

Pierre Pelissier

Language Learner Profile

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Hello ESL 4100 Students!

Nice to Meet you.



About me

I come from Haiti. My first language is French. I am currently pursuing an Honours Bachelor's Degree with a Major in English as Second Language and a Minor in Social Work. I

hold a Master's Degree in Public and International Affairs from the University of Ottawa. I have two bachelor's degrees: one in Law (State University of Haiti) and the other one in Conflict Studies and Human Rights (University of Ottawa). My hobbies are reading, watching TV, listening to music and working out. I am taking this course because not only is it a required course, but it can also help me to improve my English skills. My greatest dream is to work as a policy analyst in foreign affairs, international organizations or non-governmental organizations.

The Past: Language Learning History

I started learning English when I was in high school in my native country. I studied only basic grammar rules, sentence structure, punctuation and basic vocabulary. I could write short simple messages, read simple texts, and understand short paragraphs when the topic was familiar. Unlike writing and reading that were part of high school curriculum, listening and speaking were not included. As a result, I was barely able to understand simple conversations about familiar topics and have short social conversations. At the time I lived in Haiti, learning English was not important for my personal and professional life. Being one of the official languages, French is the essential means of communication in my country.

Once I came to Canada, learning English became necessary. Not only do most people in Ottawa speak English, but most jobs require an advanced level of English proficiency. After earning my Master's Degree in Public and International Affairs from the University of Ottawa and having difficulty finding a job in my field of study, I decided to do a Major in English as a Second Language (ESL). In addition to improving my career prospects, communicating with English speakers and having a better understanding of the Canadian culture were part of my motivation for learning English. Because I did not have the required level of competency for the ESL program, I took ESL 2111 (Oral and Written Communication in ESL), and ESL 2112 (Written Communication in ESL) as prerequisite.

Due to my abilities to follow a logical sequence, I enjoy the logical sequence of the courses offered in the ESL program. I liked ESL 2371 (Advanced Grammar in Use: Written and

Oral Expression), ESL 2372 (English Pronunciation for Effective Oral Communication), ESL 3371 (Exploring Language Conventions in Academic and Professional Contexts), and ESL 3373 (Building your Word Bank: Vocabulary Enrichment in Context). Learning vocabulary and grammar helped me to improve my writing skills. Because ambiguity prevents readers from understanding a text, I tried to write as clearly possible by checking the use of grammar and vocabulary.

Just like vocabulary and grammar that have a great impact on writing, pronunciation has a positive effect on speaking. Improper pronunciation prevents listeners from understanding oral communication. Thus ESL 2372 helped me to improve my pronunciation by paying attention to stressed syllables, intonation, and rhythm. Practising saying correctly a series of words that I have difficulty pronouncing was one of the strategies that I used. Furthermore, I watched English pronunciation practice on *YouTube* and used online dictionaries like *Oxford Dictionaries* and the *Macmillan Dictionary*, as well as websites such as the *Pronunciation* and *Many Things*.

Although learning English pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, collocations and phrases were some activities that I enjoyed, I also dealt with difficulties during my journey as a language learner. Understanding movies and radio shows without too much effort, speaking spontaneously, writing fluent and accurate academic texts, and understanding complex reading materials were some challenges that I faced. I was not always comfortable when I used English. Searching for appropriate vocabulary and expressions made me nervous. However, as an independent language learner, I learned to develop my own language learning plans in order to cope with my language challenges. Identifying my strengths and weaknesses, and applying self-correction strategies helped me to make progress in my language learning.

Present: My Current Needs and Goals

I am continuing to learn English because I would like to speak English more fluently and confidently; write clearly and effectively; read with ease all forms of the written English such as complex academic texts and specialized articles; and understand all kinds of spoken English

(conversations, movies, and radio shows) just like I can do it in my first language. As being bilingual is one of the requirements for federal government jobs, it is important for me to demonstrate my proficiency in English.

Even though English-speaking friends can help me to improve my spoken English, I don't really have English-speaking friends. I usually use other speaking strategies such as conversation groups, small talks, reading aloud, singing, and recording myself. Learning English phrases is an activity that helps me to develop good communication skills. I feel more confident to express myself when I know what I am going to say. In order to keep practicing speaking spontaneously and naturally, I interact with English speakers at school, at the coffee shop, and at the shopping centre. In casual speech, communicating in English is fun. However, making a presentation can be challenging.

Like speaking, reading is an important skill. I read in English for pleasure (comic books, magazines and newspapers) as well as for studies (academic articles, textbooks). In ESL classes, all texts and articles are written in English. Moreover, I have to complete all my assignments in English. In Social work, some of the texts are written in English. In this context, it is important for me to immerse myself in English. I listen to the radio in English (CBC, News Talk 1010) and I watch TED Talks, YouTube videos and TV in English. I also use technology in English (eBooks, podcasts, and iTunes).

By reflecting on effective learning strategies and developing my own language learning plans, I expect that this course will allow me to move forward as an autonomous learner. I hope that the volunteer placement and the other activities listed in the course outline will help me to improve my English skills in order to achieve so much more in my personal, social, and professional life.

The Future: How Will I Continue to Use English

After finishing taking this course, I will continue interacting with English speakers, whatever they are first language speakers or second language speakers. Putting myself in many diverse situations that require using the language spontaneously will help me to speak English fluently and confidently. Since getting feedback is important for a language learner, I will give people permission to correct my mistakes. An informed interlocutor, who is accurate in giving feedback, can be very useful to me.

As pronunciation plays an important role in learning a language, I will keep using some strategies such as reading aloud, mimicking English dialogue, and recording myself. Furthermore, I will continue paying attention to a series of words that I have difficulty pronouncing and practising saying them while correcting me. For example, I will keep practising the final “s” and some vowel sounds such as /ɚ/ luck and /ɑ/ lock; /ʊ/ full and /u/ fool; /ɑ/ cars and /ɑː/ cows.

In addition to speaking and pronunciation strategies, I will use some writing strategies such as prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and getting feedback from friends. As good writing skills are important for effective communication, I will continue improving my written English by writing essays, reports, emails, memos, and letters. Moreover, I will keep immersing myself in English by watching English TV shows, listening to English radio stations and using technology in English.

Finally, this language will play an important role in my professional and personal life since it is the most spoken language in Canada and can enhance my career prospects. I might use English every day to communicate with people in the workplace and in the community.