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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the experiences of an American teacher who taught English to individuals in Bene, Haiti for 10 days in the summer of 1993. The paper describes preparation for the teaching experience, discusses the experience itself, and offers a social and educational analysis of the experience. The paper discusses living conditions, transportation arrangements, the language barrier, Voodoo practices, physical expression in the Haitians' native language of Creole, fatalism, poor public health conditions, and Haitians' interest in American culture. Taking the view that the foundation for learning is set in the community, the teacher worked with the entire community of Bene, not just the children. Students included school-aged children and adults. The teaching approach emphasized that learning should be experiential, rely upon cultural strengths, and build upon the learner's prior knowledge and ability. The curriculum covered the English alphabet, introductions, body parts, telling time, days of the week, months of the year, expressions of time, verbs, American lifestyles, songs, Charades, and card games. The vocabulary and songs covered in the 10-day curriculum are appended. (JDD)

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# TEACHING IN BENE, HAITI:

## ONE TEACHER'S GUIDE TO EDUCATION IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY

ED 380 450

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## Embarking on the Journey

For the twelve-day period of June 15-26, 1993, I taught English effectively to the community of Bene, Haiti by maximizing their interests and cultural strengths to enable them to feel confident without sacrificing their success at learning English. This paper details the preparation for the experience of teaching in Bene, the story of the experience itself, and the broader social and educational analysis of the experience. To achieve my goal, I studied educational theories and the history of Haiti. I relied heavily on my own prior educational experience and prior visits to Haiti. I am currently a graduate student in International Relations with an undergraduate degree in Elementary Education. I first came to be interested in Haiti through a course that I was taking at Webster University entitled, History of Haiti. The professor of the course heads a non-for-profit organization called *People to People* that coordinates educational and developmental projects in Haiti. When I was twenty, I traveled to Haiti with *People to People* on a one-month work trip. During this time I polished my *Kreyol*, worked in Mother Theresa's Children's Home, and studied Haitian dance and culture. A little over a year later, in the summer of 1993, is when I decided to return to Haiti to work on an individual, volunteer basis. Upon my return to Haiti, I once again realized how the Haitian people could enrich my life and give to me more than I could ever give to them. Bene is extremely remote and living conditions

are primitive as compared to most of the First World's standard of living. Thus, the majority of villagers had little or no education. I wanted to discover the best way to capture their interests which was fairly simple to do, since Haitians in general are fascinated with the culture of the United States. The other problems I needed to address in order to provide effective instruction were the medical conditions of the villagers, the living conditions of the villagers (which are related to the political and economic situation), and the fact that most of the villagers could not read or write Creole.

On Tuesday, June 15, I left the guest house where I was staying in Haiti's capital, Port au Prince, at about 4:30 a.m. This was necessary in order to beat the morning rush to the busses. Because of the United States' economic embargo of Haiti, machine parts were scarce and gasoline was expensive. Thus, good transportation was always in demand and difficult to find. I walked the mile to one of the main roads where I took a tap tap to the bus depot. Tap taps are Haiti's most common form of public transportation. They are pick-up trucks with two benches in the back and a wooden roof over the passengers. Tap taps, along with houses and all other common structures, are painted in many bright colors. I arrived at the dirty, chaotic bus depot at 6:30 a.m. and proceeded to look for a bus to Blokos. Unlike the United States, Port au Prince's bus station was totally disorganized. There were few signs on the buses and the ones that did

have signs were often bound for another destination than where the sign denoted. Seeing my white skin, many chauffeurs and their assistants tried to corral me into their busses so they could charge me extra.

The bus depot was also a marketplace. Banana chips fried in five year old oil, gum, and washcloths were thrust in my face. As usual for Haiti, everything is piled on top of everything else. From the perspective of someone from the First world, it appears as though simple things *have* to be done in the most difficult, time-consuming, and chaotic way. This is one of the things that drives me crazy about the Haitians. From my perspective, it appears that if there is no immediate crisis, one must be invented. That's just the way life seems to me in Haiti. Maybe it is due to the fact that the Haitians have suffered and been oppressed for so long that they cannot function without strife.

### Living Conditions in Haiti

A bus to Blokos had not yet arrived so I looked for a soda. I passed a woman rinsing the mud off her feet in the endless flow of sewer water in the gutter that caused the city to constantly smell putrid. In the same gutter, I passed a woman squatting down to relieve herself amidst all the commotion (only rich people have toilets). A man working underneath a car threw the empty, plastic oil container in the same gutter as another man bent down to scoop a handful of the gutter water to drink. This man

did not have one American penny with which to purchase a cup of cold, bottled water. I spotted three men standing next to an oversized cooler. I approached them and ordered a "koka". One man charged me a dime extra and I continued to hold out my hand for the dime. We argued for five minutes while I drank my soda and he finally gave in, convinced that I knew what the real price was. The crowd we had been entertaining dispersed. Scams are generally accepted in Haiti, because they blame the victim for being unable to protect himself from the scam. The man handed me the usual odd mixture of Haitian and American coins, displaying the deep infiltration of American culture, economics, and politics left over from the Haitian occupation by the United States in the early twentieth century. The occupatin lasted twenty years, from 1915-1935 (Bentivegna, 1991).

### The Bus

I left to check on the Blokos bus. I sat down on a metal rail until the bus arrived. By that time, everyone in the general vicinity seemed to know that the "blank", or the white foreigner, was waiting for the Blokos bus. So when it arrived, multitudes of people prodded me toward the bus. I pushed my way to a back corner of the bus. Relieved to have a seat and a window, I quickly shoved my backpack under the seat and held my other bag in my lap to allow room for the rest of the loading passengers to load themselves, their varied and voluminous luggage, and their chickens

into the bus. Goats were tied upside-down with their legs bound together on the outside of the bus. More bags were tied on top, as well as a few more bodies. Bus drivers in Haiti *always* have to hurriedly cram everyone in and then sit around for apparently no reason for at least an hour. During this long waiting period my feet began to fall asleep because my legs were being pressed in between the side of the bus and the man next to me. Heating the bus like an oven, the sun also shone on my left arm that had to dangle out the window due to the lack of a better place to put it. Also during this time, the chauffeur tried to allow more passengers to board. He instructed everyone that we must sit five across a seat instead of four. With those words, a riot broke out among those already seated. The man next to me shouted, "Moun pa bet!" ("People aren't animals!"). Passengers argued with the driver for a good ten minutes until he finally gave in, although his discontent was obvious. Vendors brandished goods through the windows of the bus, hoping to make a sale to those inside who were rich because they could afford the bus ticket.

Already frustrated, uncomfortable, and anxious, I was glad when the bus finally left the depot. We drove through anarchic traffic on roads that had not been repaired since the 1970s when Francois Duvalier, or Papa Doc, had ultimate control over the country (Corbett, 1991). We drove on into the mountains where the population was less dense, but the effects of deforestation were obvious on the bones of the hills that were once

tropical rainforests. Inhabitable land in the mountains was scarce and poverty was just as severe as in the cities, only there were no doctors for those in the mountains.

After three hours of racing on sharp curves, we arrived at a river with a small market on the other side. The bus could not drive over the river so everyone had to get out and wade across with their belongings. The swift water forced us to walk sideways, while facing the current. Once on the opposite bank, I presumed we were in Blokos' marketplace. It was then that I found out that we had to take another truck to get to Blokos. I ate fried plantains and talked about English grammar with two men for about an hour until the truck arrived. The mad rush for a seat began. But the industrial-sized truck was already full of peasants, chickens, produce, baskets, bags of grain, etc. There were no seats, just people and things piled on top of each other. I had to sit on one of the high sides of the truck with only a rope stretched across the opening to hang on to. The road was comprised mostly of dirt and rock.

### The Relationship Between the Political and Economic Situation

Many Haitians are well aware of world politics because they are at the bottom of the barrel and they bear the brunt of many world decisions. A young man on the truck wanted to know why newly-elected American President, Bill Clinton's policies toward Haiti were not consistent with his



foreign policies elsewhere, and did I think he would end the embargo. I responded as thoughtfully as I could, while ducking from the overhanging branches and bouncing uncomfortably from the turbulent drive. Trying to avoid discussing politics without seeming uncaring, I concluded that I wished he were more consistent, but that I really had no idea what Clinton's views on the embargo were. The young man appeared angry, and rightfully so, but also appeared willing to differentiate between my government and me. I was desperately trying not to allow my dangling feet to be jarred into kicking the head of the old woman sitting below me. She felt something and reached under the chicken in her lap to pull out a precious egg.

### From Blokos to Bene: Destruction of the Rainforest

Upon arrival in Blokos, I connected with my guide Edzair Mouscardy. Edzair sent someone to bring horses. The unsettling ride had irritated my intestinal problems so I laid down in the back room of the Post Office until the horses arrived. They gave me a malnourished horse to ride. The mare had a baby colt that was still nursing on top of the mountain, and was therefore anxious and extremely persistent. I could hardly control her or slow her down. I felt sorry for the mare that had no shoes and had to walk on the rocky road. I would rather have walked, but my hosts were trying to be hospitable. At dusk we turned off the road, met up with six

villagers from Bene, and began our ascent straight up the mountain to Bene.

Rain began to fall as the last bits of light bled from the sky. The ascent sharpened quickly and the anxious mare led the group by plopping through the mud and crunching her hooves down hard on rocks. She apparently knew where she was headed. In spite of the frequency of houses and tracts of land, I felt the barrenness of the naked mountain and its once magnificent life that had been razed.

### Living Style

Once on top of the mountain, we stopped into the first cement house that we came upon. The old woman and man greeted us enthusiastically and invited us in to get warm and dry because it was freezing outside. The two-room cement house was similar to most other houses in Bene because of its structure and decor. The two rooms were proportionate in size and the house had a low tin roof. The outside was painted in bright blues, yellows, greens, reds, and white. Three-foot hearts, diamonds, and other designs were painted on the outside of the house. The floor was hard dirt. This was the coolest I had ever been in Haiti. In fact, it was quite cool at night in Bene. We ate rice and beans. The old woman appeared hurt that I wouldn't eat the best piece of meat which was a small slab of hog meat with about two inches of fat and with the bristles still attached. I told

them I was a vegetarian (which they could not fathom) so they would not be offended. I slept on the bed in the back room while a young woman and her newborn slept on the floor and the older couple slept in the front room. The young woman refused to sleep in the bed with me, even after I insisted.

In the morning I went out to use the toilet which turned out to be a hole in the ground surrounded by rocks. I passed a woman with a goiter on her neck the size of a grapefruit. Later, when I got back to Port au Prince, I learned that the treatment for the painful goiter was simply to ingest iodized salt, to which Bene had little access (Werner, 1992). On my way back from the toilet, I slipped and fell on the red earth that was so commonplace in Bene. Even the water in Bene on top of the mountain was too contaminated to drink or wash with. The villagers had built cisterns that were connected to their houses with tin gutters. They collected the rain water that ran off their roofs and into the cisterns. They treated it with Clorox so that they could have safe water to drink. In spite of the hardships, Bene seemed relatively self-sufficient.

### Preparing For My First Day Teaching: The Community-Centered Approach

In my original negotiations with Edzair over the phone, I stated that I wanted to work with the entire community of Bene, not just the

children. In one of my favorite books regarding the place of education in society, Teaching as a Subversive Activity, the author proposes that a strong community is the necessary base from which effective education stems (Postman, 1969). I truly support this idea; and I know that if all community members felt included in English lessons, the entire community would be more apt to practice it. I wanted parents and children to be able to go home together, work together, and speak English together. In this way, learning English would become much more a part of their community, instead of just a pen-and-paper school subject. My experience teaching Adult Basic Education in the inner city of St. Louis has proven, in my mind, this theory that the foundation for learning is set in the community.

### The First Day Teaching

On the hour walk to the Christian church, I peered down into the mountain gorge and realized that I was looking *down* on clouds. We passed over the highest peak on the mountain. The church was the largest structure in the village. Made of wood, the one-story building consisted of only one long, rectangular room. The local schoolteacher carried a chalkboard about a mile over the mountainous terrain everyday to bring it to the church. My students began arriving and we started on time at about ten o'clock. They all filed in very formally and sat down on the backless wooden benches. In their experiences, school has always been formal. They dressed in their better clothes and stood up to ask questions. That

first day, I faced about sixty pupils, although attendance slacked off on other days due to market days and family responsibilities. Most of the students were elementary school-aged, but a good number of high school-aged children, and even a few adults came to learn English in the church.

### The Language Barrier

Since Creole had been declared the official language of Haiti as late as the 1950s, textbooks were not written in Creole. They were written in French, the former national language of Haiti. Although 100% of Haitians speak Creole and only 2-5% speak French, French is still taught in all schools throughout Haiti. This is evidence of the post-colonial grip on Haiti that most Haitians still struggle to overcome. So, one of my greatest challenges would be to teach English to this multi-aged group of Haitians who spoke Creole, but could not write it, and who could write French, but really not speak it. Since I knew only Creole and little French, my written English lessons were often Creole lessons to them as well. My students often laughed at, but were intrigued with, the phonetic spellings of "Kreyol". They were shocked to see a white person taking pride in teaching Creole- because everything in their culture puts down blacks and holds up whites; says that Creole is an inferior language and French is supreme; puts down Voodoo, but emphasizes Catholicism; describes African as dirty, but portrays French or American as the best way to be. They did

comprehend the written Creole even though this may have been the first time they had seen it written.

### The Voodoo Nation

The preacher started with a prayer and a moment of silence. Although the community claimed to be Christian, they all practiced Voodoo beliefs in their everyday lives. The Voodoo that they practice in Haiti is a conglomeration of African religions and French Catholicism (Corbett, 1991). Approximately 100% of Haitians believe in Voodoo, as it is part of their culture and heritage, but only about twenty percent practice Catholicism (Corbett, 1991). However, peasants sometimes attend churches to receive food, medicine, or schooling from missionaries. Haiti is founded on Voodoo, much as the United States is grounded in Christianity (Corbett, 1991). Haitians still participate in practices that have their roots in Voodoo, such as the burying of a baby's umbilical cord in their yard to promote prosperity.

After the prayer, I introduced myself thoroughly. I told the listeners my name, age, and that I was a student. I told them why I wanted to teach English in Bene - which is because I aspire to be a teacher and also because they asked me to. I would never have come to Bene and imposed English on the villagers because "it was the right thing to do", or because "it would help them so much", without their request. One of Piaget's theories

explains that individuals must be allowed to make connections themselves and also that learning is driven by a personal motivation to learn (Piaget, 1976). I told them that as they learned English, to begin to ask all questions in English. I explained that I would be talking a lot about “American” culture and what life was like in the United States which sparked their interest because most Haitians are curiously obsessed with the United States. It is rare to find a Haitian that, if given the opportunity to go to the United States, would opt to stay in her homeland. I told them that the English alphabet is the same as the French or Creole alphabet in that it has twenty-six letters that can be written in cursive or print. We practiced the pronunciation of the alphabet in English and moved on through the rest of the first day’s curriculum. On this first day, the students learned how to say all of the introductory types of things such as, “Hello!”, “How are you?”, “My name is...”, etc. The first day’s homework was to practice these introductions.

### The Second Day: Applying Educational Theory to Practice

In fact, we started out everyday with those same introductions. If the students ever wanted to speak English with someone, they must learn to be good greeters! On the second day, after introductions, we learned body parts. I felt that this would be appropriate and interesting in Haiti because many Haitians are sick a lot. They had poor sanitation and lacked

any modern medicine. I had always heard Haitians talk about all of their pains and sicknesses. Now they could practice their usual conversations in English. Pain and sickness is so commonplace throughout Haiti, that it has become part of the culture to expect it (although the Haitians never get used to it). We learned the names of numbers from 0-1,000,000, times of the day, how to tell time, and the names of face cards. Many Haitians play dominoes or cards for fun, and one is considered clever if he knows a lot of card tricks. During the last two hours of class I explained how to play the card game "Go Fish". It is easy to see the personification of Anansi, the tricky, folkloric African spider (McDermott, 1972), in the character of many Haitian men. I felt that teaching them English through a card game would be a fun and non-intimidating way of providing them with an environment conducive to learning English. It also relied on their cultural strengths and interests in order to help them feel more comfortable and be more successful. They had to ask in English: "Do you have any...(the number or face)?" and respond: "Yes", "No", or "Go fish!" The homework was to play a few games of "Go Fish" that night.

### The Third and Fourth Day: Expressions of Culture

On days three and four, the students learned the days of the week, the months of the year, the Haitian and American seasons, and some phrases. Being a tropical climate, Haiti has only two seasons: hot season and rainy season.



Another trademark of Haitian culture is how physically expressive Creole is. Since Creole cannot express very deep, intellectual conversation unless it is supplemented with French, the Haitians have developed their physical movements, facial expressions, and voice intonations in order to communicate more subtle nuances. For instance, in Creole, the word for like or love is "renmen". In English we have many different words to express this sentiment such as: adore, love, like, etc. Since Creole has only one word to mean all of these things, how the Haitians say the word, or gestures they make while speaking will make it clear how it is intended. If a woman *adores* (renmen) her new baby, she might clutch her hands to her heart. But if she just *likes* (renmen) Coca Cola, she will merely say it matter-of-factly. Because of the physical expressiveness, I knew that the students would like to sing songs. I asked them if they wanted to learn to sing a song in English, and the overwhelming response was "Yes!" So we learned "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star".

### Fatalism in Haiti

After the first night in Bene, I was moved to Maxim's house. His family's house was the familiar two-roomed structure. The front room contained a table, chairs, and cabinets. The back room held a full bed and a twin bed. Maxim and his wife gave the big bed to Edzair and myself (they insisted) while they slept together on the twin bed. This really upset

me since Maxim's wife was nine months pregnant. They had their three young children sleep on mats on the floor. Women in Haiti generally have many children; sometimes fifteen to twenty. However, well over fifty percent of children in Haiti die before the age of five (Bentivegna, introduction). Foreigners would often ask why they continued to have so many children. I believe it is due to two reasons: the fatalism of most Haitians perpetuated by oppression and Voodoo, and children are the best form of social security. Since most Haitians have long been victims of oppression by their government and foreign governments, it only seems valid that they still feel helpless. Also, Voodoo is a religion that promotes this helplessness (one could argue the same of Catholicism), much as some forms of Christianity promote predestiny. The people will not use condoms to prevent pregnancy, AIDS, and other STDs because they feel that it is unnatural and it might go against one of the gods. I began to realize that foreigners and others unfamiliar to Haiti's culture could not just propagate scientific reasoning to the Haitians and expect it to work. First of all, I consider that to be a rude intrusion of another culture. Secondly, it is useless. The only way for concitions for these women and their families to get better is to help them provide for their basic needs. If women had food, water, shelter, education, and social security they probably would not opt to bear fifteen children. Once these needs are met, they may be able to challenge the functionality of their own religion and culture. This is why I

wanted to teach them when they requested someone.

### Day Five: The Correlation Between Lack of Nutrition and Learning

The school sessions lasted three to five hours and started at 10:00. The fifth day of lessons was on a Sunday, and so class had to wait to commence until noon when church got out. Students learned some more phrases. I explained what family life and religion were like in the United States. The villagers were mesmerized. I also talked about what an average day in the life of a person living in the United States might be like. When I talked about the kind of food that most North Americans eat each day, the Haitians laughed and scoffed; but mostly they found it ridiculous that people might eat meat three times a day- and eat so much! The average Haitian eats once every other day (Bentivegna, 1991). Of course, it is easy to speculate how malnutrition works against one's ability to learn.

After class, we had to pay a protocol visit to the minister and his wife, who was sick and dying. Of course, it was a status symbol to have a white "American" teacher visit your house. And I was also expected to *make a donation* to the "Holy House". I was very ill that day, and I think I upset everyone when I fainted while paying my sympathies to the minister's wife. I guess that the surrounding people thought that a spirit had mounted me, because later, after I regained consciousness, I tried to

give a pack of cards to a small child in the room, but he was terrified of me and would not come near me. No one would come near me. I figured out that the whole situation seemed extremely important to them, but no one tried to help me at all because they were frightened. I needed to get some sugar in my blood, but I did not get any. As a result, I was weak for the rest of the day. Being a healthy individual, and getting sick after only five days, I admired the strength and perseverance of my students- who came to class most everyday in spite of their malnutrition.

### Overcoming Lack of Medical Care

On the way back to Maxim's is when I met Marianne. She was throwing rocks at men, women, and children on the path. The moment she saw me, she began smiling and mocking me. The others with me told me she was crazy. She had survived the typhoid fever that was running rampant in the hills, but had come out of it violent and insane. She held a frying pan in one of her hands with which she often threatened to hit people. Most people were laughing at her, but standing back. Her husband stood by her, pleading with her to stop with sad eyes. It only encouraged her and she lifted up her shirt to expose her nude breasts, and everyone laughed. Marianne liked me a lot and began to follow me around a lot of the time. She would sit in the window of the church during lessons and make funny comments, mock me, or do sultry dances in the back of the

room. These sorts of tragedies were just a part of life to the villagers of Bene who had no access to vaccinations or medical care.

### Day Six

I taught verbs and simple verb conjugation on the sixth day. The older school-aged children caught on very quickly since they already knew how to conjugate in French. A man asked me to teach him a song. He hummed, "Jesus Loves Me, This I Know", and so I taught it to the class. That must have been one of those songs that everybody knew the tune to, but not the words - sort of like "Le Cocaracha" in the United States.

### The Seventh Day: Market Day

On the seventh day, some of the older class members and those in responsible family positions were absent from class, because Tuesday was the weekly market day in Blokos. Maxim's wife walked barefoot all those miles (at least five to ten) through the mountains to Blokos and back, carrying probably fifty pounds of goods on her head while she was nine-months pregnant! And she was probably very sick and suffering. Anyway, I taught more verbs. I introduced the game of "Charades" (my adapted version) to the students. They were to draw a card from the bag. On one side, it had a word in Creole, and on the other side, one in English. Then they acted the word out while members of the audience guessed, in

Creole, what the word was. When someone guessed correctly, the actress would then write the Creole word on the chalkboard and its English translation. We played for hours and had lots of fun. Haitians like to act things out, as they are, in general, natural hams. This was another way in which I maximized their interests and cultural strengths to accelerate learning. From that day forward, we played Charades everyday after the curriculum was finished.

### Days Eight and Nine: Checking Comprehension

I started off day eight with a discussion of the educational system in the United States. I talked about grades, class structure, and curriculum. As usual, the students were entranced with the study of the different culture and posed many thoughtful questions. We also learned names of colors and clothing. We concluded with Charades. On the ninth day, after practicing the everyday introductions, I spoke of the many different laws in the United States. I compared them to many similar and not so similar laws that Haiti has. But of course, the only law that Haitians really know is the law of the gun. Haiti's laws are not enforced for most of the population and I do not think the peasants even know what the laws are. My pupils were amazed that the United States had so many laws. They did not understand how we could function with so many. For instance, the United States' law that an individual must be at least sixteen years of age in order

to drive seemed obnoxious to them. In their eyes, anyone that is rich enough to own an automobile would drive it whenever and however they wanted, and just monetarily bribe their way out of any problems. By this time, I could speak slowly in English some of the time and the students would understand the gist of the message. I knew that they comprehended because of the questions they posed after I would briefly discuss something in English. Of course, I had no way of individually evaluating the students because we had so little time and few resources like paper, pencils, and cards. I tried to have the students evaluate themselves at home by practicing together and quizzing each other, but I had no real way of checking in with them because there were so many students and so little time. I would always reiterate in Creole what I said in English. Speaking in English reinforced what they had already learned. They loved to study and synthesize questions in English for me to respond to, especially the young men. I think they just wanted to hear me talk about my personal life. A few of the questions I received were: "Do you have a boyfriend?", "Would you like to dance with me?", and "What do you like to eat?" I vowed to answer any question they asked in English.

### The Party

On Friday, the last day, the school children said they had prepared a surprise for me at the schoolhouse. So instead of meeting in the church, I

walked about two miles to the school. The children had choreographed an entire show for my benefit. The dramatic presentation included traditional dancing and singing that involved cultural storytelling. I almost cried out of gratitude and because they were so beautiful. After the presentation, a party was thrown in my honor about one-half mile away in a small, one-roomed, white, concrete house. Four men played beautifully crafted drums and stringed instruments while all of us crammed into the room to dance to the mesmerizing African rhythms. Clairin, rotgut Haitian rum made from fermented sugar cane, was sold in dirty used bottles for about ten cents a bottle. Everyone danced in that small room, pressing our bodies together to make room, with bottles of clairin draped over each others backs. it was one of the best parties I had ever been to and I did not want to leave, but we had to start the long walk home before it got too dark.

### Conclusion: The Learning Exchange

I used my experience teaching in Bene as an opportunity to apply the previously learned educational theories that learning should be *experiential* (learn by doing), should rely upon cultural strengths, and build upon the learner's prior knowledge and ability. When I put these ideas into practice, I found that the students' comprehension soared and they were able to retain the knowledge and build upon it. Seeing that the strategy was effective has proven, in my mind, this method of teaching.



For a while I had forgotten the desolate and problematic conditions of existing in the Third World. On the long walk home, I realized that these people had taught me so much more than I could have ever taught them. They had shown me what life is really all about. When they had nothing- no money, no food, no health care- they still had their bodies, souls, and families. They made the best of everything; they had to. And they *had* to persist- just to exist. I remembered how much I had to be thankful for at home in St. Louis and I knew a part of me would always remember to be thankful and to persist and exist. Teachers can and do learn from students, and this is the ultimate example.

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# Curriculum

## Day 1

-everyday introductions:

Bonjou/Bonswa

Ki jan ou ye?/Koman ou ye?

M' pa pi mal.

M' la.

M' ap boule.

Byen anpil.

En fom!

E ou menm? Ki jau ou ye?

Ki jan ou rele?

M' rele Rio, e ou menm?

E li? Ki jan li rele?

Li se Mari, se mwen.

Li rele Steve, menaj mwen.

Ki laj ou?

M' genyen 22 an.

Ki relijyon ou ye?

M' pa kompran.

M' kompran.

M' pa konnen.

M' genyen yon kesyon, tanpri.

Good morning/Good evening/Hello

How are you?

I'm not so bad.

I'm ok.

I'm burning/going/rolling.

Very well.

The greatest!

And you? How are you?

What is your name?

I'm Rio, and you?

And him? What is his name? (her)

She is Mary, my sister.

He is Steve, my boyfriend.

How old are you?

I'm 22 years old.

What is your religion?

I don't understand.

I understand.

I don't know.

I have a question, please.

## Curriculum

### Day 1 (cont.)

-practice English alphabet

pronunciation

-pronouns: I, you, he/she, we, them    prenom yo: mwen, ou, li, nou, yo

homework: practice introductions

### Day 2

-introductions

Sa ou genyen?

Eske \_\_\_\_\_ ou fe ou mal?

tet

je

zorey

nen

bouch

goj

kou

lestomak

zepol

do

senti do

bra

kod

men

ponyet

dwet

What's the trouble?

Does your \_\_\_\_\_ hurt?

head

eyes

ear

nose

mouth

throat

neck

chest

shoulder

back

low back

arm

elbow

hand

wrist

finger

## Curriculum

### Day 2 (cont.)

kouis

thigh

jenou

knee

janm

leg

pye

foot

dwet pye

toe

-learn numbers 0 - 1,000,000

-learn times of day/how to tell

time in English:

ine

one o'clock

deze

two o'clock

twaze

three o'clock

katre

four o'clock

senke

five o'clock

size

six o'clock

sete

seven o'clock

uite

eight o'clock

neve

nine o'clock

dize

ten o'clock

onze

eleven o'clock

midi

noon

minwi

midnight

-learn names of face cards:

Vale

Jack

Ren

Queen

Rwa

King

## Curriculum

### Day 2 (cont.)

**Las**

**-learn how to play**

**"Ale Peshe!"**

**"Eske ou genyen kek...?"**

**"Wi."**

**"No, ale peshe!"**

**homework: practice "Go Fish"**

**Ace**

**"Go Fish!"**

**"Do you have any...?"**

**"Yes."**

**"No, go fish!"**

## Curriculum

### Day 3

#### -introductions

Ki jan ou di ...?

Ki sa li ye?

Ki sa li rele?

Tanpri, repete.

Eska ou kapab ekri sa su tablo?

Nou pran repo.

M'ap aprann Angle.

Eske ou bezwin ed?

How do you say ...?

What is that?

What is that called?

Please, repeat.

Could you write that on the board?

We will take a break.

I am learning English.

Do you need help?

Yon Semen:

Dimanch

Lendi

Madi

Mekredi

Jedi

Vandredi

Sandi

Days of the Week:

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Yon Ane Gen Doz Mwa:

Janvye

Fevriye

Mas

Avril

Me

Months of the Year:

January

February

March

April

May

## Curriculum

### Day 3 (cont.)

Jen

June

Jiye

July

Out

August

Septanm

September

Oktab

October

Novanm

November

Desanm

December

Yon Ane Gen Kat Sezon:

Seasons of the Year:

ive

winter

prentan

spring

ete

summer

oton

autumn/fall

Sezon Yo Ayityen:

Haiti's Seasons:

sezon chale

hot season

sezon lapli

rainy season

an passe

the past

jodia

today

ye

yesterday

demen

tomorrow

avanye

the day before

aswa

tonight

ye swa

last night



## Curriculum

### Day 3 (cont.)

maten	morning
nuit	night
ta	late
tan	time
ve	around
kek fwa	sometimes
bone	early
defwa	sometime
tanzantan	time to time
dimaten/apremedi	afternoon
kounye	now
jis	until
a menm tan	at the same time
toujou	always
avni	the future
a ki le ...	at what time ...
byen souvan	quite often
nan ane-a	in the year
janm/pa janm/poko janm	never
mwa-d	month of
segonn	second
minit	minute
le	hour
devwa: praktike shanson	homework: practice song

## Curriculum

### Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star Briyante, Briyante, Ti Zetwal

Twinkle, twinkle,  
Briyante, briyante,

little star,  
ti zetwal,

how I wonder  
ki jan m' mevey

what you are.  
jan ou ye.

Way up in the sky so high,  
ro anle nan syel telman wo,

like a diamond in the sky.  
tankou yon diaman nan syel-la.

Twinkle, twinkle,  
Briyante, briyante,

little star,  
ti zetwal,

how I wonder  
ki jan m' mevey

what you are.  
jan ou ye.

## Curriculum

### Day 4

-introductions

Ki kote ou soti?

M' soti Ayiti.

M' soti Etazini.

E ou menm? Ki soti ou?

Ki kote ou rete?

Mwen rete Etazini.

Nou rete nan Delmas 91.

E ou menm?

M' abite isit.

M' rete la.

Ki kote ou prale?

M' prale marche a.

E ou menm? Kote ou prale?

M' prale Po-au-Priz.

M' pap prale. M' rete isit.

Eska ou genyen timoun yo?

Wi, nou gen set timoun.

No, m' pa gen timoun.

Ki moun vini?

Profese a.

Ki moun sa yo ye?

Moun sa yo eleve yo.

Anpil moun vin.

Poukisa ou isit?

Where are you from?

I'm from Haiti.

I'm from the United States.

And you? Where are you from?

Where do you live?

I live in the United States.

We live at Delmas 91.

And you?

I live here?

I live there?

Where are you going?

I'm going to the market.

And you? Where are you going?

I'm going to Port-au-Prince.

I'm not going. I'm staying here.

Do you have any children?

Yes, we have seven children.

No, I don't have children.

Who is coming?

The teacher.

Who are those people?

They are the students.

Many people are coming.

Why are you here?

## Curriculum

### Day 4 (cont.)

M' vin etidye Angle.

I come to study English.

M' renmen li isit.

I love it here.

M' pral aprann Angle

I will learn English

pi bon.

better.

devwa: praktike pale fras yo

homework: practice speaking

-Stay after class to learn how to

phrases.

pronounce your name in English.

## Curriculum

### Day 5

**-introductions**

**Sa w' ap fe?**

**Pa gen pwoblem.**

**Ki le li ye?**

**Ki le ...?**

**Ki jou jodia ye?**

**Ki jou ye te ye?**

**M' vle bwe ...**

**M' ta renmen ...**

**Ki travay ou fe?**

**Pale pi dousman.**

**Ou pale twò vit.**

**Ki laj ou gen?**

**Konbyen li koute?**

**Konbyen?**

**Menm bagay ak**

**Pa menm bagay**

**Si ou vle.**

**devwa: Fe yon kesyon pou**

**mande'm demen.**

**-discussed the average day in the  
life of a person living in the United  
States**

**-discussed family life and religion  
in the United States**

**What are you doing?**

**No problem.**

**What time is it?**

**When ...**

**What day is it?**

**What day was yesterday?**

**I want to drink ...**

**I would like ...**

**What do you do?**

**Speak more slowly.**

**You speak too fast.**

**How old are you?**

**How much does that cost?**

**How much?**

**Same thing as**

**Not the same thing**

**If you want.**

**homework: Make a question to ask  
me tomorrow.**

## Curriculum

### Day 6

#### -introductions

Veb yo:

mete

soufri

vini (vin)

pe

renmen

lavi

pale

reve

repete

boule

we

lave

rete

mennen

vle

pota bay

santi

desann

limen

konstri

domi

fe

shita

Verbs:

to put

to suffer

to come

to be afraid

to like/love

to live

to speak

to dream

to repeat

to burn

to see

to wash

to dwell in

to take to

to want

to bring to

to feel

to go down

to light

to build

to sleep

to make/to do

to sit

## Curriculum

### Day 6 (cont.)

seche	to dry
pati	to leave/to go
rele	to scream
ale	to go
panse	to think
koute	to cost
ranje	to fix
tande	to listen
moulen	to grind
manyen	to touch
santi	to smell
montre	to point/to show
move	to be angry
bat	to beat
fache	to be angry
ka, kab, kapab	can
kouri	to run
met	may
Pinga!	Don't!
fek	have just
rive	to arrive
esplike	to explain
tann	to wait for
-mnde kesyon yo pou'm reponde	-ask questions and I will respond
devwa: praktike shanson	homework: practice song

## Curriculum

### Jesus Loves Me Yesu Renmen Mwen

Jesus loves me,  
Yesu renmen' m,

this I know.  
sa m' konnen.

For the bible tells me so.  
Pou bib-la di-m sa.

Little ones to him belong;  
Timoun yo pou li posede;  
they are weak, but he is strong.  
yo feb, men li fo.

Yes, Jesus loves me.  
Wi, Yesu renmen'm.

Yes, Jesus loves me.  
Wi, Yesu renmen' m.

Yes, Jesus loves me;  
Wi, Yesu renmen' m;

-the bible tells me so.  
-bib-la di-m sa.



## Curriculum

### Day 7

#### **-introductions**

**Veb yo:**

**monte**

**dako**

**sove**

**vwayaje**

**achte**

**konte**

**pedi**

**praktike**

**frape**

**kouche**

**pran**

**leve**

**bliye**

**femen**

**kontan**

**ouvri**

**jete**

**kanpe**

**rale**

**etudye**

**jwe**

**pase**

**sonje**

**Verbs:**

**to go up/to mount**

**to agree**

**to save**

**to travel**

**to buy**

**to count**

**to lose**

**to practice**

**to hit (with hand)**

**to go to bed**

**to take**

**to get up**

**to forget**

**to close**

**to be happy**

**to open**

**to throw**

**to stand**

**to pull**

**to study**

**to play**

**to happen**

**to remember**

## Curriculum

### Day 7 (cont.)

jwenn	to find
sonje	to miss
touye	to kill
vann	to sell
bo	to kiss
tonbe	to fall
kriye	to cry
gen/genyen	to have
kuit	to cook
rekonet	to recognize
kwe	to believe
ba/bay/ban	to give
tire	to shoot
kite	to leave/let
sanble	to look like
vizite	to visit
rakonte	to tell
eseye	to try
suiiv	to follow
mande	to ask
reponn	to answer
bezwen	to need
ri	to laugh
komanse	to start
swe	to sweat

## Curriculum

### Day 7 (cont.)

janbe	to cross
souri	to smile
ede	to help
geri	to heal
mouri	to die
peye	to pay
pwomet	to promise
penyen	to bathe
fini	to stop/to end
voye	to send
-jwe "Charades"	-play "Charades"
devwa: praktike jwe "Charades"	homework: practice playing "Charades"

## Curriculum

### Day 8

-introductions

-discussed the educational system

and grades in the United States

kolor yo:

ble

jon

blan

mawon

nwa

gri

rouj

woz

vet

vyolet

the colors:

blue

yellow

white

brown

black

grey

red

pink

green

purple

rad yo:

rob

kosaj

jip

chemiz

pantalon

soulye

sapat

sentiron

pa gen devwa aswa

clothing:

dress

blouse

skirt

shirt

pants

shoes

sandals

belt

no homework tonight

## Curriculum

### Day 9

- introductions

-discussed laws in the United States (i.e. driver's liscense)

-discussed/compared costs of living and wages in North America vs. Haiti

kek prepasisyon yo:

sou

devan

anba

deye

some prepositions:

on

in front of

under

behind

### Day 10

-dramatic presentation at school involving singing and dancing

-Party!