STUDENTS’ PERCEPTION ABOUT THEIR PERFORMANCE
IN ENGLISH AT THREE EVENING SCHOOLS
IN SAVANNA LA MAR.

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ABSTRACT

This case study explored students’ perception about their performance in CSEC English A at three evening schools in Savanna La Mar. While conducting the research I used ethnographic methods, including interviews, observations and document analysis to better understand students’ perceptions of their performance in CSEC English A. The central questions which guided the research are “how do students at three evening schools in Savanna La Mar perceive their performance in CSEC English A and what factors affect those perceptions, and what strategies do students think can improve their performance in English?”

Creswell’s (2008) steps for analyzing qualitative data were used to explore the central research questions. The discussion sought to highlight how students perceived their academic performance in CSEC English A and what attributed for these perceptions. These views were examined using four themes: student factors that influence student learning outcome, influence of Jamaican Creole (JC) on learning Standard Jamaican English (SJE), teacher traits that influence learning and structure and operations of the evening schools. The Attribution and Expectancy Value Theories were used to make meaning of the data.

The findings revealed that most of the students exhibited high self-concept and expressed that they would be successful in the upcoming CSEC English A Examination despite previous challenges they experienced with SJE. They attributed this success to the strategies they were using and the encouragement and positive feedback they got from their teachers. However, some students cited several factors which have negatively affected their performance such as the predominant use of JC in the home, school and community.

Although the research was a multiple site study, it was limited to one geographical location which delimited the generalizability of the study. However, the insights gained can
contribute to and fill gaps in the literature and also enlighten educators and other stakeholders of students’ perception about their performance in CSEC English A.
This dissertation is dedicated to my

Aunt Nadine Thompson

And

God Mother Inett McFarlane

who will always remain alive in my heart.
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Thanks be to God, the author and finisher of my fate.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This study utilized the case study approach to explore and better understand students’ perception of their performance in English, in particular CSEC English A, at three evening schools in Savanna La Mar. The views of the students need to be heard since they are the ones who are gravely affected and can most fittingly share the challenges they encounter in their attempt to develop competence in the language. The students got an opportunity to share their views on their perceived level of competence in CSEC English A and discuss the factors which influenced these perceptions. Furthermore, they discussed the strategies that they thought would improve their performance in English.

The secondary school system in Jamaica has undergone a number of changes over the years as both colonial and post-colonial events have significantly influenced the form of education system that exists. Colonization and slavery caused an intermingling of languages from Europe and Africa; creating Jamaican Creole (JC) and Standard Jamaican English (SJE). The use of the two languages in Jamaica has caused some linguists to assert that Jamaica is a bilingual society (MoEY&C, 2001). Although English is the official language of Jamaica, the pervasiveness of Jamaican Creole as the mother tongue across the island has contributed to the difficulty for some individuals to acquire SJE. From 1964 until 1975 three research projects on language teaching and acquisition in the Jamaican classroom situation were conducted with the primary aim of providing an empirical base for improving both the learning and teaching of SJE in Jamaican schools (Jettka, 2010).

Data collected from research within the education sector have shown that a number of problems exist; such as poor literacy levels and poor quality of programs offered within schools
(Morren & Morren 2007). These studies, however, did not include students’ voices related to the challenges they faced or strategies they thought enabled them to acquire SJE.

This study, which is qualitative, describes how students perceive their performance in CSEC English A and the factors which affect these perceptions. I describe the problem of poor student performance in English and the reason it is important to hear the views of students about their academic performance in CSEC English A.

**Statement of the Problem**

The deficiencies in the secondary school system have led to a myriad of problems. Jamaica has significant underperformance of students in English at the secondary level; with an improved pass rate of 75.4 % in 2018 compared to 70.8% in 2017, 71.2 in 2016, and 64.6 % in 2015 (Morris 2018, Smith 2017, Reid 2016, Thompson 2015).

However, these figures do not take into account students who were eligible by being in the cohort, but not allowed to do the examination because of poor literacy. Thwaites, (2015) former Minister of Education in Jamaica, asserted in his 2015 sectoral presentation that the percentage pass for subjects in the Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate (CSEC) Examination should be calculated based on the entire cohort and not just on students who actually sit the subject. If this were done, then the pass rate for CSEC Examinations would be alarmingly lower than the figures reported each year. Luton (2015) stated that “34 per cent of age-level high-school students were not recommended to do CSEC examinations last year. The grade 11 cohort averages 40,000 young people each year.”

Traditional high schools get students who are literate, while the other secondary schools which usually had limited resources were later upgraded to high school status during a renaming exercise by the Ministry of Education, struggle with students who have a poor literacy rate. This
inequity has led to continuous under performance of students in CSEC English A at the secondary level. Consequently, students have to find other alternatives to sit CSEC English A so they can matriculate to tertiary institutions or possess the requisite qualifications in order to compete for limited jobs in the labour force. One such alternative is evening schools that provide support for students after their regular day at school and convenience for individuals who no longer attend school or who are working and attend evening classes. However, there is little or no existing data which focuses on students’ performance in evening schools or students’ perceptions about their performance in CSEC ENGLISH A in the Jamaican context.

**Purpose of the study**

This study explored students’ perception about their performance in CSEC English A at three evening schools in Savanna La Mar. It sought to fill the gap in current research on the perceptions of students about their performance in the CSEC English A examination. By using ethnographic methods such as interviews and observations I was able to describe how students feel about their language use and competence in passing their CSEC English A examinations.

The study has contributed to the extant literature by focusing on students’ perception about their performance in their CSEC English A examination while attending an evening school in Savanna La Mar. Insight into students’ views about their competencies in CSEC English A can assist policy makers, educators and students in understanding how perceptions are related to students’ success or failure stories.
Research Questions

The central questions that the study will address are

- How do students at three evening schools in Savanna La Mar perceive their performance in CSEC English A and what factors affect those perceptions?
- What strategies do students think can improve their performance in English?

Definitions of Key Terms

The following terms have been operationalized for the study

1. Traditional high schools- describes government, church or trust owned institutions that have been high schools from the outset (centuries or decades), receiving students who are literate and performing above their peers in national exams at the primary level.

2. Upgraded high schools- usually government owned schools, previously called secondary schools, which initially received students who had underperformed in national examinations at the primary level and were later given high school status but still have limited resources and still receive students performing below their peers.

3. Private schools- these are privately owned and operated institutions that are sometimes registered with the Ministry of Education. These schools can create their own curricula although they often sit the same national or regional examinations stipulated by the ministry of education.

4. First attempters- A term applied to individuals who are sitting CSEC English A for the first time.

5. Repeaters- A term applied to individuals who have previously sat CSEC English A but have failed the exam and are attempting the exam again.
Significance of the Study

English is the official language of Jamaica; hence, it is the language used in the formal education sector and helps to provide an intermediary pathway for tertiary level matriculation and the competitive labour force. The private schools have sought to fill the gap of underperformance of students in the secondary schools. The number of private schools seems to rise each year as the number of individuals pursuing CSEC certification increases. The private schools have a major role to play in equipping those persons who have failed, with the requisite skills to be successful in their examination and they also offer opportunities for lifelong learning and language remediation. These institutions also provide an intermediary pathway for tertiary level matriculation and help to prepare students for the competitive labour force.

Therefore, it is imperative that policy makers, administrators and teachers are cognizant of students’ perception about their performance in CSEC English A. It should be noted that perceptions of students are difficult to capture and can change anytime based on several external and internal variables. Consequently, this study reflects the students’ views during the time when the study was conducted. Moreover, the study cannot be generalized because only students from three evening schools were studied. It can, however, provide great insight in order to implement appropriate strategies that can improve student achievement in the classroom and help to reverse the trend of dismal student performance in CSEC English. In addition, Caribbean Examination Council (CXC), the governing body for the external examinations, can use the information gleaned from the study to provide technical support for governments, institutions, and students. Parents and other stakeholders also need to understand how students feel about their performance so they are better able to assist students, and make informed choices about students’ language learning.
Additionally, the Ministry of Education has to act quickly in order to improve students’ performance. Reid (2011) stated that a 2004 Task Force Report on Educational Reform identified a target for 2015 which expected that approximately 60 per cent of students in the age cohort would pass at least five subjects in the CSEC exams inclusive of Mathematics and English. Luton (2015) stated that despite spending more than $755 billion through the national budget on education since 2005, Jamaica will not meet the target set out in the national transformation road map of having 60 per cent of students sitting the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examinations attaining five subjects, including Mathematics and English, by 2015. Data provided by the Ministry of Education indicate that only 38.6 per cent of the grade 11 cohort who sat in 2014 attained five subjects, including Mathematics and English.

Reid (2011) also reported that the Ministry of Education has identified low performance in English not only in Jamaican students but also those of other Caribbean countries and regards this as both a national and regional concern. Furthermore, it is seen where there is limited qualitative data available in Jamaica on students’ perception of their performance in a fundamental area such as English Language. Thus, the following study sought to fill this gap by exploring these areas which is also useful for policy makers in the Ministry of Education.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

English is seen as a universal language when communicating and interacting (Al-Hadhrami & Amzat, 2012). English competency is a fundamental requirement in the academic development of students pursuing various career choices. Essentially, a good command of the English language is significant when transitioning in the labour market for both governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as a requirement when entering tertiary institutions. Employers require CXC as the major certification to enter the Jamaican job market (Bailey, 2003).

Several studies have focused on the academic performance of students in English but have often neglected how students’ perceive their academic performance. This study highlights the more influential theories surrounding language acquisition, reviews the different literature on students’ perception of their academic performance, the challenges encountered by students in their attempt to master the language, adult learning theories, language learning strategies and factors that have been suggested to improve students’ performance in English Language.

Theoretical Base

Theories can be used to help in explaining, describing or predicting behaviour and can also provide a systematic description of phenomenon. Theories give researchers different lenses to examine problems, focus their attention on varying aspects of data and provide a framework to conduct analysis. The Attribution Theory and the Expectancy Value Theory (EVT) are both relevant to the study of students’ perception about their performance in English as they help in understanding that students often attribute causes to events which often impact the way they
respond to future situations and that some students believe and act upon the expectations of
success or failure related to completing certain tasks.

**Attribution Theory**

The study of attribution was initially associated with Fritz Heider, but it was later
developed by Bernard Weiner. Attribution Theory provides an important method for examining
and understanding motivation in academic settings. It examines individuals' beliefs about why
certain events occur and correlates those beliefs to subsequent motivation (Weiner, 1985; Malle,
2004). The fundamental principle of this theory is that people want to understand their
environments and, therefore, endeavor to understand why certain events happen (Weiner, 1990).
In the classroom, the understanding students have about the causes of past events influence their
capability to determine what happens to them in the future. For example, if students fail a test,
they will probably attribute that failure to a specific cause, such as lack of capability,
determination, or poor instruction. Hence, the selected attribution will affect their subsequent
motivation to engage in similar learning activities.

A rudimentary supposition of Weiner's model of attribution is that learners are affected
by both environmental factors such as features of the students' home or school and by individual
causes such as previous involvements and previous knowledge. These contextual variables affect
the types of attributions that individuals are likely to make (Weiner, 1990). For example,
students who are not proficient in English may attribute their failure to one or more factors. They
may believe that they are not as competent in English as they ought to be due to issues like
language barriers created form their first language, limited class time, or ineffective teachers. On
the other hand, students who master the language may attribute their success to factors such as
hard work, effective teachers or family background.
Expectancy Value Theory

The EVT is another theory that is pertinent to studying students’ perceptions about their performance in English. The genesis of this theory has been credited to Martin Fishbein and was designed to describe and predict individuals’ attitudes toward objects and actions. However, Eccles, Wigfield and their colleagues added to the body of work that was done on the theory and expanded this research to the field of education (Eccles & Wigfield 2002). EVT suggests that students’ achievements are influenced and determined by expectancies for success and the extent to which they value the task.

Expectancies are certain beliefs that individuals have pertaining to their success on specific tasks that they will complete (Eccles & Wigfield 2002). These expectancies are linked to concepts such as self-concept and self-efficacy. Subjective task value is linked to motivation that influences an individual to complete a task and is further broken down into the subcategories of attainment value, intrinsic value, utility value and cost. Research (see for example, Wigfield & Cambria, 2010) that has been done in the field of education suggests that expectancies and values can be used to predict essential outcomes such as academic achievement (Wigfield et. al., 2008) while other factors such as demographic qualities, prior experiences and individuals’ perceptions can affect expectancies and values. EVT is relevant to this study as students will share their perceptions about their performance in English and these perceptions will be influenced by expectancies and the value that has been assigned to becoming competent in English. It will be interesting to see how this theory applies to students in the evening schools as they speak about their perceived competencies in English language.

While the Attribution Theory and EVT are important in providing a framework and possible factors associated with students’ perception in this particular context, there are other
theories or bodies of research that can also be used to describe students’ perceptions about their performance in English and the factors which affect these perceptions. The theories associated with motivation are often seen as important tenets in educators’ quest to better ascertain what motivate students to learn especially in the area of language acquisition which has universal implications.

**Relationship between Attribution Theory and Expectancy Value Theory**

The expectancy value theory is a perception based model that provides a framework for examining how individuals make decisions based on their expectancies and how much they value a task. The students in this study chose to pursue a course of study that would prepare them to sit the CSEC English A examination. Their performance in the subject can be explained by their beliefs about how well they will do in the CSEC English A examination and the extent to which they value passing the examination. Students start the course of programme with expected consequences or outcomes based on their behaviour. Their expected values or benefits of doing well in the CSEC English A examination is important as some students want to matriculate to a tertiary institution or want to be more competitive in the job market.

For this study, I make a case that the expectations that students share are influenced by how they interpret and assign causes to their actions and behaviours. Students’ perceived causes of success and failure tend to impact their behaviour and the expectancies they have for future occasions. Therefore, if students expect to do well they will share their attributions as they try to explain their new found confidence using the environmental and individual factors they think have contributed to this new level of competence in the subject.
Other Research Linked to Motivation

Motivation is influenced by both internal and external factors that can start, sustain, intensify, or discourage behavior (Reeve, 1996). Internal factors include the individual characteristics or dispositions that students bring to their learning, such as their interests, responsibility for learning, effort, values and perceived ability (Ainley, 2004). The external factors, which schools can influence such as the variables in learning conditions and environment can trigger, support, or change student motivation.

Studies have also shown that academic behaviour may be intrinsically motivated, extrinsically motivated or amotivated. Intrinsic motivation refers to behaviour in which pleasure, enjoyment or personal satisfaction is obtained from its performance; extrinsic motivation is often influenced by outside forces and is performed to obtain an expected outcome or goal while amotivated performance relates to behaviour in which the person is not motivated (Deci, & Ryan, 1985). In that regard, educators have concluded that intrinsic motivation is more desirable and provides better learning outcomes that extrinsic motivation (Deci et al., 1999; Ryan, Connell, & Plant, 1990).

Researchers have posited that several factors influence student motivation. These include the student, who must have access, aptitude, awareness and meaningful education; the teacher, who must be highly trained, be focused and supervise the educational development of the student, be committed and approachable to the students and who is a motivator; the content of the lesson, which must be correct, appropriate, inspirational and pertinent to the existing standards and future requirements; the method or technique utilized in teaching, which must be creative, motivating, useful and be able to provide tools that can be applied to the students’ real life; and the student’s environment, which must be secure, easily accessible, have optimism, be
personalized and empowering (Palmer, 2007; Debnath, 2005; DeSouza & Masehwari, 2010).

Hence, student motivation is important in student performance. Studies have shown that one of the most important tools for success in learning English is motivation (Mokharti & Sheorey, 2002; Wiesen, 2001). Academic motivation is defined as “enjoyment of school learning characterized by mastery; orientation; curiosity; persistence; task-endogeny; and the learning of challenging, difficult and novel tasks” (Gottfried, 1990, p. 525). Accordingly, it has been argued that it is of immense importance to encourage motivation in children as it predicts their motivation in the future (Broussard & Garrison, 2004; Gottfried, 1990). This is important as teachers’ strategies will have to vary based on the individual needs and motivational level of the children.

Furthermore, studies have shown that perception by students of extreme workload and improper assessments impact their attitudes toward superficial study while their perception of good teaching motivates them to focus on deeper studying strategies (Lizzo, Wilson & Simons, 2002). It is seen that certain types of schooling practices may promote or hinder motivation, such as features of the classrooms, peer groups, tasks, and instructional practices (Ainley, 2004). Educators therefore, need to become cognizant of the practices which foster motivation so they can plan and utilize the resources which best cater to students’ language needs. One instructional strategy that is being advocated is cooperative learning. Research has shown that students’ social, emotional, motivational and cognitive processes are affected by group learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2002).

High motivation in students is linked to reduced dropout rates and increased levels of student success (Dev, 1997; Blank, 1997; Ames, 1992; Newmann, Bryk, & Nagaoka, 2001). Students are more engaged in learning when they are active and have some choice and control
over the learning process, and the curriculum is individualized, authentic, and related to their interests (Anderman & Midgley, 1998). Intrinsically motivated students retain information and concepts longer, and are less likely to need remedial courses and review (Dev, 1997). In addition, intrinsically motivated students are more likely to be lifelong learners, continuing to educate themselves outside the formal school setting long after external motivators such as grades and diplomas are removed (Kohn, 1993).

Motivation is also linked to self-esteem. Students who are highly motivated tend to have higher self-esteem than students who have a lower self-esteem. Freeman and Freeman (1999) and others have proposed that effective approaches to reading and bilingual approaches could be used to teach academic achievement as students’ perceptions of their own academic capabilities influence their self-esteem. It could also be argued that students with higher self-esteem may perceive that they are competent or near to gaining mastery in a particular task which could possibly influence them to work harder to achieve the success they think they are capable of accomplishing. Based on the foregoing discussion it can be argued that students should be exposed to all components of motivation during the learning process (Palmer, 2007; Debnath, 2005; DeSouza & Masehwari, 2010).

The reviewed literature on motivation has identified several factors that can influence individuals’ learning outcomes. These factors are often related to the student, teacher, institution, curriculum and instructional strategies. Research has suggested that motivation is important to students’ performance. While the research questions do not focus explicitly on motivation it will be interesting to examine if and what role motivation plays in the perception of students’ performance in English.
Theories of Language Acquisition

Humans do not speak immediately when they are born but instead begin to understand and speak language during the first few years of life (Bergman & Ross, 2007). A review of literature related to language acquisition is relevant and seeks to address the issue of how language is acquired, especially in a country like Jamaica where the language being taught in schools is a second language for many individuals. Individuals acquire first and second language differently; hence, the need to provide a framework for the context of the study. The theories of Language Acquisition will therefore help to provide a framework for understanding how SJE is learnt and the strategies that students use to learn SJE.

Various theories have arisen that attempt to account for how persons acquire language. Two of the earlier and popular theories, are Behaviorism, and Nativism (Littlewood, 1984; Ingram, 1989). However, these theories have been challenged and refuted as not completely explaining language acquisition and other theories have emerged to explain differences when learning a first or second language (Krashen, 1982; Ellis, 1994) as understanding how individuals acquire language is a key component in teaching a language.

Several studies have been done on language acquisition with first language acquisition influencing the work of second language acquisition (Littlewood, 1984). Decades ago the study of first language acquisition was dominated by the behaviorist approach with the chief advocate of this theory being B.F. Skinner. Skinner theorized that language was not a cognitive or mental activity but rather behaviour. He proposed that language was “learnt by a process of habit-formation” (Littlewood, 1984 p.4). During this process

1. Children imitate the sounds and patterns which they hear around them.
2. People recognize the children’s attempt as being similar to the adult models and reinforce (rewards the sounds, by approval
or some other desirable reaction.

3. In order to obtain more of these rewards, children repeat the sounds and patterns, so that these become habits.

4. In this way children’s verbal behaviour is conditioned or shaped until the habits coincide with the adult models.

This theory suggests that the children are unable to think and speak in a creative way as speech is based on the utterances already made by adults. It proposes that children only repeat whatever sound patterns they hear and rely on reinforcement in some form from adults to fully imitate the speech patterns that are heard. Therefore, children learn to speak when their verbal behaviour has been conditioned.

However, this view was contradicted and strongly challenged by others such as Noam Chomsky who believed that language was more than behaviour and was linked to cognition. Several arguments were used to counter the behaviorist theory including the idea that language was more than verbal behaviour that it contained a complex structure of rules, and that language could not be easily explained as imitation. Hence, it was argued that children have some innate ability which allows them to create speech in their first language which they were not previously exposed to in their environment. Chomsky’s view which some refer to as nativism suggests that language is an exceptionally rich and multifaceted system, which is more than a sequence of associations between words (Ingram, 1989). Language is seen by the nativists as consisting of universal principles which create a universal grammar that can be possibly applied to any humanly possible language.

The proponents of nativism argue that the universal principles are innate because children are born with these genetically coded principles. As a result, children can produce an infinite number of sentences that they have never heard which also impacts the creative nature of language. It is argued that the acquisition rate for children cannot be accounted for purely
through rote learning and imitation as from an early age children are able to produce a range of sentences that is almost comparable to adults, which could not be done without a complex innate ability (Hauser, Chomsky & Fitch, 2002).

Additionally, it is claimed that the language that the children are exposed to before going to school does not provide them with the necessary information to acquire linguistic structure. Thus, children’s knowledge about linguistic rules such as sentence structure is part of their Universal Grammar (Johnson & Newport 1991). Other researches such as Pinker (1984 & 1989) have contributed to the body of work by adding and refuting some ideas previously postulated.

This study focuses on students’ perception of their performance in English which is the official language of the country. However, many students speak Jamaican Creole as a first language while they are taught English as a first language. This paradox continues even though research has suggested that the way individuals learn a first language is different from the way they learn a second language. As I examined students’ perceptions about their performance in English and the strategies they think will improve their performance, I also noted the role that first language acquisition has on students’ perception, the instructional strategies that are used by teachers and learning strategies that are used by students. This new information will help to fill the gap in the research that currently exists about the influence of First Language Acquisition on Creole speaking Jamaican students.

While understanding first language acquisition is important, it is also vital that Jamaican educators understand Second Language Acquisition as English is the second language to be learnt by many students. Consequently, educators have to be aware of the differences in First and Second Language Acquisition so they can select the appropriate strategies to assist students in
learning a second language. This study seeks to ascertain students’ perception about a language which is their second language so it’s essential to discuss Second Language Acquisition.

**Second Language Acquisition**

Educators, especially teachers of English, need to recognize that an understanding and application of the principles associated with Second Language Acquisition is important when teaching students who have a first language. If students are taught on the premise of English being their first language, they will experience numerous challenges as they try to improve their competence in the second language.

Decades ago researchers and linguists started to examine how individuals learnt a second language. It is difficult to identify the exact starting point but some researchers like Ellis (2005) believe that it started in the 60s. It is often seen as a sub-discipline of applied linguistics and is still a somewhat young area of research. Much of the research related to second language acquisition is focused on trying to understand and improve how second languages are acquired. Some researchers who have focused on language learning in this area include Krashen’s Monitor Model; Long’s Interaction Hypothesis; DeKeyser’s skill- learning theory and Ellis’ instructed language learning (Krashen, 1981; Long, 1983; DeKeyser, 1998 & Ellis, 1994).

One of the earlier theories on second language acquisition is Krashen’s Model which is based on the premise of five hypotheses. Krashen theorizes that there is a natural order hypothesis which enables learners to acquire the rules of language in a predictable sequence; the acquisition or learning hypothesis which explains two ways adults develop their proficiency in second language acquisition; the monitor hypothesis which suggests that conscious learning acts as a monitor; the input hypothesis which claims humans acquire language through ‘comprehensible input’ and the affective filter hypothesis which suggests that adults have
mental obstacles caused by affective factors which hinder input from reaching the language acquisition device (Krashen, 1979; 1981; 1982; 1985).

Although there has been much research and many theories about second language acquisition there is still no consensus on how best to improve second language learning. Controversy still surrounds the best approach that should be taken to assist learners acquire a second language. There is also no unanimity on how the corrective feedback to students should be administered.

The following delineates a set of principles by Ellis (2005), who has tried to create some generalizations which can be considered in second language instruction.

1. Instruction needs to ensure that learners develop both a rich repertoire of formulaic expressions and a rule-based competence.
2. Instruction needs to ensure that learners focus predominantly on meaning
3. Instruction needs to ensure that learners focus on form
4. Instruction needs to be predominantly directed at developing implicit knowledge of the L2 while not neglecting explicit knowledge
5. Instruction needs to take into account the learners “built-in syllabus”
6. Successful instructed language learning requires extensive L2 input
7. Successful instructed language learning also requires opportunities for output
8. The opportunity to interact in the L2 is central to developing L2 proficiency
9. Instruction needs to take account of individual differences in learners
10. In assessing learners’ L2 proficiency it is important to examine free as well as controlled production. p. 210-221

Educators need to be aware of various principles that can be used in mastering a second language. While the above principles are not prescriptive, they hinge on several areas that are essential to second language acquisition. The various theories on second language acquisition allow educators to focus on challenges that students may face while trying to learn a second language and suggests options on finding the appropriate model that is suitable for students based on their specific needs.
The literature review for this section focused on prominent theories related to second language acquisition. Although the Ministry of Education recognizes that many Jamaican students speak JC as a first language there is little or no data that is used to encourage teachers to utilize the English as a Second Language Approach when dealing with these students. While this study will not focus on the merits of using a second language versus using a first language it is hoped that data from this study can add to the limited literature that is available on second language acquisition in the Jamaican context.

Though the theories of second language acquisition may differ in their arguments about how a second language is acquired there seems to be consensus on the notion that second language should not be taught the same way as a first language. Second language acquisition theory is important to this study as students enter their English classrooms with another language as their first language. Students may want to apply the same principles that they used to learn JC when they try to learn SJE and end of feeling like failures which is then reflected in their poor performance in the subject.

**Bilingual Education Through The Lens of Cummins and Garcia**

Whilst second language acquisition involves immersing the child in the second or target language and focuses on the problem of how linguistic structures are acquired, bilingual education is very expansive and includes individuals who are competent in the two languages operating in the society, as well as those who have limited knowledge of the second language for purposes such as for school and work.

Research by Cummins sought to understand language performance by learners and to create the connection between bilingual proficiency and academic ability or failure, in second
language learners. He argued that there are two types of language performances that can occur. This he refers to as basic interpersonal communicative skill and cognitive academic language.

Cummins (1980, 1981) postulates that there is a noticeable distinction between basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language (CALP) as it relates to the time frame that is essential for students to attain conversational fluency versus the achievement of academic proficiency when acquiring a second language. Furthermore, he theorizes that the initial introduction to a second language resulting in conversational fluency usually happens within two years. However, it takes approximately five years to achieve academic proficiency based on the suitable grade level of students (Cummins, 1980; 1981; Collier, 1987; Klesmer, 1994).

It has also been suggested that failure to differentiate between BICS and CALP results in partial psychological evaluation of bilingual students (Cummins, 1984). However, some researchers have critiqued the distinction advanced by the BICS/CALP as it pertains to its effect on language acquisition. They contend that it shows an independent viewpoint without considering societal norms and power associations (Edelsky et al., 1983). It also suggests that if bilinguals fail to attain success, it is caused by below normal cognitive and academic proficiency rather than unsuitable schooling practices (Edelsky, 1990; Edelsky et al., 1983; Martin-Jones & Romaine, 1996).

Cummins (1998) also argued that the inclusion of students’ cultural language into educational curriculum should encourage the academic engagement of students. The incorporation of their first language literacy abilities provides a structure for academic progress while reinforcing to students’ the linguistic and cultural importance of this resource. He posits
that the development of students’ literacy skills in their primary language has the potential to alter the underachievement in English Language often ascribed to bilingual students.

Furthermore, Cummins (2001) noted that learners who are exposed to both their first language and English Language in their homes have a high level of proficiency in English Language and it does not adversely affect their primary language. However, students’ whose grasp of English Language is poor display low academic proficiency and their class involvement is limited. Cummins (1998) argued that if the educational system is committed to providing effective learning opportunities for bilingual students then educators should implement pedagogy that enhances the students’ cognitive and linguistic growth while providing competency of the educational content.

There has been no consensus among educators and language policy makers in determining the most effective method to educate bilingual students to operate effectively in society. As such, he posits that educational institutions adjust to demographic and societal changes in order to competently educate second language learners, as some teachers do not have the requisite training to make academic instruction understandable to bilingual students. Cummins (2000) also contends that the policies that are implemented should facilitate teacher and meaningful interaction between the teacher and the student. This he purports would address the underachievement of second language.

Another important body of research related to bilingual education is that surrounding translanguaging. Colin Baker is credited with translating the Welsh trawsieithu to translanguaging (Garcia & Lin, 2016). Several bilingual educators have been researching and using the translanguaging approach with students because it allows bilingual learners to be flexible and dynamic as they navigate through their language (Garcia, 2009a). Translanguaging
creates the flexibility in language practices and creates the space for students to try out another language. Jamaican students could benefit from the opportunity of being guided by teachers through the process of translanguaging as Jamaican students who go to school with Jamaican Creole as their first language should be seen as emergent bilinguals (Garcia, 2009b).

In specific reference to bilingual education García (2009a, p.44) posited that translanguaging is “an approach to bilingualism that is centered not on languages as has been often the case, but on the practices of bilinguals that are readily observable.” These practices she argues are “the normal mode of communication that, with some exceptions in some monolingual enclaves, characterizes communities throughout the world.”

She advocates that in the educational context, translanguaging goes beyond code switching and translation because it refers to the method by which bilingual students are able to perform bilingually in a myriad of ways in the classroom. Othe guy, García and Reid (2015, p.3) clearly distinguish translanguaging from code switching, by describing translanguaging as “the deployment of a speaker’s full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages.” Bilinguals are often disadvantaged in the classroom because they are not usually permitted to use their full linguistic competence in learning and assessment; unlike monolingual students who are often allowed to do so. As a result, bilinguals may become silent disinterested observers in the classroom which will eventually lead to poor performance.

Some researchers like Canagarajah have argued that translanguaging is limited in describing the process that bilinguals go through as they make meaning between or among the languages they are exposed to. Canagarajah (2011) prefers the term translingual practices because he advocates that unlike translanguaging, translingual practices involve bilinguals
creatively mixing their symbol systems in order to adapt to their needs based on their context and
situation. Otheguy, García and Reid (2015) however, contend that translanguageing is not just a
social practice but also a linguistic theory that has mental grammatical rules that is created
through social interaction and negotiation.

In order for bilingual education programs to provide an equitable program for bilingual
children, it is essential that they assess the various schools of thought surrounding the
translanguaging theory. Educators can continue to provide discrete spaces for the two separate
languages to be used but also provide a safe space where translanguaging is encouraged and
speakers can develop their linguistic catalogue. Jamaican educators need to understand that
students develop new languages by referencing their old language. Students therefore have to be
guided accordingly by educators who are aware of the Jamaican Language Situation and have
adopted their methodology to appropriately address the situation.

The Jamaican Language Situation

Jamaica is often described as bilingual since there are two languages in operation. English is the official language of Jamaica; however, Jamaican Creole or varieties of Jamaican
Creole are used every day by the majority of the Jamaican people (Aberg & Waller, 2012). Creole is described by Roberts (2007) as a dialect or language which is derived from the contact
of languages of the colonizers and the colonized. Stockwell (2007) asserts that Creole becomes a
language when it is learnt as a first language by a new generation. Jamaican Creole is an English
lexicon Creole which has a consistent phonology, vocabulary and grammar and has been used
throughout Jamaica for over three centuries (Christie, 2003).

The Jamaican Ministry of Education in the latest publication of the Language Education
Policy 2001 highlights the poor performance of students in language and literacy. It has been
argued that low literacy and consistent failure of some students in English language
examinations at varying levels may be the result of the attitude and use of English and Jamaican
Creole in the society (Aberg & Waller, 2012). A study on Jamaican students’ perceptions of
Standard Jamaican English indicates that Standard Jamaican English is seen as important to
students but that is has very little use in society. This could be one of the factors which influence
students’ attitude towards the subject in school and why they perform so poorly in examinations.

Jamaican Creole has been described as inferior to Standard Jamaican English
(Wardhaugh, 2010). However, Siegel (2008) posits that English is not superior to Jamaican
Creole. This dichotomy poses a challenge in the classroom as this will affect how teachers teach
English in the classroom whether as a first language or a second language and it will also affect
students’ attitudes and perception about their competence in English.

Wardhaugh (2010) contends that some Jamaican teachers consider Jamaican Creole to be
associated with illiteracy and low socioeconomic status and treat it as a dialect which can be
corrected through speech remediation. This is problematic as the majority of Jamaicans speak
Jamaican Creole (MoEY&C, 2001). The Ministry of Education in Jamaica acknowledges that
there are languages in Jamaica and that Jamaican Creole is widely used. The language policy
(MoEY&C, 2001) states that teachers should be linguistically aware and should appreciate the
value of Jamaican Creole in the classroom and should give students the opportunity to use it as
they seek to guide their students to competence in English.

The attitudes and belief systems about the use or acceptance of Jamaican Creole in the
classroom still pose a challenge as the teachers’ view on English and Jamaican Creole affect how
they teach English in the classroom. Aberg and Waller (2012) highlight that there are different
views among teachers concerning which language should be recognized as the child’s first
language and which should be the second language. As a result, teachers approach to teaching varies. The different basis on which English is taught influences how students view and develop their competence in the language.

The literature available for review about the Jamaican Language situation was very limited due to the lack of available research in this area. This study will help to fill this huge gap and provide information on students’ views about their performance in SJE and the factors which contribute to these perceptions. Students will also share the strategies that they think would best assist in improving their performance in English. This data is important in understanding how students feel about how English is taught in the Jamaican context and what strategies can be used to assist them.

It has been argued that it is difficult to educate students successfully in English with Jamaican Creole as their first language (Devonish & Carpenter, 2007). Consequently, teachers should be aware of their students’ attitudes towards their first language and the target language that they want them to learn. Siegel (2008) stresses the importance of teachers’ knowing the difference between the two languages and recognizing which language is the students’ first language as it might affect their teaching strategies.

**Language Learning Strategies**

The challenges presented to students while learning English as a second language in the Jamaican classroom vary from student to student. Therefore, teachers and students have to figure out not only which language learning strategies students like but which ones work best for them. Researchers have conducted significant research in the field of language learning strategies. Educators are constantly seeking ways to assist language learners to become more proficient in their target or second language. While some researchers such as Green and Oxford (1995) and
Wharton (2000) believe that there is a strong relationship between language learning and the strategy that is used, the debate about the relationship between language learning use and proficiency continues as other researchers, such as Murray (2007), believes this relationship is weak. However, educators still continue to focus on finding appropriate strategies they believe can enhance language learning.

Learning strategies have been defined in a myriad of ways. O’Malley and Chamot (1990) defined learning strategies as those particular thoughts or behaviours which are used to assist learners in understanding, learning and keeping the knowledge in mind; Oxford (1990) also stated that these strategies are used by learners to simplify, increase and organize learning in order to make it more effective and to be able to transfer it to new situations and Chamot (2004) defined these strategies as thoughts and actions that learners are cognizant of which they use to complete any learning goal.

Language learning strategies have also varied in definition over the years. Rubin (1981) defined language learning strategies as those which directly or indirectly affect the learning process while Scarcella and Oxford (1992) defined learning strategies as “specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques such as seeking out conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task used by students to enhance their own learning” (p. 63). Griffiths (2003) defined learning strategies as specific actions that are intentionally used by the learner for learning languages whereas Oxford (1996) defined them as a means used for self-directed active participation that is necessary for improving communication skills.

Researchers have classified language learning strategies in different ways. O’Malley and Chamot (1990) asserted that language learning strategies should be classified as meta-cognitive,
cognitive and social-affective strategies. Oxford (1990) who developed the Strategy Inventory of Language Learning classified language learning into direct and indirect strategies. These two groups were further divided into three sub-categories. Direct strategies are classified as memory, cognitive and compensation strategies whereas the indirect strategies are divided into meta-cognitive, affective and social strategies. O’Malley et. al. (1985) posits that it is possible for a learning strategy to be used as an exceptionally influential learning tool. If this possibility exists then educators can assist students to develop or enhance the strategies they use in order to become more proficient in learning a language.

An area of focus for this study will be to highlight the strategies students have identified as best suited to assist them to gain competence in English. It is essential for Jamaican educators, especially for those who write or deliver the curriculum to understand how students, including adult learners who may have different needs from high school students, learn so that the varying needs of language learners can be appropriately addressed.

**Adult Learning Theories**

As individuals age and advance through the various stages of the education system their approach and attitude towards learning change. Knowles (1984) posited that adults learn differently and that there are factors that aid the adult learner. He describes this as Andragogy which is the art and science of assisting adults to learn. It’s based on the assumption that as adults learners mature they move from dependence on others, such as their teachers, to a level of independence or self-directedness. In self-directed learning, individuals take the initiative in executing their learning experience. As a result, educators must assume responsibility to encourage and support them as they have an inherent need to be in control. Over time adults accumulate experiences that form a foundation that aids the learning process. In addition, their
desire to learn is based on the duties applicable to their social position where they require knowledge for immediate application. Therefore, learning should be performance based and relevant to real life situations (Knowles, 1984; Knowles, 1975).

Andragogy has been criticized as failing to consider the impact of culture on the teaching process where the educator is accepted as the person responsible for imparting knowledge Brookfield (2003) cited in Teaching Excellence in Adult Literacy (2011). Other research has noted criticisms regarding andragogy being a unifying theory. They contend that critical elements are missing; hence, it could not be defined as a theory of adult education as distinguished from adult learning (Knowles, Holton 111 and Swanson, 2015). Additionally, (Cheetham & Chivers 2005) argue that sufficient research has not been conducted to conclude that self-directness is a general characteristic of adult learners as it may be impacted by differences in culture and class.

**David Kolb’s Theory**

Kolb (1984) posits a learning cycle theory which assumes that adults engage in a learning cycle several times each day. The learning cycle comprises four elements: Concrete experience – a new situation has occurred; Reflective observation – contemplating on the experience; Abstract conceptualization – analyzing and gaining knowledge from the experience and Active experimentation – applying the knowledge gained. Kolb (1984) opines that from infancy, individuals have experiences which they reflect on from time to time. However, they may not necessarily include it in their conceptualization as a principle and the concepts may not be actualized in active experimentation. Hence, educators must be aware of the levels of learning of the adults and execute their instructions accordingly as individuals develop learning styles based
on where they feel contented within the cycle. All stages are mutually supportive and successful learning only takes place after all stages have been executed.

Reynolds (1999) opines that Kolb’s theory focuses on the individual’s viewpoint to the detriment of political and social opinions. Additionally, Vince (1998) critiques the theory from a psychodynamic perspective, noting the limitations inherent in the theory. It fails to consider social position, cultural influence and gender and their impact on learning. He argues that it fails to focus on current knowledge but rather reflects on past experience and does not include other factors that unconsciously inhibit learning. Further, Holman et al., (1997) argued that individual learning is inclusive of cultural and social positions of the learner. They contend that there is an overemphasis on individual learning (Holman et al., 1997). These criticisms of Kolb’s theory concur that it overemphasizes individual learning to the detriment of social and cultural dynamics of learning.

Although the academic development of adult learners is not guaranteed based on the criteria advocated by Knowles (1970) or Kolb (1984), teachers can select certain aspects of these teaching principles to formulate curriculum based on the educational level and experience of the students, utilize teachable moments and vary activities, while students can utilize the learning process to synthesize what they learn. Hence, the principles can collaborate with aspects of other research and should be considered as potentially good educational teaching support.

**Teaching Adults English as a Second Language**

Research related to teaching adults English as a second language is still evolving. As a result, there is a great demand for qualified teachers in this area (Florez & Burt, 2001). Researchers have posited that teachers who teach adults English as second language require professional training in order to adequately assist learners (National Center for ESL Literacy
Emerging developments resulting from this gap in the system require the need for program development, teacher training, instructional strategy and practice, application of assessments, use of technology and incorporation of research and practice (National Center for ESL Literacy Education, 1998). In addition, these teachers have to be perceptive of the student’s previous educational knowledge when preparing teaching lessons (Schaetzel et al., 2007).

Professional development for teachers will vary on the skills set that teachers already possess. However, meaningful effort will have to be made to address the gaps in the teaching and learning experience if teachers have not been trained to teach adult learners. The strategies may include: enhancing teachers’ competence in adult learning strategies; acquiring second language procedures, teaching techniques and processes; exploring avenues to improve professional competence; utilizing modern technological strategies; providing practice sessions for group interaction; utilizing strategies to incorporate theory and engaging in research and practice by including practice sessions with learners and themselves (Florez & Burt, 2001; National Center for ESL Literacy Education, 1998).

Researchers have argued that effective adult teachers seek to understand adult learning methods as their requirements differ. As such, utilizing some fundamental principles associated with successful adult education can assist in this effort (Global Talent Bridge, 2011). These principles have been outlined by Spruck-Wrigley, and Powrie (2002) in Global Talent Bridge, (2011). They posit that:

1) Adult learners are goal-driven.
2) Language and literacy are social processes that involve interaction with others.
3) Language and literacy development require risk taking.
4) Language and literacy develop when the target language is slightly above the current
level of proficiency of the user.

5) Language and literacy development require focus, engagement and practice.

6) Language and literacy are multi-dimensional and require different kinds of interactions with different kinds of genres.

7) Language and literacy develop through interactions with tasks that require cognitive involvement.

8) Language and literacy develop more deeply if skills are connected to an overall topic, theme or context. p. 35.

In this regard, it is important to assess adult literacy requirements from the student’s perspective when preparing the curricula (National Center for Family Literacy and Center for Applied Linguistics, 2008). The assessment process emphasizes and reinforces prior achievements and aptitudes of the student providing them the opportunity to demonstrate and articulate previous knowledge (Holt & Van Duzer, 2000).

Adult students have limited time for study due to other obligations, as such, it is essential that teachers prepare effective lesson plans that allow students to efficiently meet their objectives (National Center for Family Literacy and Center for Applied Linguistics, 2008). Consequently, efforts should be made to engage students in applicable tasks in a vibrant educational environment as opposed to traditional classes and teaching methods (Moss & Ross-Feldman, 2003).

Research has identified strategies that educators can utilize for instruction in English as a second language. These strategies include: integrating adult learning principles; adapting different teaching strategies and methods; assessing students’ needs and objectives; utilizing students previous experiences; incorporating information that is relevant and relates to their present role as adults; involving learners in the lesson planning process; assessing and evaluating student progress; varying course content according to the learner’s comprehension level and
providing flexible schedules in accordance with the learners diverse requirements (Florez & Burt, 2001; National Center for ESL Literacy Education, 1998)

Some of the barriers to teaching adults were also identified and explored through research. Teachers should therefore try to address these issues in order to provide effective instruction. The barriers identified by Abdullah (2015) are cognitive, culture, language and learning loads. Cognitive load defines new ideas inserted in a lesson. Teachers should seek to identify concepts and abilities students may or may not have and fill the gaps. Culture load relates to the interconnectivity of language and culture and the extent to which cultural knowledge assists the understanding of English language in its context or while participating in activities. Language load makes reference to the amount of unknown vocabulary that adult students encounter when reading texts or listening to teachers or peers. Knowledge of vocabulary is vital in acquiring communicative competence as it is critical in understanding a second language (Coady & Huckin, 1997). Teachers can assist by simplifying complex sentences and making them more understandable. Learning load refers to the teachers’ expectation of the student’s grasp of English language during learning activities (Abdullah, 2015).

Knowles, Holton, & Swanson (2005), posit that the life experiences of adults assist in their learning aptitude. Teachers therefore, need to be sensitive to previous formal educational experiences that students have, while preparing their lesson plans (Schaetzel et al., 2007). Siebenhuhner (2002), cited in (Center for Adult English Language Acquisition, 2007), suggests that activity based learning should be utilized by teachers as it provides opportunities for interactions by learners as students and also as participants since this method promotes authentic language use and effective communication. Therefore, selection and implementation of the curriculum is of vital importance if teachers want to facilitate and motivate students to learn
Teaching English as a second language should be conducted with a contextualized curriculum where skills and strategies are implemented utilizing factual life contexts (Global Talent Bridge, 2011). Teachers of English have to be cognizant of the deficiencies they have as teachers to meet the needs of adult learners. These teachers have to ascertain the different challenges their learners face so they can adequately fill these gaps and develop their learners’ competence in English.

**Challenges Students Face While Trying to Master English**

The factors which contribute to students’ perception about their performance in English is a vital part of this study so it is important to review some of the factors that other researchers have cited as possible challenges students face learning English as a second language. English Language Learners (ELLs) face many challenges in school. These include learning English as a second language, the curriculum, and teachers’ instructional methods. Herrera and Murray (2005) argue that curriculum and instruction pose academic challenges to ELLs. Students’ mastery of a subject is determined by students’ performance in the prescribed subject using some form of assessment. Students’ performance is an indicator that informs persons if the teaching-learning process has been successful. When students perform poorly, then the school system, in particular the teacher is the one who is expected to address the problem as interaction between the teacher and student is expected to produce learning outcomes in the learners. As a result, teachers have to focus on students’ weaknesses as ELLs attend classes with the hope or expectation that teachers will be able to assist them to overcome the challenges which have prevented them from mastering the language.

Defining academic achievement is of immense importance and may be linked to the degree of English competence (Vinke & Jochems, 1993). Competence in the language is linked
to the various strands of the subject including, reading, writing, speaking, viewing and listening. As a result, teachers have to ensure that they incorporate all the strands during the teaching learning experience.

Poor proficiency in English language results in inadequate understanding of the subject matter and combined with weak writing skills, intensifies the possibility of failure (Amos & Quinn, 1997). Additionally, some students may be able to speak the language to a certain extent, but they have difficulty expressing themselves adequately as a result of the language barrier (Barker, 1988). In that regard, it is posited that proficiency in reading is an important factor in determining test performance (Van Eden, deBeer & Coetzee, 2001). Furthermore, students encounter difficulties in comprehending the English language being taught and very often they are tested on the subject before being proficient in the language (National Education Association, 2008).

It has been claimed that many language learners experience anxiety and apprehension which negatively impacts the learning of any language (Horwitz, 2001). Studies have shown that the formal classroom setting created stress and anxiety among students as it requires the correct use of the English language, whereas in an informal environment, students experience less anxiety as there is more collaborative activity among teachers and students (Hashemi, 2011).

Additionally, the fear of making mistakes, appearing incompetent, attracting ridicule and being embarrassed before their peers, cause students to experience language anxiety (Jones, 2004). Consequently, performance anxiety contributes to students disquiet in learning language. This anxiety includes communication apprehension which is described as fear of communicating with people; test anxiety which occurs as a result of the fear of failure and anxiety revealed as fear of negative evaluation, which reveals itself in situations such as speaking in class or
interviews (Horwitz et al., 1986). Therefore, teachers of English have to note the factors that contribute to anxiety in ELLs as they may affect students’ perception and performance in the subject, especially those who have to sit standardized examinations.

It has been argued that if students understand their learning environment, have autonomy, can relate to their teachers and peers and have self-confidence, their commitment to academic performance is enhanced (Zimmer-Gembeck, et al. 2006). Accordingly, language is best learned when the learner is focused on comprehending, saying and doing something with language and not when their attention is focused explicitly on linguistics features (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Consequently, teachers of English have to use strategies that allow students to see English as a life skill and not just as a subject to sit and pass an examination.

Studies have shown that one of the challenges English language learners have is that they find speaking the language very difficult as they do not have the ability to express themselves fluently (Zhang, 2009). These difficulties may arise as a result of the fear of making mistakes, lack of motivation to express themselves orally, low participation in class discussions which is usually due to the dominance of more outspoken students and the use of mother tongue for communication (Ur, 1996). However, reading in collaboration with a partner puts less stress on students and provides them with more opportunity to have a better command of the English language (Almaguer, 2008).

Studies at a tertiary institution in South Africa revealed some factors that inhibit competence in the English language by students include rural environment, English proficiency of the school teacher, impact of culture, strategies utilized in learning and memorizing, difficulties regarding verbal comprehension, challenges relating to transferability of language skills, concerns regarding reading proficiency and challenges pertaining to written English.
(Stephen, Welman & Jordaan, 2004). Hence, teachers of English have to be cognizant of the specific factors which impede their students so they can target those specific challenges during teaching and learning.

Studies into university students’ perceptions of challenges encountered during lecture comprehension in English as a second language revealed that students were affected by the lecturing style which affected their ability to understand. The students were sometimes confused about the purpose of the lecture and they had problems with the speed in which the lectures were delivered, as they had to interpret in their own language in order to understand the meaning and it takes time to assimilate the information. Moreover, listening and following the comprehension created challenges as they encountered difficult vocabulary which they did not fully understand. They also experienced difficulties concentrating in lecture forum because of distractions created by other students who were always talking and disrupted their concentration (Flowerdew & Miller, 1992). It can be concluded that students face several challenges in their attempt to learn English as a second language. Therefore, the approach they take to learning the language can have a direct impact on their learning ability (Prosser & Trigwell, 1999).

The discussion about the challenges students encounter while trying to learn English as a second language involves the teacher, student and environment. Hence, educators and students have to be fully cognizant of the possible obstacles to acquiring the language and to find appropriate measures to mitigate the effects of these barriers. The reviewed literature has identified several factors which have been argued as influencing students’ performance. This study will contribute to the existing literature and will add new information particularly as it relates to Jamaica. The study could provide evidence that can be
used to verify challenges students face and possible strategies to correct these deficiencies which could be beneficial for educators and language learners.

**Improving Students’ Performance in English**

Since students face several challenges in mastering English and often perform below national standards in standardized examinations (Reid, 2011), there is an urgent need to find appropriate strategies to improve student performance. As a result, the thrust for improved student performance continues to be of concern for educators. Several areas have been focused on as educators and students try to find what works best with different students. Several areas such as effective teaching and student motivation have been researched as essential components for improving student academic performance. Both teachers and students need to be aware of the factors which can significantly improve students’ performance in the subject.

Effective teaching involves finding and using the best strategies to produce effective results and having the ability to teach (Perrot, 1982). It also involves possessing expertise in one or more areas of specialization. Khurshid (2008) argued that a competency is a knowledge, skill, or characteristic that students want to acquire. The skills that English teachers should develop in their students are listening, speaking, reading, writing and viewing. Consequently, the teacher should possess these skills set and should be able to foster these skills in students through a myriad of teaching methodologies and strategies that cater to the specific needs of the language learner. To teach all students according to today's standards, teachers need to understand subject matter deeply and be flexible so they can help students create useful cognitive maps, relate one idea to another and address misconceptions (Shulman, 1987).

Studies have revealed that high student achievement is associated with teachers who have excellent qualities of self-efficacy as these teachers have the capacity to work hard under
tremendous difficulty and yet motivate students to attend classes and produce satisfactory performance (Muijs & Reynolds, 2002). Teachers’ self-efficacy is defined as “judgment of his or her capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or amotivated” (Henson, 2001, p.7). Additionally, it has been shown that students with teachers who have high efficacy levels achieved better results than those whose self-efficacy levels were low. Consequently, students having teachers with excellent self-efficacy will be motivated, achieve outstanding academic performance and will be focused on their educational attainment (Henson, 2001).

Further, teachers need to set high standards for their students regardless of the diversity of the student population (Muijs & Reynolds, 2002). This is important as it has been argued that, when teachers have low expectation of their students’ ability to excel academically, the students become bored and disorderly, fail to concentrate and put any effort in performing their schoolwork which can result in failure and eventual dropping out of school (Skiba, Rausch, & Ritter, 2004).

A classroom where teacher efficacy is strong is considered as having academic optimism. Academic optimism is defined as “a shared belief among faculty that academic achievement is important, that the faculty has the capacity to help students achieve and that students and parents can be trusted to cooperate with them in this endeavor – in brief a school wide confidence that students will achieve academically (McGuigan & Hoy, 2006). Further, ‘teachers must trust that their students possess openness to learn, capability to grasp concepts and honesty’ (Hoy et al., 2008). Additionally teachers need to utilize a humanistic approach which supports positivity, sincerity, flexibility, understanding and increased self-determination. Students are expected to be active participants in the learning process. As such, students are considered as responsible and
can control their own behaviour (Hoy et al., 2008). Conversely, custodial classrooms use punishment to control students who are viewed as irresponsible (Hoy et al., 2008).

Additionally, studies have revealed that teachers with low efficacy levels apply a custodial approach to classroom supervision; the teachers then become frustrated, irate, threatened by disruptive behaviour and have problems getting students to concentrate in class (Ashton & Webb, 1986). This type of environment, coupled with the students’ own inadequacies and confusion between the use of Jamaican Creole and English can severely hinder students’ progress in learning English. On the other hand, teachers who have high self-efficacy are organized, have better instruction skills, superior questioning and explaining techniques and greater capacity at providing feedback to students who have difficulty in understanding the lessons and also ensuring that students focus on their assignments (Ashton & Webb, 1986).

The teacher of English plays a vital role in improving students’ performance in the subject as the literature suggests that they play an essential role in influencing students’ perception and competence. Therefore, educational leaders have to move towards a more education-friendly approach which would help the teacher understand motivation and encourage its development and maintenance (Bernaus & Gardner 2008). Research related to motivation show that motivation produce outcomes that includes determination, interest, learning and performance (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Consequently, psychologists are of the view that motivation is essential for learning to take place (Biehler & Snowman, 1990).

The study highlights students’ views on the factors which influence their performance in English and the strategies that can improve their performance. Since there is limited research focusing on the distinct needs of Jamaican students, this study helps to fill the existing gap and can lead to further research in the area. There are a myriad of factors that can influence students’
performance, so it will be interesting to note the ones which emerge from the data which will then be compared and discussed against existing literature.

**Students’ Perception of Academic Performance**

The controversy surrounding the influence of perception on performance still continues as some psychologists have posited that there is no strong correlation between actual and perceived performance (Dunning et al., 2004). However, other works have shown that there is reason to think that self-perception should be considered as an important determinant in academic performance (Chevalier et. al. 2009). Since the impact of student perception on performance has not been proven conclusively, it is important to study the impact of perception on student academic performance especially in an area as important as English which is the formal language of communication nationally and the predominant language of communication regionally.

This study seeks to ascertain students’ perception about their performance in English. Therefore, a discussion of the role of self-perception in the academic life of students is important. Research has found that student’ views about the relationship between academic performance and their self-perception are important to their academic outcomes (Harlaar et al., 2006; Marsh & Shavelson, 1985). This self-concept or perception of self is defined by Hoge and Renzulli (1993) as the view we hold of ourselves. It includes “attitudes, feelings and knowledge about our abilities, skills, appearance and social acceptability” (Byrne, 1984, p. 429).

Additionally, it is defined as “students’ perceived academic competence and their commitment to and involvement and interest in schoolwork” (Liu & Wang, 2005, p. 20-27). The various definitions help to highlight the idea that perception is multifaceted and consists of several variables which individually and collectively affect perception.
Self-perception is said to be developed through “experiences with the interpretation of one’s environment” (Marsh & Shavelson, 1985 p. 107). The experiences of students vary which contribute to the various interpretations of self and the challenges teachers face while catering to several individual needs in a general classroom. It is further posited that self-perception impacts academic performance differently across race and culture (Wang, 2004; Worrel, 2007). It can be argued that self-perception is important in influencing students’ academic performance; hence the need to ascertain how students perceive their performance in a language which is not often seen as their first language based on differences in culture and socioeconomic status.

While some individuals are better able to predict the academic performance of their peers, they are unable to correctly predict their own performance as they are overly optimistic and generally overestimate their own abilities (Krueger, 1999). Some individuals tend to use their expected outcome to predict their performance. Although this study does not focus on students’ academic performance, students’ ability to predict their performance may influence how they perceive their proficiency in English.

Research has shown that the easier the task the more positive self-image is portrayed and individuals tend to rank themselves in the top quintile (Moore & Kim, 2003). However, for more daunting tasks individuals tend to be more pessimistic regarding their performance (Chevalier, 2007). In addition, less competent students tend to have poorer perception. It has been proposed that students need similar skills to succeed on the tests as well as to judge their own performance. According to Chevalier (2007) evidence suggests that learners overrate their performance in secondary education. Gibbons and Silva (2007) argued that 96% of secondary school pupils believe that they are above average when asked how good they are in their school work. These students also predicted their GCSE scores 10% above their actual achievement (Sullivan, 2006).
However, some studies have shown that there is no causal relationship between self-perception and academic performance. In a study conducted by Stringer and Heath (2008) examining the relationship between academic self-perception and academic performance it was noted that there was no significant relationship between academic self-perception and academic performance. The researchers found that neither the academic self-perceptions at the start of the study nor changes in perception during the time of the study period was able to predict changes in academic performance. As a result, Stringer and Heath concluded that “self-perception of academic competence cannot play a simple, casual role in academic achievement” (p. 327).

Research has also shown that differences in perception have important consequences. Longitudinal data used by Marsh, Trautwein, Ludthe, Koller & Baumert (2005) indicate that students who are better at assessing themselves allocate their study time more efficiently. This leads to students’ having a deeper understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, which gives them the opportunity to address weak areas and eventually students will have better academic outcome; hence, the importance of self-perception in the classroom. Other studies have revealed a remarkable co-relation between self-esteem and degree of academic achievements of students at secondary school (Ahmad et al., 2013). Therefore, it has been advocated by some that students with high self-esteem have higher academic performance than those with low self-esteem (Anthony et al., 2007; Jordan & Kelly, 1990).

The reviewed literature does not incontrovertibly show the impact of students’ perception on their performance. Although the debate on the direct co-relation between self-perception and performance is not conclusive, educators should pay attention to students’ perception as this could influence the approach and strategies that are used to assist students in acquiring English. This also highlights the need for further research about the perception of students about their
performance in key subject areas like English. This study provides data that can be examined against previously reviewed literature to see which body of research is supported or disputed and also adds to the debate concerning the influence of self-perception especially as it relates to English in the Jamaican context.

**Contribution of the Study**

This study seeks to explore and understand students’ perception about their performance in CSEC English A. The alarming failure rate of CSEC English is cause for concern, as expressed by the Ministry of Education (Reid, 2011). The Attribution Theory and the EVT were selected because of their potential predictive ability.

There are many practical implications of attribution theory for educators. English Language teachers need to recognize that they can influence the type of attributions their students make. The study has the potential to make a link with teachers’ influence on attribution and students perception about their ability in CSEC English A. Research generally indicates that the type of attributions persons make influence their behaviour in a predictable manner. One instance is the influence of specific feedback by teachers on students’ performance. Brophy (1981) argues that teachers should provide appropriate feedback that will promote attributions to effort or appropriate strategy. Researchers like Covington (1992) also propose that when teachers encourage students to make attributions to effort, some students may construe such comments as a sign of the teachers’ lack of belief in the students' true abilities.

Furthermore, teachers should be helping students to attribute their failure to specific challenges such as, not using appropriate strategies or limited content knowledge rather than assuming students are not trying. Teachers must recognize that progress and achievement will be different for individual students and so plan for their varying needs and cater to their specific
language challenges. The study therefore explores students’ views on their performance in CSEC English A and the factors which contribute to this. It also highlights instructional strategies that students believe best enhance their competence in the subject.

The basic idea behind the EVT is that people will be motivated by the belief that their actions will lead to the outcome they desire (Redmond, 2010). Hence, students will be motivated to exert high effort if they believe there is a good probability that they will do well in the subject. High confidence in one's academic potential results from a history of doing well in school, as well from strong messages that one is academically competent from one's parents, teachers, and peers (Guthrie et al., 2006). Research suggests that students who ask themselves if they think they can complete different tasks is a predictor of better performance and more motivation to select more challenging tasks (Wigfield et al., 2008). Rather than questioning students, some studies have probed the teachers instead (Bernaus & Gardner, 2008). The study therefore seeks to explore the perspectives of students about their competence in CSEC ENGLISH. It also looks at the factors which affect those perceptions and discusses the strategies that students believe could be used to improve their performance in English.

Humans have the ability to develop language but some individuals take a longer time to develop competence in a language. When individuals are unable to demonstrate mastery of certain language skills they will not be able to excel in areas related to language instruction. This can lead to high failure rates in formal examinations. In order to better understand why some students may pass or fail a language related examination, it is important to explore how they perceive their performance in the subject.

The research seeks to provide better awareness into students’ views about their proficiencies in CSEC English A the factors which they believe contribute to those perceptions
and the strategies they could use to improve their performances. An understanding of students’
perception can impact students’ success or failure stories. This could be of great interest and help
to all stakeholders who have a vested interest in improving students’ language capabilities as
well as filling existing gaps in the literature.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY and PROCEDURE

Chapter one provided insights to the reader on the failure rate of students in their external examinations in CSEC English A that is usually done at the end of grade eleven. English is the official language of Jamaica yet to date not all students in the grade eleven cohort in Jamaica are recommended to sit the English examination and, of the number recommended, the country has yet to see over seventy six percent of those students being successful in the examinations. The gap that has been created by this poor performance in CSEC English A has contributed to a rise in alternative schools such as evening schools which provide an avenue for students who don’t have CSEC subjects like English to sit these examinations.

Chapter two examined research which was pertinent to students’ perception about their performance, language acquisition and adult learning. The Attribution Theory and EVT were selected because of the value they have in understanding student behaviour and performance. The literature examined highlighted information that currently exists and some gaps which exist especially in the Jamaican context.

This research seeks to affirm or debunk what current literature says about students’ perception about their performance in CSEC English A. It also seeks to fill existing gaps in the literature, especially in the Jamaican context where there is little research and what literature does exist is primarily survey based. My research is different from previous survey methodology that was used and this chapter outlines the methodology that I used.

In this section I describe the research approach I used to investigate students’ perception about their performance in CSEC English A. I give a rationale for using the case study design
and then I explain my role and interest in conducting this study. Additionally, I describe the study’s sites, participants and participants’ selection.

**Rationale for Qualitative Design**

Qualitative research explores some facet of social life, and uses methods which generally produce words instead of numbers, as data for analysis. A qualitative case study design was the most ideal design to help me understand how students perceive their performance in CSEC English A. Qualitative research allowed me to focus on the how questions as I discovered how students felt about their competence using English and what strategies they thought could assist them to improve their performance in class and in their examinations. Yin (1994) describes the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that examines a current phenomenon within its real-life context and in which several sources of evidence are used.

The study was inductive as I explored students’ perception about their performance in CSEC English A. I used the data gathered to determine concepts that emerged from the data. The multiple site case study approach helped to provide a descriptive report from multiple perspectives. I got the views of students from three different evening schools as I discovered how and why they felt the way they did about their performance in CSEC English A.

A case study also provided a deeper understanding of the context than a survey could offer. It allows for the voice of students who are most affected by their success or failure in English. The use of interviews, observations and document analysis enabled me to triangulate my findings thus increasing the study’s validity (Mirriam, 1998). The methods of verification which are detailed below also helped to address some of the general criticisms concerning the use of case study in research.
Role of the Researcher

As an educator for approximately twenty years I have seen and been a part of several changes related to English in the education sector. I believe that having experience as an English teacher and as a school administrator has equipped me with some requisite skills and experience in the area to be studied which is student performance in CSEC English A. I have also been assisting students who attend evening classes prepare for their CSEC examination. Hence, I am aware of some of the challenges students’ face each year as they try to develop their competence in English and prepare for their English Examination. In addition, I was also a CSEC English A assistant examiner and so I was privy to some of challenges that students had in the particular areas of the examination that I used to mark. All these factors contributed to my interest in conducting this study and constitute an element of my positionality.

I know that I may have biases about the topic because of my involvement in teaching and marking CSEC English A. In order to check my biases I asked participants to review and comment on my observations and I asked them to review the transcripts of their interviews to ensure that the information that was recorded was actually what they had conveyed during the interview.

Population and Site

This case study utilized nine adult students from three evening schools in Savanna La Mar, as I tried to discover students’ perception about their performance in CSEC English A and to ascertain which strategies they thought would improve their performance in English. Students, whose first language is Jamaican Creole, were identified as high, medium and low performing in the English class by the English teacher at each school site based on students’ academic performance and progress. Students were selected as high, middle and low performing in order to
see how previous academic performance in English has influenced their perceptions about their competence in the subject. Additionally, classes are usually comprised of students who perform at different levels and so this selection method also captures this representation from the three English classes.

Evening schools provide an opportunity for students who are no longer in the formal educational system to sit CSEC subjects. These schools usually have several CSEC subjects being offered for two hours, one evening per week usually from September to May when the examinations are held. The evening schools were selected based on accessibility, and on minor differences noted about the school environment and operations at these schools. The schools are located in the town as this seems to be the best fit for both students and administrators.

The study took place on three sites in Savanna La Mar. Site One was Bright Star Evening Institute. The institution is located in Savanna La Mar, Westmoreland and offers classes from 5:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Classes are held at this time because the building it operates from is a Government owned high school which operates regular classes for grade seven to eleven students during the day.

Site Two was Sir M Evening Institute. The institution is located in Savanna La Mar. The institution offers classes from 5:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Classes are sometimes held on a Saturday to facilitate students who work during the week and are unable to attend all the evening classes. Classes are also held at this time because the building it operates from is a Government owned primary school.

Site Three was SMART Institution which is located in Savanna La Mar. The institution is privately owned and started out by offering classes from 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. However, it has started offering additional classes during the day which allows for more
flexibility of time for persons who work on a shift system, or for people who did not finish high school or for those who finished high school but need additional subjects to matriculate to university or to get a job. Classes are also held on a Saturday and Sunday.

**Data Collection**

The qualitative research methods of interviews, observations and document study were used. These methods provided in-depth information and were effective in getting closer to the realities of the individuals being studied. The data collection for the study lasted for approximately five weeks. It should be noted that individuals’ perceptions are difficult to capture and can change based on several environmental and individual factors. Consequently, this study provides a snap shot of a particular moment in time and reflects the views of the participants based on the timeframe when the data collection took place.

The study involved nine students and three teachers so the interview method was appropriate as interviews are flexible and allowed me to repeat a question if the respondent misinterpreted it without it being obvious. Interviews are beneficial because the response rate to questions is much quicker than that of questionnaire, non-verbal behavior can be noted, the environment can be controlled, and the interviewer can control the order of questions (Creswell, 1998). Hence, I wrote field notes, recorded the interviews and transcribed each interview. Written consent was sought from the participants and all information collected was kept confidential. The interviews with students were semi-structured in nature, but allowed flexibility for participants to share their stories. I also used the information gleaned from class observation or document study in the interviews to better ascertain students views on their competence in English.
More specifically each student interview consisted of three sections in order to ascertain students’ perceptions about their performance in English and the factors which contribute to these perceptions. I also sought to identify the strategies that students deemed as having the most impact on influencing how they learn or develop competence in the language.

**Student Interview**

**Part One**

The students’ interview consisted of three sections. In part one of the interviews I asked students to show me their English class or assignment books which included activities that had been marked by their teacher. I browsed through their notes and activities and recorded evidence of instructional strategies that had been employed by the teacher and the language learning strategies that the students have used. I also took note of the types of assessment that were used by the teacher and assessed how the students performed on these tasks. This information was also used when coding the data that has been presented.

I examined these documents as I hoped to ascertain if the teachers or students had a dominant instructional approach which was used generally or if the teacher had identified and catered to the differing learning styles of students through differentiation in the lessons and types of activities or assessments given. Based on the information that I gained from the documents I questioned students about the activities they did and how they felt having completed these activities. Where relevant, I also used some of the information that I gleaned during part one of the interview in subsequent sections of the interview.

**Part Two**

This section consisted of two areas. Students used three scenarios and a ranking sheet with nine instructional strategies as a stimulus for the interview. Firstly, students were presented
with three scenarios. Each scenario was different and highlighted methodologies that could be used in an English class. The methodologies were selected based on information garnered while doing the literature review and also based on my experience with supervising and assessing teachers of English. The scenarios also highlighted different personalities or character traits of teachers which influenced the teaching learning environment in the classroom. Scenario one focused on the use of writing activities in the class as the main instructional strategy by the teacher. The teacher also created groups based on students’ weak areas and spent time providing individual feedback to students instead of teaching the entire class. The teacher used and accepted the use of both Standard Jamaican English and Jamaican Creole during class instruction.

Scenario two focused on the project based approach as the predominant mode of instruction. The teacher broke down the projects which were not just exam based but also geared to reflect real life situations. The projects required students to utilize the various strands of listening, speaking, reading, viewing and writing. This teacher used Standard Jamaican English only during class instruction and did accept students’ use of Jamaican Creole during class.

Scenario three focused on the use of drills and worksheets by the teacher as the predominant mode of instruction for the class. There was little or no discussion from the teacher concerning the worksheets and students were rarely engaged in any form of extended writing activities. Students were required to complete worksheets individually and then they would be given the answers to mark their responses. The teacher often used Jamaican Creole during class.

For each scenario, students were asked to explain what they liked and disliked about the teacher and what they liked and disliked about the class. Students were also prompted to discuss
how the individual cases were reflective of their present class or what areas from the cases they would like to see included in their present class.

Secondly, students were given a list of nine instructional strategies that have been used in language classrooms. Some of these strategies can be linked to teaching English as a first language approach while the other strategies can be linked to teaching English as a second language. Students were asked to rank the strategies from the highest to the lowest in preference based on which strategies they think would have a greater impact on improving their competence in the language. Students were also be prompted to explain the rationale for the rank given to each strategy and to make a link with the effectiveness of the strategies being discussed and the strategies that they have been exposed to in English classes.

**Part Three**

This section of the interview involved the use of an interview protocol which consisted of predetermined questions which were used as a guide for the interview. Information from the classroom observations, document study and previous sections of the interview were inserted where relevant as I sought to get students views about their level of competence in CSEC English A and which strategies they believed were most effective in improving their performance. Some students provided limited responses so I had to prompt them where necessary in order to get thick descriptions during the process of data collection.

**Teacher Interview**

Interviews with teachers occurred once during the study. The interviews were done at the end of the second class observation. The interview had two parts.
**Part One**

I reviewed with the teacher three pieces of students’ work that was indicative of the type of activities commonly used in the class. This information assisted me in ascertaining the selection process for students who would be participating in the study as high, middle and low performing and to see the type of strategies and assessment that was common place in the language classroom. I was also able to gain insights into the type of feedback that was provided by the teacher to the students. The discussion of the individual participants also helped to provide vital background information about each participant that might not be revealed during the interviews with the students.

**Part Two**

This section of the interview involved the use of predetermined questions as a guide to finding out students’ level of involvement in the teaching learning process and students’ views and attitudes towards the subject area. I also tried to find out the types of instructional strategies that were used by the teacher and the response of students towards these strategies. Information that was gleaned from observations and student interviews was also included in the interviews which were semi structured in nature.

**Observation**

Observation is another method of collecting primary data in qualitative research. This study utilized non-participant observation in the English classroom to gain a better understanding of the ongoing behaviour of the students. Additionally, through observation I was able to capture non-verbal behaviour of the students, and the different themes that may emerge from the data (Creswell, 2009).
Two class observations were done at each site. The first class observation was done before I started the interviews with the students. This enabled me to use information gleaned from the class observation in my interviews to better understand the students’ perception about their performance in CSEC English A and the strategies they believed would better assist in developing their competence. The second class observation was done during the period of scheduled interviews. This assisted me as I identified or noted the areas that I missed during the first observation but which emerged from the interviews or document analysis. The class observations also gave me an opportunity to observe the standard operating procedure in the class. I was able to detect the interpersonal relationship between teacher and students, the methodologies being used by the teacher and the language learning skills used by the students. I was also able to check if what was discussed in the interviews was actually seen in the classroom.

The data collection process also involved writing field notes for each school or classroom visit. The field notes were written during the class observations or within an hour upon leaving the classroom in order to preserve the accuracy of what was seen and to ensure that relevant information was not omitted. Field notes from the first class observation were also incorporated in a stimulated recall interview format for both students and teachers. The information gleaned from the teacher helped me to get closer to the realities of the students.

**Document Analysis**

I also examined documents such as the teachers’ mark book which provided evidence of students’ grades and performance in English. Three written pieces of students’ work were examined to better understand and verify the students’ selection as high, middle or low performing student. The teachers were asked to select three samples of students’ work which
characterized their work in class. This data was also used as a stimulus for both student and teacher interviews. Samples of students’ work provided insights into assessing views expressed by students about their level of competence and how they felt about their readiness for their upcoming examinations. Information that was garnered from the samples of students’ work was also incorporated in the interviews in a simulated recall format.

**Data Analysis**

The analysis of the data for the study was done in steps. Firstly, I read through the entire data to get a better understanding of the major foci that respondents had identified. The areas included factors affecting student performance such as student learning strategies and teacher strategy. Next, I reread the data and made comments in the margin when I saw interesting or relevant information. As I reread the data I divided the information into content units. Smith and Strickland (2001, p. 150) define content units as “segments of discourse designed to make a single point.”

After dividing the data into content units I started open coding as I identified and labeled the different types of information presented by the respondents. I read each content unit as I derived codes and highlighted each code using a different colour highlighter. Then, I reread the list of initial codes and started to place them into categories. I categorized them in a way that described what the category was about. I then engaged in axial coding as I examined these categories to see how they related to each other and to see if they could be merged or they needed to be made into sub categories. The categories which emerged were used to create major categories or themes depending on the information that was garnered. The categories or themes were analyzed individually and then comparatively where possible. The major categories or themes are discussed in the findings.
Data interpretation involved making meaning of the findings by discussing lessons learned about attribution and expectancy value theories in the context of the evening schools. It also involved comparing the findings with information garnered from the literature review and theoretical framework.

**Methods of Verification**

Validity threats can occur during the collection and analysis of data. I minimized or eliminated these threats by utilizing the checklist suggested by Maxwell (Maxwell, 2013). I ensured that I was fully cognizant of my role as researcher, and tried not to unintentionally create any form of intervention. I immersed myself in the study by conducting interviews with students and teachers. Immersing myself in the study better enabled me to get the students’ voices as I tried to understand their perspective at different times and under different conditions. Moreover, my prolonged immersion in the study allowed me to gather rich data which enabled me to present the students’ voice in a way that has never been captured in Jamaica. I gathered the data through in depth interviews, observations and document study. During the process of transcribing the interviews and arranging my field notes I shared my data and conclusions, and methodically asked for feedback from my respondents.

In addition, when I was organizing and analyzing the data I checked to see if there was any discrepant data. Triangulation involves using a variety of methods to collect data from different individuals and settings. I collected data through interviews which involved asking different persons such as students and their teacher how students perceive their performance in English and about the strategies that students thought could better improve their performance in the subject. I also examined data from my classroom observations and the descriptive field notes.
that were written. In addition, I looked at students’ portfolios with sample writings and examined other pertinent documents such as application forms used for entry to the evening school.

**Ethical Issues**

The study which is qualitative in nature required participation from human participants which could have led to ethical issues needed to be addressed. In order to eliminate or minimize the potential threats, I upheld the regulations and requirements of the Institutional Review Board. This included getting informed consent from all participants in the study. Participants were also given the transcripts of their interviews to read so they could validate the information they had given during the interview process.

All information gathered was safely stored and treated confidentially. The information is being disseminated does not reveal the identity of the participants or institution as pseudonyms were used. Overall, I tried to ensure that the rights and welfare of the human participants were protected and that there were minimal risks.

**Summary**

This study seeks to explore and understand students’ perception about their performance in CSEC English A. Understanding students’ perception about their performance in English and the strategies they think can improve their performance in English is important due to the alarming failure rate of CSEC English which is cause for concern at the Ministry of Education (Reid, 2011). The Attribution and EVT Theories were selected because of their potential predictive ability. The study used the outlined methodology and explored how applicable the Attribution and EVT Theories were in this particular study of English Language learners.
CHAPTER 4

DESCRIPTION OF THE CASE

This chapter provides information on the case that was examined. I briefly describe savanna La Mar, the town where the three evening schools are located, the evening schools and the participants.

Description of Savanna La Mar

The case study approach was selected as it provided an opportunity for me to get rich thick descriptions from the participants. The case study is set in a particular geographical location and reflects the nuances and happenings of a moment in time in one of the fourteen parishes in Jamaica. Westmoreland is located to the west of the island and has an estimated population of one hundred and forty five thousand people. Savanna La Mar, the chief town in the parish of Westmoreland, is the hub of activities for thousands of persons who work or do business in the town. As the capital of Westmoreland, it is the home to most major government agencies and several private organizations. This coastal town is home to several public and privately owned primary schools. It also has, or is in close proximity, to several secondary schools and a few tertiary institutions. Most of the evening schools in the parish are also found in this town. The three evening schools for my study were selected to reflect the range of evening schools in the parish.

Description of the Evening Schools

Evening schools are a contemporary phenomenon that seems to be on the rise each year. These schools usually have several CSEC subjects being offered to students. Each subject is offered once per week for two hours, usually from September to May when the CSEC examinations are held. In recent times one of these evening schools has started to not only prepare students for the traditional May examinations when the external examination is done for
high schools but also in January, when those who failed the May examinations could retake them. However, over the years more first time students, rather than repeaters, are also sitting this examination in January.

About twenty five years ago there were few or no evening schools in Savanna La Mar. Over the years however, entrepreneurs have found a lucrative niche in the education system. These evening schools provide an alternative especially for working persons who want to improve their qualifications usually to matriculate to tertiary institutions or to be more marketable in the work force. The entrepreneurs cater to a need created by a gap in the education system as there is still a high number of persons who have left high school without passing CSEC English or who did not get a chance to finish high school. These private evening schools partner with other educational institutions situated in Westmoreland to provide their services. Only one entrepreneur has leased land and has built a school when the institution he was using decided to offer its own evening school.

The evening schools are located in the town for three main reasons. Many persons work in or in close proximity to the town and so it is easier for them after a long day to travel to classes. The town is also the hub of transportation for any location in the parish so persons know that they will be able to access transportation late at nights. In addition, the younger persons who make up a reasonable number of persons enrolled in these institutions prefer the town because of the activities, services and nightlife which it offers which might not be necessarily offered in their hometown.

The evening schools are private entities and are not regulated or governed by the Ministry of Education. Consequently, there are no rules governing the operations of these entities such as the qualifications of persons who teach the CSEC subjects, size of classes or duration of classes.
What seems to work is a consensus among administrators on the duration of class and the length of the programme. However, sometimes a few administrators deviate from the group and provide additional hours free of cost to students.

The three sites where the study was conducted were selected for several reasons. I knew the administrators for all three institutions. I knew the administrator of Bright Star Evening Institute since I had gone to his school and made a presentation some years before on study tips for English A. I also knew the administrator of Sir M Evening Institute as he was a colleague and I knew the administrator of SMART Institution because I had worked part time at that institution for about two years. I believed that all three administrators would be accommodating and would facilitate the study without any form of interference.

I met with the three administrators at different times at their evening school. At each meeting with the administrators I clearly delineated what I planned to do for my research. After visiting the schools and outlining my plans the administrators were interested in the study as they said anything that would help them understand how students perform in general could assist them in helping these students; which would mean more passes for their schools and eventually improve their businesses. The administrator at Bright Star Evening Institute also commented that he knew I was passionate about students doing well in English and so he was not worried about me using his school for the study.

My visits to Bright Star Evening Institute revealed that evening classes were offered from 5:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Classes were held at this time because the building it operated from is a Government owned high school which operated regular classes for grade seven to eleven students during the day. On my visits to this evening school I realized that a few students who attended the regular day school were still on the compound. Some students seemed
to be gainfully occupied as they could be seen in study groups or were having discussions with different teachers. Some students were seen working on projects while some students seemed to be just loitering on the compound.

The classes which were used for the evening school were on the same block. Classes had regular desks and chairs which seemed suitable for this setting. However, it was noted that while the classes were well lit, the lighting on the block and the school in general could be better as there were blind spots that were totally dark on the compound. Two overhead fans didn’t seem to provide much respite from the heat which saw some students using various objects to fan intermittently. I also found out that apart from the regular night watchman that the school employed, there were no other arrangements made for security purposes. There were also no facilities for persons to purchase food, drink or stationery.

On the evenings I visited the school there were two classes being held each time. I was told by the administrator that some years there is a need to have two different evenings for English and Mathematics which usually had larger numbers. Upon further checks I found out that the English classes were the largest classes at the school. The teachers have a contractual arrangement and are qualified teachers who are employed at various high schools in the parish.

Sir M Evening Institute was the second site that was visited. The institution offered classes from 5:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. The administrator also said that classes are sometimes held on a Saturday to facilitate students who work during the week and are unable to attend all the evening classes. The classes are also held at this time because the building it operates from is a Government owned primary school which operates regular classes during the day.
The classes are concentrated on one block. The classrooms are print rich as they are decorated with charts and other materials geared towards primary school children. The size of the desks and chairs are more suited for children. As a result, some of the seats are slightly uncomfortable for adults. However, the administrator has noted that changes have been made to seating arrangements so his students can be comfortable.

The classrooms are well lit and overhead fans provide some relief from the warm temperature. In addition to the security personnel provided by the school, extra security guards are hired based on a as needs basis. The administrators do not sell food, drink or stationery but they have given permission to two persons to sell these items provided that they monitor and assist with the disposal of the garbage created from these products.

The administrator of Sir M Evening Institute prides himself on employing teachers who are not only qualified to teach a particular subject area but who are competent and passionate about teaching. There are two separate classes per subject for English and Mathematics based on the number of students wanting to do the subject. Two teachers are employed for the English classes and students have the option in the first term to switch classes if they are having challenges with one of the two teachers or the assigned day for the class. The rationale is to provide an option for students based on the level of difficulty or fear that some students approach the subject with.

The SMART institution is privately owned. The institution was previously located at a school in the town but had to change location when that school started to offer its own evening classes. The administrator leased some land and constructed his own school. The building has several classrooms, an administrative block, cafeteria area and a lounge for students. Unlike the two other evening schools, students can purchase various items from the cafeteria which they
seem to utilize. Students also have a designated area that they can eat or relax. During my visits, students could be seen at various areas on the campus with earphones reading from their textbooks or computer screens or just talking to each other.

The classrooms are spacious, have adequate lighting and are well ventilated. The exterior of the building is properly lit and security guards are visible in the evenings and provide an extra layer of security. Two of the classrooms have seats organized in a non-traditional way.

A new location saw an expansion in the programmes being offered by the institution. The administrator started out by offering CSEC classes from 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. and later he started offering CSEC classes during the day. He said that day CSEC classes provided a much needed alternative for persons who work on a shift system such as those in the hospitality industry who mainly work in Negril, and it accommodated persons who did not finish high school and wanted a structured programme which was similar to a high school setting.

The evening classes are also structured so that high school students attend classes from 4:00- 6:00 p.m. This is the only evening institution that provides this service. Parents love this option as their children can be home earlier in the evenings while some adults love having only their peers in classes as they feel more relaxed and comfortable. The institution also offer programmes for other external examinations and short training courses which are certified by the relevant certification bodies. Classes are also held on Saturdays and Sundays. Teachers or training instructors are employed on a part time basis and most teachers have teacher training relevant to the subject area being taught.
Participants

Students

The following table outlines the three students from each of the three evening schools who were identified as high, medium and low performing students in the English class based on students’ academic performance and progress by the English teacher. Pseudonyms have been used for the participants and institutions which were involved in the study.

Table 1
Participants from the Three Evening Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Evening School</th>
<th>High Performing Student</th>
<th>Middle Performing Student</th>
<th>Low Performing Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bright Star Evening Institute</td>
<td>Britney Clarke</td>
<td>Geraldine Hughes</td>
<td>Eugene Fenton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir M Evening Institute</td>
<td>Icilda Jackson</td>
<td>Dian Ennis</td>
<td>Henry Islington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMART Institution</td>
<td>Atasha Black</td>
<td>Chris Daley</td>
<td>Felecia Grant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following table outlines the students’ interview dates and class observation dates at the three evening schools.

**Table 2**

Students’ Interview Dates & Class Observation Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Evening School</th>
<th>Name of Student</th>
<th>Interview Date</th>
<th>Class Observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bright Star Evening Institute</td>
<td>Britney Clarke</td>
<td>May 1, 2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Geraldine Hughes</td>
<td>April 24, 2017</td>
<td>April 3 &amp; 24, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eugene Fenton</td>
<td>April 10, 2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir M Evening Institute</td>
<td>Icilda Jackson</td>
<td>April 19, 2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dian Ennis</td>
<td>April 5, 2017</td>
<td>April 5 &amp; 26, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Henry Islington</td>
<td>April 12, 2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMART Institution</td>
<td>Atasha Black</td>
<td>April 13, 2017</td>
<td>April 6 &amp; 27, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chris Daley</td>
<td>April 27, 2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Felecia Grant</td>
<td>April 20, 2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Britney Clarke - High Performing Student at Bright Star Evening Institute.** Britney Clarke is a thirty year old female from Westmoreland who is currently residing in a populated but underdeveloped community which has limited opportunities for employment, except in the sugar cane industry which is seasonal employment with very low wages. She is an only child living in a nuclear family. Both her parents do not have any secondary education. As a result, it is her father’s dream for her to receive a tertiary education. She has been encouraged to save her money from her current job so she can assist to fund her educational pursuits.
She attended an upgraded high school plagued by indiscipline and JC was the dominant language that was used by students. JC was also the main language used in her home and community. However, one community member was highlighted as the sole person who spoke SJE consistently and encouraged young people to read. She does not have any academic qualifications but hopes to be awarded a level one HEART certificate for a Customer Service Programme she is currently enrolled in. She has also been a student at the evening institution for approximately seven months.

**Geraldine Hughes - Middle Performing Student at Bright Star Evening Institute.**
Geraldine is eighteen and resides in a relatively peaceful community that consists of mainly the elderly. She is from a nuclear family which includes two siblings. However, her family has frequent visits from her grandparents. Her parents completed secondary school and are both employed. SJE is the main language that is spoken in the home but Geraldine does not like this practice as she believes JC is more authentic and the Jamaican language should be spoken especially in the home. However, both JC and SJE are spoken in the community. She is still in high school because she had to repeat a grade at her current high school as she was transferred from another high school that is outside of Westmoreland. She likes her current school as there is a concerted effort by the principal and teachers to improve the school’s performance and change the public’s negative perception of the school. There is good interaction between students and staff. However, there is still some favouritism by teachers towards students who perform well academically.

**Eugene Fenton - Low Performing Student at Bright Star Evening Institute.** Eugene is from the parish of Westmoreland. He resides in a community adjacent to the town center that is occasionally susceptible to violence. This sometimes leads to reduced activities by the
residents, especially at nights, in and around the community. He lives in an extended family consisting of nine persons. The older persons in the home have completed secondary school but he has a cousin who is currently enrolled in a tertiary institution.

The language in the home is predominantly JC while both JC and SJE are used in the community. Eugene attended an upgraded high school which was on the shift system. He was not recommended by his teachers to sit any CSEC examinations at the end of his five years because they thought he would not be successful in passing these examinations. Moreover, when he was denied the opportunity at high school, his parents were unable to pay for him to do these examinations with a private institution because of the additional funding that was required and the stipulated payment deadlines by the examining body.

**Icilda Jackson - High Performing Student at Sir M Evening Institute.** Icilda is a forty three year old who resides in a community that’s on the outskirts of Westmoreland’s parish capital. Even though some persons describe her community as an inner-city, Icilda loves her community and doesn’t see herself migrating to another community. She lives in a blended family where she is the breadwinner. JC is the predominant language that is used in the home and the community. She used to attend an upgraded high school where she completed her secondary level education. She also has level one certification from HEART in Food Preparation. While at the HEART facility, the use of SJE by students was encouraged by the facilitators. She has been a student at this evening institution for almost a year and wants to pass CSEC English as a job requirement.

**Dian Ennis - Middle Performing Student at Sir M Evening Institute.** Dian Ennis is an eighteen year old female from the parish of Westmoreland and currently resides in a peaceful rural community. She belongs to a nuclear family where both her parents and two older siblings
have finished secondary school. Her siblings were successful in their CSEC exams. Both SJE and JC are used in the community. However, JC is the predominant language that is used in the home but her sister sometimes uses SJE when she is arguing with some persons. Dian abhors the use of SJE by her sister when it is used to demean or embarrass others. She attended an upgraded high school which is on the shift system. She was successful in passing five CSEC subjects but needs to pass the English so she can pursue her dream of going to university. She has been attending this evening institution for approximately seven months.

**Henry Islington - Low Performing Student at Sir M Evening Institute.** Henry is twenty five and currently living in a community in Westmoreland that has seen a recent upsurge in crime and violence. This has caused some members of the community to curtail their daily movement but he refuses to allow a few criminal elements to prevent him from pursuing his goals which are legitimate activities. He resides with his spouse and JC is the predominant language that is used in the home and the community. Henry and his spouse completed secondary school but they do not have any academic qualification.

He attended an upgraded high school where he experienced challenges learning and retaining what was taught because he was usually late for school. He had to work to send himself to school; consequently, he was often tired and sleepy in class. Some teachers used to reprimand him for his tardiness but few ascertained the reasons for his unpunctuality and non-completion of some assignments. Henry likes the fact that most of his current friends are friends he met at high school.

Henry and his friends have made a decision to speak SJE when they are communicating, even when they are in private in an effort to improve their language and communication skills. He has been a student at this evening institution for approximately three years and this is his
third attempt at the English examination. He wants to pass CSEC English so he can start an Associate Degree which would help him to get a better position at his current job.

**Atasha Black - High Performing Student at SMART Institution.** Atasha is a twenty-five year old female who was born in the parish of Kingston but currently resides in Westmoreland. Her community is relatively peaceful but there are few job opportunities in the community. As a result, most people who work do so outside of the community in the parish capital or in Negril which is a popular tourist destination. She grew up in an extended family but currently lives with her fiancé and two children. She attended an upgraded high school which was on the shift system in a neighboring parish before transferring to another upgraded high school which was in a volatile area in an urban area.

Her highest level of educational attainment is a level one HEART certificate. She has been a student at the evening institution for almost one year. Both JC and SJE were used in her home as a child. Currently, both JC and SJE are used in her home but she reinforces the use of SJE by her children because she wants them to become fluent in SJE. She uses technology to assist her children in acquiring SJE.

**Chris Daley - Middle Performing Student at SMART Institution.** Chris Daley is a twenty seven year old male who was born in a neighboring parish but currently resides in a community in Westmoreland that has a high level of unemployment among the youth. He lives alone but has a visiting relationship with his girlfriend. He is from a single parent household where his mother who never finished primary school struggled to send him to school. JC was the only language that was used in the home while SJE and JC were used in the community.

However, he now tries to speak mainly SJE because it is required on the job. He attended a technical high school where he wasn’t successful in passing any external examinations. This
failure he attributes to his irregular attendance and a lack of parental support. He has been attending this evening school for approximately three years and during this time he has already passed five CSEC subjects and hopes to pass English so he can pursue his dream of going to university.

Felecia Grant - Low Performing Student at SMART Institution. Felecia is a thirty-two year old mother who resides in Westmoreland, the parish of her birth. She is from a nuclear family and has three older siblings. Her parents have primary level education as they never finished secondary school. However, her older sisters have completed secondary school. JC was the language of choice in her home and community but as a mother she insists on the use of SJE by her sons although she allows the occasional use of JC. She attended an upgraded high school but was unable to complete her secondary education. Although she attended high school for a short period, she loved high school as there was always something exciting to look forward to. Most students spoke JC although they were encouraged by their teachers to use SJE.

Teacher

The following table outlines the interview dates for the three teachers of English at the three evening schools.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Evening School</th>
<th>Name of Teacher</th>
<th>Interview Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bright Star Evening Institute</td>
<td>Charmaine Coley</td>
<td>April 11, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir M Evening Institute</td>
<td>Stacey Reid</td>
<td>April 18, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMART Institution</td>
<td>Beverly Harris</td>
<td>April 25, 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Charmaine Coley.** Ms. Charmaine Coley has been an educator for over twenty years. She attended the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus where she pursued a Bachelor’s degree in Language Education majoring in English. She is a lifelong learner who maintains social and professional relationships which she uses to positively hone her pedagogical skills and improve her craft. She believes that Second Language Acquisition has a place in her English classroom as most of her students’ first language is Creole which interferes with students’ ability to master English which is often taught as a first language. She utilizes several methodologies to cater to her students and constantly motivates them to do well. She has been teaching at Bright Star Evening Institute for seven years and has seen English classes get bigger each year due to the number of persons who fail the examination or need to get it for entry in the workplace or to matriculate to tertiary institutions.

**Stacy Reid.** After leaving high school Mrs. Stacy Reid was employed in the hospitality industry for approximately twelve years. After working in the industry for about seven years without opportunities for promotions due to her lack of CSEC subjects, she attended the Sir M Evening Institute where she was successful in six subjects over a five year period. Her passes in CSEC allowed her to matriculate to Sam Sharpe Teachers’ College where she pursued English as her area of specialization. Mrs. Stacy Reid has been a teacher for over seven years and has been teaching at Sir M Evening Institute for four years. She feels honored to be working at the institution that helped her pursue her academic achievements. She encourages her students, especially the adult learners, to use their life experiences during English lessons as she wants them to see English as a way of life and not a subject.

**Beverly Harris.** Ms. Beverly Harris attended Shortwood Teachers’ College where she obtained a diploma majoring in English and Spanish before she went on to the University of the
West Indies where she earned a Bachelors’ Degree majoring in Spanish. She taught at the institution for four years before she attended the University of the West Indies and has been back at the institution since completing her studies. Overall, she has been teaching at SMART Institution for over seven years.

**Summary**

Nine students were selected to participate in the study. Three students from three evening schools were identified by their English teachers. Students were identified as high performing, middle performing and low performing from each institution. A short profile of each participant provides some background information on students. The three evening institutions provide similar subjects within the same timeframe and students sit the same external examination. Two institutions operate only in the evenings from schools that are government owned, while one institution which is owned by the proprietor offers additional courses during the day.
CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The exploration of students’ perception about their performance in CSEC English A revealed how nine students thought they would perform in their upcoming CSEC English A examinations. Students were candid in their responses which revealed how they perceived their performance in English and what factors affected those perceptions. The students also shared which instructional strategies they thought would best assist them as they prepared for their CSEC English A examination.

The data revealed several concepts which were later categorized under four main themes. It was observed that though there are four themes, they are interrelated and impact each other. The themes that were identified are student factors which influence students’ learning outcome, influence of JC on learning SJE, teacher traits that influence students’ learning, and structure and operations of the evening schools.

It should be noted that during the presentation of the data, students’ responses will be presented verbatim which will include both SJE and JC as several participants spoke both SJE and JC during the interview process. Before the interviews were conducted, participants were told that they could use whichever language they were most comfortable with and that they could use their usual conversational tone.

Theme 1: Student Factors That Influence Their Learning Outcome

Several concepts converged for this theme to emerge from the data. These included students’ language learning strategies, and students’ self-concept which was broken down to
positive and negative self-concept. These concepts were important at looking at and answering the research questions.

Students’ Language Learning Strategies

There are several strategies that have been posited as learning strategies that students use to enhance learning. The strategies that are used in learning a language are called Language Learning Strategies (LLS). O’Malley & Chamot, (1990) define LLS as “the special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information” (p.1) while Oxford (1990) defines LLS as “specific actions, behaviours, steps, or techniques students use- often consciously- to improve their progress in apprehending, internalizing, and using the L2” (p.1). Although the definitions for LLS may vary, it can be noted that they all speak to some kind of action by the student which helps in developing competence in the language. The language learning strategies identified in this case study included practicing, speaking SJE more frequently, using the syllabus and past papers as a guide and seeking assistance from friends and colleagues.

Practicing. Practicing the subject can take many forms but usually involves redoing a task that was already marked or attempted. One way all the respondents practiced was by redoing activities after they were marked. All the respondents completed given classwork or assignments although it was done with varying degrees of consistency. The respondents who were identified by their teachers as low performing acknowledged that they should be doing more work towards class preparation or revision in an effort to improve their weaknesses. The respondents who were identified by their teachers as middle performing students were motivated to complete tasks based on the improvements they saw while the high performing students did not just redo assignments but attempted questions which had a similar format and content in an effort to assess
how much they had grasped a concept or how well they could express themselves in that particular area of written expression.

The reasons cited by the respondents for practicing were varied. Some respondents completed tasks because they had a desire to improve their weaknesses. Henry and Eugene, who are both low performing students, acknowledged that sometimes they revisited given assignments in an effort to improve their weaknesses. Henry stated that “me try fi complete the ones a get an when a realize that some of dem doan do so properly a try an do dem ova and see if a caan improve pon di first one a do.” Henry recognized that he had to work harder in order to improve his performance. He was able to attribute improved performance with increased effort.

Eugene articulated that completing work in and out of class was important but attributed work demands as limiting the amount of work he could do. He stated that “onstly working in the days and then going to school in the evening is not always easy.” Icilda also cited some challenges that several adult learners who have a full time job while studying face. She said “When I have to do overtime or a double shift, I am so ti red sometimes I don’t have time to study or to practice my writing.” She went on to explain that “if we don’t practice we can’t do well in the exam.” Icilda also attributed practicing to improved performance. She recognized that she had challenges, as an adult learner, but she needed to do extra work, outside of regular cases, if she expected to be successful in the examination.

Two of the middle performing students Geraldine and Dian were motivated to do revisions to their previous assignments as they saw improvements in their performances. Geraldine acknowledged that she should be doing more class preparation and revisions for given assignments. She said “I know that I can probably be doing more but based on what I have been doing I realize that some improvement make so that a motivate me to do more.” Dian also noted
that she was pleased with the improvements she has seen in her work and so she is making the
effort to do more than just prepare for classes. She explained that apart from preparing for class
she also revisited previous classwork which was given and she focused on completing
assignments based on the suggested times under examination conditions to answer such
questions. She stated that:

I like to time myself when I complete the pieces, so I tend to do
similar questions to try and improve upon the corrections that I’m
given. The exam has limited time and I know I have to improve on
that area so I’ve been working on completing questions in a timed
way.

The desired outcome of improved performance through practicing motivated Geraldine and Dian
to work harder. They were rewarded for their extra effort and expressed that they would be
working even harder as they prepared for their examination.

Two of the high performing students’ rationale for completing tasks was a little different.
Icilda’s strategy included identifying similar questions to see how much she could apply what
she had learnt instead practicing what was previously given. Icilda stated that:

After I complete the assignments and I see my weakness I try to attack
another question with similar features to see how much I can apply myself.
I don’t like redoing assignments like that because it doesn’t really tell me
how much I’ve improved. I rather other questions to determine what
I’ve grasped.

Icilda wants to be successful in the examination and believes practicing similar questions
to the ones given in class or similar to past paper questions can better equip her for the upcoming
examination. Icilda attributed improved level of competence and confidence through this method
of practicing. She is satisfied that this method has been working and will continue to practice
other questions to test the skills she has acquired.
Atasha also attributed her improved performance to practicing. She used her teacher’s feedback to guide and gauge future attempts. She stated that:

I didn’t like redoing assignments. It has taken a while to adjust but I think I will continue and work on using this method more. Ammm, even though the teacher may not have time to mark them immediately, I like to use the comments she has made after the first marking and try to produce better work the next time around. That way I get to see if I understand the comments that were given or I get to see if the comments work to provide a better paper.

**Using SJE when speaking.** Some participants made a concerted effort to use SJE instead of JC when speaking in order to improve their competence in SJE. After failing English in high school Dian has found that trying to consistently use SJE during oral communication has improved her performance. She said that “speaking English more often has improved my performance.”

During the interview and classroom observation I noted that Atasha, Icilda and Britney tried to speak SJE when responding to questions. They were more vocal than the middle and low performing students in class discussions and they seemed more confident in using SJE. Icilda stated that “I tend to speak up in class. This way the teacher corrects me when I’m wrong. Fewer corrections mean I’m improving.”

**Using the syllabus and past papers as a resource.** Students often use a syllabus as a guide to the content to be covered while past paper questions assist students in understanding the format or type of assessment that is required for the examination. Past papers can also be used as a predictive tool as trends can be identified over time. Icilda’s learning strategies include “going through the syllabus” because in high school she just went to class and did most of what the teacher said. Now, she makes sure she knows what is expected for the exam. She said that she
now knows her weak areas and that she is working on those areas. Icilda commented, “I have gotten all the past papers I can and I have been practicing them. I also do extra work and ask my teacher to mark them.” Icilda believes she is better prepared for the examination because she knows the type of questions to expect and the format of the examination.

Seeking help from friends and colleagues. Two of the participants realized that they had weaknesses and asked their friends for assistance. Eugene was comfortable asking his peers for assistance. He remarked that “me start study wid me frend dem in a group.” By forming study groups he was able to share information and support each other as they went through the syllabus and looked at what was expected of them in the examinations. Eugene had failed the examination the year before and was now more focused on working on the areas that he saw as a hindrance to his success. Dian also sought help from friends prepare for exams “by studying what is done in class and asking a friend who passed the exam for help.” She believed that her friends who were successful in the examination would be able to guide and assist her so she too could be successful in the upcoming examination.

As I examined this theme, I realized that these students through their language learning strategies have been able to attribute their improved level of competence in CSEC English A to their hard work and focusing on areas that were previously neglected in high school. Essentially, as students used their new found language learning strategies and saw improved results they were more motivated to continue honing their newly acquired skills.

Students’ Self-Concept

Students’ idea or belief that they can become more competent in the language seems to significantly influence the attitude and approach that they have towards the examination. Self-concept was broken down into positive and negative self-concept based on the responses from
the participants. Most of the respondents, while currently attending these evening schools, exhibit a positive self-concept.

**Positive self-concept.** Atasha, Icilda, Britney, Dian, Geraldine and Chris exhibited high positive self-concept which was linked to high levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. If students are able to attribute success to particular inputs and they see that they are getting the desired rewards then they will be highly motivated because they expect to do well and others expect them to do well. Atasha said “I think I will be ready because I have put in the work and besides I feel more confident now.”

Britney’s belief that she is ready for the exams because of the work that she has put in has helped to increase her confidence. Her teacher’s belief that she will do well has also boosted her self-confidence and the improved grades that she has been getting.

Britney said,

I think I am almost ready for the exam. I don’t want to be overly confident or cocky but I think I will get a good grade in the exam this time around. I have been getting good grades on my pieces of written classwork. When I look at what I produced in high school and what I am producing now, I can see the difference and I realize that I have grown a lot in my writing so I think I am almost ready.

Britney is able to make a comparison and feels justified that her improvements have helped her to be better prepared and ready. It has been advocated by some that students with high self-esteem have higher academic performance than those with low self-esteem (Anthony et al., 2007; Jordan & Kelly, 1990). Britney mentioned that “my teacher believes I am ready. She has said as much. She thinks I will get a good grade. She really encourages us.” The data from this
case study shows that students with high self-esteem have a positive self-concept and it motivates them to exert more effort to do well.

Positive self-concept can also be developed in students even when they are not currently satisfied with their level of performance but when they recognize the improvements they continue to make towards successfully completing their goals. Eugene doesn’t believe that he will be successful in the upcoming examination but continues to work because of his improved performance in English. He recognizes that a lot of work needs to be done in order for him to be successful but he’s willing to try on his third attempt of sitting the subject because his teacher has been assisting him. He stated:

> This is me third time with the English but this time different cause when me see what me doing this year, me say no man me no dunce so me start put out more effort and since that de teachar start help me more and me really start do better.”

Eugene realized that he was improving in the language based on the grades and feedback he received from this current teacher, he felt some amount of self-worth coming back so he decided to make a concerted effort to improve in English. His renewed effort was doubled when the teacher seeing this new surge of effort started to encourage him which positively influenced his self-concept.

The fundamental idea behind the expectancy value theory is that people will be motivated by the belief that their actions will lead to the outcome they desire (Redmond, 2010). Hence, students will be motivated to exert high effort if they believe there is a good probability that they will do well in the subject. High confidence in one's academic potential results from a history of doing well in school, as well from strong messages that one is academically competent from one's parents, teachers, and peers (Wigfield et al., 2006). Chris attended high school but was
unsuccessful in passing any subjects. Since attending the evening school he was able to pass five CSEC subjects. Chris shared that before he passed his five subjects he didn’t believe that he had the ability to do so and so his new level of confidence and self-efficacy started showing in increased intrinsic motivation.

**Negative self-concept.** On the other hand, the low performing students did not exhibit positive self-concept like their middle and high performing classmates. Felecia stated that she doesn’t think she was ready for the upcoming examination. She said “I need to do more practice and get more understanding of stuff as I said earlier writing; I need to get that intact.” Unlike the high and middle performing students, the low performing students doubted their abilities to perform creditably in the upcoming examination. They would need to motivate themselves to work harder so they can improve on their weaknesses.

The negative self-concept started during high school for Eugene who lamented that while in high school he did not make an effort in English class because of the negative feedback from his teacher. The teacher told him that she did not expect him to be successful in the CSEC English A examination and so he felt as if there was no need to try because he would not be successful. Eugene stated “when me at high school di teacha tell me say she no tink me a go pass so me neva did tek English serious.”

Eugene’s situation was a unique one as his story was the only one which highlighted a change in self-concept from his previous schools to this current evening institution. The lens of the expectancy theory helps to analyze Eugene’s feelings and self-concept. While Eugene was in high school he didn’t make an effort in class because of negative self-concept which was reinforced by the teacher. However, his current teacher encourages him so he has developed a positive self-concept.
Several factors were identified by participants as influencing their competence and performance in SJE. Participants were able to identify student learning strategies which focused on practicing, using SJE during conversations, using the syllabus and past paper questions and seeking assistance from friends and colleagues. The participants also shared that their self-concept, which was examined as positive and negative self-concept affected their performance in SJE.

**Theme 2: Influence of JC on Learning SJE**

The Jamaican language situation involves the use of both SJE and JC which are used in various contexts. All nine students identified situations which showed that they were exposed to both JC and SJE. However, it was seen that JC which is the mother tongue for most Jamaicans was the language that was predominantly used in the homes and oftentimes used in their schools and communities. As I examined the data, I used several sub codes to create this theme. These include, use of SJE and JC in the home, use of SJE and JC at school, use of SJE and JC in the community and use of SJE and JC in the workplace.

**Use of SJE and JC in the home**

Some respondents shared that JC was the only or predominant language that was used in their homes. The use of JC, the mother tongue, in the home created some challenges for the respondents when they tried to learn SJE at school. Icilda shared that that JC was the language that was used in her home; as a result she had some challenges learning SJE because they are different languages. Henry said that “de language we use inna di house…a patois. Everybody roun me talk patois.” Henry used the language he was most comfortable with as he was totally immersed in JC. Transitioning to SJE outside of the home was challenging for him as he was not
accustomed to SJE. This affected his ability to code switch and his level of self-confidence using SJE.

Eugene stated that “it’s mainly creole though when we have visita or my cousin come from nursing school both of us try to use Standard English.” Eugene’s language in the home was mostly JC interspersed with SJE. He made the effort to speak SJE when visitors were in the home or when his cousin who was at a tertiary institution was also present in the home. However, he stated that he was more comfortable speaking JC during his childhood but maybe if had made the effort to speak SJE during that time his performance in English would be much better. Chris explained that “creole was used in his home as a child” but he now “speak[s] English or as close as possible.” Chris acknowledged that if he had been exposed to and encouraged to speak SJE as a child he would now be better able to use the language.

Atasha was exposed to both JC and SJE in her home. She said “we use to use both languages. There was no pressure to use English we jus use the language we were comfortable with”. This approach however, meant she was not fully immersed in SJE at home and this has affected her competence level in the subject. As a mother, she now tries to use primarily English in the home since she wants her children to be exposed and immersed in English in the home. She said, “I try my best to speak Standard English to my kids though it’s kind of difficult at time I try my best. And when my kids use the Creole I try to get them to use hear or say the English version.” Atasha realized the value of immersing her children in both languages so they can be confident and competent using both languages. She admitted that if this was done consistently for her she would have been more competent using SJE.

Felecia, who is also a mother, shared that she also “practice proper English” in her home and “whenever my boys speak Creole, I allow them at times but then I would tell them to do the
right thing.” Felicia, unlike Atasha might be transferring the idea to her children that JC is an inferior language to SJE as she states she tries to get them to do the right thing by speaking SJE. When children are told to do the right thing by speaking a particular language they might attribute negative feelings for JC which might be seen as an inferior language. She could however, encourage the use of SJE as another language that they need to know and encourage fluency in both.

The use of SJE in a manner to demean or embarrass others was shared by Dian who stated that her sister often times used SJE in a way that was meant to debase her parents when they had family arguments. Dian asserted that her sister would use SJE, especially its vocabulary, when arguing with her parents even though she knew they couldn’t understand some of what she was saying. Her father didn’t like this use of SJE which seemed to question his intelligence and would often respond to his daughter under these circumstances by declaring that if “she so intelligent and can talk the queen’s language why she don’t go and live in her own mansion and move out of his house”. The father was affronted by the use of SJE as he was not as competent in its use like his daughter and so he was unable to communicate effectively with her in this language. Dian shared that this experience involving her father and sister in her home influenced her decision to speak mostly JC in the home. She articulated that this decision however, has affected her negatively as it took a long time for her to feel confident while speaking SJE.

Use of SJE and JC at school

Use of JC by teachers at previous high school. Several students responded that their teachers in high school did not model SJE but rather spoke and accommodated the use of JC during and outside of classes. Felecia and Henry explained that their high school teachers used a
lot of JC at school. The language of instruction and assessment that is used in schools is SJE. If students are not allowed a safe space at school to be immersed in SJE and guided by teachers who model the language then students may not see the importance of developing competence in SJE. Felecia said “the teachers use Creole a lot at school and because of dat the students dem use mostly Creole. Only sometimes the English teacher dem stress English.” These students used JC because it was not only accepted by the teachers but it was the predominant language that the teachers modeled for the students. As a result, students were comfortable using their first language. Henry stated that the students “never feel anyway” using JC “cause that’s what we know and de teachers accept it and use the Patois when teaching.” Atasha also described her high school as a place where JC was dominant. She said that “generally most students and teachers spoke Patois. The classroom was similar to what was happening at home as you mostly found children and adults talking Patois as opposed to Standard English.” The predominant use of JC by teachers and students would have minimized the opportunities for students to develop competence in SJE. According to Atasha, schools didn’t provide an alternative to the home to learn SJE. She felt that if SJE was demanded in school then more students would perform better in SJE.

Eugene’s high school experience was slightly different as he specified that during high school “most of the teachers dem use both English and Patois.” Some teachers spoke to students outside of classes using JC which helped to build good rapport with the students and some teachers explained some information in JC when some students did not understand a concept. At Eugene’s school students would have been better able to model SJE as teachers would sometimes immerse students in the language and teachers seemed to intentionally use both languages to achieve different outcomes.
Teachers use and acceptance of JC and SJE in class. During the discussion of the three scenarios that reflected different strategies that can be used in the teaching of English, students conveyed varying reasons for liking or disliking the teacher’s approach to the acceptance or non-acceptance of JC and SJE in classes. Chris and Atasha disliked Mrs. Barnaby’s approach to compelling students to speak SJE in class. Chris stated that “this might prevent some students with good ideas not to talk.” Icilda also disliked this teacher’s approach to forcing students to speak SJE as this approach can “turn students off”. Henry indicated that he “couldn’t function” in this class as he doesn’t see the benefits of “listening to only English and can’t move on.”

Dian was opposed to Mrs. Barnaby insistence on refusing to repeat instructions in Creole. She stated that students would be unable to complete assigned tasks if they didn’t understand the instructions in English as the teacher “doesn’t repeat instructions in Creole.” However, Britney agreed with the teacher’s method and stated that students in Mrs. Barnaby’s class “should not be demanding the instructions in Creole” as the exam is not done in JC.

Unlike Mrs. Barnaby who insisted on only using SJE, Mrs. Maitland spoke JC frequently in her class. Felecia disliked Mrs. Maitland use of JC in English class as she believed that “in English class you should be practicing more English.” While some respondents claimed that JC was primarily used in their schools and they did not like this practice because SJE should be the focus of a SJE class, there were other respondents who expressed their dislike for strategies used by teachers which did not facilitate students use of JC in a SJE class as JC was the language that students were competent in.
Use of SJE and JC in the community

Some respondents claimed that JC was the predominant language that was used in their communities. Geraldine claimed that “growing up and even now it would be Creole, yes, most people talk Creole. Icilda stated that “we use the Jamaican Creole. It is the predominant language not just in the home but in the community. That is the language we hear in the mornings and evenings, it’s all around us.” Henry also claimed that “inna mi community is Patois.” The predominant use of JC in the community meant that students would not be immersed in SJE further limiting their access to SJE. This also meant that they would not be able to develop their confidence or competence of SJE use in their community.

However, some respondents asserted that both SJE and JC were used almost equally in their communities. Geraldine said that “my community is probably balanced with Creole and English.” Eugene stated that “the two of them cause you have people who speak English.” While Dian did not quantify which language was the predominant language she asserted that she has “been exposed to both Standard English and Jamaican Creole in me community. This was good, really, as we could try to speak English with some people. It helped in a way.”

SJE was also used by community members depending on the context they were in. Britney claimed that her father “would speak some form of Standard English when he needs to like when he had to take [me] to school or meet the principal and so on, he would able to present himself somewhat.” However, there were instances of SJE being used by community members and in some instances this use of SJE positively influenced their use or appreciation of SJE as a language. Britney stated that:

the community that I grew up in they speak Creole. There was just one gentleman in the district who did not speak any Creole at all. I respected him very much you know. He introduce us to newspapers
and encourages to read. The gentleman lived overseas for a while and brought back the habit with him. The impact was that the children would learn to read first and then be exposed to other things. The use of SJE in the community exposed these students to SJE and gave them the opportunity to practice and develop their competence in the language.

**Use of SJE and JC at the workplace**

The expectations and requirements of the workplace have also contributed to the language that is spoken by some persons. Chris explained that JC was the language that was used at his home “but now [he] tends to speak English or as close as possible because [he’s] exposed to it at work and through [his] friends.” He has stated that this has helped him immensely to improve his use of SJE. Henry also stated that “a few people who work like a bank or certain place speaky speaky sometimes.” Some work stations demand or expect their employees to have a good grasp of SJE. Some individuals, over time, learn conversational SJE as they become more exposed or immersed in SJE on the job.

Icilda shared that while on the job “most coworkers speak Creole while talking to each other, though some who interact with tourists speak something closer to English,” while Eugene said that “more people will chat Creole cause dat is what is expected. You caan really be going around talking English cause everybody will be looking at you kind of weird.”

The dominance of Creole in the home, school and community might have impacted the participants’ competence in English as Felecia stated that she didn’t want her sons “to struggle with English like me because they only heard patois in my home.” It was noted though that while Icilda shared that most persons spoke Creole in the community, that persons who worked in the tourist sector spoke something closer to English. Britney also shared that her father spoke some form of English when communicating with the principal or while he was at her school. This
revealed that persons in order to better communicate with others in a different context from the home or immediate community such as a principal or tourists whose language would be primarily SJE were able to code switch when necessary. They had to learn to bridge the gap between JC and SJE and had found a way to do so by moving from the Basilect stage (use of JC) on the language continuum to the Mesolect (second stage) of the continuum which some persons refer to as broken English and comes before the final stage which is the Acrolect (use of SJE).

Participants in the study revealed that JC was the first language in their homes but that they were exposed to SJE in different contexts throughout their lives. Most participants revealed that although SJE was spoken in their communities, JC was the predominant language that was used in their communities. It was also noted that the participants were not totally immersed in SJE while at school as some were allowed to use JC freely while others were encouraged to use SJE when speaking. It was also noted that some of the participants since becoming adults have started to encourage persons in their homes to speak SJE. Participants agreed that if they were exposed to consistent use of SJE in the home, community and school they would have greater level of competence in the language. Their limited use of SJE influenced their previous poor performance in SJE.

**Theme 3: Teacher Traits that Influence Student Learning**

Students’ perception can be influenced by their interaction with their teacher. In order to categorize and make meaning of the data related to teachers’ characteristics I used two subcodes, teacher beliefs and instructional strategies used by teachers. As I looked at the data I classified teacher beliefs to include teachers’ expectation of students and teacher student relationship. The instructional strategies used by teachers comprise of strategies that teachers use in the classroom and students preference of nine instructional strategies they were asked to rank.
The nine instructional strategies were selected based on information garnered from the literature review and from strategies I have observed that teachers of English generally use in their classrooms.

**Teacher Beliefs**

Teachers’ beliefs toward the teaching and learning of SJE influence what happens in the language classroom. These beliefs are demonstrated through the actions and methodologies that the teachers demonstrate.

**Teacher expectation of students.**

*Low expectations of students from low socioeconomic background.* Some individuals associate the use of a particular language with persons from a particular class. Students who speak JC as their first language are sometimes seen as students from the lower strata in society and there is often the misconception that these students can only speak JC because this is what they are accustomed to. Geraldine didn’t like the actions of some teachers at her high school and believes that there was some amount of bias toward students who were from low socio economic backgrounds as they were expected to perform poorly in class. She believes that this affected the academic performance of students.

I don’t like the bias that exist because some teachers sort of look down on some poor students who don’t do well in school and even when students start to make progress they still show preference to those who might have been doing well before but have fallen back in their grades.

Ms. Harris shared that “some students claim that their teachers didn’t expect them to do well and so if teachers expected them to fail there was no need really to try to pass the subject.” She further stated that this view has influenced her attitude as a teacher of English over the years.
and so she tries to build the self-confidence of these students by motivating them when she can. Ms. Coley also believes that students’ socioeconomic background affects performance in English. She said:

Students’ cultural or socioeconomic background also affects how well they do in the subject. I have seen that usually the students who are from the middle to upper social class tend to do better especially in speaking the language which ultimately affects how they write the language.

Both teachers are cognizant of some advantages students from the middle or upper class might have in demonstrating competence in English. However, they believe that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds can become competent in the language. Geraldine believes that her competence in English and overall performance in high school could have been better if she and other classmates had received additional help from her teachers. She explained:

Looking back most of us who did only speak Patois never use to do really well. But after a while we start to pick up and do better. If we did just get the extra help earlier from all the teachers maybe no, definitely me would pass English already and doing much better with my life.

Similar sentiments were expressed at the evening school as Ms. Coley the English teacher said “usually the ones from low socioeconomic backgrounds don’t do as well and need more help and motivation. If you are not careful you spend most of your time with these students.”

When teachers have low expectation of their students’ ability to excel academically students can become bored and disorderly, fail to concentrate and put little effort into performing on their schoolwork which can result in failure (Skiba, Rausch, & Ritter, 2004). Eugene’s previous English teacher had low expectations of him which she communicated to Eugene and this further influenced his poor performance in the subject. Eugene admitted that he
stopped trying in class when his teacher told him that he would not be successful in the examination. He said

Some neva nice at all like me English teacha. She eva tell me how me chat bad and me neva a go pass English. So me just no try inna her class cause to me it no mek sense fi try. And wat me neva like to, while some of the other teacha dem would talk English and switch to patois if we neva understand di English teacha only a talk English.

**Positive teacher student relationship improves class participation.** Some students believe that they perform better when there is a positive relationship between teacher and student. Consequently, some students try to develop and maintain good rapport with students. A positive teacher student relationship contributes to a non-threatening learning environment which allows students to feel respected and valued by their teacher and peers.

There was good teacher student rapport in the classroom and generally good teacher student relationship in all three classrooms. Most of the students in Ms. Coley’s class participated in the whole class discussions and remained on task for the activities which were done. Ms. Coley constantly encouraged the students who she called by name to respond. This constant encouragement seemed to improve the student teacher rapport in the class as there seemed to be no strained relationship in the class except for a few young ladies who Ms. Coley spoke to several times about the use of their phones in class. These young ladies were observed constantly on their phones and were often distracted as they kept asking their neighbours to explain what happened after they missed a section of the discussion. Ms. Coley reprimanded them and made reference to a conversation she had with them two weeks before about being distracted in class and not having a lot of time to prepare before the upcoming examinations. A
female student in the class interjected and said “Miss, continue the class cause they’re not babies. They must know why they coming to class.”

Students in Ms. Reid’s class also seemed to enjoy a good rapport with their teacher. Persons seemed comfortable and there was a lot of humor interspersed in the classes. However, there were three students who were seen at different times with their heads on their desks. Ms. Reid, during class discussion went over to these persons and gently touched them in their backs after which they got up. After the class I asked Ms. Reid about the students who had their heads on the desks. She explained that sometimes she allowed these three students five minutes rest period before getting them involved again because they were working adults who had to travel over an hour on public transportation to get to class. She said she understood this particular challenge but encouraged them to keep up with the class. She also said these students were doing well compared to some students who were not working.

Ms. Reid’s relationship with the class has influenced Icilda to work hard in her class. Icilda shared that she disliked English in high school because her teacher “didn’t have a good relationship with the class and so some of us didn’t put out any effort in the class.” However, she noted that her current experience with Ms. Reid is different as “my current teacher is really nice in class so I try to get the work done. She is approachable.” Icilda’s view is that she is prepared to work harder because of the positive teacher student relationship that exists in the classroom.

Ms. Harris’ classroom seemed to have a non-threatening environment as students spoke freely and respectfully during classroom discussion. There were some students who remained quiet throughout the lesson although they were seen taking notes at various intervals. Ms. Harris seemed to know the names of the students in her class as she called their names to get them involved in class activities throughout the lesson. I asked Ms. Harris at the end of the lesson
about asking specific students to respond to questions and she said that she realized that students were more focused on class activities because they knew she could ask them at any time to participate. She also said it was a method to get the students who weren’t assertive to participate and prevented some students from dominating class discussions.

Ms. Harris encouraged her students throughout the lesson and even some classmates encouraged their peers as they participated in class activities. I asked Felecia how she felt responding to a question that the teacher had specifically asked her to respond to. Felecia stated “because I know she can call on me, I try to pay attention and prepare myself to answer. She’s really a nice teacher so I wouldn’t want her to think that I’m wasting time in class. If I do that I would be disappointing she and myself.”

During the discussion of the scenarios that the participants were asked to comment on, Britney spoke passionately about the relationship that Mrs. Maitland had with her class. She didn’t like Mrs. Maitland’s attitude in class especially when she was responding to students. Britney was offended by the language used to students especially when Mrs. Maitland said “no time for such foolishness.” She believes that a teacher has to be tactful and you cannot tell adults that what they are doing or saying is foolishness. Other participants mentioned that Mrs. Maitland’s behaviour in class was unacceptable and Eugene mentioned that he couldn’t function in a class with a teacher who didn’t get along with students.

As some of the respondents discussed the three scenarios they highlighted the teachers they thought were motivating their students to well. Henry liked the individual attention that Ms. John gave to students. He believed that the attention given to students was crucial in motivating students to work harder. Students would feel as if their efforts were being rewarded and would be more likely to complete given tasks because they knew the teacher would be checking their
work and monitoring their progress. Eugene liked the fact that Ms. John “motivates her students to do well” and Icilda liked that Mrs. Maitland “tried to motivate them.”

Motivation is influenced by both internal and external factors that can start, sustain, intensify, or discourage behavior (Reeve, 1996). Internal factors include the individual characteristics or dispositions that students bring to their learning, such as their interests, responsibility for learning, effort, values and perceived ability (Ainley, 2004). While some of the respondents were influenced by their teachers positive behaviour towards them which influence their desire to complete their tasks creditably, some of the participants in the study were intrinsically motivated to do well because Henry, Chris and Britney explicitly stated that they wanted to move on to tertiary institutions. Atasha and Icilda wanted to pass English as a job requirement. Some of the other participants wanted to pass English so they could pursue their dreams.

Pajares, cited in Turner, Meyer & Christensen (2009), posited that teachers form their beliefs about teaching and learning based on their experiences as students and that these beliefs become well established by university. The above discussion highlights the actions of teachers whose beliefs were formed based on their own life experiences and whose beliefs now influence the teaching and learning of English in the Jamaican classrooms.

**Instructional Strategies used by Teachers**

Teachers should find instructional strategies that cater to the students’ learning styles resulting in high standards and quality education regardless of the diversity of the student population. Students are expected to be active participants in the learning process. Although several strategies were noted in the three classes, based on my classroom observation, review of students work and interviews with students and teachers I was able to draw the conclusion that
while several strategies were used, the use of vocabulary activities was the most used strategy for all three classes.

**Vocabulary activities.** After perusing the students’ notebooks I realized that all nine notebooks had several vocabulary activities which were in different states of completion. Most of the completed vocabulary activities were marked by students while some were not marked though they were done weeks before. The type of vocabulary activities that were done was similar to vocabulary activities from practice texts and sample CSEC English A exam papers. The vocabulary activities included synonyms, antonyms, sentence completion, word meaning and also incorporated grammar activities.

Most respondents said that they liked completing the vocabulary activities but for varying reasons. Atasha said that she loved doing these vocabulary activities because she needed to know the meaning of words and how to use them. English words sometimes have different meanings in Creole and so I want to know the meaning of these words so I can understand what I’m reading and a can use the language well. I don’t want persons to laugh at me cause I don’t know the meanings of these words. Plus when you can use different words when talking to people they will have a good impression of you and look at you different because they think you are intelligent.

Atasha had several reasons for completing these activities. She believes that if she did well and improved her vocabulary it would aid her understanding in reading comprehension and improve her written and spoken language. Both Atasha and Icilda mentioned that when individuals are able to use words appropriately when communicating to others, persons would think that you are intelligent. Atasha also said the she didn’t have a problem completing the vocabulary activities because she has seen improvements in her speech and writing so she’s “happy cause when this happens you seem to have a better grasp of English.”
Dian stated that she completed the vocabulary activities because it allowed her new ways to express herself and allowed her to “turn up or lesson the level of intensity or how to adjust [her] tone in the writing.” Britney liked completing the activities because she believes it would aid her oral and written communication. She also stated that she liked completing these activities because it felt “good when the teacher mentions persons who do well on them too.”

Felecia said that she actually loved completing the vocabulary activities and would “even do additional activities based on what is given.” She stated that she used the activities as “the building blocks for [her] to know the subject.” Henry also mentioned that he liked doing these activities which assisted him in selecting appropriate words based on context and he found himself using some of the new words “even a work.”

On the other hand, Geraldine doesn’t like doing these vocabulary activities and “complain all the time about these vocab and comprehension activities.” She conceded, however, that she can “see where these activities have been helping” her. Chris also explained that he “do[es]n’t think these activities should be given as in class activity.” He believes that “time can be better spent on other activities such as the types of writing and how to better develop these writing styles.” While most respondents claimed that they liked completing the vocabulary activities because they experienced several benefits from doing so, such as improved speaking and writing vocabulary, they all agreed the reaction or feedback from the class towards these activities was mixed as some classmates definitely did not like them and some didn’t attempt to complete them.

**Directed reading thinking activity.** This strategy was not among the list of nine instructional strategies that participants were given for the ranking activity during their interviews. However, its use was observed during two of the classroom observations. Ms. Coley
used the directed reading thinking approach to get students actively engaged in class discussions during a comprehension activity. Her use of the approach progressed smoothly throughout the lesson. At the beginning of the activity she provided all students with copies of the extract they would be reading and discussing. She then used a brain teaser to commence the lesson and I later realized that this introductory activity was linked to the material that students would be discussing. During the activity, Ms. Coley stopped at specific sections and engaged students in brief discussions where students were allowed to share their ideas and make predictions. Students were active participants in the discussions and some students got excited and expressed their excitement in intermittent outbursts when they realized that they were correct with their predictions.

The use of the directed reading thinking activity in Ms. Reid’s class however was not as engaging as Ms. Coley’s class. Each student wasn’t able to get a copy of the reading material so students had to share. This affected the level of participation for some students who complained to the teacher about the fast or slow reading rate of some group members. As a result, some students were unable to make comments about a section they had read or make predictions because they failed to keep up with the pace of the lesson. However, the students who were able to maintain the pace of the teacher were active participants throughout the discussions.

In addition, time was lost during the discussions as some students who had not completed their reading of the particular section asked for clarification or would ask for more time to complete the section. Moreover, the teacher hadn’t preplanned which sections she would stop to have students discuss or make predictions. On two occasions, she gave students a section to read and after approximately two minutes she added additional paragraphs to be read. However, for
both classes, the questions that were asked encouraged critical thinking and students were encouraged to speak the language they were studying.

**Graphic Organizers.** Ms. Coley’s class was the only class that I observed the use of graphic organizers. Each student was given a template containing a topic and a diagram with five rectangles outlining the format of the persuasive essay. She asked specific students to explain what they thought each section or rectangle should contain. For example, students discussed that the first rectangle would be the introduction. She then asked other students to explain the components of the introduction, after which she asked students to use the topic from the activity sheet and give suggestions for sentences which could be used in the introduction. At the end of this discussion she asked a student to write an introduction on the board based on the suggestions from the class. The teacher then asked students to complete the essay using their diagrams.

After observing the lesson I spoke to Britney, Geraldine and Eugene about the teacher’s use of the graphic organizer in the lesson. Britney said she didn’t think the teacher had to use “boxes” for them to write in the different sections because everyone should know the layout of an essay. She asserted that the discussion on the topic was good, but for her it never needed a diagram to have that discussion. Eugene also said he didn’t think it was necessary to go through the diagram because the information could be written without a diagram. However, Geraldine said that she liked it because she would be able to remember more clearly what each section should contain. I noted that all three participants were engaged throughout the lesson and that Britney completed the activity without assistance from the teacher while Eugene and Geraldine asked their teacher to assist them while they were completing the activity.

It was interesting to hear the comments of the students after they were engaged in the use of the graphic organizers as the comments from two of the participants reflected different views
when they were asked to complete the ranking activity for the nine instructional activities. During the ranking activity, Geraldine asserted that “some persons learn differently and so by using graphics you are expanding how they learn.” However, she was not so considerate to her peers when she mentioned that a diagram wasn’t needed for persons to understand how an essay should be written. Britney stated that “the use of these would be based on the students learning styles it’s good to use and I think it should be compulsory that you have something to fit into each child’s learning style.” Eugene agreed as he said “it can be good for different people and how they learn.” While Britney and Eugene were saying that this particular strategy was good for students who learned this way, they did not see the benefits for themselves as learners when Ms. Coley used it in her lesson.

**Translation of JC to SJE and comparative analysis of JC and SJE.** Two strategies that Ms. Harris used to complement each other were the comparative analysis between SJE and JC and the translation from JC to SJE to assist some students. She assisted the students by translating what they said in JC to SJE and then asked the students to summarize what they had said. It was noted that the students’ summaries were given with less JC interference and students seemed more comfortable responding in the class.

Sometimes when the students still struggled with making the translation she would highlight the particular difference between JC and SJE and asked the class to discuss the differences between the two languages. One such example was when a student kept saying “me no like ignorant people.” Based on the discussion Ms. Harris rephrased her sentence and said “you don’t like persons who are aggressive” and the student said, “yes miss I don’t like ignorant people.” During this discussion, Ms. Harris highlighted that JC and SJE share many words because JC is English based but some of the word meanings are different as in the case of
ignorant when used in JC. In JC, the word ignorant is usually used to mean aggressive and not the denotative SJE meaning of lacking knowledge. This shows that the teacher recognized the students’ first language and without implying that JC was inferior to SJE, she simply translated what was said in JC to SJE so the students could make their own adjustments of what they should have said. This also hinges on another theory of second language acquisition which advocates that teachers recognize the value of a first language and teach the second or target language as a separate language.

**Role play and dramatization.** Ms. Harris’ class was the only class where this strategy was briefly incorporated into a lesson. Four students were asked to dramatize a scene where two students per team would present opposing views with the hope of convincing the class based on their arguments. After the dramatization Ms. Harris asked the class to use this information to develop topics that could be used in argumentative or persuasive writing. Students were given a chance to share their topics and the class later decided which topics they could use for writing activities. I asked the three participants from Ms. Harris’ class how they felt about this strategy being used in classes.

Felecia stated “we learn differently so this would be good for some” while Atasha said “persons learn differently not everyone would like to sit in a class and see something being played out for them to learn much from it while other persons would not.”

Chris stated that “English classes should be English class. Is not drama or theater class…the exam ask us to write in English so after we understand and laugh and have a good time…what happen to writing that in English. Chris does not agree with the use of this strategy because he fails to see the many benefits of this strategy, even though he admits that it helps
students to “understand” content in a fun way. Instead he is concerned about students’ inability to express themselves in writing after having gone through these activities.

**Scenarios.** The students’ responses to the scenarios highlighting three different classrooms also allowed students to share how they felt about the strategies being used by these teachers and also allowed students to reflect on their previous or current English classes.

**Writing tasks.** Three of the students highlighted the amount of or lack of writing tasks which was given by the teachers. Icilda explained that her current teacher reminds her of Ms. John as “we spend too much time on writing and not enough time on the other skills.” Henry, on the other hand doesn’t like that Mrs. Maitland didn’t focus on the writing tasks.

Atasha liked that Ms. John spent a lot of time on writing tasks because the examination is a writing exam. She said she likes “the amount of time she spends on writing tasks in the English.” However, Atasha disliked that Ms. John was so focused almost tunnel driven on preparing students to write by giving them so many practice papers. She believes that English language offers much more and if students can improve in the other areas of English then she believed that their writing would eventually improve.

**Use of projects and activities.** Several students liked the project based approach which was incorporated in Mrs. Barnaby’s lessons. Atasha liked the use of projects in classes as students found the projects interesting and discussed them after class. Eugene liked the activity based lessons but students took too long to start projects. Dian liked “that she gives projects” as they “can be applied in real life” and students get a “chance to work with other”. Henry liked that she included projects because students “learn differently”. Chris liked that “she uses different strategies like projects and not the regular test test that some teachers use.”
**Exam preparation.** Exam preparation is important for students as the main reason for attending English classes is to sit and be successful in their CSEC English examination. Several students explained what they liked or disliked about the teachers strategies for exam preparation. Dian liked that Ms. Johns “prepares the class for the exam based on the areas that CXC focuses on.” She feels better about her level of preparedness because the class is exam oriented and she knows that she focusing on things related to the exam. She recalls previous instances where teachers taught slavishly from the syllabus and didn’t incorporate exam type papers. This strategy didn’t work for most students as some students focused on areas that weren’t really examined and ignored areas that were mandatory on the examination. Britney liked that Ms. John focused on students “weak areas instead of teaching the entire class everything that should be taught in English.”

Henry also liked this strategy used by Ms. John. He felt confident that being a member of her class he would pass the exam as Mrs. John knew what students needed to do to pass the subject. Henry believed that whilst performing well and becoming competent in English was good the goal was to pass the examination he liked that the teacher knew and communicated to the students what they needed to do to pass the subject. Once the examination requirements were discussed, Henry believed that students could always use this as a reference point to gauge how well they were doing in the subject and what they needed to improve on.

Icilda liked Mrs. Barnaby approach to preparing students for the exam as she focused on all the strands of the language and not just on writing. She loved that while students were being prepared for exams they could relate the lessons to “real life situations.”

**Drills.** Atasha and Felecia liked that Mrs. Maitland “drills her students” but Icilda disliked the drills and focus on writing tasks. Icilda thinks the drills are monotonous and boring
while Chris disliked “how rigid she is in terms of the activities or drills that she gives them.” Some respondents didn’t just register their dislike of Mrs. Maitland methodology but they also gave suggestions to what the teacher could do to enhance the teaching learning experience. Henry acknowledged that he would have to “respectfully ask [Mrs. Maitland] to change how she teach.” Her methodology could change through Icilda’s recommendation that the teacher “attend some seminars” as this would “remind her that there are other strategies and methods that she could incorporate in her classroom to stimulate students interest.” Eugene agreed that the teacher needs to “vary her lessons” and as “a trained teacher you have to be more versatile and see how best your students learn.”

**Worksheet.** Dian liked the use of worksheet as recognizes that “practice is important.” Atasha liked the use of worksheets because they “resemble a test” Geraldine likes the idea of practicing through tests as this better prepares students for exams “by doing more past paper questions” she stated that the teacher reminded her of another teacher in high school who she loves.

**Timely feedback is vital to students’ improved performance.** Teachers have to be cognizant of the type of feedback they give to students and how this influences students’ performance. Five of the participants said that they believed that they would do well because the teacher told them so. However, one of the five participants, Icilda was doubtful of her teacher’s confidence in her abilities as she said that “my teacher thinks I am ready because she says I speak well, she thinks also that I write well even though I don’t think so. She thinks I am ready and I don’t, so let’s see.”

Although one of the participants might not have been told verbally, the feedback from marked scripts expressed the teachers’ confidence in six of the participants. As I inspected the
participants’ scripts I realized that the feedback given to most of the students were very encouraging. Some scripts had words like “I know you can do it, you keep improving each piece of writing, a pleasure to read, really making significant progress so keep it up.”

While the teacher gave feedback which was supportive for the students who were doing well, the feedback for Henry who seemed to be struggling with making the transition from Creole to English was not as explicit or encouraging.

Me believe the church lose it influence on society cause nuff people na go church again and so de teaching from de church no really a reach nuff people again. Furthermore, mos criminal a di young bwoy dem weh no have no heart. Young people na go church like first time cause you caan tell dem bout church. so as me say, if dem not going to church how de church fi influence dem.

(reproduced from Henry’s persuasive essay, seen April 24, 2017)

The above is an example of the use of JC in Henry’s work. However, the teacher, Ms. Reid only wrote ‘use of patois’ in the margin. There was no other notation as to how this issue could be resolved or encouragement for him to improve. Appropriate constructive feedback as a part of teaching strategy is important as this can positively or negatively reinforce behaviour which affects how students view their performance in the subject area.

While discussing the scenarios that highlighted three different classroom settings, three of the participants explained that they liked Mrs. Maitland’s approach to providing feedback to her class. Eugene liked that Mrs. Maitland monitored her students’ progress during the lessons. When teachers actively monitor students throughout the lessons the teacher can identify students’ weak areas and address them accordingly. The teacher can also identify the strategies that she is using that may or may not work for students and can change her teaching style. Chris liked that
Mrs. Maitland have “students know if they have gotten correct answers” Britney likes Mrs. Maitland correcting students’ errors and believes that “feedback in a timely manner is vital.”

Teacher beliefs which influence their practices are multifaceted and are hinged on teacher self-efficacy. Previous research have revealed that high student achievement is associated with teachers who have excellent qualities of self-efficacy as these teachers have the capacity to work hard under tremendous difficulty and yet motivate students to attend classes and produce satisfactory performance (Muijs & Reynolds, 2002). From classroom observation and the examination of students’ scripts the three teachers have been providing feedback in a timely manner to students which has encouraged them to work hard and has built their self-confidence as most believe they can be successful in their upcoming examination. However, more meaningful feedback can be given to some students, especially the struggling students as this will help to address their weakness and build self-confidence.

**Ranking of Instructional Strategies**

![Average Ranking of Instructional Strategies](image)

**Bar graph of students’ preferences of nine instructional strategies that can be used in teaching English**
The Bar Graph highlights students’ preferences of nine strategies that can be used in teaching English. Vocabulary and Comprehension Drills strategy was selected by most respondents as the strategy of choice to be used in their English classes. Eugene stated that Vocabulary and comprehension “is the bedrock for any language.” Henry stated that it “is like the basics” as it is needed “to do well in writing.” Atasha agreed with Henry as she stated that “poor vocabulary means poor writing skills.” Atasha also liked that this strategy helped her to “process information better” and allowed her to express herself without sounding monotonous. Britney also thought that this strategy should be first choice in teaching English as individuals “have to know words, know their meanings, know where to apply them” as this would assist individuals to “do any piece of writing.”

Modeling of English Language by teacher was selected as the second highest ranked strategy. Chris stated that “the teacher should model the language that we should learn.” He also said that “reinforcement in the class would be good” as “sometimes there is little or no reinforcement of English in some communities.” Atasha agrees with Chris that reinforcement of spoken English in some communities is limited as she stated that “some persons don’t really hear English being spoken all the time or used in the appropriate context so when a teacher does that it is easier for the student to relate.” Dian stated that “when the teacher models the language [she] will be better able to comprehend what is being done” while Henry stated that an “English teacher must speak English and sound like English teacher.”

Test Based Activities was the third highest ranked strategy by the respondents. Britney’s reason for selecting this strategy was focused on the teacher as she stated that “teachers have to constantly monitor the level that their students are at” while Geraldine used the lens of a student as she stated that these activities allow persons to “know what they have learnt.” Felecia stated
that this strategy allows students to “practice more” while Eugene stated that “tests would model the real exam and so practice in this area would be good.”

Planning, drafting and revising writing assignments strategy was the fourth ranked strategy of choice by respondents. Icilda stated that this strategy allows for peer editing as students “are allowed to exchange their writing assignments with each other and so they have an idea of different writing styles.” Britney stated that this strategy “help [students] improve on their strong points” while Felecia stated that “you get a feel of what to do in the exam and do it at a faster pace to be able to revise.” Chris stated that this strategy was important as “the written section has more weighting for the exam so it’s good to try and master this section which would give a greater probability to pass the exam.”

Translation of Jamaican Creole pieces to Standard Jamaican English and use of role play and dramatization were both selected as the fifth ranked instructional strategies for teaching English. Eugene stated that translation of Jamaican Creole pieces to Standard Jamaican English “has its place because both languages are different though they seem similar and we need to see the distinction made at times.” Dian stated that she “speak[s] Creole so translating it to Standard English would be a better way” for her to learn English. Icilda also thought that this strategy would be beneficial to some students as “students need practice in this because some of them have problem[s]. Even though they should speak English some of them really don’t, so the translation would help them to use certain phrases that they have difficulty using, it would help to provide practice for them.” Britney’s support for the use of this strategy was more geared towards the young people as she stated that “young ones will hear words and they don’t know the English to that same word so it’s helpful if we can have some of those words being translated from time to time because they do use them in formal situations.”
However, there were some respondents who did not support the strategy. Henry stated that “I don’t think so. When we talk teacher can correct us but to have activities fi we sit down like that, no. I don’t like that.” Chris stated that “the Creole used in class is enough for the teacher to draw a reference and translate so it doesn’t have to be a different strategy for class.” Felecia also disagreed with promoting this strategy for teaching English. She selected this strategy as the least favourite as she spoke passionately “no, this is an English class so the focus shouldn’t be on Creole.”

The use of role play and dramatization was also selected as the fifth strategy most favourite strategy for teaching Standard Jamaican English. Chris believed that “role play has its use because it helps persons to think on the spot and use the language in various social contexts.” Dian also stated that “role plays and drama allows me to speak the language and be more comfortable with it.” Henry stated that “I like drama it brings things to life and then you have ideas to write.” Britney doesn’t like this strategy but noted that there are benefits to using this strategy as she stated that “I’m not a big fan but it can be informative and oftentimes you will remember the dramatization than what the teacher was saying so it has its role.” Eugene stated that “role play is good for learning some concepts but the exam is a written one so the focus can’t be on this strategy.”

Icilda likes this strategy as she stated that “this is one way of developing their speaking skills, because is all about developing the four skills. When they use the role play and dramatization, this helps also to provide real life context that they can use the language in a meaningful way, and I think that will help them to learn more.” Geraldine likes this strategy as she said “I love acting and writing comes from acting.”
Since there was a tie with the fifth selected strategy for teaching SJE the next strategy of choice, which was placed seventh, is the use of graphic organizers, concept maps and manipulatives. Chris noted that there are benefits to using this strategy. He noted that “visual representations help[s]” him to “remember things.” He also stated that he couldn’t understand why teachers don’t use it more frequently in the teaching of English. He also highlighted that “we have technology and social media” which can be used to help students remember information. Dian stated that she likes this strategy as “it helps [her] to understand and remember things.” Eugene stated that he’s “a visual learner so [he] like[s] graphic organizers” although not all topics are appropriate for this strategy. However, Atasha is not in agreement with using this strategy for the teaching of English. She stated that “it’s not a subject like Mathematics that requires so much visualization and if you’re not careful some teachers will confuse you with their attempts at maps and all of that.”

Project Based strategy was the eight highest ranked strategy. Some respondents claimed that there were both advantages and disadvantages to using this approach in the teaching of SJE, while others thought that there were only advantages or disadvantages. The respondents who believed there were only disadvantages include Eugene who believed that this strategy is more suited for “content driven subject areas” as it’s not applicable for many areas in English. Felecia claimed that “projects don’t always work out.” She stated that she works fulltime and so she would rather “manage [her] time and focus on exam related things.” Geraldine stated that this strategy hardly works as “some students are lazy or don’t want to do projects because they think it’s boring.” However, Icilda was the only respondent who highlighted only advantages of projects which allow students to “continue learning the language even when they are not in the classroom setting.”
Britney, who was one of the respondents who believed there were both advantages and disadvantages agreed with Geraldine as she also stated that “a lot of time wasting goes on in group work. Sometimes you have a lot of lazy people in groups and they don’t do anything.” On the other hand, Britney stated that Project Based Activities are good as this allows individuals to find out things for themselves and she believed that “we retain most of what we learn on our own, or more of what we learn on our own stays with us than what somebody teaches us.” Chris touted the benefits of projects as he stated that projects are good as “overtime you see the growth in your work.” but wouldn’t want to be engaged in projects if they relied on group work. Atasha also didn’t like projects on the premise that projects oftentimes “rely on groups and not everyone works well in groups.”

Use of Jamaican Creole as mode of instruction was the ninth highest and least liked strategy by respondents. Most respondents were against the use of JC in SJE classes. Eugene stated that students won’t be able to “pass an English exam knowing mostly Creole.” Britney stated that using and reinforcing SJE is important as “English is as a universal language” which is understood always anywhere you go. Dian stated that Creole should not be used in school. Icilda explained that in order to “develop students competency in SJE the language should be model[led].” Chris stated that it’s not a creole class while Henry said you “can’t teach in Patois to get results in English.” However, Atasha explained that in certain situations the teacher can explain concepts or situations in creole and then provide students with an English version. She said that “most persons understand instructions better when they are given in creole” but the “teacher should also give the English version so that the student can hear and learn the correct thing.”
Students have different views on which instructional strategy works best for them. However, the data showed that majority of the students believed that Vocabulary Based activities help them to become more competent in English. The information gathered also revealed that this was the most used strategy by all three English classes that participated in the study.

**Structure and Operations of the Evening Schools**

The theme focusing on the structure and operations of the evening schools emerged based on identified codes in the data. These codes were then organized under two sub categories which focused on what students liked about the evening schools’ operations and what they disliked about the evening schools’ operations. The structure and operations of the evening schools affects the teaching learning process. This is important in trying to understand how students perceive their performance because the operations at the school will affect the decisions students make towards their learning.

**Areas Students Disliked About the Structure and Operations of the Evening Schools**

**Physical Structure.** One of the evening schools utilize the buildings of a primary school where no special arrangements are made for adults such as seating, improved lighting or ventilation. The three participants and the teacher complained about the uncomfortable physical environment. However, Henry said he would not focus on the physical barriers since he came with a purpose to learn and to be successful in his exams. He said

> De seat dem kinda small still an de room dem hot sometime but me no mek dat bother me. De only ting that kind a bother me still is the mosquito dem dat rise up sometimes. But dat no detremintal still cause a learn me come fi learn so de two hour heat naa go kill me. The English class sorta big up to forty sometimes.
The institution would need to look at how the physical surroundings affect students’ attitude towards work which ultimately influences how they perceive their competence in the subject since not all students will be like Henry. Henry also mentioned the large class size which was endorsed by the teacher and the other participants. The large class size is seen as a deterrent for marked success as the teacher might not be able to individually address the specific needs of her diverse group of learners. Geraldine shared that they “are encouraged to speak English in class but sometimes [they] don’t even get a chance to because the class is big.” The inability to participate in class can demotivate students and influence how much effort they exert in their academic life.

**Unavailability of teachers outside of regular class hours.** Another area that students dislike about the operations of the evening school is the availability of teachers for assistance in the subject area. Henry stated his displeasure

> A don’t like that if a wanted to talk to the teacha in a di day I have to wait until nearly night to get to her. A know she has another job but sometimes is a little emergency and you would want an answer to a question.

Unlike the formal school setting where full time teachers are available on campus, evening schools have part time teachers who are available on the day they are teaching their subject.

**Limited hours for class.** Eugene stated that “the hours for classes could be more.” This was also echoed by Chris who said “the hours for classes don’t seem enough, but I understand it’s a business still and it’s based on the school year and the exam period.” Most students would be accustomed to at least three hours of English classes in most high schools. However, evening classes provide two hours per class and covers the CSEC syllabus in approximately eight months compared to approximately eighteen months in high schools.
Limited hours for class at previous high school that operated on a shift system. The time allocated for student instruction is important if students are to develop their competence in the language. Atasha didn’t like the shift school she attended during high school as she thought she lost valuable time compared to students at an all-day or extended day school. She said “the shift system greatly affected the instruction time as this meant less instruction time for students compared to other schools not on the shift system and this would have affected the teaching learning process.”

Eugene also didn’t like that he attended a high school on a shift system. He said “I think we didn’t learn as much cause the time short and the school small for so much children.” Dian also attended a shift school and did not like it because of the lack of time to engage in several school and extracurricular activities. The evening schools have similar challenges with shift schools in regards to limited time to complete the curriculum. Teachers therefore need to utilize the limited timeframe to complete activities.

Lack of medical personnel on the campus during class hours. Another area that was highlighted by Henry was the need for medical personnel during classes or the protocol to be followed in the event an emergency arises. Henry stated that the school “need a medical person when there are classes cause you never know what can happen.” While no other respondent mentioned this area it’s an important service which is currently not provided by any of the evening schools.

Areas Students Liked About the Structure and Operations of the Evening Schools
Some of the respondents were satisfied with the operations at the evening school. Geraldine said “I’m still searching for something I don’t like” while Felecia said “there’s nothing I don’t like.”
Dian stated “I don’t dislike anything about the evening school. It’s good and doing what I expected so there are no complaints from me.”

**Absence of Noise.** One of the respondents liked the absence of external noise during classes. Atasha stated that

> I like the environment, you know when you go the school there isn’t so much noise. I think the noise thing affected me in high school so now when I go to evening school it’s a more comfortable setting.

Other respondents liked that the compound was relatively quiet before and after classes. This allowed them to be more focused on their studies, especially the respondents who were attending classes after a day at work.

**Flexible payment plan for tuition.** Some of the respondents liked that their institutions offered them a flexible payment for their tuition. Henry said that the “school is reasonable with dem school fee, dem give you a payment plan” while Eugene stated that “they understand when I couldn’t pay off my school fee after the deadline them give we. A less stress that so we can better concentrate on we school work.” Chris also said

> I like the fact that you pay as you go meaning that although the school would love you to pay all your school fee at once they realize that is not always possible so they allow you the flexibility to pay during the term when you have the money and you don’t really feel pressured or I should say embarrassed because the manager comes harassing you in front of others for money.

Geraldine also shared that while researching which evening class to attend she learned of a student who was denied her chance to do a CSEC examination because she had outstanding fees with the institution. She exclaimed

> I wouldn’t want that to happen to me because supposed something
could happen and my money couldn’t be paid on time then I would be devastated. Here, they are understanding and knows that life happens so they would give us time to pay.

The ease of doing business with the evening institutions is important as students can speak to the administrators and work out a reasonable schedule for payment. Students can then concentrate on the teaching learning process and spend less time worrying about paying all the fees at once or embarrassment from administrators as they try to collect outstanding fees.

**Learning among peers.** Henry liked the arrangement at his evening school where high school students attended a separate class from the adults. He said, “a like that the adults dem separate from the children cause it will reduce certain tension, people can talk freely without a censor anything.” The practice of having separate classes for high school students and adults did not happen at the three evening schools as only two schools facilitated this approach.

The structure and operations of the evening schools influence the teaching learning process and ultimately how students perceive their performance. Participants highlighted areas that they disliked about the evening institutions such as the physical structure, unavailability of teachers outside of regular class hours, limited hours for class and lack of medical personnel during class hours. However, participants liked some areas related to the structure and operations of the evening institutions such as absence of external noise during classes, flexible payment plans for tuition and the opportunity to learn among ones’ peers.

**Summary**

This chapter presented the findings from the study which focused on students’ perception about their performance at three evening schools. The data revealed four main themes which were discussed individually. The first theme highlighted student factors that influence their learning outcome which had the sub categories of students’ language learning strategies and
students’ self-concept. The second theme examined the influence of JC on learning SJE which included the use of SJE and JC in the home, the use of SJE and JC in the community, the use of SJE and JC at school and the use of SJE and JC at the workplace. The third theme examined teacher traits that influence student learning which was discussed under the sub headings, teacher beliefs and instructional strategies. The fourth theme highlighted the structure and operations of the evening schools which discussed the areas students liked about the structure and operations and the areas students liked about the structure and operations of the evening schools.
CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter focuses on the findings of the study in relation to some of the literature that was reviewed and makes recommendations for research related to classroom practice and for further research.

The following research questions informed the study:

- How do students at three evening schools perceive their performance in CSEC English A and what factors affect those perceptions?
- What strategies do students think can improve their performance in English?

Discussion

Attribution and Expectancy Value Theories

Both the Attribution and Expectancy Value Theories were useful while I tried to make meaning of the data. Studies have shown that one of the most important tools for success in learning English is motivation (Mokharti & Sheorey, 2002; Wiesen, 2001). Students were motivated to learn as success in the CSEC English A examination would assist them to accomplish several goals such as matriculation to tertiary institution or job security. This can be linked to arguments purported by Ainley (2004) that motivation for learning is sometimes based on internal factors which include the individual characteristics or dispositions that students bring to their learning, such as their interests, responsibility for learning, effort, values and perceived ability. It also supports the arguments of Deci et al. (1999) and Ryan, Connel, & Plant (1990) that intrinsic motivation is more desirable and provides better learning outcomes than extrinsic motivation.
The type of self-confidence students felt towards the examinations was predicated on several factors which emerged from the data. The findings revealed that most of the students exhibited high self-concept and expressed that they would be successful in the upcoming CSEC English A Examination despite previous challenges they experienced with SJE. The high and middle performing students displayed positive attitude towards their studies and declared that they were “ready” or “almost ready” for the upcoming examination. These students expected to do well and attributed this success to the strategies they were using and the encouragement and feedback they got from their teachers. So, as the EVT purports, the high and middle performing students expected to do well in their examination based on the level of success they were seeing and how much they valued the task as success in this area would allow them to achieve other goals. Students were able to make attributions to their improvement in the subject based on the positive results they were seeing.

However, the low performing students thought that were not ready although one of the students said he hoped to be ready for the examination. These students didn’t expect to do well because of the challenges they were experiencing and feedback from the teacher. Interestingly, for one of these students, the teacher thought he was ready for the examination but he was still experiencing low self-concept and self-doubt.

**Theme 1: Students’ factors that influence their learning outcome**

As the data unfolded, it revealed that there were student factors which influenced how students perceived their competence and performance in SJE as they prepared for their upcoming CSEC English A Examination. Students’ language experiences prior to the evening schools provided the background for the views students shared. I noted that all the students recognized that they had to develop strategies to improve their performance if they wanted to be successful
in the upcoming examination. A majority of the students saw improved performance when they made greater effort in their studies. They attributed this success to the extra effort they had made and so they were motivated to continue using strategies that gave them their desired outcome.

The students developed learning strategies that they thought would best prepare them for their examination. O’Malley and Chamot (1990) posited that learning strategies are those particular thoughts or behaviours which are used to assist learners in understanding, learning and keeping the knowledge in mind while Oxford (1990) stated that these as strategies are used by learners to simplify, increase and organize learning in order to make it more effective and to be able to transfer it to new situations.

Students were engaged in learning strategies such as asking peers for assistance and practicing tasks. Almaguer (2008) posited that reading in collaboration with a partner puts less stress on students and provides them with more opportunity to have a better command of the English language. Students have attributed improved performance from asking peers for assistance and while this was not limited to reading, there are merits to working with peers for improved language competence. This supports the advocacy for the use of cooperative learning as an instructional strategy in classrooms as research has shown that students’ social, emotional, motivational and cognitive processes are affected by group learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2002).

Students were also involved in practicing several tasks and students attributed improved performance from doing so. Likewise students acknowledged limited improvement because they were unable to practice as much as they wanted. Students’ improved performance due to the strategies they have used can be used to support Green and Oxford (1995) and Wharton (2000) who suggested that there is a strong relationship between language learning and the strategy that is used.
It was also noted that some of the students cited an inability to complete some of the tasks to be done because of work related responsibilities. Hence, teachers of adult students need to structure classes to accommodate adult learners and assist them to deal with challenges when they arise because they have limited time for study. As a result, it is essential that teachers prepare effective lessons that allow students to efficiently meet their objectives (National Center for Family Literacy and Center for Applied Linguistics, 2008). Adults learn differently and so teachers have to be cognizant of the factors that aid the adult learner. Some students mentioned some challenges they were having preparing for classes because of work and family responsibilities. It was noted that the teachers at the evening schools were accommodating and found effective ways to assist these students. Teachers need to know the art and science of assisting adults to learn (Knowles 1984).

Students identified several strategies that they thought would best assist them as they prepared for their examination. The use of vocabulary and comprehension skills was ranked as the strategy students thought would best assist them in preparing for their upcoming CESC Examination. It is important to note that this strategy was also the predominant strategy that I saw being used by the three teachers at the three evening schools. Even though some students complained about this strategy being used by their teachers they recognize that it is an important strategy for improving their language skills. Language then is best learned when the learner is focused on comprehending, saying and doing something with language (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

Moreover, the use of JC as a mode of instruction was the least liked strategy for students. Even though most students thought that teachers should use JC in SJE classes when appropriate such as clarifying a concept they did not expect to be taught in JC. Students stated that they were
doing an SJE examination so this language should be modeled by their teachers. As a result, they selected modeling of the language by the teacher as the second liked strategy.

**Theme 2: The influence of JC on learning SJE**

The data revealed that all the participants were exposed to JC in the home as their first language. However, only some were also exposed to SJE in the home. Both JC and SJE were spoken in the community and at school but JC was the predominant language that was used. Students stated that were comfortable using JC with their peers and teachers while at high school and “never felt pressured” to speak SJE at school. As a result, some students never got the chance to develop or reinforce their use of the language that they were expected to sit an external examination in at the end of their five year tenure at high school. Some of the students mentioned that lack of early practice using SJE in the home and school caused them to struggle with SJE and has influenced their level of competence in the language. Teachers while accepting the students’ first language need to ensure that students are adequately immersed in any target language they want their students to acquire.

The Language Education Policy from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture (2001) states that teachers should be linguistically aware and should appreciate the value of Jamaican Creole in the classroom and should give students the opportunity to use it as they seek to guide their students to competence in English. The use of JC was widely accepted by teachers in high schools but according to the students they never reinforced the use of SJE and so they continued to use JC which they were comfortable with. While two languages were in operation at school, it seems as if JC was given dominance over SJE. Hence, students’ ability to develop competence in SJE was negatively affected.
Most students stated that they didn’t like the use of JC only in the classroom for instructional purposes but accepted that the use of JC was often times necessary in the classroom to bridge the gap for students who were having challenges with comprehending some tasks in SJE. As I argued previously in the literature review, teachers should be aware of their students’ attitudes towards their first language and the target language that they want them to learn. Siegel (2008) stresses the importance of teachers’ knowing the difference between the two languages and recognizing which language is the students’ first language as it might affect their teaching strategies.

**Theme 3: Teacher traits that influence student learning**

Students identified some teacher traits that influence how they improve their language competence. Some students cited a positive teacher student relationship as important to their learning and development in the SJE classroom. It was also revealed in the data that some students were not previously successful in their CSEC English A examination because their teachers didn’t expect them to be successful; partly because they were from low socio economic background. It has been argued that when teachers have low expectation of their students’ ability to excel academically, the students become bored and disorderly, fail to concentrate and put any effort in performing their schoolwork which can result in failure and eventual dropping out of school (Skiba, Rausch, & Ritter, 2004).

Students in this study claimed that they didn’t do well because of their teachers’ low expectations. Wardhaugh (2010) suggested that some Jamaican teachers consider Jamaican Creole to be associated with illiteracy and low socioeconomic status. Hence, teachers in the SJE classroom need to have high expectations for their students and cater to the specific needs of their students.
Theme 4: Structure and operations of the evening schools

The structure and operations of the evening schools also influenced students’ level of competence in SJE. The physical environment was also important as students liked the quietude that the evening schools offered. Research has shown that there is a strong correlation between noise and annoyance of students (Ali, 2013). This annoyance can lead to distraction which can affect the level of performance of students.

A majority of the students also mentioned that they wanted additional time for classes. Some students mentioned that the two hours per week for instruction time was inadequate but understood that the operators had a limited number of hours because they wanted to remain economically viable. The operators could however, could ensure that instruction time was maximized for the students’ benefit if they are unable to increase the allotted time for classes. Gettinger and Seibert (2002) outline several ways that educators can ensure that students get maximum benefit from their instruction time.

Students also stated that they would like greater access to their teacher. Unlike high school where students were able to see their teachers daily, whether or not they had that particular class, students only had access to their teachers the evening of their class. However, students liked the institutions provided opportunities for flexible tuition payments. This enabled them to focus on their studies rather than being worried that they would be removed from classes because of non-payment of fees.

Summary

I mentioned in the literature review that if students understand their learning environment, have autonomy, can relate to their teachers and peers and have self-confidence, their commitment to academic performance is enhanced (Zimmer-Gembeck, et al. 2006). These
themes emerged from the data as influencing students’ perception about their performance at the three evening schools. A majority of the students expressed confidently that they would be ready for their CSEC English A examination and expected to be successful. They also attributed their improved performance and expectations to the strategies they were using, positive teacher relationship and timely feedback from teachers.

**Implications for Teaching and Learning**

The information gleaned from the case study revealed that several students enter the language classroom with limited immersion in SJE as JC is the language that is predominantly used in the home, community and school. However, the views of the students regarding the use of JC in an SJE classroom differ. Some students shared that even though it is an English class, teachers should use JC when necessary to explain concepts to students. Some students on the other hand believed that teachers should model English in class and should only accept students’ use of English in the class because it was a SJE class and not a JC class.

The data also show that most students do not want teachers to use JC as the chief modality for instructional purposes. As a result, teachers need to ascertain the attitudes and competencies that students bring to English classes as this information can better assist them to plan for students as they cater to their individual needs instead of teaching students as a group. For example, if teachers recognize that most of their students enter their classrooms with JC as their first language they could incorporate, where relevant, some of the principles promulgated by Ellis (2005) about second language acquisition so they can adequately meet the specific need of these students.

Using the appropriate strategy is essential in getting students interested in learning a language. Students in this study identified the use of vocabulary and comprehension activities as
the predominant strategy that teachers should use to develop their language skills. Students’ interests and preferences are important to them in the SJE classroom so teachers should find out the strategies that students like and try to integrate these strategies with the skills they are developing. Even though, students may not like or resist the strategies that teachers use to meet their specific needs, teachers need to find a way to incorporate these strategies in their lessons. For example, several students didn’t like to complete the vocabulary and comprehension activities but teachers could find innovative ways to develop the strands of speaking, writing, listening, viewing and reading instead of just focusing only on written vocabulary and comprehension activities. It could also be combined with other areas to utilize other strategies such as modeling the language, project based assignments, role play and dramatization.

Whilst teachers work with their students to create the best strategies for effective lesson delivery, students can also use the language strategies that best suit their needs. The high and middle performing students expected to do well based on their level of preparedness for their CSEC English A examinations. They attributed this level of self-confidence to the marked improvements they saw in their work and from the positive feedback from their teachers. The language learning strategies that yielded positive results for the students in the study include, practicing, making a concerted effort to speak SJE, utilizing resources such as past paper and the syllabus and seeking help from friends. The effective use of appropriate teacher and student strategies should assist students in developing their level of competence in English.

In addition, tertiary institutions can also introduce andragogy courses so educators can be more informed on how adults learn. This is crucial as educators are supposed to be lifelong learners and understanding how adults learn should assist them in garnering and using new information. Moreover, recognizing the differences in how adults and children learn will better
equip educators to meet the needs of children or adults in their classrooms. The English classes at the evening schools had adult students. There were instances where recognizing and catering to the specific needs of these adult learners became an important part of the teaching learning process. One such instance is a teacher allowing her students who attend class after leaving work to rest for short periods in class if it becomes necessary. Understanding the challenges adult learners face or using their experiences in the classroom can significantly improve the teaching learning experience.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The number of students who fail CSEC English A or are not recommended to sit the examination at the end of high school is of great concern and needs to be addressed. Empirical data is crucial if we are to ascertain the challenges in this area and make appropriate recommendations as individuals continue to promulgate their opinions over the years but there is little evidence to substantiate or dismiss these claims. There are many research possibilities related to this area but not much research has been done in Jamaica. This study examined students’ perceptions about their performance in CSEC English A at three evening schools and was the first qualitative study examining this phenomenon in Jamaica.

Other possible areas that can be researched are discussed below.

- Students stated that JC was widely used by teachers and peers during classes.
  Both JC and SJE are accepted in many Jamaican classrooms where students are required to complete examinations using SJE. However, there is little or no research on the impact of JC as the mother tongue in the Jamaican classroom. Research utilizing longitudinal studies to assess the performance of students in English who have Jamaican Creole as their first language and were taught English
using the tenets of second language acquisition could help to provide vital data in this area.

- The students in the study, except for one who is yet to complete high school, were not successful in their CSEC English A examinations at the end of high school. These students would have been recorded among the failures for their cohorts. However, there is no research to ascertain if and when these students are successful in subsequent CSEC English A examinations. One way to confirm if students become successful in future sittings of the CESC English A examination is to ascertain data through research involving evening schools to track the number of persons who didn’t pass CSEC English at high school but have passed the subject through these institutions. This would provide vital information for planning purposes in several government and private sector agencies.

- My research was designed to focus on students’ perception about their performance in CSEC English A. The data revealed that a majority of the students stated that they were ready for their examinations and expected to be successful. It would be interesting to see what future research reveal about students’ perception of their performance in English versus their actual performance.

- Some students expressed their beliefs that they would have performed better in high school if their teachers had used other teaching strategies, had better teacher student relationships or provided better feedback. My research did not focus on this area but emerged as a concern for students. Since there is little or no research which focuses on which teaching strategies or best practices work best for
teaching SJE in the Jamaican classroom, research highlighting these areas could help to fill this gap.

- Another component of the research to identify what works best in order for students to be successful in their CSEC English A examination would be research focusing on the challenges teachers and students face while teaching SJE in the Jamaican classroom. This data could be used to develop intervention strategies to assist teachers and students.

One of the concerns that students mentioned as contributing to their lack of competence in SJE was the shift system at their high schools. Research is needed to identify the inadequacies and consequences of the shift system in schools, in particular those related to language competence of students. The Ministry of Education could then use this information to inform policy decisions and to ensure that its monitoring committee remains robust and proactive so the perennial challenges in the SJE classroom can be minimized and students can be successful in their CSEC English A examination by the end of high school.

**Conclusion**

In this section I discussed some of the findings in relation to the literature that was presented and made some recommendations for further research. Based on the findings of the study several factors related to students, teachers and educational institutions have influenced students’ level of language competence. However, the high and middle performing students feel confident that they will be successful in the upcoming CSEC English A examination. This positive self-concept is based on the improved performance they have seen because of strategies they are using such as language learning strategies and the positive feedback they received from their teachers.
Students in ranking their preferred strategy for use in the SJE class by their teacher selected the use of vocabulary and comprehension activities and modeling of SJE by their teachers as first and second respectively. Obtaining data on what works best for students in the Jamaican SJE classroom is fundamental in ensuring that students are successful in their CSEC English A examination; hence, more research is needed in this area.
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APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

Title of the research study:

STUDENTS’ PERCEPTION OF THEIR PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH AT THREE EVENING SCHOOLS IN SAVANNA LA MAR.

Name of investigator: Dr. Michael W Smith, College of Education, Temple University

Student Investigator: Tracey Brown Coote, Graduate Student, Temple University

This study involves research. The purpose of the research is to look at students’ perception of their performance in CSEC English A.

What you should know about a research study:

Someone will explain this research study to you.
You volunteer to be in a research study.
Whether you take part is up to you.
You can choose not to take part in the research study.
You can agree to take part now and later change your mind.
Whatever you decide, it will not be held against you.
Feel free to ask all the questions you want before and after you decide.
By signing this consent form, you are not waiving any of the legal rights that you otherwise would have as a participant in a research study.

The estimated duration of your study participation is 3 months.
The study procedures consist of observations and conversational interviews.
There are no reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts.

The benefit you will obtain from the research is knowing that you have contributed to the understanding of this topic, and the opportunity to discuss your feelings about your competence in the official language of the country which can affect your future.
The alternative to participating is **not to participate.**

Please contact the research team with questions, concerns, or complaints about the research and any research-related injuries by calling 876-955-5024 or e-mailing tue97791@temple.edu.

☐ If I am selected to be interviewed for this study I am willing to be audiotaped.

Confidentiality: Efforts will be made to limit the disclosure of your personal information, including research study records, to people who have a need to review this information. However, the study team cannot promise complete secrecy. For example, although the study team has put in safeguards to protect your information, there is always a potential risk of loss of confidentiality. There are several organizations that may inspect and copy your information to make sure that the study team is following the rules and regulations regarding research and the protection of human subjects. These organizations include the IRB, Temple University, its affiliates and agents, Temple University Health System, Inc., its affiliates and agents, the study sponsor and its agents, and the Office for Human Research Protections.

Information collected for this study including written notes, interview transcripts, and documents will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my home. Electronic files will be kept on a password-protected computer.
**Signature Block for Capable Adult**

Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research.

**DO NOT SIGN THIS FORM AFTER THIS DATE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of subject</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Printed name of subject</td>
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<tr>
<td>Signature of person obtaining consent</td>
<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>Printed name of person obtaining consent</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM FOR INSTITUTIONS

Date

Name of Administrator
Administrator
Name of Institution
Institution’s Address

RE: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear [Name of Institution],

I am requesting permission to conduct a research study at your institution. I am currently enrolled in a doctoral programme at Temple University, PA, and I am in the process of writing my Thesis. The study is entitled A Qualitative Study on Students’ Perception of Their Performance in English at three Evening Schools in Savanna La Mar.

I hope that the school administration will allow me to recruit three students from the English class who will participate in one semi-structured interview which should last from 60-90 minutes. Due to the nature of the study, I hope to recruit one high, middle and low performing student from the class. I would also want to interview the English teacher and be allowed to observe the English class twice.

Interested students, who volunteer to participate, will be given a consent form to be signed by at the beginning of the interview process. The administrator and the English teacher who volunteer to participate will also be given consent forms to be signed and returned to the researcher.

If approval is granted, all participants will complete the interview in a classroom or other quiet setting on the school site at a suitable time agreed upon by all parties. Should this study be published, pseudonyms will be used and identifiable individual or school information will not be used. No costs will be incurred by either your school or the individual participants.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. I will follow up with a telephone call next week and would be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have at that time. You may contact me at my email address tue97791@temple.edu or telephone number 876-955-5024.

If you agree, kindly sign the attached consent form and return the signed form in the enclosed self-addressed envelope.

Sincerely,

Tracey Brown Coote
CONSENT FORM TO INDICATE INSTITUTION’S PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY AT THE INSTITUTION

I ______________________________, of ______________________________

name of administrator name of institution

having read and agreed to the conditions of the letter seeking permission to conduct a research at my institution hereby grant permission and has affixed my signature below to indicate same.

Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research.

DO NOT SIGN THIS FORM AFTER THIS DATE

Signature of administrator Date

Printed name of administrator

Signature of person obtaining consent Date

Printed name of person obtaining consent
APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR STUDENTS

Please read the following scenes and for each scene tell me
What do you like about the teacher?
What do you dislike about the teacher?
What do you like about the class?
What do you dislike about the class?

Ms. John

Ms. John is an English teacher and also an examiner for the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) for over seven years. She knows the areas that (CXC) focuses on and prepares her students to pass the exam based on this knowledge. She tells her students that she expects them to pass and do well because she will focus on the weak areas that she sees will prevent them from passing the exam. She uses both English and Jamaican Creole in class and does a lot of writing activities. When students complain about the number of writing tasks that they have to do she tells them "The English exam is a writing exam and until that changes that is what I am preparing you to do. Others have done well so I know you can do well too."

By the middle of the year she reminds students to pay attention to the four sections of the exam which are comprehension, summary writing, story or descriptive writing and persuasive writing. She then creates groups in the class based on students weak areas and focuses instruction on the weak areas instead of teaching the entire class. She visits each group but provides individual feedback for each student in the group. Students sometimes complain to each other about spending too much time on the writing tasks but they never tell her because she is so nice to them and they don't want to disappoint her. She would remind students that they could call or email her during the week about problems they were facing so she could assist them. She would also invite past students who passed the exam to come and talk to her class about the benefits of working hard on the writing tasks.
Mrs. Barnabay

Mrs. Barnabay has been teaching evening school for only four years. She believes that in order for her students to learn the language and be functional in society they have to complete certain projects she has broken down into listening, speaking, reading and writing tasks. The projects were not just exam related but were often different and also based on real life situations. They are always very interesting and often students continue their discussions about them long after class have ended. When the projects are completed students are amazed at all of the reading, writing, speaking, and listening they have done. However, students often find it hard to get started in those projects. Mrs. Barnaby only uses English and does not repeat the instructions in Jamaican Creole. When students complain that they don't understand something in English she would often respond "Students, you signed up to attend an English class at an evening school and I will not turn it into a Creole class."

When students ask a question they have to speak in English before she responds to them. And she’s very strict about staying on task. The students know that they would all have to report to the class on the projects they have completed and that excuses are not accepted for non-completion of given assignments.

Mrs. Maitland

Mrs. Maitland had been teaching evening school for years. More than anything, she wanted her students to pass the test that would allow them to get their diplomas. And the best way to do that, she thought was drill, drill, drill. Each lesson was very much the same. Mrs. Maitland would pass out a worksheet that resembled the test and students would do them individually. As they were working, she’d circulate around the room encouraging them to do their best, often speaking Creole to do so. Then they’d correct their own worksheets as she read the answers. She didn’t explain very much, but sometimes someone would ask a question about why and she’d explain. After students were done correcting the first worksheet, they’d go on to the second. And sometimes third or fourth. They did very little writing and when they did Mrs. Maitland would mark every error and make students correct them. Sometime people would ask if they could read something besides the passages on the worksheets, which the students thought
were really boring. “No time for such foolishness” Mrs. Maitland would exclaim. “We have work to do. I know you can do it, but I know you need lots of practice.”

Please rank the following strategies in order of preference from first to ninth place and tell me why you have made these choices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Strategies</th>
<th>Rank (from 1st -9th )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary and Comprehension Drills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test Based activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeling of English Language by teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of graphic organizers, concept maps and manipulatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation of Jamaican Creole pieces to Standard Jamaican English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of role play and dramatization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Based Activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Jamaican Creole as mode of instruction in class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning, drafting and revising writing assignment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ques. # 1:
Can you tell me a little about yourself:

- How old are you?
- Which parish are you from? and
- Briefly describe the community you live in?

Ques. # 2:

- Can you tell me a little about your family structure:
  
  - What type of family do you live in?
  - What is the size of your family?
  - What is the highest educational attainment for family members?
  - What role do you play in your family?
  - Can you tell me about the language (Standard English or Jamaican Creole) usually used within your home?
  - What type of language/s have you been exposed to in your community?

Ques. # 3:

- Which school did you attend before you started this evening school?
- What academic qualifications do you have?

Ques. # 4:

- What was your previous school like?
  
  - What did you like about attending your previous school?
  - What didn’t you like at this school?
  - Did students use English or Jamaican Creole at this school and how did students feel about using it?

Ques. # 5:

- How long have you been a student at this school?

Ques. # 6:

- What is your English class size like?
  
  - Can you tell me what it is like as a student at this institution?
Ques. # 7:
- Can you describe how you are prepared by the teacher for the upcoming English exam?

Ques. # 8
- Can you tell me what you do as a student outside of class to prepare yourself for the exam?
  - Can you tell me what you have done in class that has prepared you for your exams.

Ques. # 9:
- What are the factors which affect students’ performance in English class?
- What challenges have you faced (in class or outside of class) while preparing for your upcoming exams?

Ques. # 10:
- Does being engaged in other activities (such as work) affect you preparing for the exam? Why or Why not?

Ques. # 11:
- How do you cope with these challenges?
- How does the teacher or institution help you to deal with these challenges?

Ques. # 12:
- Can you tell me how you feel about attending this evening institution?
- What do you like about attending this evening institution?
- What don’t you like about attending this evening institution?

Ques. # 13:
- Do you feel that this institution was the best choice you made to help you improve in English?
- Why or why not?
Ques. # 14:
- Do you think you are ready for the upcoming CSEC English A examination?
- Why do you think you are ready or why don’t you think you are ready?

Ques. # 15:
- Do you feel that the language you speak affects your performance in English? Please explain.
- Do you think the language you speak will affect if you pass or fail the CSEC English A examination? Please explain.

Ques. # 16:
- Do you think your teacher thinks that you are ready for the upcoming CSEC English A examination?
  - Why or Why not?
APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR TEACHERS

Ques. # 1:

Which college or university did you attend before you started teaching at this evening school? What academic qualifications do you have? What was your area of specialization?

Ques. # 2:

How long have you been a teacher at this school?

Ques. # 3:

Can you describe the learning environment at this school for me? What the class size is like and what type of students are in your English class?

Ques. # 4:

Can you describe how you prepare the students for the upcoming English exam?

Ques. # 5:

Can you tell me what your students do to prepare for the exam?

Ques. # 6:

What are the factors which affect students’ performance in English?

Ques. # 7:

• What do you think are the challenges you have preparing them for the upcoming CSEC English exams?
• How do you cope with these challenges?
Ques. # 8:

Could you describe your feelings about the overall teaching learning experience at this evening institution?

Ques. # 9:

How does the language used by teachers affect your students’ performance in English?

Ques. # 10:

How do you feel about your students’ level of readiness for the upcoming CSEC English A examination?

Ques. # 11:

How do you feel about the strategies/methods used to prepare students for the exams?

Ques. # 12:

How do you think your students feel about their level of preparedness for the upcoming CSEC English A exams?

Summary

I want to ensure that I covered everything that is important to you. Is there anything else that I should have asked that you would like to tell me about now?

Thank you again for participating in this interview.
APPENDIX E

PERMISSION TO AUDIOTAPE

Investigator's Name: Tracey Brown Coote

Department: Policy, Organizational and Leadership Studies, Temple University

Title: Students’ Perception of Their Performance in English at Three Evening Schools in Savanna La Mar.

Date: _______________________

I give __________________________ permission to audiotape me. This audiotape will be used only for the following purpose (s):

(Choose one)

EDUCATION

This audiotape may be shown to education professionals outside of Temple University for educational purposes. At no time will my name be used.

RESEARCH

This audiotape will be used as a part of a research project at Temple University. I have already given written consent for my participation in this research project. At no time will my name be used.

WHEN WILL I BE AUDIOTAPEd?

I agree to be audiotaped during the time period: __________ to __________.

HOW LONG WILL THE TAPES BE USED?

I give my permission for these tapes to be used from: ________________ to ________________.

I agree to the proposal that the data be stored for one year after completion of the study.

WHAT IF I CHANGE MY MIND?

I understand that I can withdraw my permission at any time. Upon my request, the audiotape(s) will no longer be used. This will not affect my care or relationship with ________________ in any way.
OTHER

I understand that I will not be paid for being audiotaped or for the use of the audiotapes.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If I want more information about the audiotape(s), or if I have questions or concerns at any time, I can contact:

Investigator's Name: Tracey Brown

Department: Policy, organizational and leadership studies, Temple University

Institution: Temple University/ Church Teachers’ College

Email: tue9771@temple.edu

This form will be placed in my records and a copy will be kept by the person(s) named above. If I so desire, I will get a copy of the interview.

Investigator’s Signature: _______________________

Interviewee’s Signature: __________
### THEME

#### STUDENT FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THEIR LEARNING OUTCOME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open Codes</th>
<th>Axial Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practicing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Learning Strategies</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Wants to see improvements</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Revisits given assignments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Wants to see improvements but affected by work</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eugene</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>would like to redo more assignments but is usually tired after work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Icilda</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>like Eugene would like to spend more time revisiting assignments but doesn’t have enough time because of work. states that if students don’t practice they won’t do well in exams</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Improvements seen through revision</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she prepares for classes&lt;br&gt;revisits previous classwork&lt;br&gt;completes assignments using suggested allotted time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geraldine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>should be doing more class preparation but has seen improvements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employ different strategies for doing revision</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Icilda</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>does similar questions instead of always redoing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments</td>
<td>Students’ Self Concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses syllabus as a guide. This wasn’t done in previous school</td>
<td><strong>Positive Self Concept</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses past papers as a guide</td>
<td>Atasha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atasha uses teacher feedback to guide work being done.</td>
<td>Feels confident and think she’s ready for the exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dian makes concerted effort to use SJE during conversations</td>
<td>Britney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asks friends who have passed the exam for help</td>
<td>Thinks she’s ready because of the work she has done preparing for the exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eugene studies with friends in group</td>
<td>Teacher expressed belief in her being ready for the exam has boosted her confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[During classroom observation Icilda, Britney and Atasha used SJE confidently when communicating with teacher]</td>
<td>Chris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Believes he’s ready for the exams. Before this evening school didn’t know he could pass CSEC subjects. After passing 5 subjects has new level of self confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Icilda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Believes she’s ready for the exams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Geraldine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Believes she’s ready for the exams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Believes she’s ready for the exams</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Transitioning from Negative to Positive

Eugene
- Is improving which is boosting his confidence. Being motivated to work harder

### Negative Self Concept

Eugene
- Didn’t make the effort in English while in high school because the teacher told him that he would not be successful in exam

Felecia
- Doesn’t think she’s ready for exams. Needs more practice