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### What is in a name? All “Jo--na” Names are the Same Right?

Jovana Caicedo

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# What is in a name? All “Jo--na” Names are the Same. Right?

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## Abstract

How would you pronounce the name Jovana Caicedo? Are you hesitating? That is okay this name has given many people trouble. The most common mispronunciation people will make with the first name is Joanna and many people will not attempt the last name. If they do try the mispronunciation will usually be something like, “sigh-se-duh.” When looking at why people mispronounce this name, this project will look into the phonology of the name, or the study of the sounds within a language, and the lexical semantics of the name, or the study of words and how their meanings are formed. Such as when people associate different words or names, like Jovana, with a similar looking name with similar sounds. Phonological (Sound) processes like the deletion of a sound could help explain why so many English speakers will try to drop the “v” in Jovana. This project will examine this problem by looking at the etymology, or the study of the origin of a word or a name and how its meanings have changed, for the name Jovana Caicedo. For instance, the name Jovana is said to be a form of the name John from the Bible. However, variations of this name can be found in many languages from Danish to Czech and even in Medieval French. By studying the ways that people mispronounce names such as these, we will be able to look at how different native languages deal with encountering new words or names.

## Terminology

**Assimilation** – The phonological process where a sound is changed by one phonological characteristic into another sound.

**Dissimilation** – The phonological process of where a sound is changed by two phonological characteristics into another sound.

**Etymology** – The study of the origins of words and how they have changed through time.

**Lexical Semantics** – The study of word meanings and word relations

**Phonology** – The study of sounds and their organization in relation to one another.

**Phonetics** – The study and classification of sounds and the physical properties of producing sound.

**Phonemes** – A distinct unit of sound.

**EXAMPLES:** the consonant sound /b/ in “baby” OR the vowel sound /i/ in “sit.”

**Segment Deletion** – The phonological process of deleting a sound likely for ease of pronunciation.

**Segment Insertion** – The phonological process of inserting sounds in anticipation of other sounds or for ease.

**/dʒ/-** pronounced “juh” as in the “j” in “job” or “Jovana.”

**/o/-** pronounced “o” as in the “o” in “Joe” or “Jovana.”

**/i/-** pronounced “e” as in the “ea” in “eat” or in “Giovanna.”

**/v/-** pronounced “vuh” as in the “v” in “vet” or in “Jovana.”

**/a/-** pronounced “augh” as in the “au” in “aunt” or the “a” in “Jovana.”

**/æ/-** pronounced “ah” as in the “a” in “sat” or in the first “a” in “Joanna.”

**/n/-** pronounced “nuh” as in the “n” in “net” or “Jovana.”

**/k/-** pronounced “kuh” as in the “c” in “cut” or in the first “c” in “Caicedo.”

**/aɪ/-** pronounced “iee” as in the “igh” in “sigh” or in the “ai” in “Caicedo.”

**/s/-** pronounced “ss” as in the “c” in “cite” or in the second “c” in “Caicedo.”

**/t/-** pronounced “eh” as in the “e” in “set” or in the “e” in “Caicedo.”

**/ð/-** pronounced “tth” as in the “-th” in “clothed” or in the “d” in “Caicedo.”

**/h/-** pronounced “huh” as in the “h” in “hope” or in the “h” in “Johanna.”

## Acknowledgements

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## Methodology

- I researched the etymology of the names Jovana and Caicedo.
  - I researched the origins of the names and tried to look at the path that the name took to be in its most recent forms.
  - There wasn’t much research on the name Jovana from scholarly sources and there seems to be disputes between its origins and what it is spelled as.
  - There was more interesting historical information on the last name Caicedo as it has standing history.
- I chose the top three most common mispronunciations of the first name “Jovana” from my own experience.
  - Joana
  - Giovanna
  - Johanna
- I broke each name into its phonetic transcription, the way it is spelled with phonetic symbols.
- I compared the phonetic transcription of the mistaken names with the actual name's phonetic transcription.
- I applied phonological processes to explain the possible reasons that the sounds were changed. While looking at how the phonology of the English language effects how someone would choose to pronounce the names.
- I also examined what makes the last name so difficult to pronounce for English speakers while looking at the possible language lineage and phonological sounds that differ between the Spanish language from the English language.
  - I choose to focus on the Spanish version of the last name since my father hails from Mexico a known region with Spanish influences, an area where Basque influence was possibly present with Colonization.

## History of the Name

### 1: Jovana -

According to names.org, the name Jovana has conflicting origin stories. Most contributors of the site claim the name to be of Serbian origin, with 51% of them claiming so, yet 21% of the contributors also claim the name originates from Mexico. The meaning of the name Jovana is further disputed. The name is said to be “Close to God or gift of God.” While another website, Behindthename.com claims the name is a Serbian and Macedonian form of “John” and is spelled “Јована.” Many languages hold similar looking and sounding names, from Basque to Welsh. This includes the Spanish language and the English language.

### 2: Caicedo -

According to “Basque Legacy in the New World: on the Surnames of Latin American Presidents,” the name Caicedo, originates from the Basque country area of Araba, a small province in between Spain and France. The name comes from two areas, Caicedo-Sopeña and Caicedo-Yuso, a name of a town that is not uninhabited. The name was originally spelled Cassiceto and Cassizeto in 1025, but it later became Caycedo or Caycedo in the thirteenth century. The newest form Caicedo ending in “-edo” is thought to have changed because of dissimilation, the process of a sound becoming different because of two sound features from the Latin language. The “-edo” represents that the name is coming from the region or the place itself.

## Conclusion

In this exploration of the name Jovana Caicedo, we find that a lot of the times English speakers will chose to simplify sounds or substitute in the closest sounds they associate with the way a name is spelled. Most of the mispronunciations are due to the phonological process of dissimilation where two features of a sound are changed. This is because when sounds look alike, English speakers are likely to base their pronunciations on the spelling and not the actual phonetic transcription of the name. Mispronunciation is happening more often with these names to ease the pronunciation of the name and because of unfamiliarity with different phonemes or sounds from different languages, like from the Spanish language.

## Analysis

**Phonetic Transcription of the name:** “Jovana Caicedo” /dʒovana/ /kaɪsɛðo/

**Mispronunciations of “Jovana” the Phonetic Transcription:**

1) “Joana” VS “Jovana” → /dʒoæna/ /dʒovana/

**First difference:** *segment deletion* of the consonant sound /v/ from the original.  
**Second difference:** *assimilation* of the /a/ vowel sound to the /æ/ ‘schwa’ vowel sound.

**Explanation -**

**Segment deletion**, taking out the /v/ sound is common in the English language. **Assimilation** of the /a/ sound to the /æ/ sound because the sound feature that is changed is the front-ness of the vowel sound. The /a/ vowel is usually placed in the central position of the mouth, where the /æ/ sound is produced in the front of the mouth.

As a result of the shift in the position of the tongue where the vowel is produced the /a/ vowel sound is changed. This is likely happened because the sound /dʒ/ is produced in the post alveolar position in the front of the mouth and the /n/ consonant sound is produced in the alveolar position. It would be less work for the tongue to remain near the front of the mouth.

2) “Johanna” VS “Jovana” → /dʒohana/ /dʒovana/

**First difference:** *dissimilation* of the consonant sound /v/ to the /h/ consonant sound.

**Explanation -**

**Dissimilation** of the /v/ sound is a result of two features of the consonant sound changing, these are the *voiced* (or the amount of vibration the sound has) features of the /v/ sound and the labiodental position where it is produced. This is likely to make the name easier to say with a simple sound /h/ which is just a puff of air. The sounds are both fricatives meaning the stream of air is limited in a similar way.

3) “Giovanna” VS “Jovana” → /dʒiovana/ /dʒovana/

**First difference:** *segment insertion* of the /i/ vowel sound.

**Explanation -**

**Segment insertion** of the /i/ vowel sound between the /dʒ/ and /o/ is likely because of the associations people may have with the name Giovanna. People of Italian descent, where this is more likely to be used instead of the “Jovana” version of the name are likely to insert the /i/ unconsciously. Another version, the more common Giovanni, version of this name is common in Mexican American houses.

**Mispronunciation of “Caicedo” Phonetic Transcription:**

1) “Sisedo” VS Caicedo → /saɪsɛdo/ /kaɪsɛðo/

**First difference:** *dissimilation* of the consonant sound /k/ to the /s/ consonant sound.

**Second difference:** *dissimilation* of the consonant sound /ð/ to the /d/ consonant sound.

**Explanation -**

**Dissimilation** of the /k/ sound to an /s/ is changing the entire features of the consonant sound to the voiceless, alveolar, fricative version /s/. In the English language the letter “C” is pronounced as a /k/ sound and /s/ sound. English also does not have a /kaɪ/ sound making it more likely a person would change the pronunciation to something more familiar. The /ð/ consonant sound is changed to a similar voiced /d/ consonant sound. The place the sound is produced is changed to the alveolar placement from the labiodental placement and the air is stopped completely in the mouth. This again is likely because the /d/ sound fits with what the spelling looks like with a “-edo.”