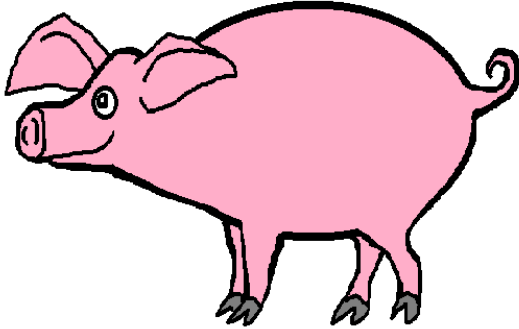


## SOME PIG!

COMPELLING INPUT, GENUINE ENGAGEMENT & ACQUISITION FROM AN UNLIKELY SOURCE

By Bryce Hedstrom



For *La Persona Especial* today in first period we talked with a girl named Mattea. This was the second round of questions for her and she is normally quite willing to share with the class, but today she was not very talkative, only mentioning that she liked to draw and sing, with very little elaboration—until we asked her if she had any animals. Then she told us about Pudge, and suddenly a lackluster interview exploded with genuine engagement. What started as a routine exercise became an example of how a class discussion can become compelling and

how students can begin to acquire language at an astounding rate—without pre-teaching vocabulary and without a rigid lesson plan. At the end of the class discussion today nearly every student in the class could say at least 15 sentences about Mattea’s pig, Pudge—they paired up and took turns telling each other what they remembered about him. This all happened because we kept asking questions until the student showed a spark of enthusiasm.

These are the sentences that students wrote about Pudge—I simply wrote them down as I verified details at the end of the class. They were based on the questions that the students and I had asked Mattea in class. It was extremely interesting—so much so that I tossed out the planned lesson and allowed the class to run with questions about the pig. The period ended with Mattea promising to bring us pictures of Pudge, and maybe even the pig himself. There was all kinds of vocabulary, both review and new—with lots of high frequency words and noun/adjective combinations. Many other words were recognizable because they were similar to ones students already knew. Words that students did not know or remember well were written on the board in English and Spanish as they came up. Words that were new for some students are indicated in yellow below.

We may have a Special Person quiz based on Pudge alone since we probably know more about him than we do about Mattea!

- **Mattea tiene dos conejos y un puerco.**  
(Students needed these two words translated, but they easily remember Puerco due to repetition.)  
Mattea has two rabbits and a pig.
- **El puerco se llama Pudge.**  
The pig is named Pudge.
- **No es un puerco grande.**  
It is not a big pig.
- **Es un puerco pequeño.**  
It is a little pig.
- **Pesa solamente treinta libras.**  
(Students could guess this word due to talking about athletes lifting weights)  
(Many students remembered libras from previous class conversations and reading.)  
It weighs only thirty pounds.
- **Es un puerco Juliana.**  
(Mattea had to spell out “Juliana” for us in Spanish.)  
It is a Juliana pig.
- **No es un puerco “Pot Belly”, es más pequeño que ellos.**  
He is not a Pot Belly pig, he is smaller than them.
- **Pudge tiene tres años.**  
Pudge is three years old.
- **Pudge vive en la casa de Mattea, como un perro.**  
Pudge lives in Mattea’s house, like a dog.
- **Salta en el sofá, como un perro.**  
He jumps up on the sofa, like a dog.



- **A veces duerme en el sofá.** *Sometimes he sleeps on the sofa.*
- **Normalmente va para abajo y duerme en el sótano.** *Normally he goes down and sleeps in the basement.*  
*(I had to translate this word, but students remembered it because of the context.)*
- **Pudge no duerme en la cama de Mattea con ella.** *Pudge doesn't sleep in Mattea's bed with her.*
- **Puede hacer trucos.** *He can do tricks.*  
*(I had to translate this word, but students could remember it due to similarity to English and context with the next several questions.)*
- **Puede sentarse, como un perro.** *He can sit, like a dog.*
- **Puede levantarse en dos patas.** *He can stand up on two feet.*
- **Puede tocar una campana cuando quiere entrar en la casa.** *He can ring a bell when he wants to come in the house.*  
*(Students could understand the word campana because I use the word at the end of class almost every day)*
- **No come comida mala de puercos.** *He doesn't eat bad pig food.*
- **Su comida no apesta.** *His food doesn't stink.*  
*(Students could understand apesta because they already knew the expression ¡Esto apesta!)*
- **Come comida especial.** *He eats special food.*
- **Le gusta comer fruta, especialmente las manzanas.** *He likes to eat fruit, especially apples.*
- **Mattea puede andar con Pudge, como un perro.** *Mattea can walk with Pudge, like a dog.*
- **Pudge piensa que es un perro.** *Pudge thinks that he is a dog.*
- **Pudge no apesta como un puerco normal, porque Mattea lo lava cada semana.** *Pudge doesn't stink like a normal pig because Mattea washes him every week.*  
*(Students could understand lava because of my actions, the context and similarity to "lavatory".)*
- **Ella lava Pudge en la tina en el baño.** *She washes him in the bathtub in the bathroom.*  
*(Students could understand the Word tina because of the context)*
- **A Pudge le gusta bañarse.** *Pudge likes to take baths.*  
*(Students could understand the Word bañarse because of the context and familiarity with baño.)*
- **Le gusta jugar en el agua.** *He likes to play in the water.*