



Broward County Public Schools

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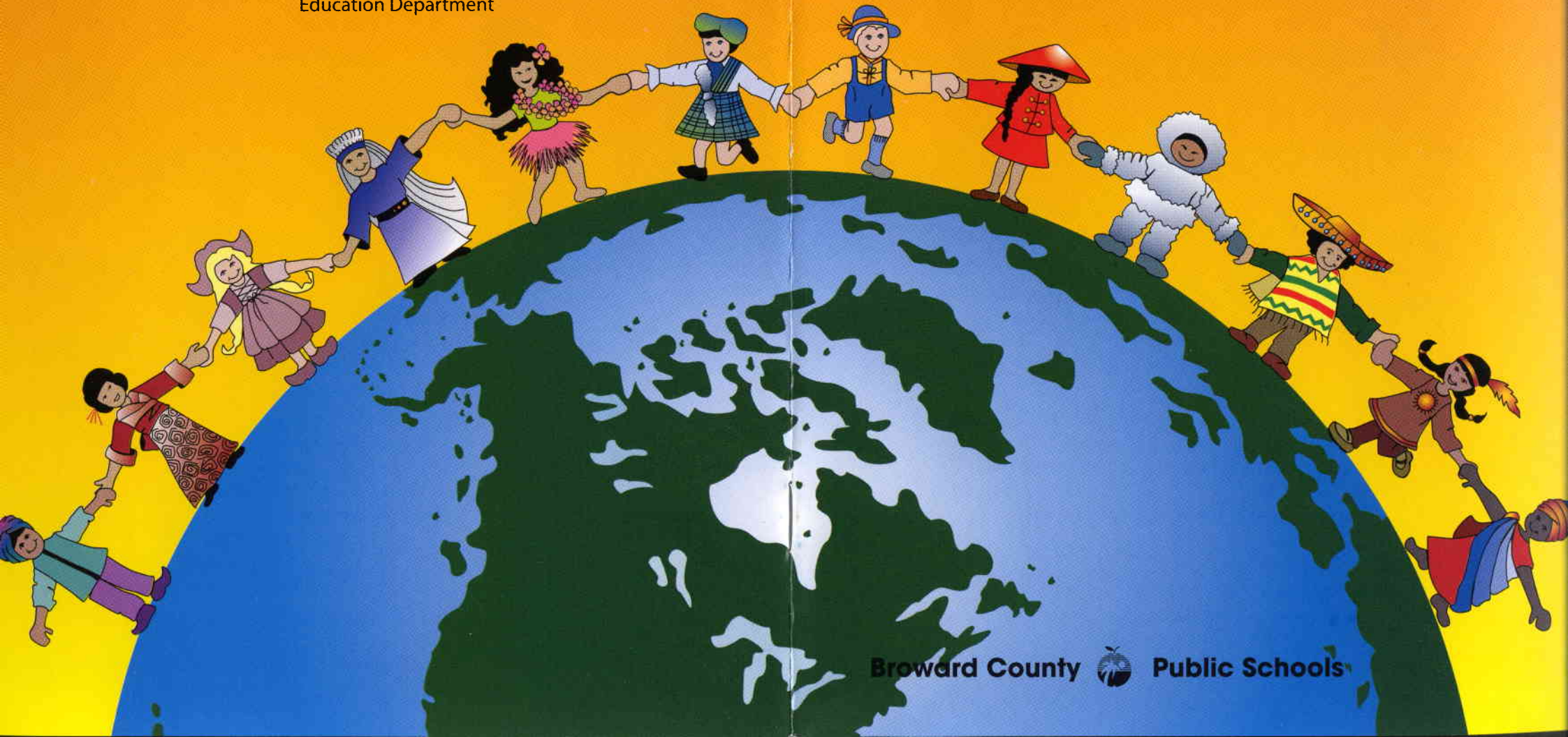
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Potential Impact of Haitian-Creole Syntax and Phonology on English Language Learners

Multicultural & ESOL Program Services Education



Broward County Public Schools



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Potential Impact of Haitian-Creole Syntax on English Grammar

Native Haitian-Creole speakers often transfer rules of grammar (syntax) from their first language onto the second language. This is a normal process and not a case of impaired language learning. A child may make an error in English syntax due to the influence of grammar rules from Haitian-Creole. In order to accurately assess the English language skills of a native Haitian-Creole-speaking child, the following examples of common errors may be useful.



Potential Impact of Haitian-Creole Syntax on English Grammar

Potential Impact of Haitian-Creole Phonology on English Pronunciation

Th

Haitian-Creole Syntactical Structure

1. There is only one Haitian-Creole pronoun for "he," "she" and "it."
2. Haitian-Creole nouns do not indicate plurality. Plurals may be indicated by adding "-yo" to the end of the noun, or may not be indicated at all.
3. Demonstratives follow the noun in Haitian- Creole.
4. Articles are sometimes omitted.
5. Adjectives are sometimes placed after the noun.
6. For possessive "s," the structure is determined by placement.
7. Intonation, rather than the auxiliary verb "do," is used to ask a question. "Èske" is said at the beginning of an interrogatory sentence to signal that a question is being asked.
8. There is one expression in Haitian-Creole generally used to ask about quantity.
9. Verbs themselves do not change for different tenses. Verb markers before the verb, indicate tenses.

This may result in the following errors in English:

- She is my brother.
- They are student.
- Hat this
- I am going to store.
- I see the cat white.
- Uncle Mary is handsome.
- You have candy?
- How many money does it cost?
- They dance yesterday.

Potential Impact of Haitian-Creole Phonology on English Pronunciation

For native Haitian-Creole speakers, the systematic rules governing sound production may have an impact on the pronunciation of English words. A majority of the pronunciation differences are related to the unique characteristic of the Haitian-Creole sound system and thus, are considered to be normal. In order to accurately assess the articulation skills of a native Haitian-Creole-speaking child, the following examples of common errors may be helpful. Issues of maturational readiness also contribute to correct sound production.



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Haitian Creole Phonological Patterns

English Examples

1. There is no /r/ sound at the end of words in Haitian-Creole; a speaker may delete final /r/.
2. In Haitian-Creole /r/ is pronounced /w/ before rounded vowels.
3. The unvoiced "th" (e.g., bath) does not exist in Haitian-Creole; a speaker may pronounce it as /t/ or /s/.
4. The voiced "th" (e.g., brother) does not exist in Haitian-Creole; a speaker may pronounce it as /d/.
5. Consonant clusters at the ends of words are rare in Haitian-Creole; a speaker may omit one of the consonants.

flow for floor
wote for wrote
sick or tick for thick
den for then
las for last

Developmental Norms for Articulation for Native English Speakers*

SOUNDS	UPPER AGE LEVELS**
h, w, m, n, d, vowels	4.0
f, k, b, g, "y" (e.g., "yellow"), p, "ng" (e.g., "ring")	4.6
t	5.0
l, l - blends, "j" (e.g., "just")	6.6
v, r, r-blends, "ch," "sh," voiced "th" (e.g., "brother")	7.0
unvoiced "th" (e.g., "both"), z, s, s-blends	7.6

Common Sound Substitutions:

1. "ch" for "sh" e.g., chip for ship, share for chair
2. "zh" for "j" e.g., zhump for jump
3. /d/ for /t/ e.g., din for tin
4. /b/ for /p/ e.g., ban for pan

* Adapted by H. M. Melius (2005) from Exceptional Student Education (2003). Speech and Language Program Handbook. Ft. Lauderdale: The School Board of Broward County, Florida.

** Upper age at which 90% of the subjects correctly articulated the sound in initial and final positions of words. Derived from the Arizona Articulation Proficiency Scale.