

## ABSTRACT

Student Language Awareness. An Exploratory Study on the Language Awareness of Jamaican High School students and the relation to their proficiency in English.

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This study seeks to explore the level of Language Awareness (LA) of a select group of Jamaican high school students. The two languages involved in the study are Jamaican Creole (JC) and Jamaican Standard English (JSE). The aim of the research was to explore to what level the students' LA skills had been developed/heightened after six years of formal education, following the Ministry of Education's stipulations in their Language Arts Curriculum. This study suggests that a heightened sense of LA in Jamaican Schools will better prepare students to learn and perform well in English and other content subjects delivered in English.

Although studies which address Language Attitudes and JC influence on JSE learning exist, no significant study on the LA of students has been conducted. This is where the study attempts to fill the gap by addressing LA within the Jamaican Creole context.

The study incorporates a mixed methods approach to elicit information pertaining to the language awareness and language use of these students. Data collection methods included a structured written test, interview of students through focus groups, collection of written work from students and classroom observations. The 'bridging the gap' notion postulated by Hawkins (1991) will be drawn upon; however it will be reworked to fit into the Jamaican context.

The study found that LA levels in relation to Syntax were reflective of lack of clarity in some instruction received in the classroom. The study also found that there were muddled lines when students expressed their knowledge of their language use and actual examples to display said knowledge.

Keywords: Language Awareness; Jamaican Creole; Jamaican Standard English; Jessie Adwoa Antwi; Semantics; Syntax; Jamaica; Metalinguistic Awareness