SOCIETAL LINGUISTIC DEVELOPMENT

The subject of our case study was a fourth grade student by the name of Joselyne. Joselyne’s birthday is February 4, 1994, and she is ten years old. She was born in Haiti and her ethnic group is Haitian. In her country she is not considered a minority. French and Creole are the official languages of the country. The two languages are linguistically distinct and are not mutually comprehensible. Creole is more widely spoken, but facility with the French language connotes a higher social status.

Haiti is located in the Caribbean, between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, west of the Dominican Republic. The size of the country is slightly smaller than the state of Maryland. The terrain is mostly rough and mountainous. The ethnicity of the country is 95% black and 5% mulatto and white. The main religions of the country are Roman Catholic (80%) and Protestant (16%). Nearly half of the population also practices Voodoo. Haiti is a very poor country – more than 80% of the population lives in abject poverty. Haiti has the highest rates of AIDS, malnutrition, and infant mortality in the region. The literacy rate is 52.9% of the population. The ratio to students to teachers is 33 to 1.

Joselyne lives with both of her parents and 3 siblings. Her mother is 35 and her father is 38. Her mother is a stay-at-home mom and does not work outside the home. Her father is a manual laborer who usually works two to three jobs. The main language spoken in Joselyne’s home is Creole. The mother speaks little to no English while the father can speak a minimal amount. He attends all the parent teacher conferences at his daughters’ schools but is often frustrated because he cannot understand much of what is going on. A very limited amount of English is spoken in the home.

The oldest sibling in the home is 14 years old. She will be attending high school this year. The parents rely heavily on this oldest sibling to translate English into their native tongue. The second oldest sibling is 13 and attends middle school. This child has not learned very much English and prefers to communicate in their home language. The third oldest sibling is Joselyne and the youngest is a small girl of three years old. This is a very close knit family that depends heavily on each other.

The father moved his family to the United States in order to provide a better education for his daughters. He wanted his girls to be able to attend college and knew that if they stayed in Haiti, they probably would never have the opportunity. Their family has a very good attitude towards the Unites States. They see their move to America as a way to provide a better life for themselves and for their children. They encourage their children to learn all that they can about the American culture and the language.

Joselyne’s parents try to be involved in their children’s school life as much as possible, but as noted earlier, the father oftentimes cannot communicate effectively nor understand everything that is going on with his daughters’ education. They come from a very low socio-economic status and must work very hard to make ends meet.
Joselyne’s family is of the Roman Catholic faith and they attend services regularly at a Haitian-American church. They live in an underdeveloped area that is predominantly African-American with a small population of Haitians. The language of the community they reside in is primarily English with many different dialects. The family is active within their Haitian community and is becoming increasingly more active within the American community.

Joselyne is a tall, slender girl. Her eyes and skin are brown. She is an attractive, well-groomed young lady. She is a very shy and quiet, and is respectful and submissive. She seems to get along very well with her classmates and has been helped by forming one or two very close friendships within the classroom. Since Joselyne moved to the United States when she was 7, she still continues to have a very heavy accent. This may be due to the fact that the family continues to speak Creole almost exclusively in the home.

Statistics and information regarding Haiti were obtained from the following websites:
http://www.nationmaster.com/

LINGUISTIC DEVELOPMENT

Most formal schooling in Haiti is provided by private and religious-based schools. These schools are not regulated and are too expensive for most people too afford. Although by law primary education is free and mandatory for children between the ages of six and twelve, there is a lack of proper teaching facilities because of limited government funding. For every teacher in the countryside there are 550 school-aged children.

Joselyne attended school for one year on her home country. She had a basic foundation for reading and writing when she came to the United States. Education is a top priority in the home. Since the mother and father are illiterate, they rely on the oldest sibling to read to the younger children. They encourage her to read to her siblings regularly. She also helps them with their homework. The family owns a very small amount of books. The reading material found in the home is mostly from public sources such as the school and the public library.

Prior to coming to the United States, Joselyne was in the emergent stages of reading and writing. Despite the poor quality of education offered to Haitian children, Joselyne was able to pick up the basic linguistic skills needed. In Haiti, Joselyne had no exposure to English in either the written or spoken form.

Joselyne’s BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) at the time of arriving in the United States was well developed. These skills were learned at home, around her family and within social settings. However, her CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) was beginning to be developed, although it was at the early stages. Since these skills were not fully developed in the first language, it has taken her longer to develop them in the second language.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Arrival</th>
<th>1 year</th>
<th>3 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vocabulary</strong></td>
<td>Very little use of vocab. Uses gestures to communicate</td>
<td>Less than 100 words. Still uses some gestures.</td>
<td>More developed vocabulary but still not well defined. Fluency still needs to be developed more. Less gestures</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Morphemes</strong></td>
<td>Does not use the possessive form. Uses first person singular</td>
<td>Adds morphemes to words; uses them incorrectly</td>
<td>Uses morphemes correctly but has problems with irregular verbs</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Syntax</strong></td>
<td>No understanding of word order</td>
<td>Frequent errors in grammar and word order.</td>
<td>Well defined word order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phonology</strong></td>
<td>Cannot understand her verbal communication Phonemes are not</td>
<td>Poor understanding of verbal communication. Frequent misuse of phonemes and phonics</td>
<td>Speaks softly with a definite accent. Verbal communication is clearer. Has some phonics errors and misuses phonemes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural Pragmatics</strong></td>
<td>Little communication in English; hard to determine</td>
<td>Conversation is limited; frequently uses an incorrect word or phrase.</td>
<td>Occasionally uses inappropriate terms. Occasionally needs to rephrase ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BICS and CALP</strong></td>
<td>Speech is fragmented. Conversation is virtually impossible.</td>
<td>Speaks hesitantly. Often forced into silence by language limitations.</td>
<td>BICS well developed. CALP – vocab. not big enough to be well defined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English/ Grammar</strong></td>
<td>Didn’t understand when or why to use punctuation. Fragmented sentences.</td>
<td>Starting to form complete simple sentences, but incorrect use of articles and verbs. Limited use of punctuation</td>
<td>Greatly improved. Almost to grade level, but sometimes uses incorrect words and punctuation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
<td>Not able to read.</td>
<td>Very little reading. Able to read simple sentences and words.</td>
<td>Reading much better; almost at grade level. Reading full sentences and paragraphs. Fluency still needs to be improved.</td>
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</table>
My dad brought home a rooster and we were all excited until the next day. My dad was the first one to get out of the house to feed the rooster bread or corn and to untie him because the rooster had a rope on his left foot. When I went outside I saw the rooster jump the fence and I ran inside the house to look for my mom since dad went to the store to buy some more corns.

Mom and I had to go look for the rooster. We walked around the neighborhood to look for the lost rooster and we stopped when we heard the rooster singing. And so we followed his voice until we saw it in our neighbor's backyard eating something on the ground. And so we asked our neighbor if he can go in the backyard for a reason and she replied, "Oh, yes, sure."

We walked slowly and both of us jumped after the rooster and I got the rope pulled
Everyone has experienced a time when they have found something. It might have been money, a lost animal, or someone’s treasured possession. Before you begin to write, think about a time you found something. Now write to tell about a time you found something.
INTERVIEW

Teacher: I need your help reading a story. I need you to read. Is this the book that you are reading and that you are familiar with?

Joselyne: nods her head yes

Teacher: So, tell me first how your school year has been going because I haven’t seen you since, I think it was in October or November. I think that was the last time I saw you. How have you been doing since then?

Joselyne: Good

Teacher: Have you been doing good in school? Have you been having fun?

Joselyne: nods her head yes

Teacher: Your teacher said you were a patrol. Which area are you patrolling?

Joselyne: The courtyard

Teacher: My son is a patrol. Do you know Jeffrey?

Joselyne: (shakes her head no)

Teacher: He is a patrol when you come up the yellow line and as soon as you turn right, right there he stands right there. He is all excited about it. Are you a morning patrol or an afternoon patrol?

Joselyne: Morning Patrol

Teacher: So you have to get here early?

Joselyne: nods her head yes

Teacher: So does he. Is that hard for you?

Joselyne: uh huh

Teacher: I know. He was late this morning.

Joselyne: So was I.
Teacher: Do you get in trouble if you are late?

Joselyne: (nods her head yes)
Teacher: It is kind of hard sometimes getting here early. So, what else is new?

Joselyne: No

Teacher: Now, you told me you were from…

Joselyne: Haiti

Teacher: Do you speak another language?

Joselyne: (nods her head yes)

Teacher: What language?

Joselyne: Creole

Teacher: I don’t know if I have ever heard Creole. Do your mom and dad speak English or do you have to help them speak English?

Joselyne: They know it.

Teacher: I know sometimes children have to help their parents speak English because their parents don’t know a lot of English. You told me you have some sisters, is that right?

Joselyne: Yes, I got three sisters

Teacher: Are you the oldest?

Joselyne: No

Teacher: Tell me where you are at.

Joselyne: I am the second youngest

Teacher: Does your youngest sister go here?

Joselyne: No

Teacher: Because she is real little, right?

Joselyne: She’s three years old.

Teacher: Do you have anyone else that goes here?
Joselyne: No

Teacher: Just you? Do you have anybody in high school?

Joselyne: No. My sisters go to middle school and one will go to the high school.

Teacher: Which high school?

Joselyne: Lake Region

Teacher: Oh, that’s a good school. I like Lake Region.

Joselyne: It is right…it is right by my house.

READING SAMPLE

Teacher: Oh. Okay, are you ready to read?

Joselyne: Yes

Teacher: Here’s the book and just get comfortable. Start whenever you are ready.

Joselyne: Once in ancient China lived a princess who was the fourth daughter of the emperor. She was very tiny. In fact she has, she was so tiny her name was Djeow Seow, which means “the smallest one.” And, because she was so tiny, she was not thought very much of when she was thought of at all….she was not thought very much of when she was thought of at all.

Her brothers, who were all older and bigger and stronger than she (was), were thought of all the time. And they were like four rising suns in (da)the eyes of their father. They helped the emperor rule the kingdom and teach the people the ways of peace.
Even her three sisters were all older and bigger and stronger (dan) than she. They were like three midnight moons in the eyes of their father. They were (da) the ones who brought food to his table.

But Djeow Seow was like a tiny star in the emperor’s sight. She was not even allowed to bring a grain of rice to the meal, she was little she thought. so little she was thought of. In fact she was so in-sig-nif-i-cent (insignificant) that the em-pair-e-er (emperor) often forgot he had a fourth daughter at all.

And so Djeow Seow ate by herself. And she talked to herself. And she played by herself, which was the loneliest thing of all. Her favorite toy was a kite of paper and sticks.
Every morning, when the wind came from the east past the rising sun, she flew her kite. And every evening, when the wind went to the west past the setting sun, she flew her kite. Her toy was like a flower in the sky. And it was like a prayer in the wind.

In fact a monk who passed the palace daily made up a poem about her kite.

*My kite sails upward,*  
*Mounting to the high heavens*  
*My soul goes on wings.*

But then he was a monk, and given to such thoughts. As for Princess Djeow Seow, she thanked him each day for his prayer. Then she went back to flying her toy.

But all was not peaceful in the kingdom, just as the wind is not always peaceful. For the wind can troubled the waters of a still pond. And there were evil men plotting against the (empire) emperor.

They crept upon him one day when he was alone, when his four sons were away ruling in the furthermost parts of the kingdom and his three daughters were down in the garden. And only Princess Djeow Seow, so tiny she seemed part of the corner where she sat, saw what happened.

The evil men took (empire-er-or) the emperor to a tower in the middle of a wide, treeless plain. The tower had only a single window, with an iron bar across the center. The plotters sealed the door with bricks and mortar once the emperor was inside. Then they rode back to the (place) palace and declared that the emperor was dead. When his sons and daughters heard this, they all fled to a neighboring kingdom where they spent their time sobbing and sighing. But they did nothing else all day long.

All except Djeow Seow. She was so tiny, the evil men did not notice her at all. And so, she crept to the edge of the wide, treeless plain. And there she built a hut of twigs and branches.

Every day at dawn and again at dark, she would walk across the plain to the tower. And there she would sail her stick-and-paper kite. To the kite string she tied a tiny basketful of rice and poppy seed cakes, water chestnuts and green tea. The kite pulled the basket high, high in the air as high as the window in the tower. And, in this way, she kept her father alive.

So they lived for many days: the emperor in (his) the tower and the princess in a hut near the edge of the plain. The evil men ruled with their cruel, harsh ways and the people of the country were very sad.

One day as the princess prepared a basket of food for her father, the old monk passed by her hut. She smiled at him, but he seemed not to see her. Yet as he passed, he repeated his prayer in a loud voice. He said:

*My kite sails upward*  
*Mounting to the high heavens.*  
*My (em-pire- er) emperor goes on winds.*
The princess started to thank him. But then she stopped. Something was different. The words were not quite right. "Stop," she called to the monk. But he had already passed by.

He was a monk, after all, and did not take part in things of this world. And then Djeow Seow understood. The monk was telling her something important. And she understood.

Each day after that, when she was not bringing food to her father, Djeow Seow was busy. She twined a string of grass and vines, and wove in strands of her own long black hair. (And) When her rope was as thick as her waist and as high as the tower, she was ready. She attached the rope to the string of the stick-and-paper kite, and made her way across the treeless plain. When she reached the tower, she called to her father. But her voice was as tiny as she, and her words (was) were lost in the wind.

At last, though, the emperor looked out and (say) saw his daughter flying her kite. He expected the tiny basket of food to sail up to this window as it had done each day. But what should he see but the strand of vines and grass and long black hair. The wind was raging above, holding the kite in its steely grip. And the princess was below, holding tight to the end of the rope.

Although the (empire or) emperor had never really (understand) understood the worth of this tiniest daughter before, he did now. And he promised himself that if her plan (work) worked she would never again want for anything, though all she had ever wanted was love. Then he leaned farther out of the tower (window) and (grabst) grasped the heavy (string) strand. He brought it into his tower room and loosened the string of the kite. He set the kite free, saying, "Go to (they) thy home in the sky, great kite." And the kite flew off (toward)towards the heavens.

Then the emperor (tried) tied one end of the thick strand to the heavy iron bar across the window, and the other end stretched all the way down to Djeow Seow’s tiny hands.

The emperor stepped to the window sill, slipped under the iron bar, (salted) saluted the gods, and slid down the rope. His robes billowed out around him like the wings of a bright kite.

When his feet reached the ground, he knelt before his tiny daughter. And he touched the ground (gound) before her with his lips. Then he rose and embraced her, and she almost disappeared in his arms.

With his arm encircling her, the emperor said, “Come to thy (house) home with me, loyal child.” He lifted the tiny princess to his shoulders and carried her all the way back to the palace. At the palace, the emperor was greeted by wild and cheering crowds. The people were tired of the evil men, but they had been afraid to act. With the emperor once again to guide them, they threw the plotters into prison.

And when the other sons and daughters of the emperor heard of his return, they left off their sobbing and sighing, and they hurried home to welcome their father. But when they arrived, they were surprised to find Djeow Seow on a tiny throne by their father’s side. To the end of (this) his
day, the emperor ruled with Princess Djeow Seow close by. She never wanted for anything, especially love. And the emperor never again neglected a person—whether great or small. And, too, it is said that Djeow Seow ruled after him, as gentle as the wind and, in (her) their loyalty, as unyielding.

Teacher: You did a good job. Your teacher gave me some questions to ask you about the story. Besides being tiny, how is Djeow Seow different from her brothers and sisters?

Joselyne: She was…(can’t understand answer)

Teacher: Who gives Djeow Seow the idea for getting her father out of the tower?

Joselyne: The monk

Teacher: What does he do? How does he do it? Do you remember?

Joselyne: shakes her head no

Teacher: It says he repeats a prayer he says each time he passes her that adds the word emperor in place of soul. So he said a prayer.

Teacher: How does Djeow Seow get her father out of the tower?

Joselyne: She flew. She…um. She flew the kite in the tower and made her dad…

Teacher: Did he climb out of the tower?

Joselyne: nods her head yes

Teacher: He did.

Teacher: How did her life change from the beginning to the end of the story?

Joselyne: She used to be not loved and at the end she was love

Teacher: Why do you think she wasn’t loved?

Joselyne: Because she was tiny

Teacher: Do you think that is a reason not to love someone because they are tiny? What might have happened if her favorite toy had not been a kite?

Joselyne: Her father would still be in the tower

Teacher: How does she feel when her father kisses the ground before her with his lips and then rises and embraces her?
Joselyne: She feel happy

Teacher: What does unyielding mean?
Joselyne: no response

Teacher: Do you know?
Joselyne: shakes her head no

Teacher: Tell about a time you have been loyal to someone.
Joselyne: Um

Teacher: Do you understand what the word loyal means?
Joselyne: I think so

Teacher: What do you think it means?
Joselyne: Like telling the truth?

Teacher: Okay, good. That is one way to be loyal. So can you tell me about a time you have been loyal to someone?

Joselyne: The time I been loyal to someone was when I got in trouble and my mom said, “Why did I…..(can’t think of rest of words)

Teacher: Your mom asked you why you did something and you were honest and told her the truth?
Joselyne: Yes

Teacher: Good

Teacher: Use (the word) insignificant in a meaningful sentence. Do you know what that word means?
Joselyne: No

Teacher: Tell about a time you have helped a friend or member of a family who was in trouble. Can you tell about a time you helped your sisters or someone who was in trouble?
Joselyne: shakes her head no
Okay. You did a very good job. I appreciate you reading to me and helping me out today.

**ASSESSMENT OF READING**

During the reading of *The Emperor and the Kite*, we noticed a few errors that Joselyne made. Most of her errors came from either mispronouncing words or from using the incorrect words. For instance, during the reading of the story the line was supposed to read, “In fact she was so tiny…” Joselyne read, “In fact, she has so tiny.” Another instance during the reading, the text said, “Then they rode back to the palace…” Joselyne read “place” for “palace”.

Joselyne also has a weakness with morphemes. The text was supposed to read, “He promised himself that if her plan worked…” and she read “work” for “worked”. She misused the word “understood” and the word “grasped”. Another problem we noticed is that she forgets to add the ’s’ at the end of her verbs. An example is when Joselyne says she ‘feel’ happy.

Instead of saying I have three sisters; Joselyne said I got three sisters. This shows us that she is uncomfortable with irregular verbs. In another sentence she used the verb ‘were’ instead of the verb ‘was’. This is another example of Joselyne’s misuse of irregular verbs.

She also has a problem with phonology and sight words. She also adds words that do not need to be included. Joselyne speaks the word ‘the’ as ‘da.’ She has a definite problem with the pronunciation of the ‘th’ sound.

**PROBLEM SCENARIO**

Joselyne has been having difficulty in school. At the beginning of the school year she seemed to be on task. Now, her grades are falling. She is quiet and withdrawn. She is not participating or speaking during group activities. Even at lunch while the others are talking their hearts out, Joselyne is silent. She was always a quite girl, but now she seems to have completely withdrawn. Although according to research¹, Haitian children often respond nonverbally by looking down, hiding their faces with their hands, or displaying long pauses, Joselyne’s behavior was beyond this. Her symptoms resemble those of a learning disability. Children with learning disabilities may become frustrated, lose interest in schoolwork, and often withdrawal.

**The Teacher**- After noticing Joselyne’s lack of communication, the teacher first decided to talk to her. She asked her to stay after school for a few minutes. Alone Joselyne talked a bit more but not very much. When she did speak, it was just a faint whisper. The teacher asked her if she liked school and Joselyne said she did. The teacher asked Joselyne if she thought she was doing well. Joselyne replied, “I don’t know.” The teacher asked if she needed any help with her schoolwork and Joselyne just shrugged her shoulders. Then she asked if she understood her schoolwork and Joselyne again just shrugged her shoulders. The rest of the meeting continued at
about the same pace. Joselyne did not really give any answers that could have helped. During their last math unit, Joselyne did not ask any questions, did not say she needed any help, and did not consult any of her classmates. The teacher knew math was Joselyne’s best subject so she thought Joselyne understood the lessons. When Joselyne took the unit test, she got a 52%. Her reading was also not progressing at any noticeable rate. Joselyne was having trouble understanding and comprehending much of what she was reading. The teacher’s next task was to talk to her parents.

The Parents- After the teacher explained her side of the story to Joselyne’s parents, she was surprised by their reaction. The parents were not receptive to the suggestion that there may be a problem with Joselyne. In their perspective, Joselyne was not withdrawn. She just needed friends. The parents blamed her grades on the fact that Joselyne does not have any friends so far in the year. They suggested maybe putting her in a group to get to know more students. The teacher then explained that Joselyne has been in groups and has not responded. They wanted so much for her to become a part of the American culture without losing her own culture. Her teacher felt they were losing sight of the problem. Her parents feel that having friends would make the difference with Joselyne’s situation.

The School Counselor- Next the teacher went to the school counselor. She explained the situation and gave her perspective, along with the parents’ perspective. The guidance counselor suggested she meet with Joselyne, look at the work she has been doing and then meet with her parents if she felt there was a problem. After meeting with Joselyne and examining her work, the counselor agreed with the teacher that there could be a learning disability. She wanted to meet with her parents and discuss having her tested.

The ESOL Teacher- The ESOL teacher had also noticed a problem and was going to discuss it with her primary teacher. At first she thought it might just be a temporary stage that she sometimes sees in her ESOL students. As time went on, though, she has noticed that the problem is more than a just setback. The ESOL teacher agrees with the counselor and the teacher in testing Joselyne to see if she could have a learning disability.

The Principal- The teacher wanted to inform the principal of all the aspects of Joselyne’s case to see if the principal was in agreement with testing her. The principal reviewed her records, spoke with the counselor and the ESOL teacher and concluded that Joselyne should be tested. The principal thought it would be beneficial to have a meeting with herself, the counselor, both teachers, and her parents.

The Special Needs Teacher- The principal has asked the special needs teacher to be present during the meeting. The special needs teacher can explain the benefits to having Joselyne tested and can answer any questions that may arise.

Joselyne- Joselyne has become quiet and withdrawn because she feels intimidated and out of place. She does not understand what is happening in class, although she does try. She wants to get good grades and succeed in life, but feels that school and all that is involved is too
difficult. When she reads, she doesn’t comprehend what the story is about. It is hard for Joselyne to communicate with the teacher or anyone else about how she is feeling because she doesn’t understand what is happening.

Resources

1 Hudicourt-Barnes, J. (2001) *Bay Odyans: Argumentation in Haitian Creole Classrooms* (Online), June 22, 2004

   [http://www.medem.com/search/article_display.cfm?path=\TANQUERAY\M_ContentItem&mstr=/M_ContentItem/ZZZSXX4DI5D.html&soc=AAO&srch_typ=NAV_SERCH](http://www.medem.com/search/article_display.cfm?path=\TANQUERAY\M_ContentItem&mstr=/M_ContentItem/ZZZSXX4DI5D.html&soc=AAO&srch_typ=NAV_SERCH)

**Discussion questions:**

1. What types of strategies can be implemented to help the student with her disability?

2. What else could the teacher have done to help the parents understand what was going on with their child?

3. What kinds of things can the teacher do when assessing the student in class throughout the year?

**BLOOM’S TAXONOMY**

1. Who is the case study about?

2. What is the main idea that you get from this case study?

3. How would you use this information and apply to a student in your classroom?

4. Why do you think the parents feel there is no problem with the student?

5. Elaborate on why the student may need to be tested for the disability?

6. Do you agree with the parents or with everyone else that was involved?