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# From Haiti to the ESL Class: Working with Adult Haitian ESL Learners in the US

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From Haiti to the ESL Class: Working with  
Adult Haitian ESL Learners in the US

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the Master of Arts in  
Teaching Degree at the School for Inter-  
national Training, Brattleboro, Vermont.

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This project by Dona Vassall-Paquirot is accepted in its present form.

Date Oct 3, 1983

Principal Advisor Alex Silver

Project Advisor/Reader David W. Bellows

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Special thanks to Idi for his help, to Gary, Solange and Pierre for their insights, and to Odelaine for her willing spirit.

Most importantly, thanks to my many students who helped make this project possible.

### ABSTRACT

This project provides the person unfamiliar with Haiti and its inhabitants with some background information on the country - politically, economically, socially. It also gives a perspective on why Haitians leave Haiti to come to the US, and the stages they must go through in order to do so. Teachers are given some insight into what to expect from their students in an ESL class, given their background and experiences. Finally, factual information is provided on Haiti - i.e. holidays, major cities, etc. - for the interest of the reader. It also serves to help the teacher make the ESL class more relevant to the student.

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PREFACE

I had my first prolonged contact with Haitians in 1977 while studying in France and taught them ESL for the first time in 1979 when I went to live in Haiti. I continued teaching them ESL when I moved to Massachusetts and took the position of ESL coordinator on a project designed to service Haitians in the Cambridge/Boston communities. I was assigned the section of the program based in Boston and my ESL staff comprised both Haitians and Americans.

As I began to work with the non-Haitian teachers, I realized that many of them had had little or no exposure to Haitians before starting the job. For such a teacher, the life of the average student in his class, his past experiences and his experiences on arrival in the US, were often areas of mystery. As a result I decided to work on some material aimed at providing useful and relevant information to a teacher who is working with Haitians and who is interested in learning more about them. Often information is difficult to extract from students, especially those at a beginning level; sometimes the teacher has no time to research the information.

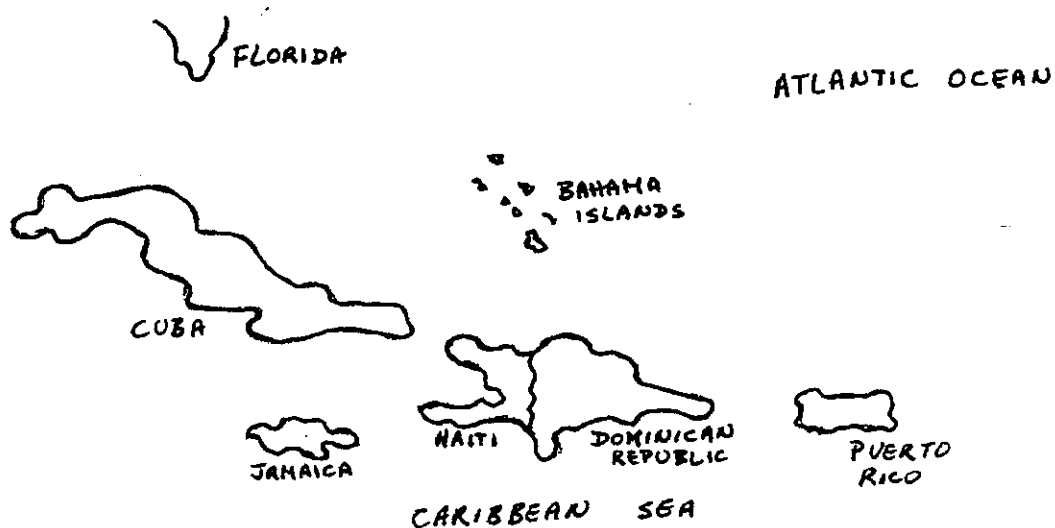
I have drawn on my experiences, my friendships and

acquaintances of the past six years to produce material on the Haitian history and society, the lifestyle of Haitians, reasons why they come here, what they have to cope with while here and how this affects the ESL class. The focus is on students who attend programs such as those funded to service Haitians and other immigrants to this country. It is my hope that those who read this will benefit from my experiences and will find the information not only interesting but educational.

## INTRODUCTION

The island of Hispaniola is located in the Carribean not far from Cuba and between the islands of Jamaica and Puerto Rico. The country of Haiti occupies the western one-third of the island which it shares with the Dominican Republic. It covers 10,700 square miles and has a population of six million people. Its capital is Port-au-Prince, the other major city being Cap Haitien. Of the six million people in Haiti, one million live in the capital city alone; there are approximately one million Haitians living outside Haiti, in the US, Canada, Europe, Africa and other countries. In the US the largest concentration of Haitians is to be found in Miami; Boston has anywhere from twenty to twenty-five thousand.

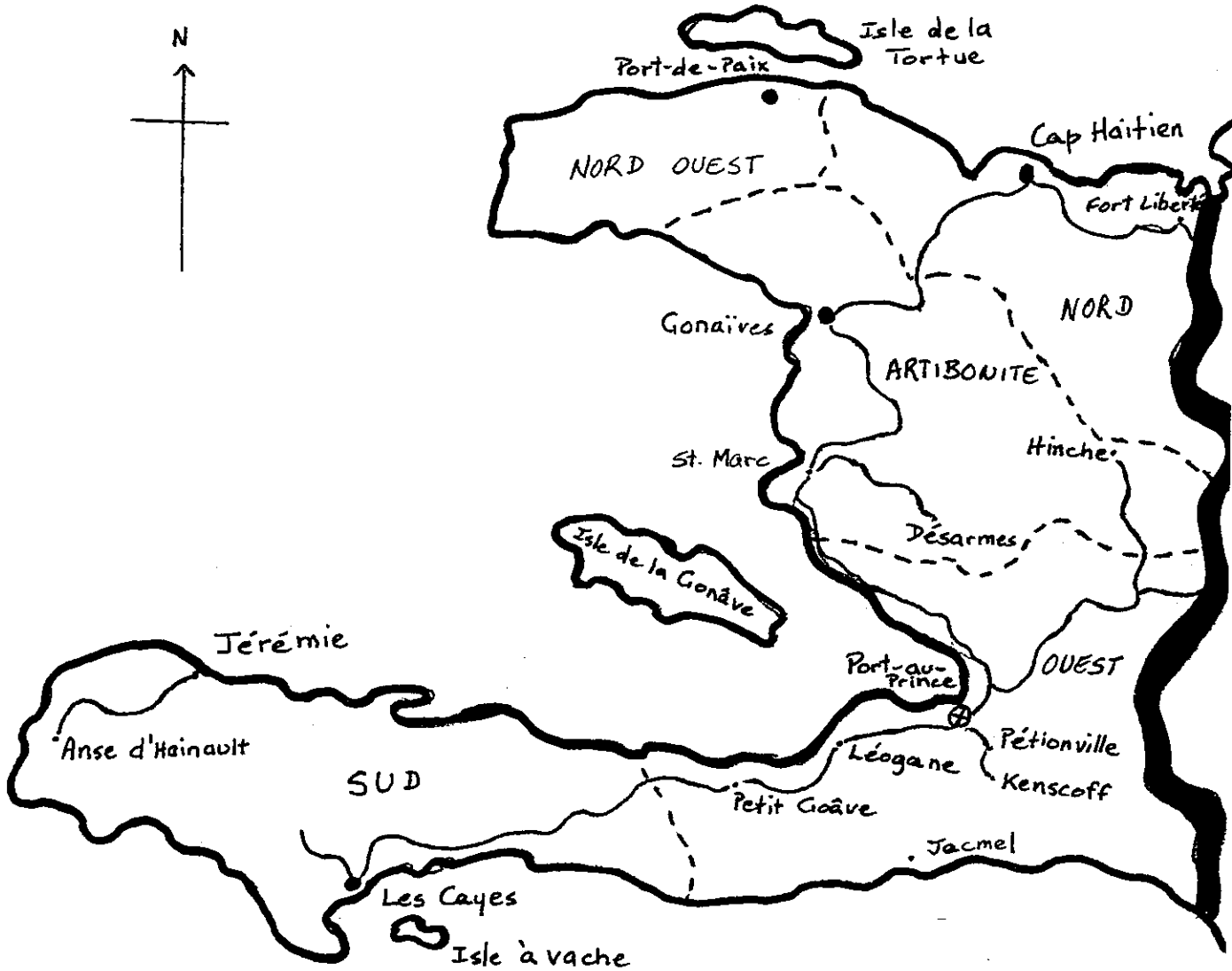
### Map of Haiti and Surrounding Islands





Map of Haiti

Atlantic Ocean



- ⊗ capital city
- departmental capitals
- departmental borders
- ~ main roads
- █ border with Dominican Republic

Caribbean Sea

## HAITI - AN OVERVIEW

### Past

Haiti had the only successful slave revolt in recorded history, becoming the first Black republic in this hemisphere on January 1, 1804. Some of the key figures in the events leading to the success of the revolt were: Boukman, the grandson of an African chief and one of the organizers; Toussaint L'Ouverture, the leader who was tricked by the French in order to be captured; and Dessalines, the commanding general in the decisive battle against the French. Although the country became independent of European colonizers, the mentality of the rulers reflected the fact that they still looked to Europe for approval and as a model for their government. Following its independence, Haiti became an Empire modelled after France, with Emperors and Dukes; for forty years it was obliged to pay an indemnity to France in order to be recognized.

Haiti has had a history of discontent among the masses since there has always been a wide gap between those at the top who control and the rest of the population. Its political instability has been marked by a series of uprisings against the government and assassinations of those ruling the country; economically the wealth has

never been shared equally and the masses have remained poor. Recent history has not been much different. Francois Duvalier came to power in September of 1958 and made himself President for Life of the Republic of Haiti. Upon his death in April 1971, his son Jean-Claude Duvalier inherited the presidency and his title. The Duvalier reign brought much unrest, fear and bloodshed at the beginning, but despite this an effort was made to restructure the distribution of wealth and power in the country. In recent years the violence has decreased, however there has been no progress made in the area of equality of wealth and power.

#### Present

The economic inequity in the Haitian society is very blatant. On arrival there, one immediately notices that there are those who can afford to drive expensive cars such as the BMW or Mercedes Benz, while others walk or take the 'tap-tap' (vans used for public transportation).

As one spends more time in Haiti, other contrasts present themselves; there are those who afford well-carpeted houses, equipped with air conditioning and swimming pools while others have no electricity and their toilets and kitchens are outdoors; there are those who own flourishing businesses while others sell candy

on the streets at two for 3¢; there are those who fly to New York for the week end and those who risk their lives on crowded boats to Miami. One might question whether or not there exists a group in between the two extremes. The answer is yes. There is in Haiti a small group of people who may be called a middle class in terms of their wealth (or lack of it). Generally they live in houses with running water and electricity and they may own a car. However they do not own businesses, they do have to work to maintain their standard of living and they do not have the means to be extravagant.

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that the resulting class distinctions follow certain clearly defined patterns. The 'upper class' is made up mostly of persons who own businesses of some kind or else who are established professionals. Their children don't necessarily have to work too hard since they know that once they finish school they will move on into the family business. These are the Haitians who drive expensive cars, wear expensive clothes and are members of the social clubs in Haiti. The 'middle class' which is just beginning to emerge constitutes those who work as teachers, secretaries, salespeople or who own a small business. Their parents worked hard for them to be where they are

and they in turn work hard to send their children to good schools. These families often started out as members of the 'lower class' and moved up over the years. Children born to such families often obtain scholarships to study abroad. The 'lower class' is formed by the majority of people in Haiti and it is they who work the hardest to stay alive. They own small parcels of land in the rural areas where they grow fruits and vegetables on which they subsist, selling the surplus. They are also the vendors in the markets and on the streets, the drivers of local transportation, the factory workers and those who cook and clean in other people's houses. For the most part their children are not able to go to the best schools and often must drop out in order to help the family survive.

In Haiti as in other countries, the responsibility for economic and social conditions lies in the hands of the government. Sometimes the government is influenced by foreign powers who have investments in the country and on whose investments the country depends. This is true in the case of Haiti and it is also the case that countries who economically support Haiti sometimes dictate exactly how the funds should be used. The US is one of the most influential investors and supporters of

the Haitian government and ironically this country which to a certain extent has perpetrated the existing economic conditions in Haiti, has also seen the largest influx of Haitians, both legal and illegal.

## LEAVING HAITI

### Who and why

Haitian expatriates fall into at least three different categories. First there are those wealthy enough to attend private institutions where they take ESL classes and go on to further studies. Such people find it profitable to get an education here so that they can become familiar with current developments in various fields and be more productive in the family business back home. People also leave for political reasons. The political climate in Haiti is such that residents are forced to be careful of the political statements they make and to whom they are made. As a general rule, there is a suppression of any criticism of the government. Those who leave for political reasons are perceived as acting or speaking contrary to what the government expects. In recent years the most frequent victims have been journalists, TV and radio announcers and others working in news media. They have either been imprisoned, or forced to leave the country.

The vast majority who leave however, fall into neither of the two categories discussed earlier. Most come because of economic reasons and were farmers or had

jobs as factory workers, teachers, masons, carpenters, jewelry makers, accountants, cashiers, etc. They were usually people quite respected in their circles and confident of the jobs they were engaged in. Working at this level they made between \$200 and \$300 monthly which is not enough to live on in Haiti if one is married, has a family and is the sole provider. Fortunately the family structure in Haiti is based on the extended family until they are married and even after if necessary. Even so it is usually a struggle paying rent and feeding the family and as such, people often seek to leave the country because there seems to be little possibility for socio-economic mobility.

People working the land find it increasingly difficult to do so with periods of drought, a decrease in aid and few resources to cope with the situation. It can be particularly frustrating for a young person and this frustration sometimes leads to a move to the city where it is thought that life is better. For these people a decision is made to leave that life behind which frequently means selling land and possessions, leaving friends and family behind. What they normally find is a city already over-crowded and with few jobs. When their funds begin to be exhausted frustration also



drives them to a decision to leave the country. Coming to a decision to move to another country may or may not be easy, but once that decision is made, one must be very persistent especially if one intends to come to the US.

#### How

There are two basic ways of entering the US and remaining here: either through legal or illegal channels. Someone who comes for the reasons mentioned above may do so legally by obtaining a permanent or visitor's visa. In order to receive a permanent visa one must be sponsored by someone already a US resident or citizen or be married to such a person. To obtain a visitor's visa one of the major requirements is to show intent to return to Haiti. Applicants who are employed are required to show documentation of how much they earn monthly and proof that they intend to return to the job. Once they have the necessary documents they must wait (sometimes months) to be notified of an interview date; an interview is required whether applying for a visitor's or permanent visa. Because many Haitians wish to migrate to the US, there is constant flow of people waiting in line at the consulate. For some this means that they are forced to secure a place in line at three or four o'clock in the

morning, knowing that they will not be seen until the afternoon. Others pay someone to stand in line overnight in their place so that they are among the first to be seen the next morning.

People who have tried to obtain a visa many times without success and those who realize they have no chance of getting one, find other means of entering the US. Some, after successfully applying for a Canadian visa and going to Canada, slip across the border into the US. Otherwise, people who are desperate enough spend as much as two thousand dollars or more on other alternatives; they have their passport stamped with a false US visa, or have a relative in the US send them a passport, have the original passport picture changed in Haiti, and then use the passport to enter the US. For some, the alternative is to take a boat and try to make it to Miami.

#### Consequences

There is danger in using boats as a means of getting to the US since the boats that are used to transport people illegally are not necessarily seaworthy. Many have lost their lives on the voyage from Haiti to Miami. Those who do make it to Miami are generally put in a detention camp where they await the granting of political asylum or deportation. Arriving on a false visa or

passport can also lead to deportation if one is caught; so can overstaying the limit on a visitor's visa.

Remaining in the country illegally requires that one enter a business marriage with a US resident or citizen, acquire false identification and take on a new identity, or work 'under the table' until one is ready to return to Haiti permanently. One would not be allowed to return to the US for the first five years after illegal residence.

#### Why America

Geographically America is close enough to Haiti to make it a reasonable and realistic choice for those who wish to emigrate. Moreover, Haiti has enough American influence through tourism, imported consumer items and American films on TV and at the cinema, for Haitians to become familiar with it and develop an image of what things are like here. Apart from that, those who have not had a chance to travel frequently fall for the myth of America, 'the land of plenty' and have visions of escaping their current lifestyle and moving on to making quick money. They feel that "money is growing on trees and one only has to shake the tree when one gets here" as one student so aptly put it. Since they believe that money will be easily made because jobs are not hard to

find, they often plan on being here only a short time; just long enough to get a comfortable amount of cash and then return home.

Misconceptions of the ease with which one finds a job and makes a living are kept alive by the Haitian who moves to the US, returns to Haiti on vacation with gifts for relatives and friends and dresses stylishly so that he is perceived as 'successful'. Relatives and friends back home do not realize that there are some who go as far as to rent jewelry to wear so that they give the impression of making a lot of money here. This myth of the easy American life has been perpetuated for so long that the Haitians who do go home and try to dispell it are not believed. Instead, it is thought that they are trying to keep all the good that exists here to themselves and want to prevent others from getting a share in it.

## ADJUSTMENTS TO THE US

### Lack of language skills

There are many adjustments to be made once a person arrives in the US and is allowed to or decides to stay. To begin with, being here and not knowing English can pose different kinds of problems. Haitians must deal with the frustration of trying to express thoughts without the appropriate means to do so; being taken advantage of because they do not speak English; the consequences of being unable to communicate in certain emergency situations. Haitians generally settle in communities with other Blacks and language often stands as a barrier in the way of communicating with them. Because it is difficult to get to know and understand the people around them there is an isolation that comes about and it takes a while for the Haitian to integrate into the community.

### Attitudes

They must also cope with the general American attitude of intolerance and of impatience with those whose native language is not English. It also becomes apparent that some Americans have little time for or interest in learning about the foreigner or his country. This is in direct contrast to the prevailing attitude in Haiti where foreigners are made to feel comfortable and welcome to the

country and where Haitians are understanding and encouraging if one doesn't speak the local language or is trying to learn it.

#### American lifestyle

New to them also are many things taken for granted here such as elevators, escalators, complex transportation systems, and the fact that everything is on such a large scale i.e., tall buildings, huge bridges, large highways, etc. This is strange since in Haiti the structures are on a smaller and less complex scale.

Another surprise for them is the kind of employment available to them when they get here. Generally, people who go back to Haiti do not explain exactly what they do here, the type of work, the conditions under which they work, etc. Therefore it often comes as a surprise that only certain jobs are open to immigrants regardless of their past experience. Some of them work in factories on assembly lines and others who are qualified may find a job in an auto body mechanic shop. However, the majority have the choice of working as janitors, maids, nurses' aides, laundry workers, dishwashers and busboys. The types of responsibility expected of them on these jobs include: mopping, cleaning, sweeping, vacuuming, dressing and undressing patients, and cleaning tables.

Another important aspect with which they are faced is, as with all people of color in the US, the problem of racism in America. Although they come in contact with many foreigners in Haiti through tourism, they do not make a distinction based on color: all visitors to the country are referred to as 'blanc' (the creole word for foreigner), regardless of color. This then is a new reality they are forced to adjust to.

#### Weather

They must also become accustomed to the weather, especially in states such as Massachusetts. The climate in Haiti is always warm to hot with the primary changes being the rainy vs. the dry season, as opposed to temperature changes. Therefore while to a Bostonian 55 degrees is mild weather, to a Haitian newly arrived it is cold, and below 0 degree temperatures are unimaginable. Even though they may know of snow and cold weather before coming here, they are never truly prepared for the reality of it.

## PROFILES

When students arrive in an ESL class, they have already had many experiences in Haiti and are adjusting to life in America. Following are sketches of what some of the students in an ESL class might look like.

### Jacques

#### Physical description

He is in his mid to late thirties, dark complexioned, of medium height and build.

#### Personality

He is a devout Protestant, this is reflected in his conversations and the fact that he is always carrying a Bible or some other religious material. He is not talkative. His oral English is at an intermediate level and he has difficulty producing correct structures.

#### Past experience

He was born in Delmas, just outside of Port-au-Prince. He dropped out of high school after two years. He worked in a mechanic shop and then went on to become a tap-tap driver, transporting people and baggage from Port-au-Prince to the rural areas and back. He earned between \$15 and \$25 per day.

#### Present experience

He is presently working as a dishwasher in a local restaurant



and his duties include shovelling snow in winter. He started out making \$3.35/hour and has since had a 25¢ raise.

### Jean-Claude

#### Physical description

He is about 5'10", 26 years old and average weight for his height. He is of medium brown complexion and has a few gray hairs.

#### Personality

He is very self-confident. His oral English is at a strong intermediate level, and he is eager to use what he knows and learn more.

#### Past Experiences

He was born in Jacmel where he spent the first two years of his life and then moved to Port-au-Prince. He went to private primary and high schools, and during that time studied English for seven years. He attended the Faculté de Droit et des Sciences Economiques of the University of Haiti and received a degree in Economic Science. He also attended technical school and was granted a diploms in Electro-mechanics. He worked for two years in mechanical drawing.

#### Present experience

He is now working in a nursing home as a nurse's aide, making \$3.85/hour. He is living alone.

YolettePhysical description

She is in her mid-forties, has light brown skin, is 5'4" tall and slightly heavy set.

Personality

She has a very outgoing personality, enjoys parties and going to concerts given by Haitian bands. She has developed poor language habits but is able to communicate her ideas. She is not at all shy about using her English.

Past experience

She was born in Cavaillon near les Cayes. She was not formally educated and worked as a housekeeper in Port-au-Prince with a family of Arab descent. She also helped them in their cloth store when she was not occupied

Present experience

She has a full time job at a bra factory and works in a nursing home on weekends. She is divorced with no children and her parents are dead. She helps her other family members financially. She attends ESL classes but has problems since she never learned to read and write.

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Haitian educational system

As the profiles show, students in the ESL class often come from varied educational backgrounds. Those who have been formally educated in Haiti received their education through the medium of French. The Haitian school system is based on the French system and students are expected to take the Baccalauréat exam at the end of their high school years. Following is a model of the educational system that students presently in ESL classes would have gone through to varying extents.

	<u>Haitian System</u>	<u>Translation</u>	<u>Age</u>
	Maternelle 1&2	Pre-school	
Primaire (Primary)	Enfantin 1&2	Kindergarten	4,5
	Préparatoire 1&2	Preparatory	6,7
	Elémentaire 1&2	Elementary	8,9
	Moyen 1&2	Middle	10, 11
Examen (Exam)	Certificat	Certificate	
Secondaire (Secondary)	6ème	6th	12
	5ème	5th	13
	4ème	4th	14
	3ème	3rd	15
	2ème	2nd	16
	Rhétorique	Rhetoric	1u
	Philosophie	Philosophy	18
Exmen (Exam)	Baccalauréat	High school diploma	

### Effects of system

The fact that school subjects are taught in French is of importance since the first language of every Haitian is Creole and not French. The problem then that many children face is that they learn subject matter through a medium other than their mother tongue. For one to be successful in school, one has to master not only the subject matter, but also the language through which it is being taught. In effect, a child who has been raised learning and speaking only Creole at home, is expected to go to school at the age of five and suddenly function normally in French, a language foreign to him. There is generally no one to help the child at home and the only reinforcement for the language is the classroom.

As a consequence, students often go home at night and study but do not really understand what they have studied. The result is that many depend on memory to get through school and develop incredible memorization skills where they are able to memorize pages of material at a time. A very common sight in Port-au-Prince on a Sunday evening in particular, is that of students 'studying' on Champs-de-Mars (a big public park). In reality, they are usually memorizing material for the following day.

### Differences

Like Jean-Claude in the profiles, students who finish high school or who nearly finish, often have studied English for several years before coming to the US. The skills that they bring with them are very different from those students such as Jacques or Yolette who have little or no formal education. Students like Jean-Claude have a latent store of English grammar and vocabulary, can read and write English. They have also acquired their own individual style of learning a second language in a structured situation, having had to learn French in that way. English is in fact a third language for them. Students in this situation often come here with the objective of continuing their education at some point. They eventually want to take the GED exam (high school equivalency) and apply to a college or university. They will be seeking not only a functional but an academic level of English as well.

In contrast, students such as Yolette do not possess the latent knowledge of English that the formally educated students do, nor have they developed individual ways of learning a language in a structured situation. They usually possess weak reading and writing skills if any at all. Students like these need develop-

ment of basic skills and sometimes literacy or individual tutoring. Their objective is not usually to further their own education but rather to achieve a basic functional level in English.

## APPLICATION - THE ESL CONTEXT

### The student as an adult

It should always be kept in mind that although the student is learning English through structures that may at times seem very basic, he is still an adult and not a child. These are some things to remember:

- lesson content should be relevant to the adult learner (choose topics that students can relate to)
- the teacher/student interaction should reflect that the student is considered an adult (attitudes should not be condescending)
- if possible the classroom setting should reflect an adult atmosphere
- the student has had years of life experience, is not naive
- the student is simply learning a new way of verbally expressing concepts and a reality he already knows
- usually the student is in class voluntarily, because he wants to learn English

### The student is Haitian

The student is from Haiti and as such has had experiences that are different from those of students of other countries. To know as much as possible about the students enables the teacher to meet their needs as fully as possible. Knowing about their country and their lives here gives the advantage of linking lessons directly to their past experiences. The teacher should try to:

- learn as much as possible about life in Haiti, its history, present conditions, etc.
- learn about the lives of students here in the US, the communities they live in, etc.
- learn about the individual students (this may be easier in an informal setting, outside of class time)

#### Their educational background

As was noted before, students come from varying educational backgrounds and it is likely that one would have a mixture of people in a given class. It was also noted that many Haitian students have developed good memorization skills and usually transfer these skills to the ESL class. One problem that arises because of this is that students sometimes do not understand what they have memorized.

Here some things to remember:

#### Formally educated students

- their objectives are usually to continue school
- they probably know some English even if their oral skills are weak
- they need academic English as well as functional English
- they are likely to understand and retain material more quickly than others

#### Students with little formal education

- they probably know a lot less English than formally educated students



- their reading and writing skills may be weak and in need of development

#### Students with no formal education

- they need basic orientation to a classroom learning situation
- they need to learn basic pre-literary and literacy skills
- they should develop at least a sight word vocabulary of important words in their environment (MEN, WOMEN, EXIT, etc.)
- for reading and writing they should be in a class with a focus on the preceding and not be combined with students who already possess literacy skills

#### Memorization

- students will find it easy to cope with techniques which stress memorization
- they will do well with memorizing dialogues, conjugations, translations, etc.
- memorized material should be followed by usage in a meaningful context
- critical thinking should be encouraged on the part of the student
- techniques that emphasize deduction should also be used
- teachers should try to capitalize on memorization abilities without depending too heavily on them

#### Survival needs

The immediate needs of the Haitian ESL learner are usually those of language and survival skills. Accordingly, it is not enough to concentrate on grammatical structures;

the vocabulary and situations presented with them must be carefully chosen to reflect the students' needs outside of class. The student will need to know how to function in areas such as looking for a job, taking public transportation, etc. Following are some of the areas of particular importance to the student:

#### Personal information

- knowing how to give information about themselves such as name, address, telephone number, age, sex, etc.
- being able to give information about their educational background, work history, etc.
- being able to tell about their skills, interests, likes, etc.

#### Application forms

- becoming familiar with forms and transferring personal information to these forms
- being familiar with the many ways that the same information is presented on different forms

#### Finding a job

- how to go about looking for a job (newspapers, bulletin boards, etc.)
- basic questions to expect on an interview
- how to behave, how to dress, what to ask on an interview

#### Types of jobs available

It is important to know the types of jobs that students find once they are here. Many times teachers

who are not aware of the students' job situation, teach vocabulary totally unrelated to their work experience. Learning vocabulary and structures related to the kind of work they do or will probably do, helps the student be more effective at work or in an interview situation.

- if possible visit some of the students' work sites or talk to employers about the job sites, duties. etc.
- from the above information, present useful vocabulary and structures

A word of caution: for many students, discussing the type of work they do is a very sensitive subject and they are not comfortable doing so in class. Many are doing jobs they would not consider doing in Haiti. The following is suggested:

- discuss jobs in a general manner in class
- focus on words and functions associated with the types of jobs and not on what individual students do
- encourage the idea that a job is nothing to be ashamed of and that with proper education, students can move on to more meaningful jobs

#### Transportation

- understanding and being able to use available local transportation
- how to change, make transfers, etc.

Money

- although Haitians are familiar with US money since it is used alongside Haitian currency, they need practice with the English terms
- how to buy a money order, where, etc.
- other ways of sending money out of the country safely (cashier's check, wire, etc.)
- how to open a bank account, types of accounts, etc.

Post office

- related vocabulary (stamps, packages, etc.)
- how to send letters, packages safely out of the country (registered mail, etc.)

Cultural adjustments

The Haitian who comes to the US has many cultural adjustments to make. A teacher can help by:

- incorporating cultural activities into their curriculum (typical American gestures, interaction on a formal vs. informal basis, etc.)
- letting them know about their civil rights, tenants' rights, etc.
- telling them about resources in the community in case of crisis or emergency
- teaching them about the communities in which they live, its leaders, newspapers, etc.
- encouraging them to become involved in their communities
- exposing them to 'ordinary' people from within the community

### Guests and field trips

These can be very effective ways of supplementing classroom learning. Guests provide the student with a different voice to listen to and if the guest is from a specialized field, provides the student with more specific information than the teacher could. Field trips are a change of pace for the students and also help them in becoming familiar with where they live. Some suggestions:

- guests can be from anywhere in the community
- they can also be from special organizations or agencies, e.g., hospital representatives, housing representatives, a bus driver, etc.
- field trips can be to the post office, supermarket, local museums, etc.

### Placement

Student placement will be somewhat difficult given the differences in students' written and spoken abilities. Most tests are written and do not give an actual indication of students' ability to communicate orally. As a result, many teachers end up having classes with students of mixed levels and abilities. Expect that:

- sometimes students will be non-readers but have good oral skills
- tests will make some students nervous and they will not perform as well as they could
- on oral placement 'interviews' students sometimes do not respond well because a) they aren't confident

about their English and feel intimidated, b) they want to be put in a low class because they "don't speak English"

For classes with students of varying written skills:

- develop a means of assessing students' written skills and based on that make a division of the class
- divide the classtime into an oral and a written period (e.g. use the first portion of the class for oral work and the second for written)
- during the writing time use the division(s) made based on written skills as a basis for the assignments for each group
- try to limit the group to no more than three unless a teacher's aide is available

#### Jobs and attendance

The Haitian ESL student on arrival in the US often finds it extremely difficult to find a job. While he needs to learn English in order to find work, he also needs to work in order to live. Consequently his attendance in class suffers. Once he does find a job, this also causes problems at times. Frequently students who work attend class after work, thus the factor of fatigue has to be considered. Many times by 5:30 pm or 6:30 pm when ESL classes are about to begin, the student has already worked a full hard eight hours or more. The same is true for a morning class where some students leave work, stop home for a short time, and then go

directly to class having worked through the night.

Teacher should be aware that:

- a student enrolled in daytime classes may find it difficult to attend classes regularly since he must also find a job to support himself
- finding a job is as important, if not more so than attending class
- attendance for new comers to the US is usually unstable
- once students find a job, they may be laid off or change jobs which will affect their schedule and therefore might affect their attendance
- students sometimes have to work overtime; this may also affect attendance
- some students may nod in class - it's likely that they are tired, not bored
- it may be difficult for some to concentrate
- teachers will need to vary techniques to keep the students' concentration
- a break is a good idea if the class goes for more than an hour and a half
- activities that involve physical movement will help keep the students alert

#### Other factors affecting attendance

In Haiti when the weather is bad, i.e. it rains heavily, most businesses and schools close. Haitians therefore are not accustomed to working in disagreeable weather. There are other factors that they have to deal with on arrival here that also affect their attendance.

- expect low attendance when there is poor weather
- incorporate into class an understanding of the importance in the US of attending class or going to work even when the weather is bad
- childcare conflicts can cause poor attendance
- appointments (i.e. with the doctor) can also affect attendance

#### High turnover

The ESL teacher is not likely to end up with exactly the same people she started out with. There are likely to be students dropping out of class and new ones on a continuous basis. Some suggestions:

- plan frequent reviews throughout the session; this will help the regular students and give a sense of the level of the new students
- try not to take new students too close to the end of a session; these students miss more than half of the planned curriculum and are usually lost



### FOR YOUR INFORMATION

The following information may be used in different ways. For the person who has never been to Haiti or who knows nothing about the culture, it gives a sense of some of the areas of importance in the culture - the religion, landmarks, holidays, etc. It can be used simply as a source of interesting information or the ESL teacher can use it as a constructive resource for lesson planning. For the classroom, the information can be used for cultural comparisons (such as comparing holidays), in role plays (what would take place at Téléco, for example), as follow-up practice for location (where is Nègre Marron, Fort Dimanche, etc.), practice in grammatical structures (how is 'duri ak pwa' made - first the beans are cooked, then oil is added to the pan). There are many other possibilities.

In addition, this provides the teacher with a spring board for finding out much more about the students and their culture, and promotes a class which is more relevant to the student. The ESL teacher will also find that in doing this, interest is sparked on the part of the student because he is familiar with the subject and has a sense of bringing his own experience to the classroom. Students also feel more receptive to a teacher who shows interest in knowing and learning about them.

<u>HEADING</u>	<u>CREOLE/FRENCH</u>	<u>ENGLISH MEANING</u>
Language	*kreyòl	Creole
	français	French is only spoken by 10% of the population
Religion	*vodou	Voodoo, a religion based on the African religious and healing systems brought to Haiti by its first African inhabitants
	christianisme	Christianity - catholicism brought by Europeans Protestantism-- brought by the US and other western countries
Place of worship	*peristil	for Voodoo religious ceremonies
	église	for christian worship
Main cities	Port-au-Prince	
	Cap Haitien	
	Jacmel	
	Gonaives	
	Les Cayes	
	Jérémie	
	St. Marc	
Major roads	Port-de-Paix	
	Route du Nord	the road going to the northern part of the country
	Route du Sud	the road going south

<u>HEADING</u>	<u>CREOLE/FRENCH</u>	<u>ENGLISH MEANING</u>	
Roads in Port-au-Prince and vicinity	Bourdon		
	Delmas		
	Lalue		
	Rue Pavée		
	Grand Rue		
	Rue Mgr. Guilloux		
	Rue de l'Enterre- ment		
	Buildings in Port-au-Prince and vicinity	Téléco	phone company for long distance calls
		Contribution	tax office
		Palais National	national palace, official residence of the president
Immigration		immigration office	
Aéroport		airport	
La poste		post office	
Marché en fer		iron market - big market downtown	
Caserne Dessalines		military headquarters	
Caserne F. Duvalier		police precinct	
Fort Dimanche		prison	
Landmarks	La citadelle	Citadel - King Henri Christophe's fortress	
	Sans Souci	Christophe's pa- lace	
	Nègre Marron Inconnu	the statue of the unknown maroon	

<u>HEADING</u>	<u>CREOLE/FRENCH</u>	<u>ENGLISH</u>	
Currency	gourde	five gourdes equal one US dollar - this does not change	
	centime	100 cents equal one one gourde	
Fruits	*mango	mango	
	*lam veritab	bread fruit	
	*zaboka	avocado	
	*gwayav	guava	
	*kokoye	coconut	
	*fig	banana	
	*bannann	plaintain	
Vegetables	*karòt	carrot	
	*mayi	corn	
	*zepina	spinach	
	*jouroumou	pumpkin	
	*malanga	root plants - related to potatoes or yams	
	*mazoumbèl		
	*tomat	tomato	
	Foods	*duri ak pwa	rice and beans
		*duri ak sòs pwa	rice with bean sauce
*duri ak djondjon		rice with black mushrooms	
*pwason		fish	
*lanbi		conch	
*bannann peze		fried green plaintain	

<u>HEADING</u>	<u>CREOLE/FRENCH</u>	<u>ENGLISH MEANING</u>
Foods (cont'd)	*griyo	fried pork
	*taso	fried goat
	*mayi moulen	corn meal cooked
	*kann	sugar cane
	*soup jouroumou	pumpkin soup - a popular dish on the 1st of January
Juices/Drinks	*ji citron	limeade
	*ji seriz	cherry juice
	*ji chadèk	grapefruit juice
	*ji papay	papaya juice
	*ji melon	watermelon
	*kafe	coffee
	*te	tea
	*koka	coke
	*kola	local soda
	Prestige	local beer
	*akasan (AK 100)	beverage made with milk and finely ground corn meal
	*kremas	sweet liqueur made with coconut milk
	*kleren	white rum
National holidays (sample)		
Jan.1	Jour de l'indépen- dence	independence day
	Jour de l'an	New Years Day

<u>HEADING</u>	<u>CREOLE/FRENCH</u>	<u>ENGLISH MEANING</u>
National holidays (cont'd)		
Jan. 2	Jour des aïeux	day of the ancestors
April 7	Mort de Toussaint	anniversary of Toussaint's death
May 1	Fête du travail	labor day
May 18	Fête du drapeau	flag day
May 22	Jour de la reconnaissance nationale	recognition day (Duvalier)
Oct. 17	Mort de Dessalines	anniversary of Dessalines' death
Nov. 1	La Toussaint	All Saint's day
Nov. 2	Fête des morts	All Soul's day
Nov. 18	Bataille de Vertières	anniversary of the decisive battle against the French
Dec. 5	Découverte d'Haïti	discovery of Haiti by Columbus
Dec. 25	Noël	christmas

Note: \*denotes words written in creole

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