

ABSTRACT

The primary goals of this study were

- (i) to identify specific areas of difficulty for learners in the verb category in French, and
- (ii) to determine factors which accounted for these, as well as for variability in the students' performance at the intermediate level in High Schools.

The underlying hypothesis was that areas of difficulty could be identified on the basis of frequency of error.

A pilot study in three (3) schools was employed as a base but the main data for this study was obtained from tests administered by the researcher to Grades Nine and Ten in a High School. The data consisted of individuals' responses in two types of tests: creative and directed. An attitude/motivation test was also administered prior to the language test.

The basic technique employed in this study was an "Error Analysis". Since this study aimed at investigating the overall language performance of students, error frequency was assessed relative to possible loci.

Results indicated that both Grades had difficulty with the *passé composé* as well as with the present

tense. These difficulties appeared to be traceable to function as well as to form. It was also concluded that variation in performance across the group as well as that within individual performance was largely dependent on the type of language task and the teaching method employed. Results from the attitude/motivation test did not, however, always correlate with learner performance. This suggests that factors other than attitude/motivation were at work.

The results of this study indicate that it is possible to identify areas where students at the intermediate level are likely to have difficulty. At the same time, it is evident that factors, other than linguistic ones, determine the performance of individual learners relative to each other as well as to different situations.