

## Societal Linguistic Background

Michael is an outgoing and pleasant seven-year-old from Vietnam. Born on March 24, 1997, this first-grader and his family have been in the United States for at least two years. Both of his parents are employed by Wal-Mart as nail technicians. They speak Vietnamese at the workplace and in the home, but they are able to communicate with Michael's teachers in English adequately. Since English is quickly growing to be the preferred second language of Vietnam, Michael's parents may have had some experience speaking English in their home country. Michael's parents harbor no resentment toward their home country, but wanted to offer Michael more opportunities for advancement in America.

Upon arrival in America, Michael's family found housing in a middle-class, English-speaking apartment complex. It would be typical to find Michael outside playing with the neighborhood children that also attend the same school.

After conducting research about Vietnam, some interesting trends were discovered. The unemployment rate in Vietnam was recorded as 25% (1995 est.). This seems excessive when compared to the rates of Americans who are out of work, which was estimated to be 5.8%. Also notable was the percentage of people falling below the poverty line. In Vietnam, 37% of citizens are considered to be impoverished. This is significantly higher when contrasted with the 12.7% poverty rate in the United States. For more statistical data on Vietnam, visit the [CIA website](#). These factors may have been instrumental when Michael's family decided to move to the United States.

Moving to Florida seems interesting when studying the Vietnamese population of the state. According to the 2002 American Community Study (conducted by the US Census Bureau), 35,437 claim Vietnamese heritage. That composes approximately .2% of the population of Florida. That is less than the total population of Vietnamese living in America—Vietnamese-Americans make up .4% of the population of our nation. For other statistics concerning the racial composition of the United States, visit the [Census Bureau website](#).

## LINGUISTIC DEVELOPMENT

	Vocabulary Expansion	Morphemes	Syntax	Cultural/Pragmatic Appropriateness	BICS	CALP	Writing Ability	Reading Ability
<b>DOA</b>	Vocabulary very limited	Frequently omitted in speech	Makes syntax errors in speech	Hesitant to speak in an unfamiliar environment	Does not speak much	Does not speak much	Very limited	Very limited
<b>3 months</b>	Ability to identify some items in both languages	Experimenting but still using incorrectly	Improvement; still makes errors	Gaining awareness of the appropriate ways to express himself	Understands some of what is being said	Improving, but still needs contextual support	Can write most of the alphabet legibly	Easy picture books
<b>1 year</b>	Working knowledge of items in both languages	Errors are less frequent but still occur	Errors are less frequent but still occur	Able to speak appropriately in a given situation	Understands most of what is being said	Needs less contextual support	Understands graphophonic relationships	Confuses some vowel sounds, has trouble with consonant blends.

During the short time Michael lived in Vietnam he attended a non-compulsory preschool. From the ages of three to five, he began instruction toward necessary literacy skills he would need to develop. The program offered cognitive, physical, and social stimulation with efforts to prepare students for primary education.

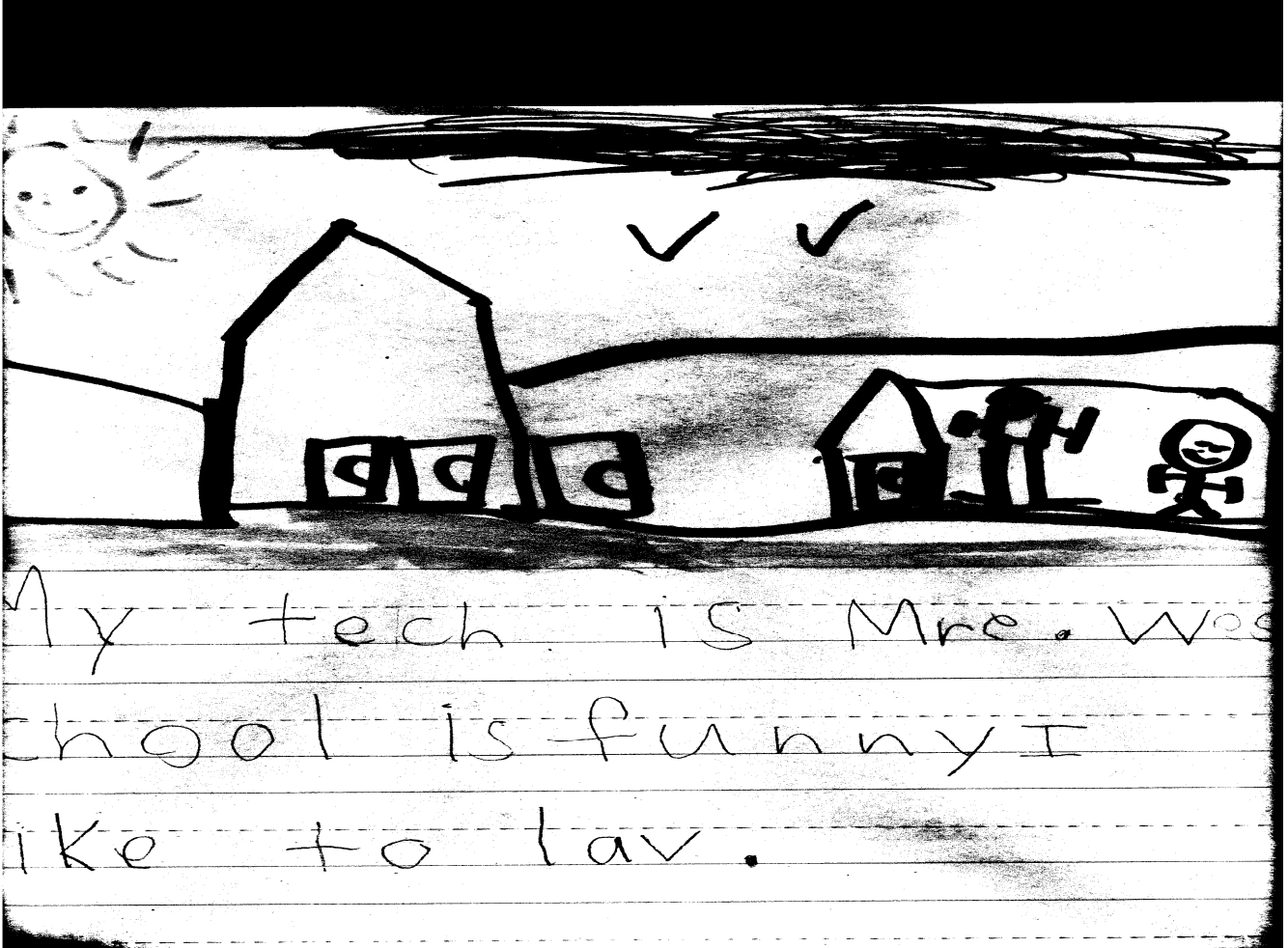
The Education for All 2000 Act is a program the government created to insure that all students have an equal opportunity to a quality education in primary years. While attending preschool, the central focus of Michael's education was based on the teacher teaching and directing the students on what and when to learn content material. Students remained primarily passive to instruction and only learned what they were taught with out any exploration.

Although specifics on the type of literacy education Michael received in preschool are unavailable, it is known that books are distributed to students to take home and study. Parents are also encouraged to read with their children daily in order to prevent illiteracy.

Prior to coming to the United States, Michael was developing his literacy skills at a normal rate. He was speaking in sentences and reading simple books in Vietnamese. Both of Michael's parents are bilingual and not only encouraged Michael to speak Vietnamese but they also began teaching him some words in English to prepare him for their move to the US.

Just before Michael arrived in the US, his home language competence in basic interpersonal communication skills and cognitive academic learning skills was adequate for the school environment. He was on grade-level and communicated effectively with his peers and teachers.

WRITING SAMPLE



My teacher is Mrs. Wos  
school is funny I  
like to lav.

## Transcribed conversation with ESOL student. (M-Michael, T-Teacher)

M- My name is Michael.

T- How old are you Michael?

M- I am 6 years old.

T- Six years old.

M- I mean seven years old.

T- What grade are you in?

M- First grade.

T- What grade will you be in next year?

M- Second grade.

T- Are you excited about that?

M- Yes.

T- Do you know who you want to be your teacher next year?

M- No.

T- There are some very nice second grade teachers.

T- Are you glad school is almost over for this year?

M- Yea, I can go to California.

T- California. What are you going to do in California?

M- I don't know.

M- I am going to stay there for one whole week

T- One whole week, how fun is that?

M- I don't know.

T- Can you think of things you might want to do in California?

M- Um ... sleep.

T- Can you go swimming in California?

M- Yes.

T- Who are you going to go to California with?

M- My mom and my dad and me

T- That will be a lot of fun don't you think?

T- What kinds of books do you like read?

M- Green Eggs and Ham

T- Do you know who wrote Green Eggs and Ham?

M- Dr. Seuss

T- I like Dr. Seuss too.

T- Are there any other books you like to read?

M- Transformers

T- What was that?

M- Transformers

T- What kind of book is that?

M- A transformer book.

T- Is it good?

M- Yes

T- What is it about?

M- Transformers.  
T- Oh. Are they robots in disguise?  
M -Yea I got two of them  
T- That is fun.

## **READING**

### **Nat the Crab**

(indicates what the text said)

T- Well I have a book here would you help me read it?  
T- What is the title of it?  
M- Nat the crab.  
T- What do you think it is going to be about?  
M- The crab.  
T- Can they pinch you?  
M- Yea

M -Nat nat in the crib nat. (Nap, Nat! I the Crib, Nat.)  
M- What is that?  
T- He is in a crib, do you see him in the crib right there?  
M- Yea he look like a baby  
T- You are right  
M- I crab can't not (A crab can't nap.)  
M -I can't not nap. (A crab can't nap)  
M- A crab can tap. (A crab can tap!)  
M- A crab can nap. (A crab can snap!)  
M- A crab can slap. (A crab can spin and spin!)  
M- A crab can nap. (A crab can't nap.)

(A crab naps!)

## **Analysis**

After being in American schools for over 1 year, Michael has developed a working knowledge of simple items and words in English. Language errors are much less frequent; he speaks almost as well as a native speaker the same age. BICS/CALP has improved dramatically between the time of arrival and the time of this study. In recent months, Michael has less of a need for contextual support to understand teachers and other students.

When Michael was asked to read for us, he showed improvement in word recognition and phonemic awareness. He still confuses some vowel sounds (“I” for “A”, for example), and he has trouble with consonant blends (“sn” and “sp”).

When analyzing the writing sample from Michael, it was apparent that he understood the sounds that letters can make (graphophonic relationships). It appears that he needs practice in sight words.

Michael is making great strides in learning English. With some help from experienced and patient teachers, Michael should be on grade level very soon.

## Problem Scenario

Michael is first grade student who has recently been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder with Hyperactivity. [Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder](#). This “label” has been given to him by his teacher who observed him acting out in various ways including playing with objects during instruction, not remaining seated, and not participating in classroom activities and discussions.

A clinical definition of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder states that ADHD is a group of chronic disorders that begin in the childhood years and sometimes lead into adulthood. Many times individuals diagnosed with this disorder show symptoms of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. These problems can easily affect every aspect of an individual’s thinking process and daily activities

Although it may appear that there is only one view of Michael’s situation, in actuality there are various perspectives. The other individuals involved in this situation include his classroom teacher, ESOL teacher, school counselor, his parents, and the school principal. Each of the individuals involved, have their own perspectives and insights to the situation. The following are the various perspectives of each participant.

### CLASSROOM TEACHER:

Observed hyperactivity traits in Michael’s behavior such as:

- Playing with objects in and around his desk
- Not remaining seated
- Not participating in classroom activities
- Often out of his desk

The classroom teacher has the idea that he should be placed on medication to help with his hyperactivity.

The classroom teacher had a conference with the ESOL teacher and asked her to observe Michael’s behavior while he was in her class.

### ESOL TEACHER:

The ESOL teacher noted the following while working with Michael in his home language:

- Michel is well behaved and attentive
- He remains seated through instruction
- Enjoys participating in activities
- Contributes to discussions

### SCHOOL COUNSELOR:

The school counselor met with Michael and developed a plan of action. The counselor administered a test that has been developed to diagnose ADD. The test is called Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder Test. This test is not inclusive, but does show valid results for the following skills: verbal, non verbal, fine/gross motor, memory/intention skills. This data can be useful in determining the disability or ability level of the student.

The results from the test led the counselor to believe that Michael may display behaviors of ADHD in the classroom setting due to the fact he is having difficulty understanding the language. With this information in mind, the counselor also concluded that Michael may be well adjusted in the ESOL classroom because he is in a comfortable learning environment.

### MICHAEL'S PARENTS:

With this information brought to the attention of Michael's parents they were concerned due to the fact he displays none of these traits within the home setting. They request that the least intervention possible be implemented. Along with avoiding all ESE classrooms, the parents also made it known that their child would receive equal opportunities for his education or they would seek outside legal advice. Michael's parents also stated that under no circumstances would their child be placed on medication.

### PRINCIPAL:

When this matter was brought to the attention of the school principal he stated the following:

- The school would be willing to work with the parents to insure the success of their child.
- Michael's teacher will give him every opportunity within the classroom setting to learn English as his second language.
- Together, Michael's classroom teacher, ESOL teacher, school counselor, principal and parents will come to agree on a course of action that will be most beneficial for Michael to insure his success.

### MICHAEL'S PERSPECTIVE

The school counselor talks with Michael and receives the following information from him:

- The other children in class make fun of me because I do not speak English well.
- I can not do the work in school because it is too hard and I don not understand it.
- I like my ESOL class because I understand what is going on.

### Reference:

Flick, L.G. (1996). *Power parenting for children with ADD/ADHD*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

## QUESTIONS



### **Reflective/Discussion Questions:**

Michael's behavior quickly compelled the teacher to suspect ADHD. Do you think this was an accurate assumption to make? Why or why not?

What do you think was the source of Michael's behavioral problems? Support your position with specific examples.

In your opinion, would Michael's situation be different if his first language was Spanish? Why or why not?

### **Bloom's Taxonomy Questions:**

Knowledge:

According to the CIA's data in Phase 1, what is the poverty level in Vietnam at the time of this case study?

Comprehension:

Explain one reason why Vietnamese citizens may immigrate to the United States.

Application:

How would you use what you have learned to develop a solution to the problem posed in Phase IV?

Analysis:

How is Michael's language issue related to his behavior in the classroom?

Synthesis:

Make a prediction of Michael's future success with the English language given the information presented in the case study.

Evaluation:

As a teacher, what would you do if you had a student similar to Michael? Give examples to support your position.