

Case Study of Juan Martinez

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Phase 1 - Societal Linguistic Background

Juan Martinez, now a young boy, was born on December 20, 1998. He is currently 6 years old and was born in Monterrey, Mexico. Juan is Mexican, which is the majority ethnic group in Mexico. His primary language is Spanish. The primary language in Mexico is Spanish, however there are small towns in the southern part of Mexico that speak a different language. Juan's family only spoke Spanish at their home in Mexico.

Juan lives with both of his parents and five siblings. Both his mother and father are 35 years of age. Both of his parents are migrant farm workers. They travel from state to state - season to season, following whatever produce is in season at the time. Many websites give very interesting information on the life of migrant workers, including http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2002/escuela/migrant_feature01.html.

He has three brothers - ages 8, 3 and 1; and two sisters - ages 11 and 9. His two younger brothers stay with their grandma while the parents are at work. When in Mexico, Juan and his siblings had to travel with their parents whenever they went to another produce region. They were never able to stay at one school for the entire year because of their constant moves to follow work. Another website that gives valuable information pertaining to children of migrant workers is: <http://users.owt.com/rpeto/migrant/migrant.html>. It features articles about migrant life as viewed by the children.

Juan's family came to the United States for economical reasons. They could not make enough money in Mexico to provide what they desired for their family. They came seeking more reliable work and better wages. Mexico did not provide the opportunities and income that is available in the United States. Juan's parents have stated how glad they are to be in the United States. They still like Mexico and visit often, but feel that the United States offers more opportunities for a bright future. They want all their children to learn English and to keep their use of Spanish. They have no personal issues with the children speaking in English at home. They desire for their kids to speak both languages fluently.

Now, that they are living in the United States, all of his older siblings are currently in school and get to stay there for the entire school year. Their grandmother is still the main provider of child care in the home. His younger siblings still only speak Spanish, but can understand some English words – most of which they have learned from Juan and his other siblings. The primary language in the home is still Spanish. However, Juan occasionally speaks to his older siblings and friends in the community in English.

Juan's parents work from sunrise to almost sunset. They are a low-income family. Even though they do not have an excess of income, Juan's parents try to provide their children with the best possible things. Juan and his siblings are very happy with their home life. Juan, his parents, siblings and grandmother live in a modest 3-bedroom trailer. They spend most of their afternoon playing outside with the neighborhood kids.

The community in which Juan and his family live is predominately Mexicans. Most of their neighbors are from the same socio-economic status and are employed at the same type of work. Most children in the neighborhood are also watched by their grandparents, older siblings, or other relatives. The language spoken in this community is Spanish, with mostly the children speaking English with one other.

Juan came to the United States with his family when he was 4 years old. He attended a Head Start program and is currently in kindergarten. Juan is the average height for a kindergartner, has black hair, dark brown eyes and tanned skin. He is very social with friends, but gets very quiet when he does not understand something. His kindergarten teacher provides little positive reinforcement and can be found making references such as, “you should listen and get those potatoes out of your ears.” When this is said to him, Juan looks confused and starts trying to pull things out of his ears. These negative comments are said to him and others in the class on a regular basis. Consequently, it makes him shy away from his school environment. He is friendly, very eager to learn and tries hard to speak English all of the time. His English is very slurred, but he tries to stay upbeat about his school activities he participates in.

Phase 2 – Juan’s Education and Linguistical Development

Elementary schooling in Mexico, called *Primeria*, can be quite equivalent to the American view of elementary school – with Parent/Open House days, celebrations for national holidays, even performing school plays in English to broaden cultural understanding and to practice English speaking skills. (To learn more about school life in Mexico, from the eyes of its children, visit this website <http://www.inside-mexico.com/queonda1.htm>) However, school life for the children of migrant farm workers can be quite difficult. A child can be in three to four schools in one year’s time. Also, several weeks can be lost due to the time needed to make each move.

Juan’s parents have always desired the best possible education for their children, realizing that education is the key to financial success and stability. Although Juan was not old enough to receive formal public education in Mexico (he came to the U.S. when he was three years old), he was read to by his grandmother and older brother and sisters. Being of a lower economic level, the family owned very few books; especially picture books for preschool age children. However, Juan was read to on a regular basis from an anthology that the family owned. His grandmother also read to the children from the family bible. Both Juan’s parents and grandmother are literate, but on a middle school grade level. He also could say his alphabet and count to 20. All of this informal preschool education took place in the family’s native language of Spanish.

In Mexico, the younger children were exposed to very little English, only overhearing it spoken when they traveled to Mexico City. Juan’s parents spoke only a few words of broken English, words such as hello, good bye, I know farm work. Juan’s grandmother does not speak any English. Juan’s older brother and sister received the most exposure to English, although it was minimal. However, they still did not speak it at home.

Juan’s English language competence prior to his family moving to the United States was nonexistent. He rarely heard it spoken, especially compared to his older brother and sisters, who heard it in school occasionally. However, as the timeline shows, Juan caught on very quickly.

--For an analysis of migrant youth, visit <http://www.ericfacility.net/ericdigests/ed405158.html>

--For a look at how the U.S. education system is trying to increase educational opportunities for migrant school age children through the use of technology, visit <http://seamonkey.ed.asu.edu/~mciaac/emc598geold97/Spring97/10/migrant.html>

A timeline summary of Juan Martinez

Date of arrival: age – 3 years old

Upon arrival, Juan did not have any BICS or CALP in his new language, English. Not having any exposure to English in the home could be a disadvantage to someone entering the United States. However, due to Juan's young age at their family's time of arrival, he was the perfect age to soon enter preschool. And due to the Headstart program in their area, the family was afforded an educational opportunity that they could not otherwise afford in Mexico.

3 months after arrival: age – 3 years and 3 months old

Having been in the U.S. such a small amount of time and due to the young age of Juan, his CALP was still nonexistent. However, his BICS was beginning to develop, seen through the use of English – such as, “hello,” “bye-bye,” “I love you” and the names of animals.

1 year after arrival: age – 4 years old

Juan was admitted into a pre-K for 4 year olds program at a local private preschool, in cooperation with the Headstart program. His exposure to American television and to his older brothers and sisters going to American schools had greatly increased his casual use of English. He knew his colors, numbers, shapes and alphabet in English. He was very good at singing with popular animated television shows and movies in English. He was able to understand his teachers in English through concentration on his part and a little reinforcement of instructions from them. However, he experienced a lengthy silent period as he adjusted to preschool life. Although he understood instructions in the classroom, he did not verbalize his CALP abilities. Even though, Juan's parents (especially his father) still moved around to follow agricultural work, the children were now able to remain in one place with the grandmother serving as guardian in the parents' absences.

2 years after arrival: age – 5 years old

Upon entering Pre-K for 5 year olds, Juan emerged from his shell and began to engage his teachers and classmates socially. Although his grammar was still weak, he entered the phase of being able to verbalize his understanding of his teachers' instructions with minimal effort. He became very chatty and imaginative, sometimes to the point of speaking out of turn.

3 years after arrival (present): age – 6 years old

Upon entering formal Kindergarten at a public school, Juan is comfortable with academics. He tries hard and excels because he had the support of his family, especially

his parents. Although his speech is beginning to approach that of other native speaking six year olds, Juan still has not achieved the syntax of his classmates. He is currently in a classroom where the teacher is not trained to work with ELL students. He often still uses nouns and pronouns for the same word as one – ex/ “the boy he plays,” or “the cat it sleeps.” He writes very well and enjoys reading very much. His BICS and CALP levels are leveling out, showing his grasp of the English language in social as well as academic situations. The family now makes use of the public library, reading books in English as well as in Spanish. Although the rest of the family has embraced English as a second language in their home, the grandmother has politely declined to formally learn to speak English – even though she has learned to understand it. She still reads to the children in Spanish. The family tries to maintain their cultural identity by attending a bilingual church where services are conducted in a mix of English and Spanish. Juan’s early entry into the U.S. educational system, combined with his family’s support of academic achievement, are currently showing Juan to be a very intelligent student. His interest in science and math surpass that of classmates his age. He also grasps new concepts quickly and eagerly.

Phase 3 – Language Samples

{Location: This interview was conducted on May 14th, 2004 outside of the classroom following lunch time.}

Verbal Interview

Interviewer: Can you tell me what your favorite color is?

Juan : Umm, ummm, dark blue?

I: Oh, Dark Blue, that is a nice color? Why do you like it?

J: Because it is my favorite color.

I: What is your favorite animal?

J: Uh, an elephant.

J: Because he can make some noises and give me a ride and he can pick me up with his nose and put me on his back.

I: Can you tell me about elephants?

J: You eat peanuts.

I: What do they do?

J: They eat peanut butter, get you by the horn and then bring it to their mouth. And an elephant make noise, more loud.

I: What are you going to do this summer?

J: I am going to, I go get up on a lion, and the lion it is danger!

I: Anything else?

J: I am going to go in the Disney World to see Mickey Mouse.

I: What is your favorite Disney World Character?

J: Mickey mouse because he make uh and make uh and live in, in, in Disney World and uh we, we, go see it and Lion King too!

I: That sounds exciting.

I: Where are you from, where did you live before here?

J: I like where I am living now. I now live in a big house, it is bigger than before and we have two chickens named Catchy and Fatty. Catchy is the big white one and Fatty is the black one. I have a big, big backyard and they have snakes lizards and spiders in there. And I touched a cow and it was fun.

I: We are now going to read some books

Reading Sample – book one is a level 1.0 book

J: The Big Carrots

I cannot dig it up

Can you help me?

I cannot tug it up

Can you help me?

I cannot pick it up

Can you help me?

You can pick it up

I: You are reading so well

J: I sound it out, remember we had a paper that said show your mom and I help to read used my sounds.

I: Since you are such a good reader we are going to read another book.

J: I think that is a harder one.

I: But that is ok, you can try your best.

J: I don't know that word. That is hard.

I: Look at the picture on the front, what do you think book is going to be about?

J: It is about walkin in the street, and the police will stop them. Hey, remember when somebody goes walking in the street the police says stop and people still walk. We see people walkin in the street with the bus wagon and people get on and get off, get on and get off with a bunch of bus wagons.

I: Why do you think the police stop the cars?

J: Because if people come, people want run over by the cars.

I: Ok let's read the story and see if your prediction is right. If you don't know a word then you can pass.

Reading Sample - book 2 is a level 1.5 book

J: I see a let. Lot of for you and me.

Here is Sal. He is I a bus ___ here he ___ this to _____

Here is ___ Gus the ___ by the bus.

(Pause)

I: Your doing well. Is this a hard book for you?

J: Yes

J: Yours _____ is _____ make on Andy

J: Here is Nan who _____ Nan a for you and me

When the above section is analyzed, one can see how far Juan has progressed with English. However, there are many things that comes to mind where he has room for improvement. He frequently stops and pauses, adding in words that are not needed like "um," "uh" and "like." This happens around four times in the conversation and many of

the times he tries to correct himself. Those words also might serve as fillers that give him more time to think about how to say something in English.

Throughout the conversation, Juan also jumps around to many different subjects resulting in unclear sentences. For example, when he was talking about what he was going to do this summer, he mentioned that he was going to get up on a lion and the lion is danger. There is some confusion as to how the subject of the lion came up; it does not make sense to the rest of the conversation. Overall, it seems like a majority of his sentences do make sense, but he does lack some consistency.

Juan also may have some issues with unclear use of verb tense. Some of his examples are: “I sound it out” and “Help to used my sounds.” Those were the only two instances that he missed, so more research would need to be conducted to see if this is a consistent problem with his speech development.

Upon reviewing the conversation, his use of the wrong pronoun agreement was very noticeable. He referred to his big backyard as “they” and then referred to the elephant as “you.”

One word that Juan consistently pronounced incorrectly was “walking.” Whenever Juan spoke, he always left out the “g” and said “walkin.” This could be the result of the way that he learned the word and no one ever corrected him, or because of the hearing a southern drawl on the farms his family works at.

Overall, Juan is learning English at a very fast rate. The problems he is having with English language, like the ones mentioned above, are normal for a person learning English as their second language. His biggest obstacle is confidence with the language.

Phase 4 – Creating a Problem Scenario

The Problem

Juan is a 6-year-old Kindergarten student. It has become very apparent to Juan’s teacher that he is more advanced than his classmates. She often displays frustration that he is slow to respond to her instructions, even though she is confident that he understands her and can do the work required. Juan hesitates to speak up in class because he feels ashamed that he can not speak as well as his native English classmates. Juan’s teacher would like the input of the “stakeholders” in Juan’s education to see if they can come up with a solution to help him through this stumbling block.

Perspectives on the Problem

His Parents

“As Juan’s parents we feel that the teacher is being too hard on him because he is not fluent in English. When he gets a bad grade or the teacher corrects him in front of the class, we feel that this might be discouraging to him. We want the teacher to correct him, but not in front of the whole class. We also know that he is discouraged by the teacher’s curt comments to him. We want him to feel that his is like all of the other students. We are working very hard with him and we need to know what more we can do at home to

help him. We want him to become more fluent in his English, so he won't feel different than his classmates at school."

His Kindergarten Teacher

"My concern, as Juan's teacher, is that if I don't correct him like everyone else, then he won't know what he has done wrong. Also, if I am giving a lesson and I wait to correct him, then the moment will be lost and he won't understand what I am correcting him about. When I do correct him or try to give him help one-on-one help, he just shuts down. He feels everyone is watching him. If we could make him understand that he is not the only student that I give extra help to, then maybe he won't be so stubborn to accept it. If he is not comfortable accepting assistance in the presence of the class, then perhaps he should spend time at the Learning Resource Center to get extra help in a more private setting. I also would like the Learning Resource Teacher to test his intelligence and comprehension levels. Although Juan is reluctant to ask questions or respond to me verbally, he shows a very high level of understanding in science and math. Even though he is usually quiet, he has occasional outbursts of chattiness or restlessness. I think he is bored with the lesson and frustrated with his lack of confidence to communicate this in English"

The ESOL Teacher

"I feel that Juan's teacher should give him more time to finish his work, but not in a way that the other kids might notice. I also think that the Resource Center is an excellent way for Juan to improve his English in a smaller setting. He can also finish any work there without the time pressures present in the classroom. His teacher can collect his work along with the rest of the class, then he could spend 30-45 minutes at the Resource Center completing his assignments. There he can get extra help from the Resource Teacher. I would suggest that spend three afternoons a week in the Resource Center and the remaining two afternoons in extra language sessions with me. There are also some additional activities that we can send home with Juan, since his parents are so willing to give him the necessary attention at home. There are many English Language Learner resources available, through the school, that his parents can check out for home use. The Resource Center provides an excellent opportunity for the parents and students to bridge the gap between home and school. Also, our Resource Center Teacher has qualifications to work with gifted students. Since his teacher feels that Juan shows a high level of intelligence, she can take Juan through the available tests to see what his actual intelligence level is. I feel this will be a great learning opportunity for Juan."

The School Counselor

"I feel that Juan doesn't need any counseling. I agree with the classroom teacher and the ESOL teacher that the Resource Center will give Juan exactly the help that he needs to help build his self-esteem and assess the possibility that he should be in a gifted ESOL program".

The School Principal

"I feel Juan would greatly benefit all of the programs that we have to offer through our Learning Resource Center. I believe that it will work well for Juan, if

everyone involved stays on top of their area. As a team, we can get to the root of Juan’s issues and bring his true academic and social self to the surface. I suggest having another meeting the middle of the grading period and one at the end to assess Juan’s progress.”

--For more information about Gifted and Talented Minority Language Students, visit the following websites:

<http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content/giftedandminoritylang.html>

<http://www.ericfacility.net/ericdigests/ed321485.html>

Phase 5 – Discussion Questions

On Knowledge: How old was Juan Martinez when he entered the United States?

On Comprehension: Explain the progression of Juan’s BICS and CALP abilities.

On Application: How would you apply your knowledge of Juan’s migrant family farming background to help him learn English?

On Analysis: What is the degree and function of English language use in Juan’s household?

On Synthesis: Elaborate on the reasons why you think Juan is having behavior difficulties in class.

On Evaluation: Which person’s viewpoint, from the “stakeholders” present at the meeting, would you recommend?

For group debate:

- Can you call an ESOL student “gifted” when they do not know how to use the English language proficiently?
- Can the children of a migrant farm family perform as well as children in a stationary family? And why or why not?
- What additional resources could be made available to the family to help develop and encourage English language use?