

ABSTRACT.

This investigation, aimed at discovering the effects of pre-secondary school experience, socio-economic background and intelligence on Jamaican pupils' achievement in French, was carried out in four high schools of the Corporate Area.

The sample consisted of 315 pupils, 175 of whom were from the first and 140 from the third forms.

The main investigation took the form of testing - both oral and written. Since knowledge of the conditions under which French is taught seemed important in interpreting the results which would be obtained from the statistical analyses of these tests, classes in progress were observed wherever permission was granted.

In addition to statistical analyses of the tests an error analysis was done in order to identify and classify the linguistic errors. This latter exercise, it is hoped, will be useful to the teaching profession.

T-tests showed no significant differences between the performance of pupils having pre-experience and that of the others. In this study, resulting from the technique of matched pairs, the effect of the socio-economic variable

could not be ascertained, because the majority of the subjects fell into the borderline categories 3 and 4, which created homogeneity of the groupings.

In looking at intelligence, the total population was used. First form pupils of higher intelligence in the higher socio-economic categories performed significantly better than those of lower intelligence on the three skills in which they were tested - Listening Comprehension, Speaking and Writing. Those of higher intelligence in the lower socio-economic group were better in Writing. In the third forms where four skills were tested, the subjects of higher intelligence in the higher socio-economic group performed better on all the skills. In the lower socio-economic group, however, the small number of subjects prevented the drawing of firm conclusions.

The error analysis revealed that problems in sound discrimination, pronunciation, spelling and syntax were due to both interlingual and intralingual factors.