

ABSTRACT

Error Consistency in the Writing of Students
in a Jamaican Secondary School

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This research, identified and compared the types of errors being made by students at their entry into, and their exit from formal secondary education; identified some of the influences on error making and its consistency in the acquisition of Standard Jamaican English; and made suggestions with pedagogic implications.

The data were collected from twenty-six Grade Seven and thirty Grade Eleven students in a New Secondary School, selected on the basis that they represent the most academically-able students in either Grades, based on the school's ability grouping. The instruments used consisted of three writing tasks, namely, narrative, explanatory and imaginative writing. Information regarding the relationship between students' performance at the two Grade levels, was obtained by identifying errors as falling into three major language categories: Spelling, Punctuation and Morpho-Syntax. These yielded fifty-six error types referred to as 'variables', in the research. These, including the results of word and error totals were subjected to t-Tests of significance. These findings were supported by the ranking of errors based on a frequency count of the number of errors made in every one hundred words.

The results of this analysis suggest that a number of linguistic and non-linguistic factors impact on the learning of Standard Jamaican English by the Jamaican Creole-speaking child. Chief among these, are interlingual and intralingual factors. These contribute to both the persistent and consistent nature of errors made and suggest that students are largely mesolectal users of the language. The need for more effective teaching through the use of effective methodology and materials and classroom and school environment that are more conducive to language learning are highly suggestible.