way to like practicing and not forget

32. it. I think a mixture. Newspapers and stuff like that. Basic things.

33. I would say in a bilingual environment. Cause I think it is a good idea

34. to be expose to English and Spanish and have in mind that both of

35. them are important. Well I think it is hard to learn English and more

36. because of the differences that there are like between English and Spanish and I think

37. the hardest part is reading and speaking since it is like different. And sometimes

38. due to the fact that we might feel like scared to do those mistakes and be called out.

**Viviana's Phonological Analysis of the Short Vowel /i/ Sounds:**

	Standard Forms:	Variation & Examples:
1.	3	0
2.	0	0
3.	0	0
4.	3	0
5.	2	0
6.	3	0
7.	0	0
8.	2	0
9.	5	0
10.	4	0
11.	2	0
12.	3	0
13.	1	0
14.	2	0
15.	4	0
16.	3	0
17.	1	0
18.	3	0
19.	1	0
20.	0	0
21.	0	0

22.	2	0
23.	1	0
24.	0	0
25.	2	0
26.	3	0
27.	4	0
28.	3	0
29.	4	0
30.	2	0
31.	3	0
32.	4	0
33.	3	0
34.	3	0
35.	5	0
36.	4	0
37.	3	0
38.	1	1 <mistakes>

Total A: 90

Total B: 1

Add columns: A (90) + B (1) = Sum Total (91)

Column A (90) / Sum Total (91) = 98.9 % accuracy of short vowels /i/ sounds

### **Morphology: Use of Past Tense:**

1. I **was** like thirteen and a half. I **was** in eighth grade in middle school.
2. And that's when I **started** to learn and **had** to learn
3. because I **moved** from Mexico to the United States.
4. So before starting to learn English here in the United States, I **took** a class where I **had**
5. like English for beginners but it **was** different because I would just be like **translating** from
6. a book but it is not the same as like **learning** the sounds and more in detail.
7. And I would say that I **had** some knowledge just like from basic words like tree, or the
8. colors, the months, the days of the week, just basic stuff. It's
9. hard because since I am in the United States, I speak English but my major is Spanish.
10. And when I am at school I speak English but sometimes also Spanish since it's
11. my major and at home I speak Spanish most of the time. I think Spanish.
12. I think it's just the fact that it's my first language.
13. I would say that for my career I have to have like knowledge in both of the languages.
14. And yeah, I think I need like knowledge in both of them, it's like a balance.
15. Well I think **learning** English was an important part to **reaching** my academic goals
16. because without it I wouldn't be able to be where I am like I wouldn't be able to finish
17. high school and go on to college and finish all the general requirements.
18. It is very important to my career.
19. Yeah, I want to be a professor so I want to get my masters and a PHD in the future.
20. I think being **embarrassed** like to pronounce the words wrong and being like **ashamed**
21. because people like would notice that I wasn't **speaking** the right way.

22. I think that stops sometimes people from practicing English and learning the language.

23. I think classmates. No I don't have any like memory that happen like exactly but I was

24. afraid of like doing something like that, like someone making fun of me because I didn't

25. pronounce it the right way. I think the support was more from school because at home it

26. was just Spanish. No they don't. Well I received an award in middle school for like

27. English development so that was something important for me in making that transition to

28. go to high school. Yes. Well I think as I develop my Spanish I develop English.

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30. used too much Spanish maybe I am like getting away from English or like I feel like my

31. skills are decreasing. But I think reading is a helpful way to like practicing and not forget

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35. them are important. Well I think it is hard to learn English and more

36. because of the differences that there are like between English and Spanish and I think

37. the hardest part is reading and speaking since it is like different. And sometimes

38. due to the fact that we might feel like scared to do those mistakes and be called out.

**Viviana's Morphological Use of Past Tense:**

	Standard Forms:	Variation & Examples:
1.	1	0
2.	2	0
3.	1	0
4.	2	0
5.	2	0
6.	1	0
7.	1	0
8.	0	0
9.	0	0
10.	0	0
11.	0	0
12.	0	0
13.	0	0
14.	0	0
15.	2	0
16.	0	0
17.	0	0
18.	0	0
19.	0	0

20.	2	0
21.	1	0
22.	2	0
23.	0	0
24.	1	0
25.	0	0
26.	1	0
27.	0	0
28.	1	1 <develop> ed
29.	1	0
30.	1	0
31.	2	0
32.	0	0
33.	0	0
34.	0	0
35.	0	0
36.	0	0
37.	2	0
38.	2	0

Total A: 28

Total B: 1

Add columns: A (28) + B (1) = Sum Total (29)

Column A (28) / Sum Total (29) = 96.5 % accuracy of use of past tense

### **Syntax: analyzing the use of articles**

1. I was like thirteen and **a** half. I was in eighth grade in middle school.
2. And that's when I started to learn and had to learn
3. because I moved from Mexico to **the** United States.
4. So before starting to learn English here in **the** United States, I took **a** class where I had
5. like English for beginners but it was different because I would just be like translating from
6. **a** book but it is not the same as like learning the sounds and more in detail.
7. And I would say that I had some knowledge just like from basic words like tree, or **the**
8. colors, **the** months, **the** days of the week, just basic stuff. It's
9. hard because since I am in **the** United States, I speak English but my major is Spanish.
10. And when I am at school I speak English but sometimes also Spanish since it's
11. **my** major and at home I speak Spanish most of the time. I think Spanish.
12. I think it's just **the** fact that it's **my** first language.
13. I would say that for **my** career I have to have like knowledge in both of **the** languages.
14. And yeah, I think I need like knowledge in both of them, it's like **a** balance.
15. Well I think learning English was **an** important part to reaching **my** academic goals
16. because without it I wouldn't be able to be where I am like I wouldn't be able to finish
17. high school and go on to college and finish all **the** general requirements.
18. It is very important to **my** career.

19. Yeah, I want to be a professor so I want to get my masters and a PHD in the future.

20. I think being embarrassed like to pronounce the words wrong and being like ashamed

21. because people like would notice that I wasn't speaking the right way.

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23. I think classmates. No I don't have any like memory that happen like exactly but I was

24. afraid of like doing something like that, like someone making fun of me because I didn't

25. pronounce it the right way. I think the support was more from school because at home it

26. was just Spanish. No they don't. Well I received an award in middle school for like

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29. I think a good way to do it through reading in English cause sometimes when I feel like I

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35. them are important. Well I think it is hard to learn English and more

36. because of the differences that there are like between English and Spanish and I think

37. the hardest part is reading and speaking since it is like different. And sometimes

38. due to the fact that we might feel like scared to do those mistakes and be called out.

**Viviana's Syntactic use of articles:**

	Standard Forms:	Variation & Examples:
1.	1	0
2.	0	0
3.	1	0
4.	2	0
5.	0	0
6.	1	0
7.	1	0
8.	1	0
9.	0	0
10.	1	0
11.	2	0
12.	2	0
13.	1	0
14.	2	0
15.	0	0
16.	1	0
17.	1	0
18.	3	0

19.	1	0
20.	1	0
21.	1	0
22.	0	0
23.	0	0
24.	1	0
25.	1	0
26.	1	0
27.	1	0
28.	1	0
29.	0	0
30.	0	0
31.	1	0
32.	1	0
33.	0	0
34.	0	0
35.	0	0
36.	0	0
37.	1	0
38.	0	0

Total A: 32

Total B: 0

Add columns:  $A (32) + B (0) = \text{Sum Total } (32)$

Column A  $(32) / \text{Sum Total } (32) = 100\%$  accuracy of use of articles

