M.Ed. In TESL Program
Language Group Specific Informational Reports

Produced by Graduate Students in the M.Ed. In TESL Program
In the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development

Language Group: Haitian-Creole
Author: Megan Morin

Program Contact Person: Nancy Cloud (ncloud@ric.edu)
The Language of Haitian Creole

By: Megan Morin
TESL 539
Spring 2009
A Quick Overview...

- An official language of Haiti
- Mix between French and West African Languages
- Vocabulary is similar to French vocabulary
- Grammar differs dramatically from French
- In the 1940s there were 3 different alphabets for the language but in 1979 the government adopted one standard system
- Haitian Creole is spoken in Haiti, USA, Canada, France, Venezuela, and many Caribbean countries such as, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and the Bahamas
Common Errors in English

Nouns

- Plural Forms- omission of plural –s
  Why? In Haitian Creole nouns do not change form to show more than one
  ex: I have 5 book.

- Possessive Forms- omission of -‘s
  Why? In Haitian Creole a noun’s owner comes after the object
  ex: house my friend.
Pronouns

- No distinction between subject and object
  - ex: Him helped I. or I gave the forms to she.

- No gender difference for 3rd person pronouns
  - ex: The boy carried her bag.
    (Instead of: The boy carried his bag.)

Adjectives

- Adjectives are placed after the noun
  - ex: I read a book interesting
Verbs

- Omission of third person singular in present tense
  Why? There is no subject-verb agreement in Haitian Creole
  ex: She go to school every day.

- Omission of tense markers
  Why? Verbs in Haitian Creole do not change form to express tense
  ex: I study English yesterday.

- Omission of the verb to be
  Why? The verb to be is not required in all sentences of Haitian Creole
  ex: He hungry.
Formulating Questions

- In favor of tag questions because in Haitian Creole there is no subject-verb inversion in question formation.

- Omission of do or did
  Why? In Haitian Creole no equivalent to the do/did verb in questions.
  ex: Where you went?
Haitian schooling is rote learning and students may not be comfortable when asked to analyze and hypothesis. Whereas in America students are encouraged by their teachers to explore the world around them.

Haitian students are taught to hold the upmost respect for their teacher and a student only speaks when asked a question. Also Haitian students do not look the teacher in the eye and cast their heads down as a sign of respect. This body language may be viewed by Americans as distant and uninterested in learning.
Parents of Haitian decent view the teacher as responsible for the student’s learning and therefore may be hesitant to participate in PTAs.

Also, a Haitian parent would not be expected to come to the school unless summoned there by the teacher in which case the student would have done something VERY wrong.
Speakers of Haitian Creole may have trouble pronouncing the following sounds, spoken in English:

- /h/ as in hen
- /r/ as in rabbit
- All R-controlled vowels
- /th/ as in think
- /ch/ as in chair
- /x/ as in Xray
- short e- as in set
- short i- as in sit
- short u- as in cup
- /ng/ as in sing
- /c/ as in cat
A quick look into Haitian Culture

- Discover Haiti: Culture Page
H. C. relies greatly on proverbs, metaphors, and imagery

- YouTube - Haitian traditional African music (Raram 2002)
A sample of Haitian traditional African music
I chose to report on Haitian Creole because it is a language spoken by .5% of Rhode Island’s population. Although this percentage does not seem significant it is important for ESL teachers to have some background knowledge on this language. Haitian Creole is a dominant second language in parts of the USA (Boston and New York). It is for these reasons I chose to evaluate Haitian Creole.
Bibliography

Books


Internet Sites


Image