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Writing Skills of Grade Three French Immersion Pupils

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This paper analyzes short stories written in English and French by French immersion pupils at the Grade 3 level. Their English writing skills are compared to those of Grade 3 pupils in a regular English program. Aspects of their writing skills which are examined include vocabulary skills, technical skills (punctuation, capitalization and spelling), grammatical skills and creativity. The errors made by the pupils are discussed in detail.

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## Writing Skills of Grade Three French Immersion Pupils<sup>1</sup>

Merrill Swain

As part of a longitudinal evaluation of the French immersion program in the Ottawa area public schools (Barik and Swain, 1975), the writing skills of the Grade 3 pupils were assessed. This paper reports the results by (1) comparing French immersion pupils' ability to write in English with that of pupils in the regular English program; and (2) comparing French immersion pupils' ability to write in French with their ability to write in English. Further it describes in detail some of the more frequent errors made by the pupils in French in order to provide a basis for the preparation of appropriate instructional material.

The study involved 40 pupils from two French immersion Grade 3 classes and 24 pupils from two regular English Grade 3 classes. The French immersion classes and regular English classes were comparable with respect to linguistic characteristics (all from English-speaking homes) and socio-economic background (generally middle to upper-middle class).

French immersion programs have been described elsewhere (see for example Lambert and Tucker, 1972; Swain, 1974; 1975). Suffice it to say here that the French immersion pupils in the present study were instructed entirely in French in Kindergarten and Grade 1. In Grades 2 and 3 they continued to receive all their instruction in French with the exception of approximately one hour a day of instruction in English Language Arts taught to them by an English-speaking teacher. The regular English pupils on the other hand, received all their instruction in English at all grade levels with the exception of daily 20 minute French language classes.

The pupils in the present study were required to write two stories in

English each based on a different picture, the second picture being the more complex and detailed of the two. The first picture showed a train, a boy wearing a jacket and cap, and a small dog. The boy is waving at the train. The second picture showed a house on fire, a lady at a second story window, two firemen, a firetruck, and a ladder going up to the window. One fireman is manning a hose; the second is on the ladder. The French immersion pupils were required to write two additional stories in French each based on a different picture. The first picture showed a child wearing a raincoat carrying an umbrella. The child is standing in front of a book lying in a puddle of water. The second picture depicted a boy and a girl on the beach. The boy is running across the sand playing with a kite. The girl is playing in the sand with a pail and a shovel, making a sandcastle. There is a sailboat, and some seagulls in the background. The time limit allowed to complete each story was ten minutes. For the French immersion pupils, the English stories and French stories were written on two separate occasions.

The stories the children wrote were analyzed on the basis of the following four categories:

- (1) Vocabulary skills
- (2) Technical skills (spelling, punctuation, and capitalization)
- (3) Grammatical skills (sentence types and syntactical errors)
- (4) Creativity

The next four sections consider each skill in turn, first describing the basis of the analysis followed by description of the results.

Preliminary analyses of the stories involved the calculation of averages for the number of words per sentence, the number of sentences per story, and the number of words per story. Words were considered to be units bounded by spaces. Contractions were considered as two words; hyphenated words were

classed as one word. Sentences were defined as units marked by capitalization (other than proper nouns) or a period, or both. The results are shown in Table 1.

No statistical analyses have been made of any of the data presented in this report because the concern of this paper is less with the magnitude of the differences between groups (which has been well documented in evaluation reports (Lambert and Tucker, 1972; Barik and Swain, 1974)) and more with the errors themselves. In other words, it is felt that it is important educationally at this point in time to note what errors French immersion pupils make.

TABLE 1

Average Number of Words and Sentences Used in English and French Stories

	English Stories		French Stories
	Regular	Immersion	Immersion
Average number of words per sentence	13.4	12.5	11.3
Average number of sentences per story	4.6	6.5	5.7
Average number of words per story	61.6	81.3	64.4

In English, the French immersion pupils wrote on the average about one word less per sentence than the regular English pupils (12.5 versus 13.4). However, the French immersion pupils wrote an average of almost two sentences more per story than the regular program pupils (6.5 versus 4.6). Thus, overall, the French immersion pupils wrote longer stories in English (approximately 20 more words per story) than their English-instructed peers.

In French, the French immersion pupils wrote about one word less per

sentence (11.3 versus 12.5) and about one sentence less per story (5.7 versus 6.5) than they did when writing English stories. However, they still wrote slightly longer stories in French than did the regular English pupils in English (64.4 versus 61.6 words).

### VOCABULARY SKILLS

#### a) Variety

Token refers to each noun (verbs, prepositions, etc.) used. Type refers to each different noun (verbs, prepositions, etc.) used in each story. A type-token ratio (TTR), that is, a ratio of the total number of types to the total number of tokens within any particular part of speech, represents the variety of use within that specific part of speech. The higher the ratio, the greater the variety of nouns (verbs, prepositions, etc.) used. In other words, the higher the ratio, the less there is repetition of vocabulary items within the part of speech being considered. TTRs were calculated for nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and prepositions in each English story written by the regular English pupils and by the French immersion pupils, as well as in each French story written by the French immersion pupils. Average TTRs were then calculated within each part of speech (see Table 2).

The following points should be noted about what was included in the vocabulary counts:

- (1) The noun count included proper nouns.
- (2) The verb count did not include modals, (e.g., will, may).
- (3) The adjective count included predicate adjectives, (e.g., "The ball was little")<sup>2</sup> as well as past participles used as adjectives, (e.g., "She was frightened") and nouns used as adjectives, (e.g., "He has a rubber ball", "She had a candlelight dinner"). It did not include either possessive adjectives (e.g., his) or qualifiers, (e.g., some).

- (4) Adverb phrases of time such as "last night," "one day," "all the time" and "all of a sudden" were counted as one adverb.
- (5) The preposition count did not include the "to" in front of an infinitive in English. In French "de", "à" and "pour" in front an infinitive were included in the count.

The TTRs are shown in Table 2. These results are important as, although the TTR in each category in English is higher for the regular English pupils, the difference between the two groups of pupils in each category is small (e.g., adjectives .82 versus .80). The largest difference occurs with respect to prepositions (.81 versus .75). Thus, with the possible exception of prepositions, French immersion pupils used as much variety in their choice of

TABLE 2  
Type-Token Ratios

	English Stories		French Stories
	Regular	Immersion	Immersion
Nouns	.69	.65	.66
Verbs	.72	.70	.69
Adjectives	.82	.80	.86
Adverbs	.91	.89	.85
Prepositions	.81	.75	.58

English vocabulary (nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs) as their English-instructed peer group. Furthermore, the French immersion pupils used as much variety in their choice of French nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs as they did in their choice of English nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. With respect to prepositions, however, they used less variety in French than in English.

Less variety in the use of French prepositions relative to English prepositions may be due to differences in the two languages. For example, "de" was a frequently used preposition in the French stories, and in most cases its use was obligatory, that is, no other preposition was acceptable. Thus it is possible that there was less opportunity of choice in French prepositions than in English necessarily reducing the TTR in French relative to English. However, this is mere speculation which could be verified best by examining the TTRs in French stories written by native French-speaking children.

b) Errors (morphological and lexical misuse)

Morphological errors and errors of lexical substitution, addition or omission (lexical misuse) were examined. Note was made of spelling errors and syntactic errors, but these are described elsewhere in this paper under technical and grammatical skills respectively and are not included in the counts of errors noted in this section. Table 3 summarizes the results. The figures in Table 3 represent the number of lexical substitution and morphological errors occurring within the noun (verb, adjective, etc.) category expressed as a percent of all the nouns (verbs, adjectives, etc.) used.

TABLE 3

Morphological Errors and Lexical Misuse (Substitution, Addition or Omission)

	English Stories		French Stories
	Regular	Immersion	Immersion
% of nouns with errors	1.7%	1.0%	3.3%
% of verbs with errors	4.0%	2.6%	18.5%
% of adjectives with errors	0.8%	0.3%	16.7%
% of adverbs with errors	2.3%	1.5%	3.2%
% of prepositions with errors	5.4%	3.2%	9.8%
% of articles with errors	1.9%	2.3%	18.0%
% of pronouns with errors	4.4%	1.6%	11.3%



The first point to note is that although the differences are not large, the French immersion pupils made fewer lexical substitution and morphological errors percentage-wise in each part of speech than did their English-instructed counterparts with the exception of articles. Thus the French immersion children are performing at least as well in vocabulary skills in English as their English-educated peer group.

The second point to note is that the French immersion children made more errors percentage-wise in writing French words than they did in writing English words. The differences are especially marked in verbs (18.5% versus 2.6%), adjectives (16.7% versus .3%), articles (18.0% versus 2.3%), and pronouns (11.3% versus 1.6%). Verbs must be marked for number agreement and tense. Adjectives, articles and pronouns must be marked for number and gender in many cases. It would be interesting to know how native French-speaking children perform in these areas relative to the French immersion children. Do French children have as much difficulty with the French verbal system and with marking gender and number agreement as the French immersion children (i.e., with these parts of speech, is written French more complex than English?), or is the French immersion pupils' poor performance related to the fact that French is a second language and still being learned?

The kinds of errors made by each group in writing their stories are described below with respect to each part of speech.

#### Nouns

Most of the errors involving English nouns were connected with noun number. And the majority of these number errors involved confusion, in the second story over fireman and firemen (e.g., "a firemen came", "some fireman came; they..."). Most of the remaining errors in English nouns involved expressions

of quantity with one, some and all (e.g., "one of our friend\_\_", "all of the train\_\_").

The majority of errors involving nouns in French were classified as lexical substitution. These were divided into two definite types. Either the pupils were unfamiliar with a vocabulary item in French and therefore substituted an English equivalent (e.g., "sa petite spade", "dans le suitcase"), or the pupils used a word that was similar in form (e.g., "la bibliothèque" (bibliothécaire)) or similar in meaning (e.g., "avant la cloche" (l'heure); "la terre" (sable)).

### Verbs

On the whole, the French immersion pupils used a smaller range of verb tenses in English than the regular English pupils, limiting themselves mostly to present, simple past, and an occasional progressive. The most frequent type of error observed in the English stories was the omission of past tense endings "dog stop\_\_"; "I open\_\_".

Errors involving French verbs included using the incorrect past participle form (e.g., "a perdre" (perdu)); wrong auxiliary (e.g., "a tombé", "a venu"; incorrect subject-verb agreement (e.g., "les enfants sommes allées", "Paul et Sophie va"); incorrect infinitive form (e.g., "je vais fait", "perder"); and also fabricated forms (e.g., "a pron" (pris)).

### Adjectives

Errors related to the use of the adjective in English were rare. An example is "Thanks to the fireman the lady would have been died".

Errors related to the use of the adjective in French primarily involved incorrect number agreement (e.g., "elle est tristes") or incorrect gender agreement (e.g., "un petite livre", "un livre ancienne"). The remaining errors involved the use of fabricated or inappropriate forms (e.g., "ils sont mous" (mouillés)).

### Adverbs

In English the errors involving adverbs were mostly lexical substitutions rather than incorrect adverb forms. An example of adverb lexical substitution is "The train went along" (The train went by). An example of the use of an incorrect form is "Afterward I went to bed,..." (After I went to bed,...).

In French all adverb errors involved lexical substitution (e.g., "un jour" (aujourd'hui), "Martine juste joue").

### Prepositions

Most errors in English involved preposition substitution (e.g., "all in a sudden", "slept to ten o'clock") and a small number of cases involved omission (e.g., "there is a fire    my next door neighbour's").

In French, again the majority of errors involved preposition substitution (e.g., "audesous de sa tête" (audessus), "pour l'école (à)", "sur la cours" (dans)). However, some errors involved the addition of a preposition (e.g., "sur lundi", "regardé à") or the omission of a preposition (e.g., "a dit    tout le monde" (à)).

### Articles

In the case of articles in English most errors involved omission of articles (e.g., "there was    little house", "got    ladder"). The French immersion pupils also tended to confuse a and an (e.g., "an metal", "a avalanche").

The majority of errors of articles in French involved incorrect gender (e.g., "tout cette jour", "sa livre", "un fille"). It is interesting to note that even within a story, one would find both, for example, "un fille" and "une fille". Other errors involved article omission and addition, particularly in expressions that appeared as translations from English, (e.g., "c'est le temps", "pour un longtemps", "livre de l'école"). Errors involving number agreement were relatively rare, perhaps because the pupils tended to use singular nouns in their stories. An example of an error in number is "le deux enfant le".

### Pronouns

Most of the errors involving pronouns in English were categorized as either cases of ambiguous reference, or no antecedent. Examples included such sentences as: "She opened the kitchen door; it was on fire" (the door, or the oven?), "they told them" (no antecedent), "So Tommy helped him move the tree", (no antecedent).

In French, the majority of the errors involved the omission of either reflexive pronouns (e.g., "est arrêté" (s')); direct object pronouns (e.g., "j' ai apporté" (l'), "aller me cacher"(me)); or indirect object pronouns (e.g., "lui a donné" (lui)). Also errors in gender (e.g., "il la lance" (le livre)); number (e.g., "nous allons me coucher"); and person (e.g., "nous allons se coucher") were observed.

### TECHNICAL SKILLS

Punctuation (omitted, substituted, added), capitalization (omitted, added) and spelling errors were noted and analyzed.

—Further specification within these categories of technical skills is

necessary.

Punctuation was counted as:

- a) omitted - if capitalization was included, but terminal punctuation was missing; also included here were omissions of appropriate punctuation required to set words off (quotations, interjections, nouns in apposition, etc.).
- b) added - if an apostrophe was included within a word (for example, in French stories where rules for English possessive constructions were sometimes used).
- c) substituted - included substitution of comma for semi-colon, semi-colon for colon, etc. Also included here was substitution of English quotation marks (" ") for French (<< >>) in the French task.

Capitalization was counted as:

- a) omitted - if a period was used to mark the termination of a sentence, but initial capitalization was missing.

Spelling errors were counted as:

- a) 1 error only if a word was misspelled more than once in the same way within a story.
- b) 1 error only if the same "morphological" spelling error occurred more than once in a story (this included use of -ez or é for infinitive ending, or -er for past participles, etc.).
- c) 1 error only if more than one spelling error occurred in the same word.
- d) errors in accents in French were counted as spelling errors.

The results concerning technical skills are summarized in Table 4 where the average number of errors per story are given.

TABLE 4

Technical Skills - Punctuation, Capitalization and Spelling:  
Average Number of Errors in English and French Stories

		English Stories		French Stories
		Regular	Immersion	Immersion
Punctuation	Average number omitted per story	2.0	2.7	1.7
	Average number added per story.	0.1	0.1	0.3
	Average number substituted per story.	0.1	0.4	0.4
	Average number of punctuation errors per story	2.2	3.2	2.4
Capitalization	Average number omitted per story	1.3	1.6	0.6
	Average number added per story	0.1	0.1	0.1
	Average number of capitalization errors per story	1.4	1.7	0.7
Spelling	Average number of spelling errors per story	4.1	4.6	8.3

Punctuation

French immersion pupils made on the average one more punctuation error per English story than the regular English pupils (3.2 versus 2.2). It must be remembered, however, that the French immersion children wrote longer stories and therefore had more opportunity to make errors. The most frequent errors included the omission of a period at the end of a sentence, omission of commas, omission of quotation marks, and omission of the apostrophe in possessives. These errors were on the average made about equally as often by both groups of children. In addition, however, French immersion pupils made some errors rarely if ever made by the regular English pupils. These errors

are listed below from the most frequent to the least frequent.

1. omission of the apostrophe in contracted verb forms and negatives, e.g., "you\_\_ll", "couldn\_\_t".
2. use of dash instead of quotation marks.
3. incorrect position of apostrophe, e.g., "could'nt".
4. omission of question marks.

In French, the French immersion children made fewer punctuation errors than they did in writing English. Again, it must be taken into account that the French immersion children wrote shorter stories in French than in English and therefore had fewer opportunities to make errors. The errors from most frequent to least frequent are listed below.

1. omission of the apostrophe in pronoun-verb contraction, e.g., "jai"  
"c'était".
2. omission of hyphens, e.g., "donnez\_\_moi", "pense\_\_t\_\_il".
3. omission of the period at the end of a sentence.
4. omission of commas.
5. hyphens added when not needed, e.g., "par-ce-que".
6. use of English quotation marks (" ") instead of French quotation marks (<< >>).
7. omission of quotation marks.
8. omission of the apostrophe in article-noun contractions, e.g., "lautre"
9. omission of the apostrophe in negatives, e.g., "na pas".

#### Capitalization

In English, the difference between the number of capitalization errors made by the regular English pupils and the French immersion pupils was small (1.4 errors per story versus 1.7 errors per story respectively). Again, it

must be pointed out the French immersion children wrote longer stories in English and therefore had more opportunity to make errors. Both groups of children omitted the capitals on proper names about equally as frequently. They also omitted capitals at the beginning of a sentence about equally as frequently. In addition, the French immersion children tended to omit capitals on words that are not capitalized in French, for example, days of the week and months of the year.

In writing the French stories, the French immersion pupils made fewer capitalization errors per story than they did in writing English stories (.7 versus 1.7) or than the regular English pupils did in writing English stories (.7 versus 1.4). These errors consisted, as in English, mainly of omitting the capitals on proper names and at the beginning of a sentence. Perhaps the superior performance of the French immersion pupils on French capitalization relative to themselves or to their English-instructed counterparts in English is due to the fact that there are fewer instances in French where capitalization is necessary, although it would have been possible for the French immersion pupils to "overcapitalize"; that is, to put capitals in French where they are not required.

### Spelling

Although the average number of spelling errors per story in English was slightly greater for the French immersion children (4.6 versus 4.1), it must be remembered that the French immersion children wrote longer stories. When this is taken into consideration, it turns out that on the average 6% of the words in each English story written by French immersion children contained spelling errors whereas 7% of the words in each English story written by the English-instructed group contained spelling errors.

In French the French immersion pupils made more spelling errors per story



than they did in English. In fact, on the average 13% of the words in each French story contained spelling errors. It would be interesting to know to what extent these errors would have been made by native French-speaking children.

No attempt has been made to classify the errors since not enough data are available to determine which errors are due to confusion between the two language systems and which errors are due to confusion within one of the language systems. In order to make these distinctions, data from French-speaking children would be needed. Instead all of the spelling errors have been listed in Appendix A. Appendix A1 lists the spelling errors made by the regular English pupils writing English stories. Appendix A2 lists the spelling errors made by the French immersion pupils writing English stories. And Appendix A3 lists the spelling errors made by the French immersion pupils writing French stories.

### GRAMMATICAL SKILLS

#### a) Types of Sentences

Sentences were classified as simple, compound, complex, compound-complex, or as a sentence fragment. Simple sentences included sentences with compound subject noun phrases (e.g., "Andrew et Margaret sont très contents"). Compound sentences were any sentences joined by a coordinate conjunction or which had a double predicate (e.g., "One day he went to the train station and waved his arm at the driver"). Complex sentences were any sentences with a relative clause (e.g., "Une fois il y avait un petit garçon qui est allé à la maison de son ami") or with an adverbial clause (e.g., "The lady cried 'help' because her house was on fire").

The average number of each type of sentence occurring per story was

calculated as well as the percentage that each type of sentence represented of the total number of sentences. The results are shown in Table 5.

TABLE 5

Types of Sentences

		English Stories		French Stories
		Regular	Immersion	Immersion
Simple	average number per story	2.1	2.8	2.8
	% of total number	46%	43%	50%
Compound	average number per story	1.2	1.3	1.2
	% of total number	26%	20%	20%
Complex	average number per story	0.6	1.2	1.0
	% of total number	13%	19%	18%
Compound/ Complex	average number per story	0.6	1.0	0.6
	% of total number	13%	15%	11%
Fragments	average number per story	0.1	0.2	0.1
	% of total number	2%	3%	1%

In English, the French immersion pupils wrote proportionately fewer simple and compound sentences and more complex and compound/complex sentences than their English-educated peers. In all cases, however, the differences are small, never exceeding 6%. These data suggest that the French immersion children are writing sentences in English which are at least as sophisticated as their English-educated counterparts. Furthermore, in French, although there was a slight tendency for them to write proportionately more simple sentences than they did in English (50% versus 43%), the French immersion pupils are about as advanced in the types of sentences they use in written French as in English.

b) Syntactic Errors

Errors of syntax were noted in the English and French stories. Only about 2% of the sentences in the English stories written by either group of pupils contained syntactic errors. About half of the errors made by the French immersion pupils in English appear to be due to the influence of French,

for example, adjectives misplaced, adverbs misplaced or direct objects misplaced. However, the absolute frequency with which these errors occurred was very low.

Approximately 10% of the sentences in the French stories written by the French immersion pupils contained syntactic errors. The types of errors made are noted below in order from the most frequent error to the least frequent.

1. misplaced pronoun, e.g., "a amené nous", "tu peux aider moi".
2. misplaced direct object noun, e.g., "a laissé son livre tomber".
3. misplaced adverb, e.g., "Martine juste joue dans la sable".
4. misplaced adjective, e.g., "du froid l'eau".
5. misplaced preposition, e.g., "qui il appartient à".
6. misplaced negative, e.g., "j'ai attrapé rien".

### CREATIVITY

Analyses of creative skills involved determining the number of stories in both languages with titles, the number of descriptive stories and, for comparison purposes, the number of narrative stories. Within the stories, such elements as logical chronological sequence, selection of proper names for characters and use of dialogue were counted. The stories were also assessed according to creativity or imagination of the narrative (creation or elaboration of relevant events using the picture as a starting point). The data on creative skills are found in Table 6.

TABLE 6  
Creative Skills

	English Stories		French Stories
	Regular	Immersion	Immersion
% of stories with titles	38%	61%	50%
% descriptive stories	6%	8%	14%
% narrative stories	94%	92%	86%
% of stories with logical chronological sequence	53%	53%	51%
% of stories with dialogue	6%	29%	21%
% of stories with proper names for characters	36%	44%	64%
% of stories creating events related to, but not represented in picture	45%	35%	45%

In English, the regular English pupils created titles for 38% of the stories they wrote. In comparison, the French immersion pupils created titles for 61% of the stories they wrote. In French, the French immersion pupils added titles to 50% of the stories. Although this is lower than the percentage obtained by the same group of pupils on the English task, it is still higher than that obtained by the regular English pupils in writing their English stories.

In an effort to establish what general kinds of stories the pupils wrote in regard to the pictures provided, a comparison was made of the number of pure descriptions, as opposed to narratives (which often included some description as background). Six percent of the stories written by the regular English pupils and 8% of the English stories written by the French immersion pupils were of a purely descriptive nature. In French, however, 14% of the

stories written by the French immersion pupils were purely descriptive stories. Thus, the French immersion pupils seem slightly more inclined to write descriptive stories in French than in English or, to put it another way, they seemed less inclined to write narrative stories in French than in English (86% versus 92% respectively).

Within the stories analyses were done on logical chronological sequence - i.e., the flow of the paragraph - did it flow smoothly and logically from one event to the next, or was it disjointed and awkwardly sequenced? Fifty-three percent of the stories written in English by both groups demonstrated logical chronological sequence. Approximately the same percentage of French stories (51%) were written in a logical chronological sequence.

The percentages observed regarding the inclusion of dialogue by the various groups are interesting - 6% of the stories written by the regular English pupils and 29% of the English stories written by the French immersion pupils included dialogue. Thus the French immersion pupils made greater use of dialogue in their English stories than did the regular English pupils. They also made greater use of dialogue in their French stories than did their English-instructed peers (21% versus 6%), although they used less dialogue in their French stories than in their own English stories (21% versus 29%).

The regular English pupils created proper names for characters in 36% of the stories they wrote. French immersion pupils created names for characters in 44% of the English stories and 64% of the French stories they wrote.

As a measure of imagination or creativity, the stories were analyzed on the basis of creation of events relating to the picture, but not necessarily evident in the actual picture. This included elaboration of the background to the picture, as well as narration of events which took place either prior to, in conjunction with, or after the events shown in the picture. These

extra events must have been related to the picture, that is, they must have used the picture as a starting point. A description of a forest fire in conjunction with the second picture of the English task, though imaginative, was considered off-topic, and therefore counted as "inappropriate". In many cases it is difficult to draw the line between originality or creativity, and inappropriateness. Forty-five percent of the stories written by the English pupils, 35% of the English stories written by the French immersion pupils and 45% of the French stories written by the French immersion pupils included related events not represented in the picture.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Overall the performance of the Grade 3 French immersion pupils in writing English stories compares favourably with that of their English-instructed peers considering the limited time devoted to formal school instruction in English Language Arts relative to the regular English program pupils. Specifically, the results related to their English writing skills show that the French immersion pupils relative to the English program pupils:

1. write longer stories.
2. use as much variety in their choice of English vocabulary (nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs) with the possible exception of their use of prepositions.
3. make proportionately fewer lexical misuse and morphological errors in each part of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions and pronouns) except with articles.
4. make on the average more punctuation, capitalization, and spelling errors per story, but the differences are small. However, the French immersion pupils write longer stories and therefore have a greater opportunity of making errors. Thus, for example, when spelling errors are calculated as a

made by the French immersion children in writing English stories is slightly lower than that of regular pupils.

5. write proportionately fewer simple and compound sentences and proportionately more complex and compound-complex sentences.
6. make proportionately the same number of syntactic errors.
7. are at least as creative in writing stories in that the two groups write proportionately about equally as many purely descriptive stories, narrative stories and stories with logical chronological sequencing. They give more stories a title and give more characters a name. They write more stories with dialogue. However, they write fewer stories creating events related to the picture but not depicted in it.

Generally speaking, the French stories written by the French immersion pupils contain more errors than their own English stories. Specifically, the results related to the French writing skills of the French immersion pupils relative to their English writing skills show that in French the French immersion pupils:

1. write shorter stories.
2. use as much variety in their choice of vocabulary (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) with the exception of their use of prepositions.
3. make proportionately more lexical misuse and morphological errors in each part of speech. Difficulties in adjectives, articles and pronouns are related to the choice of appropriate morphological endings to signal gender, number and person. Similarly, difficulties in verbs are related to the morphology required to signal tense, number and person.
4. make on the average fewer punctuation and capitalization errors, although the differences are small. However, the French immersion pupils write shorter stories in French than they do in English and may, therefore, have less opportunity for making errors.

5. make on the average more spelling errors.
6. write proportionately more simple sentences and fewer compound-complex sentences.
7. make proportionately more syntactic errors.
8. write proportionately fewer stories with titles but more with names for characters. They write more purely descriptive stories as well as more stories which describe related events not represented in the picture. However, they make less use of dialogue. About equally as many of the English and French stories are told in a logical chronological sequence.

The results presented in this paper complement those presented in Barik and Swain (1974) concerning a larger sample of the Grade 3 students in the Ottawa French immersion program. On a standardized test of English achievement (Metropolitan Achievement Test), the French immersion pupils performed as well as their English peer group in word knowledge, reading and language (includes items on punctuation and capitalization), but not as well in spelling. On a standardized test of French achievement (Test de Rendement en Français), the French immersion pupils' performance was equivalent to that of from 23 to 39% of native French-speaking Grade 3 pupils.

In addition, the results of the present paper are, generally speaking, consistent with those noted by Genesee (1974) in a study of the writing skills of Grade 4 immersion pupils. Genesee had teachers rate compositions written in English by French immersion pupils and English program pupils. He found that the French immersion pupils were similar to their English educated counterparts in the following aspects of writing: sentence accuracy, vocabulary choice, sentence complexity and variety, and organization. The immersion students, however, lagged behind the non-immersion students on spelling. On the other hand, the immersion students were



rated higher than the non-immersion students on originality of thought, on punctuation and on length of story.

These results suggest that there is little need for alarm concerning the English writing skills of the French immersion pupils. Further instruction related to their French writing skills would seem of more concern at this time. The errors discussed in this paper should be useful in providing a basis for such instruction.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Many thanks are expressed to Kathy McTavish and Kathy Scott who spent a great deal of time counting and recording the errors made by the students. This paper would not have been completed without their help. Thanks are also expressed to Dr. H.C. Barik who read and commented on an earlier draft of this paper.

<sup>2</sup>The examples given throughout the paper are taken from the texts of the students' stories. All errors made by the students in the examples quoted have been corrected in the text with the exception of the one being used to illustrate the point.

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Spelling Errors: Regular English Pupils on Stories in English

ERROR	CORRECT FORM	ERROR	CORRECT FORM
atlas	at last	comming	coming
allowens	allowance	cealning	cleaning (?)
apon	upon	cealn	clean (?)
are	our	ckwically	quickly
alreandy } alreandy }	alreandy	damag	damage
anwerd	answered	diver	driver
agian	again	departmet	department
all ways	always	derrert	dessert (?)
		did_'t	didn't
beter	better	ever_	every
bigest	biggest	exiting	exciting
bagag	baggage	evywhere	everywhere
bye	by	ennofe	enough
by	buy	engineer	engineer
breakfeast	breakfast	ex-ray	x-ray
businiss	business	eung	young
bother	brother	eny	any
Berry	Barry		
backing	baking	favorit	favorite
baby sit	babysit	fir	fire
bussy	busy	frie }	(3X)
becaus	because	firer }	(3X)
brat	brought	fireman }	(2X)
belown }	below' (?)	firenan }	(2X)
belowe }	below	firnen }	
company	company	firenen }	
cot	caught	firmen }	
cucing	cooking	fraind }	
cabnet	cabinet	finaly }	
climed	climbed	finilly }	
carryer	carrier	fooen	fooling
cralwed	crawled	could	Friday
could	could	care? chair?	
chare	Canadian	Canadian	
Canadian			

Spelling Errors: Regular English Pupils on Stories in English

ERROR	CORRECT FORM	ERROR	CORRECT FORM
grandmother	grandmother	only	only
gose }	goes	oven	of (?) often (?)
grined (3X)	grinned	out_side	outside
happaliy	happily	off	of
hurrd }	heard	people }	people
herd }	heard	peole }	police
hared }	heard	plece }	place
hospitle	hospital	plase	place
houes	house	rored	roared
incirenc	insurance	rememberd }	remembered
jumped	jumped	remebered }	remembered
jaket	jacket	really	really
ladar	ladder	strang	strange
latter (2X)	later	stars	stairs
last	last	p_sairs	started
lowly	lovely	stared }	started
ladly or laddly }	lady	sarted }	squirrel
lad	lady	squirrl }	squirrel
mapel	maple	soid }	said
mater	matter	siad }	said
Marry	Mary	skie	ski
mad (?)	made	siting	sitting
Manatoba	Manitoba	sazs	says (?) saws (?)
naber	neighbour	smeed	(?)
nummble	(?)	smock	(?)
nekst	next	saing	saying
ninenten	nineteen	sow	saw
new }	now	safves	saves
new' }	now	somthing	something
nam	man	streed	street
non't	not (?)	sher	sure
no	how (?)	stoped	stopped
		Suden	sudden
		skramed }	screamed
		sceamed }	screamed
		stashon }	station
		stalsion }	station
		stason }	station
		stasion }	station

Spelling Errors: Regular English Pupils on Stories in English

ERRORS	CORRECT FORM	ERROR	CORRECT FORM
through	throw		
tride	tried		
tain }	train		
trian }			
tianes	trains		
The	they		
truk	truck		
trues	trucks (?)		
traying	trying		
traped	trapped		
trak	track		
traks	tracks		
thow	though		
to	too		
two	to		
too	to		
thire	there		
there	their		
ther	there		
up_stairs	upstairs		
village	village		
wherck }	work		
wark }			
wen	when		
write	right		
wared	warned		
weli	while		
windos	windows		
wraped	wrapped		
where	were		
wachted	watched		
wavse	waves		
wating	waiting		
yeld	yelled		

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Spelling Errors: French Immersion Pupils on Stories in English

ERROR	CORRECT FORM	ERROR	CORRECT FORM
aspos	supposed	Beatty	Beatty
and	an	brote	brought
are	our	ble	(?)
all most	almost	bye	by
animals	animals	bate	body (?)
aroud	around	bin	been
approching	approaching	becauce	because
aske	ask	becase	
ageunst	against	becuase	
axatly	exactly		
upoun	upon		
a pone }		canda	Canada
awer	over	colled	called
anquer	anchor	crie	cry
alarme	alarm	chou	choo (?) chew (?)
al	all	cept	except
arme	arm	comeing }	coming
alwis	always (?)	comming }	
agin	again	calaps	collapse
a nuther	another	coverd	covered
avalanch	avalanche	completly	completely
All	I'll	controll	control
apparte	apart	cabuse	caboose
apoligized	apologized	cheif }	chief
accross	across	chife }	
adventuer	adventure	climming	climbing
		climed	climbed
		chassing	chasing
		cors	course
		carots	carrots
bey }	buy	cot	caught
by }	bridge	cought }	
brige }	burnt	cout }	
hurt }		cood }	
bernt }		cod }	
bunt }		cede }	
blong	blowing		could
brake	break		

Appendix A2

Spelling Errors: French Emmerision Pupils on Stories in English

ERROR	CORRECT FORM	ERROR	CORRECT FORM
Michael	Michael	Plain	plane
mina }	minutes	poor	put
minites }		payed }	played (?) paid (?)
murderd }	murdered	played }	played
musiums	museums	plaing	playing
mishan	mission	pasengerse	passengers
Misses	Mrs.	potatos	potatoes
named	named	Patricha	Patricia
Montoel	Montreal	purposly	purposely
montines }	mountains	puting	putting
montanes }		permosion	permission
moutaine }	mountain	preshes	precious
middle	middle	peaple }	people
mony	money	pepole }	people
no	know	quicly	quickly
niun	noon	quit	quite
new	knew		
nitting	knitting	ruines	ruins
newsoms	new Ones	ruched	rushed
nabber	neighbour	rite	right or write
Nabores	neighbours	remembered	remembered
neibours }		remenrer	remember
meighbores }		robed	robbed
noure	(?)	rocy	rocky
Nochenal	National		
needead	needed	saveing	saving
northern	northern	sqrtered	skirted (?) squirted (?)
		suddenely }	suddenly
off }	of	son	soon
ov }		super	supper
	(2X)	sparces	sparks (?) sparce (?)
olny	only	sow	saw
ocklock	o'clock	skelitan	skeleton
oner	owner	speciale	special
our	hour	spraing	sprang
oonc }	once	sertanly	certainly
onece }		stif	stiff
otawa	Ottawa	semedly	(?)



Spelling Errors: French Immersion Pupils on Stories in English

ERRORS	CORRECT FORM	ERRORS	CORRECT FORM
diner	dinner	gote	got
diver	driver	gose	goes
dicided	decided	girlfired	girlfriend
desle	diesel		
departement } (2X)	department	here	hear
danres	dangerous (?)	hy	high (?) hy (?)
daze	days	hapened	happened
draem	dream	hostpital	hospital
		haf	half
exiting	exciting	her	here
everywere (2X)	everywhere	hosbend	husband
everyttime (2X)	every time	him self	himself
engin	engine	hollo	hollow
Expeiraly (?)	(?)	hury	hurry
exsitment	excitement	hos	whose (?) house (?)
exclaiamed	exclaimed	heard }	heard
exited (2X)	excited	herd }	house
erning	earning	hose	hook
equale	equal	huck	hundred
enginear }	engineer	hidrent	who (?)
engineer }		hhaw	if (?)
exitement }	excitement	hif	help
exept	except	held	
evrey	every	in side	inside
		il	he'll (?) I'll (?)
fryde	fried	idiet	idiot
finace	finance	knowked	knew
fixt	fixed		
freends (3X)	friends		
fist }	first		
farst }		lather }	later
farnis }		latter }	ladder
fond (2X)	furnace (?) furnish (?)	lade	lady
four	four	living	leaving
		littel }	little
		litle }	
		let	lit
		locamotive	locomotive
		lftime	life time
		luckyley	luckily

1 3 1

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Spelling Errors: French Emersion Pupils on Stories in English

ERROR	CORRECT FORM	ERROR	CORRECT FORM
skered	scared	thup	chump
smorning	this morning	thru	threw
salades	salads	through }	
safily	safely	the	them
scoquuel	schedule	trile	trial
stoped	stopped	thoe	though
shavels	shovels	thai	they
sirup	syrup	to	too
sugaud	squad	to }	two
sow	sew	to }	
spraded	sprayed	to }	
sparc	sparse	too	to or too
soporsed	supposed	te }	to
socking	soaking	low }	
somm	some	ther	there
sead	said	theer }	
stated	said	their }	they're
stared }	started	there }	their
startd }		there }	
shoud	should	theer }	
screammimg	screaming	thers }	there's
screemng		there's }	they're
screemd	screamed	they're }	
statione	station	unites	units
station }		useully	usually
staiton }		une	one
tomorrow }	tomorrow	understand	understand
tommorlow }		veery }	very
touck }	took	vare }	
tock }		Vancoover }	Vancouver
then	than	vacaition }	vacation
tough	through		
trakes }	tracks		
tracs }			
traintraks	train tracks		
trickclng	trickling		
tring	trying		

1 1 1 1 1



Spelling Errors: French Emersion Pupils on Stories in English

ERRORS	CORRECT FORM	ERRORS	CORRECT FORM
wan	one		
wer	wear		
with	with		
wonderd	wondered		
wasent	wasn't		
was 'it			
whaching	watching		
wathing			
wene	when		
wa	way		
whated	wanted		
wating	waiting		
would'ed	wouldn't		
wich	which		
wait	what		
wayved	waved		
wafes	waves		
worck	work		
write	right		
will }	we'll		
whel }			
whent	went		
wore	were		
where			
wher or where	where		
were			
youse	yours		

(2X)

(2X)

(2X)

(2X)

(3X)

(3X)

## Spelling Errors: French Immersion Pupils on Stories in French

ERROR	CORRECT FORM	ERROR	CORRECT FORM
audessous	au-dessous	aporté	apporté
avoirs }	avoir	aporté }	apporter
alore }	alors	aporte }	apporte
à	a	aport }	
a	a	aié }	
ami	amis	aiée }	
arvie	envie	alle }	
aten	attend ? a temps?	aler }	
arevoir	au revoir	allé }	
autre	autres	aller }	
aujourdni }	aujourd'hui	sont aller	allés
aujourd 'ni }		alée }	allé
assi }	aussi	alée }	allés
ausie }		alés }	allé
après	après	bonhomme	bonhomme
an	en	bot	botte
anné	année	botes	bottes
ai	et	beacoup	beaucoup
apercoit	aperçoit	bonne histoire	bonnes histoires
areter	arrêté	bateaux	bateaux
arrete	arrête	bato	bateau
atraper	attraper	dés bétise	bêtises
atraper	attrapé	brisser	brisé
apartien }	attraper	blans	blanc
apetient }	appartient	bruns	bruns
a amener	a amené	beaux	beau
sont arrivé	sont arrivés	baignez	baigner
arrivée	arrivé	beingné	beigné
achete	acheter	bibliantie	bibliothèque
achete }	achète	bibliothèque	bibliothèque
avait }	avaient	bibliotic	bibliothèque
avais }		bibliothèque	bibliothèque
avet }	avait		
avie }			
avee	avait?	cen	quand
aver	avait?	celce chose	quelque chose
ai aporter	ai apporté	cane	canne
aporter	apporter	ceil	ciel
aportte	apporte	comance	commence
aportte	apportent	Cecile	Cécile
après	après		

ERROR

chocolat  
 come  
 Glode  
 cloch  
 chaute  
 Galafornia  
 comment  
 cooved  
 les cigale  
 chercher  
 chose  
 class  
 content  
 content  
 chateau }  
 chateau }  
 court  
 cour  
 cour  
 cour }  
 cour }  
 courr }  
 cerf-volante }  
 cerf-volent }  
 cervolen }  
 c'est sa }  
 cest }  
 cetais }  
 cet }  
 c'est }  
 cest }  
 cest }  
 doure  
 devoir  
 diset  
 desider  
 dollar  
 desus  
 deaur

CORRECT FORM

chocolat  
 comme  
 Claude  
 cloche  
 chaude?  
 California  
 comment  
 ?  
 les cigales  
 chercher  
 choses  
 classe  
 contents  
 content  
 chateau  
 cours  
 courent  
 cours  
 court  
 cerf-volant  
 c'est ça  
 cette  
 c'était  
 c'est  
 sait  
 ses  
 s'est  
 dur  
 devoirs  
 dix-sept  
 décide  
 dollars  
 dessus  
 ?

ERROR

diner  
 danes  
 dinner }  
 diner }  
 det  
 di }  
 dis }  
 demin  
 Dahcor  
 dacord  
 a donnez  
 a donner  
 dehor  
 deor  
 deores  
 deheur  
 duore

CORRECT FORM

diner  
 dans  
 diner  
 des  
 dit  
 demain  
 D'accord?  
 d'accord  
 a donné  
 a donné  
 dehors

ERROR

estoire  
 erbe  
 entre  
 escallier  
 esay  
 es-ce  
 enfant }  
 enfen }  
 ecole  
 échapper  
 échape  
 est  
 et  
 es  
 et  
 ête  
 el  
 ê  
 êter  
 etais  
 était  
 ête

CORRECT FORM

histoire?  
 herbe  
 autre  
 escaliers  
 essaie  
 est-ce  
 enfants  
 école  
 échappé  
 échappe  
 et  
 est  
 est  
 est  
 es  
 est  
 ?  
 et  
 était

ERROR	CORRECT FORM
esté etre a étéét était était était }	était être a été étais étais était }
(2x) (2x) (2x) (2x) (2x) (6x)	(2x) (2x) (2x) (2x) (2x) (6x)
forses foide fore for fot fain faré facher finis foie, foit foir fare fère fer fait fais fès }	forces froide fort faut fin fâché fini fois faire fais fait fès }
(2x) (2x) (2x)	(2x) (2x) (2x)
grivoner gambader grose garçon heurs heurex heusaux }	griffoner gambader gros garçon heures heureux heurs }
(2x) (2x) (5x) (2x)	(2x) (2x) (5x) (2x)
ilya ils ill il inquête	il y a il il il ils inquiète
(6x)	(6x)

ERROR	CORRECT FORM
Jagues Jaque journee jaitte joves jous joueer joué joue jou joue joue jou jouent joué joets a joues à jouer jou kans lest lopital lake lendemain livelle lecole lear leurs lessy laisse la livrer ses livre machait magazin malheurese mechante mama mateau	Jacques Jaques jouer faite joues jous jouer joué joue jou joue joue jouent joué joets a joués à jouer jou kans lest l'opital lac lendemain l'école leur leurs lessy laisse la livres ses livres marchait magasin malheureuse méchante maman ?
(2x) (3x) (3x)	(2x) (3x) (4x) (3x)
oc cc	oc cc

ERROR

CORRECT FORM

ERROR

CORRECT FORM

march (2x)

marche

penier

premier

mot

mots

porte

porter

maime

m'aima

pries

près ?

maïtress

maîtresse

partie

parti

mère

mer

picnic

pique-nique

mère

mère

peure

peur

minuet

minutes

perde

perd

muse

musée

prepart

prépare

monsoeur

monsieur

plait

plaît

mouée

mouillé

povons

pouvons

mouyle

mouillé?

poor

pour

maiye

mathématiques

pense

pense

mathématique

mathématiques

pens

personnes

matimattique

mais

persons

personnes

met

met

poisson

poissons

mes

met

poisons

poissons

m'est

maintenant?

petite

petite

mait

maintenant?

petête

petite

mes

maintenant?

ptite

ptite

mais

maintenant?

peid

pied

metrenant

maintenant?

piers

pieds

mentnet

maintenant?

profeseur

professeur

maintent

maintenant?

proveseur

professeur

maintent

maintenant?

profeseur

professeur

maitemant

maintenant?

prent

prend

nintnen

nineteen ? maintenant?

prends

prend

nottre

autre

pron

prend?

nouse

nous

pran

prend

ou

où

pendans

pendant

oiseau

oiseaux

pendeat

pendant

ouïsou

ouï

parapioie

parapluie

ont

ont

paraplui

parapluie

on

on

parapluit

parapluie

o

au

paraplie

pluie

o

aujourd'hui

pluit

pluie

o

aujourd'hui

plui

pluie

o

aujourd'hui

pluis

pluie

o

aujourd'hui

pluie

pluie

o

aujourd'hui

pluie

pluie

o

aujourd'hui

pluie

pluie

o

aujourd'hui

pluie

pluie

o

aujourd'hui

pluie

pluie

o

aujourd'hui

pluie

pluie

o

aujourd'hui

pluie

pluie

o

aujourd'hui

pluie

pluie

<b>ERROR</b>	passque } parceque } par-se-que } peu peu } peu } peut } peux } peur } peu pleu } pleu } pleux } pler } pleure } plau	(2x) (2x) (2x) (2x) (3x) (2x)
--------------	--	--

<b>CORRECT FORM</b>	parce que peut peux peut peuvent pleut pleure plu
---------------------	--

<b>ERROR</b>	sapelle samdi Suzanne Susan sercret shose seléver sait sans va solién sortai son ala selcher sech soer } seour }	(3x) (3x) (2x) (2x) (2x) (2x) (2x) (2x) (2x)
--------------	---	--

<b>CORRECT FORM</b>	s'appelle samédi Suzanne Susan secret choses se lever sais s'en va ? sortait s'en aller? sécher sec soeur
---------------------	---

qu'es que } questqu } quesque } quiqen } quelle } quand } quand } quant }	(2x) (3x)
--	--------------

qu'est-ce que quelque quel quand
---

sonne sonner soufle sa son sont serf-volante ser-volant servolant ser-volen serf-volant serf-volant sétait sétaint sêtre sette set sest se sait } sais } se } ses } setais	(3x) (11x) (3x) (6x) (2x) (2x) (2x) (2x) (2x) (3x) (2x) (2x) (2x) (2x) (2x) (7x)
---	---

c'était c'étaient être cette cette? c'est ce c'est c'était
--



ERROR

CORRECT FORM

ERROR

CORRECT FORM

text (2x)

travers

travil

travaille }

tout de suite

tous a coup }

toute à coup }

tu }

touté }

tous (2x)

a terminer

tres (4x)

tyras }

tirampe (5x)

tiramp }

trempe (2x)

trange }

temp (2x)

tant (3x)

tent }

tombey }

tombé (3x)

a tomber (3x)

tonber }

tomber (2x)

est tomber (2x)

ai trouver (3x)

trouvée }

trouve (2x)

a trouver (2x)

ue

eu

texte

traverse

travail

tout de suite

tout à coup

tout

tout

tout

tout

a terminé

très

trempe

trempe

trempe

trempe

temps

temps

temps

temps

temps

temps

temps

temps

temps

temps

temps

temps

temps

temps

temps

voleille

vol

vait }

ve }

vian }

vien }

viens }

vent

ve

(2x)

(2x)

(2x)

(2x)

(2x)

(2x)

(2x)

(4x)

voler

vole

vais

vient

vient

vient

vient

vient

vient

vient

vient

vient

vient

vient

vient

vient

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vient

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vient

vient

vient

vetements

voila }

voila }

vert

voix

voit

voit

vie

vas

voil

vêtements

voilà

voilà

vers

voit

voient

va?

va

voile

voile