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## **CASE STUDY**

**Name:** Christian Fernandez

**Age:** 8 years old

**ESOL Level:** Intermediate Fluency

**Country of Origin:** Puerto Rico

**Native Language:** Spanish

### **Phase I: Societal Linguistic Background**

The subject of this case study is an eight year old boy named Christian Fernandez. He was born in Puerto Rico on March 12, 1997, and relocated to Tampa, Florida approximately three years ago with his mother and younger sister. Christian was five years old when his family moved from Puerto Rico to live with his mother's parents, due to his elderly grandmother's unstable health. At the time they arrived in Tampa, Christian was getting ready to enter kindergarten. He now has just finished the second grade, and will begin third grade in the fall of the 2005 – 2006 school year. Christian and his family are Hispanic and all speak Spanish as their first language, which is the dominant language in Puerto Rico. Many Puerto Rican residents also speak some English as well. Overall, Spanish is used in homes, schools, and in professional and social situations in his home country. Christian is the oldest child in his family, and has a six year old younger sister who is in kindergarten at the same school he attends. He and his sister are in the intermediate fluency stage of language acquisition. They both communicate in English at school, and use English and Spanish at home. They both live with their mother and maternal grandparents. His father and mother were never married, and Christian and his little sister have only spent small amounts of time with their father, and rarely speak to him. Their mother is a 30 year old part time secretary at an office near their home, and is also fairly fluent English, although she has a distinct Spanish accent. His grandparents have resided here for about 15 years, and owned a moderately successful restaurant, which they recently sold and now live off of their earnings. Their grandparents also speak English with heavy Spanish accents. When at home, the family

uses both Spanish and English, but the use of English at home is done for the purpose of benefiting Christian and his sister with their English. Christian's family is very supportive of his and his sisters learning the English language. They have an appreciation for their home culture as well, making sure to educate the children about Puerto Rico. They support the English that Christian and his sister have learned in their ESOL classes at school, and they do their best to reinforce what they learn in school at home. While the family wants the children to learn fluent English, they tend to speak mostly Spanish out of habit. His family wants him and his sister to do well in school, and work hard to foster learning. His family is not overly involved in Puerto Rican language community organizations, but his grandparents mostly socialize with Puerto Ricans, and their mother has a few Puerto Rican friends, as well. Christian and his family live in a small home in a nice community. The community in which they live is mostly made up of white, native English speaking middle to upper class people. The community is mainly large, expensive homes and a few smaller homes, one of which Christian's family lives in. Most of the community members are native English speakers, although there are quite a few native Spanish speakers in the surrounding neighborhoods as well (between 7-10% of the population). Christian is somewhat tall for his age, with dark hair, brown eyes, and a fairly dark complexion. He is a smart child who does well in school, enjoys reading, watching movies and amusement park rides. He is fairly quiet and avoids speaking to large groups, but will answer when spoken to, and will get talkative if he feels comfortable in a situation, usually one on one. He likes to speak and write in language he sees in books, which is very creative and descriptive. He does not have many friends at school, and those he does talk to are usually ESOL students, although they typically converse in English. He has one good friend at school, a boy named Jack who is a native English speaker. These two boys usually will stray from the class, and like to do their own thing if given recess or free time. Christian and Jack rarely get to play together outside of school, so Christian usually plays with his sister or does things by himself, occasionally playing with other kids who live on his street. He is not part of any organized extra curricular activities.

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## **Phase II: Linguistic Development**

Christian entered school for the first time in the United States after his family relocated here. He entered kindergarten at five years of age in public school. He received no formal schooling in his home country. Christian's mother took care of him and his sister at home everyday and provided all his early literacy education. Using books and children's television programming, she taught Christian the alphabet, some letter sounds and some early reading capabilities in his home language of Spanish. No literacy education was provided in English until he moved to the U.S. Doing well academically and being literate in both Spanish and English are highly valued by Christian's family. Education is a high priority and his mother and grandparents both work to help Christian and his sister with the English and academic content they are learning. Christian has always read with his family and enjoys books and reading. There are many books

available to him in his home. His mother and grandparents are literate in Spanish and English.

Upon coming to the U.S., Christian was five years old and had received no language learning in English or any other language outside of Spanish. He was developing linguistically in his home language before relocating. His mother spoke to him often and encouraged his speech and he was verbally communicating averagely for his age in his home language. Christian could ask questions, verbally elaborate when questioned, and communicate his feelings. However, according to his family these skills were somewhat difficult to ascertain because Christian is a quiet and reserved boy. Due to his mother's literacy efforts, he was also beginning to learn letter sounds and some basic phonetic reading skills in Spanish. As noted above, literacy in Spanish and English is highly valued by his family and Christian continues to be taught how to read and write in his native language by his mother and grandparents. He is also continually given the opportunity to continue speaking in Spanish because although his family tries to talk to him in English at home to help him learn, he is exposed to family friends who only communicate with him in Spanish. Apparently Christian had probably heard his mother speak to another adult in English on a couple of occasions but had no playmates that spoke English in Puerto Rico and had not really been subjected to or taught any English. He had no English language competence at the time of his arrival.

	DOA		3 months		1 yr		3 yrs	
	L1	L2	L1	L2	L1	L2	L1	L2
Vocabulary	3000 words	0 words	3500 words	500 words	5500 words	3000 words	8000 words	6000 words
Type and length of sentences	Simple, complete sentences, asks questions, relates stories with medium length	Does not speak in English	Simple, complete sentences, asks questions, relates stories with medium length	No complete sentences, 1-2 word responses	Long sentences beginning to be used with more complex questioning	Speaks in simple, short complete sentences, With some errors in speech	Speaks in long, age appropriately complex sentences with good conversational skills	Longer, more complex sentences used with complex errors in speech
Stages Of: Negation	Negating correctly with some use of no or not instead of don't – stage 3	No negation skills	Negating correctly with some use of no or not instead of don't – stage 3	Use of no in front of noun being discussed to express he doesn't have or want something – stage 1	Negating correctly – stage 4	Negating correctly with some use of no or not instead of don't – stage 3	Negating correctly – stage 4	Negating correctly – stage 4
Questions	Do- and wh- word fronting and no inversion in sentences – stage 3	No questioning skills	Using do- and wh- words at beginning of sentences with some proper inversion – stage 4	Can use only one or two words stated as a question – stage 1	Using proper inversion in all simple questions – stage 5	Do- and wh- word fronting and no inversion in sentences – stage 3	Using complex questions correctly – stage 6	Using proper inversion in all simple questions – stage 5
Past Tense	Marking past tense on verbs with some overgeneralization type errors – stage 3	No past tense skills	Marking past tense on verbs with some overgeneralization type errors – stage 3	No past tense skills but may indicate when something happened if it happened in the past – stage 1	Using past tense correctly in sentences	Beginning to attach endings to verbs that mark them for past tense in simple sentences – stage 2	Using past tense correctly in sentences	Marking past tense on verbs with some overgeneralization type errors – stage 3
Pronunciation	Some problem with harder 3-4 syllable words	No attempts to correctly pronounce English	Some problem with harder 3-4 syllable words	Pronunciates words with Spanish letter sounds but can get simple words after several attempts	No pronunciation problem	Pronunciates many simple words with only some consonant sound substitutions on trickier	No pronunciation problem	Pronunciates most simple words correctly and can pronounce complex words after being explained how to

						sounds		
Cultural/ pragmatic appropriateness	Beginning to use basic politeness correctly in simple sentences with comprehension confusion in more complex discussions and figurative speech	No cultural/ pragmatic skills	Beginning to use basic politeness correctly in simple sentences with comprehension confusion in more complex discussions and figurative speech	Some comprehension of others politeness and requests but mostly confused by conversation	Beginning to comprehend some complex inferences in meaning in conversation and figurative speech	Beginning to use basic politeness correctly in simple sentences with comprehension confusion in more complex discussions and figurative speech	Is culturally and pragmatically appropriate for his age	Beginning to comprehend some complex inferences in meaning in conversation and figurative speech
BICS & CALP	Age appropriate, functioning BICS with beginning CALP in terms of preliminary literacy	No BICS or CALP	Age appropriate, functioning BICS with beginning CALP in terms of preliminary literacy	Some very early BICS development in terms of learning vocabulary and pronunciation and repeating knowledge, but with no CALP	Successful improvement of BICS with CALP steadily increasing to include more semantic meaning	BICS steadily increasing with more comprehension of knowledge and added language skills with some early CALP exhibited in literacy	Continued improvement of BICS and CALP to include much higher level thinking	Functional BICS in L2 with CALP greatly increasing with conversation and analysis skills and comprehension of figurative language
Prescriptive aspects of English: grammar, punctuation	Writes some simple words on his own and grammar in speech is age appropriate	No English grammar or punctuation skills	Writes some simple words on his own and grammar in speech is age appropriate	Writes simple words with many spelling errors	Write short sentences with many grammar, punctuation errors	Write short sentences with many grammar, punctuation errors	Writes paragraphs with some grammar and spelling errors	Writes paragraphs with some grammar and spelling errors, good punctuation

Christian tests on the lower end of what is considered on-level in reading skills. He is assessed frequently by his teachers with the DRA. This is a good score considering he is at the intermediate fluency stage and is still lacking in sufficient academic language for full fluency. Christian's joy of reading no doubt assists in his constant reading improvement. His favorite type of books to read is fantasy. However, these can be challenging because they contain concepts that are still difficult for Christian to understand in English. He is really just beginning to read and comprehend vocabulary beyond what is simply concrete. His writing abilities are also improving steadily and his abilities allow him to function academically in his class at school. He can produce whole stories and makes complex grammar errors, which is indicative of his current fluency stage. Below is a writing sample.

I am thankful for my family because I have a nice family. My mom take care og me and my grama cook us food and my grampa. I have a littl sister and she always try to chher me up dp funny things. My favorit thing is when we all wented to Chuck E Chees for my birthday! I have such a great family, don't you think?

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## **Phase IV: Problem Scenario**

### **PROBLEM**

Christian has progressed very well in his L2 since coming from Puerto Rico in kindergarten approximately three years ago. He is currently at the intermediate fluency stage of L2 development and has shown considerable development in his academic performance. However, as previously mentioned, Christian is a quiet and reserved boy. He is rather shy and avoids speaking in front of groups. Christian does not have many friends at school, and those he does socialize with tend to be other ESOL students. Although he does have one friend who is a native English speaker, Christian has had limited one-on-one contact with other native English speaking peers. He has recently entered the third grade and his new teacher has become concerned with his shyness as it relates to classroom activities. She has noticed that Christian has a difficult time participating in group activities in and out of the classroom. When asked to work in pairs or with a group, Christian does not actively contribute to the assignments, probably partially due to lack of confidence in his English abilities. Instead of conversing with the other students, he tends to simply sit back and watch, contributing little or nothing to the group's work. In addition to his low involvement in cooperative learning exercises, Christian never volunteers to share any answers, writing, projects, etc. in class. When called on by the teacher, he seems to become nervous or intimidated and does not want to speak in front of the whole class. As Christian's teacher values group work and cooperative learning, incorporating it into the classroom on a daily basis, his lack of participation is negatively affecting his academic performance.

In addition to Christian's limited socialization during school, he rarely gets the opportunity to mingle with his peers outside of school. Christian's main playmate when not in school is his six year old sister. He seldom associates with the children in his neighborhood or from his school. He is not involved in any extracurricular activities, play groups, etc.

## STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

- **Christian's Parents** – As stated in previous phases of the case study, Christian's mother and grandparents are strong supporters of his academic performance. They desire for Christian and his sister to master the English language, while holding on to their Puerto Rican roots as well. His family members try to remember to speak English in their home, although it is easy for them to slip into speaking Spanish as a habit. They also do their best to reinforce what the children learn in school and do everything in their power to help them learn. As for the problem stated above, Christian's mother and grandparents are concerned that Christian is having problems in school due to his shyness. They agree that it would be beneficial for him to participate more in classroom cooperative learning activities, as well as in extracurricular activities outside of school; they want to help him earn better grades, increase his abilities in English, and become more confident and outgoing. They are willing and eager to do what it takes to help Christian become more comfortable with his peers, and welcome suggestions from his school principal, counselor, classroom teacher, and ESOL teacher.
- **Christian's School Principal** – The principal at Christian's school is dedicated to ensuring that each of her students receives the best education possible. She has listened to Christian's teacher's concerns and agrees that it is in Christian's best interests to help him "come out of his shell" so he can feel more comfortable participating in classroom activities. However, she is not overly concerned because she believes that many children battle shyness regularly and still perform well in school. She has agreed to attend a meeting with Christian's parents, the school counselor, his classroom teacher, and his ESOL teacher to try to come up with a plan of action to solve Christian's problem with socialization.
- **Christian's School Counselor** – The counselor at Christian's school has not had much interaction with Christian thus far. She has met with him a few times to make sure he is comfortable in the school; however, Christian felt comfortable talking with her in a one-on-one situation and did not display his shyness. She was unaware that this was a problem, and had not heard of anything from his previous teachers. The counselor has been introduced to Christian's teacher's concerns and agrees to the suggested meeting. She has dealt with this problem many times and has committed to developing a few ideas to bring to the meeting that may be beneficial for Christian.
- **Christian's Classroom Teacher** – Christian has just recently entered the third grade, and his new teacher is pleased with his academic performance across subjects on individual assignments and assessments. She recognizes that Christian is in the intermediate fluency stage of L2 acquisition and that he is doing well with his continual progress with the English language. She is a strong advocate of cooperative learning in her classroom, especially when modifying lessons for ESOL students. She believes that Christian's shyness has caused a problem with group assignments. She also feels that more socialization and communication with native English speakers his own age would vastly improve his mastery of the English language, and much more rapidly. She is concerned that his low rate of participation in group activities and volunteering/speaking in front of the class will cause him to receive lower grades than he is capable of. She has asked the principal to support a meeting to discuss methods to start helping Christian overcome his shyness.
- **Christian's ESOL Teacher** – The school's ESOL teacher that has been working with Christian over the past three years is proud of Christian's progress. When he arrived at the school in kindergarten, he spoke very limited English. He is now in the intermediate fluency

stage, and is progressing satisfactorily. His ESOL teacher is aware of Christian's shy nature, although it is not as evident when he is working with other ESOL students. She takes his classroom teacher's concerns seriously, though, and would like to help however she can. She understands that socialization is a key component in Christian's progression in his English mastery. As an ESOL teacher, she has encountered this issue often, as has the school counselor, and has a few ideas of how to help Christian conquer some of his socialization issues. She plans to meet with the school counselor to help develop her ideas to bring to the meeting.

### **CHRISTIAN'S PERSPECTIVE**

Christian knows he has learned a lot when it comes to the English language over the past three years he has attended school. However, as stated often throughout this case study, Christian is shy by nature. He is introverted and quiet. On top of his natural shyness, Christian feels that native English speakers are better able to express themselves than he is. He is afraid of saying something that the other kids will consider "stupid." Like all kids, he does not want his peers to think he is not smart. He loves to read and prefers to do individual assignments, and does not think this is a problem. When asked to work with groups on class activities, Christian feels nervous and has difficulty thinking of input for the group work. He is intimidated by the other children because he has encountered some slight cruelty over the past few years from other kids, making fun of his accent, choice of words, etc. (although not regularly). In Christian's culture, it is disrespectful to say such rude things, and he does not want the situation to escalate to where he is forced to stand up for his honor and get into trouble. He would rather just read a good book, watch a good movie, or go to an amusement park!

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## **Phase V: Possible Solution, Discussion Questions, Bloom's Taxonomy**

### **Possible Solution**

As previously discussed, Christian is developing quite well in terms of his academic performance. However, his education may be suffering due to a problem with his shyness and lack of participation in cooperative learning activities. Christian has a difficult time participating in group activities in and out of class and contributes little to nothing in these learning situations. Also, he does not volunteer answers in class and does not want to speak in front of the class. Christian's teacher highly values cooperative learning and utilizes it in class assignments daily. His lack of involvement could begin to affect his grades for his third grade year if the problem is not resolved. In addition, Christian does not appear to be socializing well in school and has limited access to friends outside of school or extracurricular activities. Christian's mother and grandparents are dedicated to improving his education as much as possible and also have concerns about his shyness. They agreed to come to a meeting at school with the school's principal, counselor, Christian's classroom teacher, and his ESOL teacher. All parties involved were previously made aware of the concerns for Christian's performance and lack of socialization and came to the meeting prepared with ideas to share towards helping him overcome these issues. After collaborating on the problem, these possible solutions were generated.

- Christian’s family will take him to one play date with a friend once a week and sign him up for one extracurricular activity outside of the home, such as a little league sports team.
- He will receive a once weekly appointment with the school’s guidance counselor to set a goal toward speaking more in class and discuss his feelings and progress.
- Christian will be paired with a peer tutor from the same grade or above that speaks in his L1 but is a higher level of fluency in English. They will communicate in English so Christian can practice, but there will also be the ability to use Spanish comfortably if necessary. They will collaborate on some of the cooperative learning activities assigned in Christian’s class and the tutor can help him to be prepared for introducing his ideas to his small group.
- If there is another ESOL student from the same background in the class they will be put together in small work groups to support each other.
- The class will complete a cultural unit on their ethnic backgrounds to share in front of the class and Christian will be encouraged to share his favorite foods, games, etc. from Puerto Rico with his classmates.
- If Christian works toward completing the above resolutions, his classroom teacher will allow for less of his grade to be taken from amount of participation until he is functioning better in the classroom.

### **Reflective Questions**

1. How else could Christian’s family help him socialize better with his peers?
2. How could his classroom teacher help him to feel more comfortable verbalizing his thoughts in class?
3. Is Christian equally shy meeting new children who are Spanish?

### **Bloom’s Taxonomy**

#### *Level 1: Knowledge*

1. What is Christian’s family’s outlook on using the English language?
2. How often is English used in Christian’s home?
3. What is Christian’s academic history from kindergarten until the present?
4. Identify situations in which Christian socializes freely and comfortably.
5. How often does Christian speak in his L1?
6. In which developmental stage of English acquisition is Christian?

#### *Level 2: Comprehension*

1. Is it appropriate to expect Christian to rapidly adapt to using English comfortably with his peers since he has only experienced American academic settings?
2. Are there any aspects of Puerto Rican culture that could be related to his shyness?
3. Does Christian’s sister demonstrate the same shyness as Christian with regards to her peers? If so, is this related to Christian’s problem?
4. Are Christian’s mother and grandparents outgoing and social people, or do they prefer to keep to themselves?
5. Has Christian shown any progress related to his shyness? If so, how?
6. Does Christian want to be social with his peers but hindered by his shyness, or does he simply prefer to keep to himself?

*Level 3: Application*

1. Would Christian's situation benefit from parental and/or faculty involvement and encouragement?
2. Could some aspects of Christian's home life be adjusted to facilitate more socialization?
3. Could Christian's teacher adjust her classroom environment and activities to facilitate more socialization?
4. Would Christian benefit from being placed in a planned academic situation that would encourage peer interaction?
5. Would Christian benefit from being involved in extracurricular activities outside of school that would require him to interact with other children?
6. Would Christian feel more comfortable communicating with other children from similar backgrounds?

*Level 4: Analysis*

1. Is Christian's progress towards English acquisition above, below, or average for his age/amount of time spent in the United States?
2. Is Christian's degree of shyness characteristic of students from similar cultural backgrounds in his situation?
3. What approach to English instruction would be most beneficial to Christian?
4. Is Christian's situation severe enough to warrant professional counseling?
5. Does Christian's problem stem from previous experiences in his life?
6. Explain how Christian's problem could have an increasingly detrimental effect on his academic and personal life.

*Level 5: Synthesis*

1. Design an instructional plan that would accommodate Christian's needs.
2. Would continuing Christian's education without any intervention be harmful to Christian?
3. If Christian were to become close friends with a classmate, would his situation improve?
4. Are there any other factors that may contribute to Christian's shyness that were previously overlooked?
5. If any other factors do exist, could they be manipulated to improve his level of social interaction?
6. Would participation in non-school related social situations help Christian feel more comfortable socializing in academic situations?

*Level 6: Evaluation*

1. Do any other students in Christian's class exhibit the same degree of shyness, and if so, could it be due to the classroom teacher?
2. To what degree could Christian's shyness affect his overall academic performance?
3. How does Christian's academic performance compare to that of other ESOL students at his level of English acquisition?
4. Evaluate the degree of stereotypes on the part of school employees that are impeding his academic progress.
5. Evaluate the degree of stereotypes on the part of school employees that are impeding his social development.

6. Evaluate the degree of stereotypes on the part of Christian's classmates that are impeding his academic or social development.
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**Resources:**

<http://www.eslmag.com/modules.php?name=News&file=print&sid=9>

Diaz-Rico, L.T. & Weed, K. Z. (2002). *The crosscultural, language, and academic handbook: A complete K-12 reference guide*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.