

## A Case study of native Spanish Speaker: A Critique approach in learning English Language

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### ABSTRACT

The paper deals with the case study of a foreign student, who belongs to a Spanish speaking background. The investigator has systematically analysed the problems faced by the student in learning English language. Furthermore, recommendations have been made as remedial measures to be taken up in ten classes at the intermediate level, covering the fundamental aspects of English language.

The write-up was submitted 'in the form of a paper' at Saint George International, London, as part of a CertTESOL course. The course is a 'Level-5 of the National Qualification Framework' in the UK, and 'is regarded as comparable in difficulty to the second year of an undergraduate degree'.

### BACKGROUND

Julio, a 27 years old Spanish student, studies technology in Malaga, Spain. He doesn't hail from a big city in Spain. His father is a taxi driver and mother is a homemaker. His parents can't speak English. He recollects his country a lot. He believes that people don't socialize much in London.

### Culture:

He, having a kind of cultural shock, feels that everybody is too busy in London to spare time passing a smile. He stays here as he has to learn English, finds the city very costly, all the money he earns, is spent in making his ends meet. He, unable to find a good place to live, has relocated four times over a course of month.

**Communication:**

Julio is desperate to learn English as he needs to communicate while travelling. His motto of living in London isn't achieved, for he hardly gets the chance to speak improve his language. He only finds the opportunity to speak English when he comes to study at the Saint George International in London. He works in a restaurant for a living. He believes that if he stays with a person, who is an English speaker, his communication skills will gradually improve. The place where he works doesn't provide opportunities to interact with many English speakers. Often his pronunciation makes people laugh in the restaurant because it changes the meaning altogether and the discourse is jeopardised. He harbours the notion that if he speaks English for two months his pronunciation will improve. He plans to have a British girlfriend in order to improve his command over the language.

**Ambition:**

He loves travelling to different places. He has been to various destinations in Europe. His next destination is India. He thinks that going to India isn't a costly affair. He plans to travel to all the countries in the world.

**Role & status of English in his country:**

In his country, generally he doesn't get the chance to communicate in English. He belongs to a non-English speaking middle class family. However, his girlfriend is multi-lingual and knows English. She finds it difficult to express her feelings in a foreign language and he too is unable to understand it well, so they prefer talking in Spanish. He seems to have studied English because he could understand the questions and was able to read and write to some extent. Recently, the government of Spain has tried to enhance the English-learning process of preschoolers and early elementary school students, and they want to do it by bringing in native speakers from all the corners of the world.

**Differences between English and Spanish****Phonology:**

- Spanish and English, particularly in the aspects of vowel sounds and sentence stresses are different. English is a stressed timed language and Spanish is a syllabic timed language (Carter, 2005).
- Spanish has 5 pure vowels and many diphthongs. The length of the pure vowels isn't of any significance in distinguishing between words (Morrison, 2008). It is not surprising, therefore, that Julio might have great difficulty in producing or even perceiving the various English vowel sounds.

**Grammar - Verb/Tense:**

- Many aspects of English and Spanish verb grammar are similar, but there is no one-to-one correspondence in the use of the tenses.
- As in English, the word order in Spanish is generally Subject-Verb-Object. However, Spanish places at the end of the sentence words that are to be emphasised.
- Another notable thing is regarding the positioning of the object pronouns. Object pronouns in English always occur after the verb while in Spanish they always go before the verb (Vigliocco, Butterworth & Garrett, 1996).
- In English, the qualifier usually goes before the noun that it describes, while in Spanish its normal position is after the noun in a sentence (Demonte, 1999).

**Vocabulary:**

- Due to shared Latin influence English and Spanish have many cognates, and the corresponding collection of false friends, such as ‘eventual’ or ‘particular’. Owing to the fact that the Latin-derived words in English happen to be more formal, the Spanish student may benefit when reading an academic text. If a Spanish student uses such words in an everyday spoken English, he or she may sound very formal. The English language learners of Spanish origin struggle to comprehend the phrasal verb that are part and parcel of colloquial English (Beltrán, 2006).
- Spanish has a close correspondence between the spelling of a word and its sound. Owing to the irregularity of correspondence between the spelling and sound in English, the Spanish learners face predictable problems while writing a word they first come across in the spoken language or saying a word first meet in the written language (Proctor, August, Carlo & Snow, 2006).

While analysing Julio’s mistake the above mentioned points have been considered. There were times when he made exactly the same mistakes, which generally Spanish students of English make. Following is the list of his phonological and grammatical mistakes:

Vowel Sounds	Phonetic mistake	Correction	Reason of problem
/æ/	/trɒvɑ:l/	/'trævɪ/	Difference between vocalic phonemes of Spanish & English
/ʊə/	/tu:rɪst/	/'tʊərɪst/	Difference between vocalic phonemes of Spanish & English
/aɪ/	Lak	/laɪk/	Diphthong occurs between two consonants
/ɪ/	/li:tl/	/'lɪt(ə)l/	confusing the long /i/ and short /ɪ/.

/i/	/'pɪpʌl/	/'pi:p(ə)l/	confusing the long /i/ and short /ɪ/.
/ə/	/dɛstɪnə/	/'dɛstəni/	Perhaps substituting the schwa (/ə/) sound for (/i/) owing to spelling in Spanish
/ɪə/	/rɪəlɪ/	/'rɪəli/	Difference between vocalic phonemes of Spanish & English
/ʌ/	/lʌb/	/lʌv/	Short and long vowel problem

Consonants Sounds	Phonetic mistake	Correction	Reason of problem
/r/	/træns fɜ:r/ trilled r released	/træns' fɜ:(r)/ flap r	Flap r doesn't exist in Spanish phonemes
/ʃ/	/zɒp/	/ʃɒp/	ʃ doesn't exist in Spanish
/w/	/gʊd/	/wʊd/	Difference between vocalic phonemes of Spanish & English
/v/	/beri/	/veri/	not able to prevent the upper lip from coming into contact with the lower lip
/j/	/dʒes/	/jes/	Words beginning with phonemes /dʒ/ is replaced with /j/ and vice-versa

**Orthographic Script:**

Yes.....for me I love to travel, but my next destiny is I like go that India. I have very interesting for go to India. Some friends of me have travelled to India ...say me that people with very little money have very .... .no good life but the people is very friendly and very happy. . . . and London is really for me very bad and the cost . . . . . capitalis form. . life . . . . .a lot of money . . . . a lot of shop.....a lot of. . . . transfer of money.. . . . . New Delhi maybe the city with rich people maybe . . . . . but for

me..... London is for me very very bad..... Capitalis form life... ...for me isn't good.....I don't remember anything now.

### Native Speaker:

Oh yes! I love to travel. My next destination is India. I would love to go to India. I have great admiration for India. Some of my friends have travelled to India. They told me that people with very little money could have a very good life there. The people of India are friendly and nice. London for me is really very bad. Capitalist form of life prevails in London. For me it isn't good.....I don't remember anything now.

### Phonetic Script (Native Speaker):

/əʊ jɛs! /aɪ lʌv tə 'trævl/ /maɪ nekst ,dɛstɪ'neɪʃən z 'ɪndɪə/  
 /aɪ wʌd lʌv tə ɡəʊ tʊ 'ɪndɪə/ /aɪ hæv ɡreɪt ,ædmə'reɪʃ(ə)n fər 'ɪndɪə/  
 /sʌm əv maɪ frɛndz hæv 'trævlɪd tʊ 'ɪndɪə/ /ðeɪ təʊld mi ðæt 'pi:pl wið 'veri 'lɪtl 'mʌni kəd hæv  
 ə 'veri ɡʊd laɪf ðeə/  
 /ðə 'pi:pl əv 'ɪndɪə ə 'frɛndli ənd naɪs/ /'lʌndən fə mi z 'ri:li 'veri bæd/ /'kæpɪtəlɪst fɔ:m əv la  
 ɪf prɪ'veɪlz ɪn 'lʌndən/ /fə mi ɪt 'ɪznt ɡʊd/ /aɪ dəʊnt rɪ'membər 'eniθɪŋ naʊ/

### Phonetic script (Julio):

dʒes..... fɔ:r 'mi aɪ lʌb tʊ trɒvɑ:l bʌt maɪ nekst , dɛ:stɪnə ɪs aɪ lʌk ɡə ðet ɪndɪə. aɪ heb beri ...  
 fɔ:r ɡə tʊ ɪndɪə. zɛm frɛnds əv mi heb /trɒvɑ:l tʊ ɪndɪə... se mi det pɪpʊl wið beri li:tl mʌni heb  
 beri..... nɔ ɡʊd lef bʌt dɪ pɪpʊl ɪs beri frɛndli ənd beri heɪrɪ end lɒndən ɪs ri:li fɔ:r mi beri  
 bʌd end ðe kəs kʌpɪteli:s fɔ:rn.. lef ... ɛ: lɒt əv mʌni... ɛ lɒt əv zɒp... ɛ: lɒt əf... trænsfər əv  
 mʌni.... neu delɪ meɪ ðe: sɪtɪ wið ri:ʃ pɪpʊl meɪ bʌt fɔ:r mi..... lɒndən ɪs fɔ:r mi beri beri  
 bʌd kʌpɪteli:s fɔ:rn lef ... fɔ:rn mi ɪsɛn ɡu:d ... a:ɪ dɔ:n rɪmembə eniθi:ŋ naʊ

**Liaison:** Since Spanish is a syllabic timed language unlike English, Julio at many occasions was unable to create liaison between two words in a connected speech for e.g. instead of saying:

/rɪ'membər 'eniθɪŋ/ as /rɪmembə eniθi:ŋ/

### Weak Forms:

He always used long forms of vowels he found it difficult to articulate the weak forms, there was always a pause after a word and he would articulate either wrong or with a long vowel.

Schwa was most of the time avoided. For example,

/'veri 'frɛndli ənd 'veri 'hæpi/ he said, /beri frɛndli ənd beri hæ:pi/

### Addition of an extra vowel:

In the phonemic analysis of the one minute connected speech he added an extra vowel /e/ in the consonant cluster starting with /s/ sound like,

/'spænɪʃ 'pi:pl/ as /espɑ:nɪs pɪpu:l/

Grammatical Errors	Correction	Reason of Error
<b>Pronouns:</b>		
“Me I only speak Spanish”	I only speak Spanish.	Addition of object pronoun when there was no need.
“Some friends of me”	Some of my friends	Confusion between object pronoun and an adjective pronoun.
“It is finish girl”	She is a Finish girl.	For 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular number pronoun there is a gender barrier.
<b>Articles:</b>		
“80 day in year”	80 days in an year	In Spanish, the articles do not follow the rule as they follow in English.
“This is work of waiter.”	This is the work of a waiter	A similar problem article ‘a’ has to be used before common noun in English.
<b>Prepositions:</b>		
“I am a medium class family”	I am from a middle class family.	Misses prepositions.
“in seven o’clock”	“at seven o’clock”	English has a complex use of prepositions. It comes as you practice in conversation.
In food I don’t spend money	On food, I don’t spend money.	Unable to differentiate between the use of ‘in’ and ‘on’.
<b>Structure</b>		
“What age do you thought that I have?”	How old do you think I am?	Spanish place the word at final position if they want to give emphasis.
“For me it is very good this life”	This is a good life for me.	He wanted to emphasise ‘life’ so he placed it at final position.
“For work in London for my English is restaurant or cleaner”	In London, I can work as a cleaner or in a restaurant because my English is bad.	Here he completely fails to give his sentence a structure, does not know where to place clauses.
<b>Verbs:</b>		
‘For see’	‘To see’	Infinitive verb
“She talked that I have 19 year old”	She said that I am 19 years old.	Unaware of the collocation.
“I had four flat”	I have changed four flats.	No one-to-one correspondence in the use of tenses between English & Spanish.

“People normally is very very good”	People normally are very good.	Syntax error, unaware of singular and plural nouns.
<b>Tenses:</b>		
“I meet my girlfriend one year ago”	I met my girlfriend a year ago.	Unaware of Simple Past form of irregular verb.
My mother hasn’t work	My mother does not work.	Use of auxiliary verb ‘do’ and ‘does’ in a negative form of simple present tense.
“My girlfriend speak 5 languages”	My girlfriend speaks 5 languages.	Disagreement of verb with its number and person.
“All the time I have speaking with Spanish people”	All the time I have to speak with Spanish people.	Use of ‘have’ its structure and function.

### Speaking:

He could not articulate certain sounds because they seem not to exist in his language. Even at times, I was confused and unable to understand what he spoke. He was able to use the modal verbs, at times. He had no idea of syntax. He said “its depend”. Prepositions were also weak. Nevertheless, he was able to communicate with an air of confidence. There is room for improvement in the student. He was able to convey his idea. Instead of structures, he used gestures when he was out of vocabulary circle. He mixed with verbs like ‘come and ‘go’. The use of modal auxiliary ‘may’ was in abundance. He used most of the time simple present instead of using present progressive or future simple. Syntax was not up to the mark - “People in London is very very good.” He was unable to differentiate between the cases of pronouns. Like he said, “My study telecommunication”.

### Writing:

His writing skills were better than speaking, perhaps because both English and Spanish share Latin influences. The Spanish students are expected to commit more spelling mistakes generally, since Spanish has a strong correspondence between the sound words and its spellings. In contrary, Julio made a few spelling mistakes. His grammar seemed to be weak. Sometimes he used a noun as verb by adding ‘-ed’ (luck as lucked). The connectors were properly used. Again, he used simple present instead of a progressive tense.

### Reading:

Julio likes reading books as a leisure activity. His reading was good. He found all the answers that were there in the text. He did well in reading than in the writing test. He took very little time to read and write the answers in the text. He copied exactly the same word that were there in the text for answer.

### Listening:

I find it difficult to say at this stage how much Julio understood the cassette. He got the meaning, though. He completed his listening task comfortably. He answered all the true and false questions. Having been refused to re listen to the cassette, he tried to make guesses about what was said and he was able to answer. Out of ten, he followed eight of the phrases.

### Conclusion:

As far as speaking is concerned, Julio was intelligible. He conveyed and received the messages. There were occasions when he struggled to find words. He used gestures to convey message. His syntax was poor and it needs an attention. Spanish intonation seems to

influence Julio's English. He used the plosive consonant /t/ that was neither /t/ nor /d/. The words ending with nasalised /m/ turned into /n/ or /ŋ/. Instead of /v/ he used /b/ while saying 'very'. Julio seems to be unaware of sentence stress and consonant clusters especially, when they occur at the start of a word, the /s/ sound in the initial position was /es/ while saying 'Spanish people' (Paulston, & Bruder,1976). He needs to focus on structures of tenses that can be used for the future. He intends to visit many countries so he should be taught ESP for travelling. Materials related to famous places will attract him and he may focus better if they are used to teach him.

### Recommendations:

S.No	Grammar	Topic	Phonology	Skills	Rationale
1	Present continuous & use of modal auxiliaries	A person visiting to different countries of the world	Weak forms and strong forms of auxiliary verbs 'is' & 'are'	Talking about future plans of travel	Julio while talking, avoided using progressive tense.
2	Simple present & its use, in talking about routines	Daily life activities, likes dislikes and habits	Contractions	Talk about his and his friends habits, likes & dislikes	Julio doesn't know about 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular number & changes in verb.
3	Past Simple	Words that are used in heroic stories & simple past form of verb	Allophones /t/, /d/ & /ɪd/	Listen to a recorded story and write what happened	Julio needs to focus on the irregular forms of verbs like (V1) Meet (V2) met etc.
4	Present Perfect	Vocab of recent happenings and events	Contraction and weak form and strong form can be taken up	News for specific details and gist information	No correspondence between sound and word in English compared to Spanish.
5	Pronoun, subject, object, relative & possessive adjective.	Vocabs that can go with possessive adjective & transitive verbs that can take object pronoun	Stress & difference between long & short vowels.	Movies of cartoons where characters fight for their possession.	Julio transfers the stress & intonation pattern of Spanish to English.



6	Prepositions & prepositional phrases.	Vocab that can take it before verbs followed by them	Weak & strong forms can again be taken up	Use of pictures in which things are kept at different places and actions that can take preposition.	Julio drops prepositions & at times uses it incorrectly.
7	Modal verbs, auxiliaries & possible functions	Vocabs for probability & permission etc.	Phonemes like /s/ & /z/ can be taken up	Listening for specific information about possession and belonging, instruction and suggestion etc.	Julio can't differentiate between 'have changed' and 'had changed'. Mixes them.
8	Indefinite article	Vocab and expression for describing people	Use of schwa in connected speech	Talk about one's family friends and possessions	Loves to talk about his friends & work in the restaurants.
9	Visit & travel	Vocabs & Collocations for the same.	Liaison can be taken up	Writing about the plan in detail with dates.	He intends to visit India in the coming future.
10	Revision of all the past lessons with a focus on the needed areas	All the previous, future present & past & uses	—	Active role play meeting ambition and life in other countries	It will combine material learnt.

### FEEDBACK:

Julio was an average student, very willing and seemed serious. Whatever task was assigned to him he was able to complete it. I was doubtful about his ability to understand the things that I had planned to teach. I had taken up some sentences that can be used for future purposes to teach since he was reluctant to use it in the previous session with him. But this time he himself used the word 'oh future'. I had chosen the following structures to teach him: 'I am going to visit India' and 'I may visit India'.

He came up himself with the will and struggled, I just helped him a little and he understood. Firstly, I tried to teach him what I had planned primarily. I showed some pictures on my laptop and asked if he wanted to visit those places. He said, 'yes.' I asked him concept check question to differentiate between them. Surprisingly, not only he understood the concept but also completed his tasks one after the another. I was at my wits end when I saw his script, it was unexpected of him, he proved me wrong. I guess one of the reasons for understanding the concepts was the choice of activity. The activity was based on famous sightseeing places, since he had great admiration for travelling.

At times, I felt quite uncomfortable. I had never taken such a class. I was thinking if what he ought to be asked next. I had planned for drilling but going it with someone all alone was

very uncomfortable. It sounded weird. I did not know what to do instead. Finally, I went for drilling in parts. Whenever I found him making mistakes, I would ask him to repeat what was taught. The pace of learning was also very fast. At occasions, he would talk about his personal life happenings. As a teacher, I tried to bring him to the topic without making him conscious.

For example, he informed me that his 200 Euros had been stolen. I felt sad for him but as a teacher I used this happening for my production purpose. I asked him about his future plans in such crisis. I used the words, which Julio had articulated incorrectly.

When you teach a student in a one-to-one class, a bond is created between you and your student, the later admires you more; and thinks you are going to answer all his questions. Perhaps owing to it, there were innumerable questions. A teacher needs to be cautious what to answer and what not to. A student's issues/interests can be better exploited for teaching in a one-to-one class.

I feel the TTT (teacher's talking time) is more in a one-to-one class. Your student and you have to interact. There is almost zero chance of peer group correction. Many things depend on the quality of student. If he is not able to understand concepts, your TTT is going to be high. The format of the lesson has to be same there is no harm in it but there should be flexibility to digress and have chitchats. The student might feel lonely and get bored of the single face he watches all the time.

It was my first lesson of this kind. The thing that puzzled me a lot was Julio understood some very difficult words like 'economy' and 'finance' but when I used the word 'parents', he could not get it. Therefore, his understanding of things was varying. Still I believe that he has the potential to learn the language.

The role of a teacher changes in such a class, he should be friendlier than in a normal classroom situation to keep the motivational level high. He needs to change positions, talk about his interests and alike.

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