



Sample Diagnostic Assessment

Student: [Name]

Date: May 2013

Evaluation type: Spoken English (primary); Grammar (secondary)

Overall Level: Advanced Low

*Based on the ACTFL scale, which ranges from Novice Low (1-2) to Superior (18), [student's] spoken English ability is **Advanced Low** (13). The ACTFL description of this level is as follows:*

Speakers at the Advanced-Low level are able to handle a variety of communicative tasks, although somewhat haltingly at times. They participate actively in most informal and a limited number of formal conversations on activities related to school, home, and leisure activities and, to a lesser degree, those related to events of work, current, public, and personal interest or individual relevance. *[Note: Due to his use of English primary in work settings, [student's] language use is actually strongest on professional topics.]*

Advanced-Low speakers demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in all major time frames (past, present and future) in paragraph length discourse, but control of aspect may be lacking at times. They can handle appropriately the linguistic challenges presented by a complication or unexpected turn of events that occurs within the context of a routine situation or communicative task with which they are otherwise familiar, though at times their discourse may be minimal for the level and strained. Communicative strategies such as rephrasing and circumlocution may be employed in such instances. In their narrations and descriptions, they combine and link sentences into connected discourse of paragraph length. When pressed for a fuller account, they tend to grope and rely on minimal discourse. Their utterances are typically not longer than a single paragraph. Structure of the dominant language is still evident in the use of false cognates, literal translations, or the oral paragraph structure of the speaker's own language rather than that of the target language.

While the language of Advanced-Low speakers may be marked by substantial, albeit irregular flow, it is typically somewhat strained and tentative, with noticeable self-correction and a certain 'grammatical roughness.' The vocabulary of Advanced-Low speakers is primarily generic in nature. Advanced-Low speakers contribute to the conversation with sufficient accuracy, clarity, and precision to convey their intended message without misrepresentation or confusion, and it can be understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives, even though this may be achieved through repetition and restatement. When attempting to perform functions or handle topics associated with the Superior level, the linguistic quality and quantity of their speech will deteriorate significantly.



Language Goals

[Student] feels most comfortable using English in a professional context, but would like to improve his comprehension and expression in informal social settings. He interacts with customers and shareholders outside of the office and has difficulty following conversations on unfamiliar topics, especially when the speaker talks quickly. So the primary goal for [student's] training will be to improve his ability to take part in social conversations by familiarizing him with the topics, social norms, and vocabulary he is likely to encounter in that setting.

Language Strengths

[Student] demonstrates good control of language at the discourse level, including

- Syntax / Word order
- Clause structure
- Verb tense and aspect
- Modifiers (word-level and sentence-level)
- Transitions and connections

Recommendations for Improvement

Vocabulary is accurate but limited / generic

To improve: add idiomatic / slang vocabulary and more precise vocabulary

Pronunciation is fair – clear enough to be understood in most cases, but requiring some effort on the part of the listener and causing occasional misunderstanding. He exhibits a few patterns of error that could be improved for more natural speech.

To improve:

- Word-level stress (e.g., fru'strating, not frustra'ting).

English word-stress is much less systematic than in many other languages, and so this difficulty is probably best addressed by focusing on select high-frequency words.

- Sentence-level and discourse-level intonation patterns.

As is fairly typical for some language learners using English, [student's] intonation comes across as very flat. This is related in part to the transfer of the syllable-timing of the native language over into English (which uses far more unstressed syllables and reduced vowels, contributing to a more varied pitch pattern).

This is especially critical to improved comprehension skills, not just speaking skills.

- Short and long vowel sounds

While [student] shows good control of the consonants of English, he does not consistently distinguish between the short and long vowels of English. In particular, he uses the full (or “long” / “tense”) versions of vowels where English uses reduced or unstressed vowels. This is especially true with *o* and *i* and the vowels of *r*, such as the unstressed *-er*.

Listening – [Student] indicated that improved comprehension, especially of social conversation / small talk, is one of his primary goals. In the assessment, his listening comprehension was fairly good, though he occasionally had to ask for a repetition of the question. This skill can be improved by addressing the vocabulary and pronunciation points noted above, and by listening to natural speech patterns in large quantities (e.g., spontaneous dialogues, or even scripted dialogues – as in movies – rather than the more formal pattern of speech found in news broadcasts.)

Grammar is solid on the basics, with appropriate and consistent use of tenses, especially in the future, but some inaccuracies on aspect (e.g., perfect vs. simple)

To improve: present perfect, verb usage with *since*, and conditionals