



# Developing Linguistic Profiles

## Why Develop Linguistic Profiles?

Most educational assessment tools used by schools, districts, and states are designed for administration in a single language. Yet, Multilingual Learners (MLs) engage with multiple languages at varying proficiency levels across different contexts, with these proficiencies fluctuating over time. Teams should take an assets-based approach by gathering data to develop a **Linguistic Profile**, which can guide instructional decisions and ensure accurate assessments of MLs' abilities.

MLs often develop proficiency in their home/native language(s) and the language of instruction at different rates. MLs follow unique developmental trajectories that may include temporary lags in second language (L2) skills, which are normal (Pradis, Genesee, Crago, 2021). MLs can exhibit developmentally appropriate behaviors such as limited vocabulary, grammatical errors, or slower processing in their second language (L2) (Klingner, Artiles, 2003). Without this context, typical patterns of multilingual language acquisition may be misidentified as deficits (Ortiz, 2014). A **Linguistic Profile** provides a holistic understanding of an individual's language use by capturing the full range of a learner's language abilities, including proficiency, usage, and contexts (Grosjean, 2010).

## Process for Developing Linguistic Profiles

1. REVIEW EXISTING DATA
2. GATHER ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FROM FAMILY
3. CONDUCT A STUDENT INTERVIEW
4. ANALYZE THE DATA

### STEP 1: Review Existing Data

English Language Proficiency (ELP) and Home/Native Language Proficiency data must be taken into consideration when evaluating Multilingual Learners (DCL Boals 2021). Team members should collaboratively review data from both categories.

#### English Language Proficiency Data

- WIDA Screener data
- Most recent ELP Assessment (ACCESS for ELLs)
- Progress towards ELP
- Observations of language use across settings and contexts
- Reviewing Academic Transcripts
- English Core Content Instructional data
- READ Act assessment data (if applicable)
- Informal data (i.e. student portfolios, presentations, journals, etc.)
- Like-Peer Comparative Data

## STEP 1 (cont.): Review Existing Data

### Home/Native Language Proficiency Data

- Formal or informal testing data
- Reviewing Academic Transcripts
- Review of past Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP)
- READ Act assessment data (if applicable)
- Informal data (i.e. student portfolios, journals, etc.)
- Native Language Core Content Instruction (applicable to bilingual program models)
- Family interviews about language use in the home, academic history, and prior or ongoing instruction in the home language
- Like-Peer Comparative Data

## STEP 2: Gather Additional Information from Family

Conducting a family interview is essential in developing a Linguistic Profile for Multilingual Learners. Families provide critical insights into the student's language use, exposure, and development across different settings. They can clarify which languages the student uses at home, in social settings, and in academic contexts, as well as any shifts in proficiency over time. Understanding cultural influences, prior education experiences, and potential external factors (such as interrupted schooling or trauma) helps the team differentiate between language acquisition challenges and potential disabilities. Questions that can be asked during this process are detailed in the [Multilingual Learner Family Interview Questions](#) or [Entrevistas con las familias de estudiantes multilingües](#).

## STEP 3: Conduct a Student Interview

Interviewing a multilingual student about the languages they use is crucial for developing an accurate linguistic profile because it provides direct insight into their language exposure, usage patterns, and personal experiences, which standardized tests alone cannot fully capture. This process reveals critical details such as the contexts in which each language is spoken (e.g., home, school, or social settings), the frequency of use, and the student's perceived proficiency or comfort level, all of which shape their linguistic abilities and identity. Additionally, interviews can uncover cultural and emotional factors tied to language use, which are vital for tailoring educational interventions effectively (Genesee, F., et al., *Dual Language Development & Disorders*, Brookes Publishing, 2011).

*Without this personal input, a linguistic profile risks being incomplete or misaligned with the student's actual abilities and needs.*

## STEP 4: Analyze English Language Proficiency and Native Language Proficiency

Analyzing both English Language Proficiency data and Home/Native Language Proficiency is essential. Data on listening, speaking, reading, and writing should be evaluated and analyzed from both the English Language Proficiency collections and from the Home/Native Language Proficiency collections. Data should be collected and analyzed by either a bilingual evaluator or an evaluator with a language interpreter and a thorough analysis will include explanations of how data was collected.