

A Comparative Study of the Writing Abilities of English-Speaking Grade 8 Students in French-Speaking Schools*

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This paper compares writing in two modes, narrative and argumentative, by English-speaking grade 8 students educated in French-speaking schools with that done by a group of similar children in a regular English program. The students' papers are compared for overall quality as measured by holistic scoring, for syntactic maturity as measured by T-unit analysis, and for surface feature control as measured by frequency of selected errors. In addition, the scores for syntactic maturity are compared to those presented in major studies of this aspect of writing development. Fifty writing variables do not differ significantly at the .05 level. The study strongly supports the view that education in a second language does not impair native-language abilities.

Dans cet article, on compare deux modes d'écriture, à savoir la narration et l'argumentation, chez des élèves anglophones de 8e année fréquentant des écoles francophones et un groupe de jeunes comparables, mais inscrits dans une école anglophone. On évalue de façon globale la qualité générale des travaux des élèves, les paramètres utilisés étant la maturité syntaxique telle que mesurée par l'unité d'analyse T et le contrôle des caractéristiques apparentes tel que mesuré par la fréquence de certaines erreurs. Les scores en regard de la maturité syntaxique sont en outre comparés à ceux dont font état des études exhaustives sur cet aspect de l'apprentissage du langage écrit. Cinquante variables de l'écriture ne présentent pas de différences significatives au seuil de 0,05. Cette étude vient fortement appuyer la théorie selon laquelle l'éducation dans une langue seconde n'affecte pas les aptitudes linguistiques pour ce qui concerne la langue maternelle.

Research on bilingual education in Canada has for fifteen years questioned whether French immersion programs are detrimental to children's English language abilities. Parents and administrators have worried that when thousands of hours of instruction normally given in English are switched to French, students' skills in English may suffer.

The question is urgent for English-speaking children who attend French-speaking schools in the Roman Catholic Separate School Board in the city

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of Windsor, Ontario. Although these students are not enrolled in an immersion program, they experience an intensive form of immersion education. As students in French-speaking schools, rather than in immersion classes within English-speaking schools or in special immersion schools, these children experience from kindergarten to grade 8 many more hours of instruction in French than do those in most immersion programs. French is commonly the dominant language of instruction up to grade 5 in even the most intensive immersion programs, but then the use of English increases, until in grades 7 and 8 half the curriculum is taught in English and half in French (Swain & Lapkin, 1981). For Windsor children, French remains the dominant language of instruction throughout their elementary education. Apart from a required class in English language arts amounting to 40 minutes a day in grade 4, 60 minutes in grades 5 and 6, and 50 minutes in grades 7 and 8, the students receive no formal instruction in English at all.

In one important respect these students' education stands apart from typical immersion and comes closer to what has been called submersion (Swain, 1978; Cummins, 1979): they share classrooms with children more advanced in the language of the school, that is with children whose mother tongue is French. However, since non-Francophone children constitute such a large presence in these schools—32 out of 65 students in the grade 8 cohort studied—primary grade teachers often find themselves introducing practices more common in immersion than in native language classrooms. For example, they respond in French to youngsters who must still express their ideas or needs in English. Programs in these schools exhibit none of the other important characteristics of submersion. The Windsor children, from the dominant linguistic group of their community, make a home-school language switch by parental choice rather than necessity; they are praised for their growing competence in French rather than simply expected to have it; and English is itself a subject within the curriculum. The most accurate view, then, is to see these students as receiving an atypical but comparatively intensive form of second-language immersion as defined by Swain (1978):

Immersion refers to a situation in which children from the same linguistic and cultural background who have had no prior contact with the school language are put together in a classroom setting in which the second language is used as the medium of instruction. (p. 238)

Although Windsor pupils may be studied to see whether French immersion has a negative effect on English language skills, strictly empirical research will not finally decide the issue. Subjects cannot be randomly assigned to treatments since students are generally placed in immersion programs in advance of any research and for reasons beyond the researchers' control. Researchers have had to resort to what Carey (1984) has called "a model

of necessity" rather than one of choice, and to compare the progress of immersion students with those in regular programs. The question has thus been altered: "How do the English language skills of French immersion students compare with those of similar students following the same curriculum in English?"

Even this question presents difficulties, most notably how to establish comparison groups that are similar. As Carey stresses (1984, p. 252), although it is almost impossible to control for the attitudes of parents, students and teachers, and for many other variables associated with the social milieu, there is evidence such factors strongly influence language acquisition and school achievement. Given these difficulties, it is important to interpret cautiously the results of research based on comparison groups.

Still, the research is impressively consistent. In their comprehensive survey, Swain and Lapkin (1981) conclude that, after a "temporary lag" in English language skills to the end of grade 3, "The overall trend in subsequent grades is for immersion students to perform as well as or, in the case of early total immersion students, better than their English-educated counterparts" (p. 127). Although this is an accurate enough report of the evidence, the conclusion is not entirely justified by it, or by certain other studies. Indeed, English language ability has been assessed largely through language subtests of such standardized tests as the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills and the Metropolitan Achievement Test. Results indicate that immersion children compare well with regular students in vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation. Grobe (n.d.) reports that grade 5 immersion students scored higher than their regular counterparts on all eleven objectives of the New Brunswick Language Arts Criterion-Referenced Test, performing significantly better on such writing-related items as using punctuation marks correctly and completing sentences to illustrate subject-verb agreement. However, such tests provide indirect and fragmentary pictures of students' writing.

Very few studies to date have examined samples of writing by children in immersion programs. Fewer still have employed the standard procedures used to assess writing ability in English. The earliest of the few studies is that of Lambert, Tucker, and d'Anglejan (1973). Thirty grade 4 and 20 grade 5 immersion students were given the language subtests of the Metropolitan Achievement Test and items from the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test. Children's performance in such areas as spelling, word usage, and vocabulary was generally equivalent to that of comparison students in the regular English program, although the grade 4 immersion students scored lower in punctuation and capitalization. One teacher's evaluation of a composition showed grade 4 immersion students significantly below English controls, with a mean score of 6.06 compared to 7.84, and with "certain handicaps in

expressing themselves through writing" (p. 145). The grade 5 students performed "significantly better" than the regular students, with a mean of 7.90 compared to 6.80 (p. 151). Unfortunately, there is no information about the composition, how it was administered, or the procedures by which it was assessed. It may be inferred that one teacher evaluated the scripts holistically, on a 10-point scale. What the "certain handicaps" are or what "significantly better" means is never explained.

The most comprehensive and detailed study of immersion students' writing so far was done for the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal, and reported in Genesee (1974) and Genesee and Stanley (1976). Fifty-four immersion students in grade 4, 26 in grade 6, 117 in grade 7, and 86 in grade 11 wrote narrative compositions in response to certain topic sentences. For the first three grades, each paper was scored "blind" by two markers on a five-point scale for six dimensions: spelling, sentence accuracy, sentence complexity, organization, originality, and overall quality. A sample of 20 grade 11 papers was scored by two markers, and the other 66 papers were divided evenly between them. All were judged appropriate or inappropriate for length and punctuation and superior, average, or below average for vocabulary.

At the grade 4 level, students in the regular program were found to spell significantly better, and immersion students were rated significantly higher for originality. The differences were not significant on the other four dimensions. No significant differences on any dimension were found between the immersion and control groups at the grade 6 level. Grade 7 immersion students were rated significantly higher on overall quality and on sentence complexity; other differences were not significant. One group of grade 11 students who had been immersion students but were no longer taking French classes scored significantly higher on organization than did both a second group of immersion students still in the program, and the English controls. Other differences were not significant. Genesee and Stanley (1976) conclude that "the immersion students seemed to be at least as well equipped as the non-immersion students to express themselves in written English" (p. 15).

Although Genesee and Stanley must be commended for attending seriously to samples of writing and for the comprehensiveness of their study, some aspects remain problematic. The writing of grade 7 students in only their sixth month of an immersion program may not be fruitfully compared with that of students still in the regular program. Further, some of the criteria for the writing assessment are too vague to be informative or to be readily compared with other findings. A score of 5 in sentence complexity represents "superior use of complex and varied sentence types in a meaningful way," while a 3 means that the "complexity and variety of sentence types is adequate for grade 7 level" (Genesee, 1974, p. 21). The immersion students'

score of 3.00 for spelling is not significantly below the 3.46 scored by the control group since a score of 3 represents "4, 5 or 6 errors" without regard to the length of the composition (p. 21).

Swain (1975) compares two short stories written (in response to pictures) by each of each of 40 grade 3 immersion pupils with those done by 24 children from regular grade 3 classes. She finds that the immersion pupils' writing "compares favourably with that of their English-instructed peers" (p. 19). For example, they generally write longer stories (mean length 81.3 versus 61.6 words), use an equally varied vocabulary, make fewer morphological errors, and make proportionally fewer spelling errors. Examining syntax in greater detail than does Genesee, Swain finds that the immersion children are syntactically more mature and write "proportionately fewer simple and compound sentences and proportionately more complex and compound-complex sentences" (p. 20). It should be noted that the differences between the groups are very small and that the results were not analysed statistically.

Lapkin (1982) reports on holistic scoring of twenty-minute compositions written by grade 5 students in the immersion and regular programs of the Carleton and Ottawa Boards of Education. A random sample of 98 papers was assessed by three experienced teachers on a seven-point scale. The teachers did not know which students had written which papers. The mean scores were 4.09 (SD 1.14) for the immersion students and 4.13 (SD 1.36) for the regular students. In addition, as a measure of variety in vocabulary use, "type/token ratios" were calculated for nouns and verbs based on 50-word samples of good and poor writing drawn from the larger groups. The results are comparable. While Lapkin includes no statistical analysis of her findings, the data are so similar it is unlikely that any differences are statistically significant. She concludes: "The claim that the first language skills of immersion pupils do not suffer in comparison with those of pupils in a regular program is thus further substantiated by this analysis of their writing" (p.28).

Although these studies support the view that the English writing skills of students in French immersion programs are not significantly different from those of similar students in the regular program, the studies are not extensive enough to be conclusive.

AIM OF THE STUDY

The present study provides a detailed and comprehensive comparison of the writing skills (in English) of grade 8 students at the end of an intensive immersion program with that of similar students completing the regular elementary school curriculum. Results are reported for three major aspects of

written performance: overall quality; syntactic maturity; and surface feature control.

The syntactic maturity of the Windsor immersion students is compared not only to that of their counterparts in the regular program but also to the results for grade 8 students in three earlier major investigations of written syntax. Hunt (1970) reports the performance of a representative sample of students on his Aluminum passage, which measures how writers combine 32 short, single-clause sentences into a more mature statement. Loban (1976) presents the findings of a longitudinal study into the increase in language skills of 211 Californian students from kindergarten to grade 12. Subsequent research has produced scores so consistent with those of these two studies that they (Hunt's and Loban's work) have been widely accepted as establishing norms for student performance (see Hillocks, 1986, pp. 63–76 for a review of research on syntactic maturity). The third investigation, that of Pringle and Freedman (1985), is the most comprehensive Canadian study to date. It gives the results for a random sample of students in two large Ontario school systems.

METHOD

Subjects

All the grade 8 students (N=65) in the four French-speaking schools of the Windsor Separate School Board and in four classes from three Anglophone schools located in comparable areas of the city (N=95) participated in the study. From this population, two subgroups were established: (a) immersion students (IMM), those within the Francophone schools who claimed English as their mother tongue and who had been educated predominantly in French; and (b) English students (ENG), those students within the regular program who claimed English as their mother tongue. On the basis of questionnaires concerning language use in their homes, completed by the students and corroborated by the principals, 33 students were initially classified as IMM. On further investigation, two students who claimed both English and French as their mother tongues but spoke predominantly French in their homes were disqualified, leaving a group of 31 subjects. These subjects represent an intensive form of immersion education: 28 received their entire elementary education, kindergarten to grade 8, in French-speaking schools, while the other three spent six years in such schools. To eliminate the possibility of second-language interference from the comparative data, 27 students who claimed a mother language other than English and who regularly used a second language at home were eliminated from the group. From the remainder a sample of 33 was drawn at random.

TABLE 1
Mean Age in Years and Months of Groups by Mode and Sex

<i>Mode</i> <i>Sex</i>	<i>IMM</i>			<i>ENG</i>		
	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Narrative n</i>	19	9	28	17	15	32
<i>M</i>	13.8	13.10	13.9	13.11	13.11	13.11
<i>Argument n</i>	22	8	30	18	15	33
<i>M</i>	13.9	13.10	13.9	13.11	13.11	13.11

Some subjects were absent on the days the compositions were written, with the result that the data for the modes of writing are based on slightly different subject groups. In IMM, 28 narratives and 30 arguments were completed; in ENG, 32 narratives and 33 arguments. Table 1 provides descriptive statistics comparing by sex and age the students writing in each mode.

That there are more females (N=22) than males (N=9) in the immersion group leads to the question whether sex significantly effects comparisons. Chi square tests applied to the groups writing narratives ($X^2=1.35$, $df=1$) and those writing arguments ($X^2=2.39$, $df=1$) do not produce values for X^2 significant at the .05 level. Since the distribution of sex is not significantly different in the groups being compared, there is no reason to attribute significant effect to this variable. Differences in socioeconomic status (SES) are generally of concern in research into comparative performance and particularly in studies concerned with French immersion. The common view is that students in immersion programs tend to come from more privileged backgrounds. Employing a simplified version of the occupational categories and rankings of Pineo and Porter (1979), the subjects were rated according to parental occupation on a five-point scale using the following classifications:

1. professionals, major proprietors, managers, and officials;
2. semi-professionals, minor proprietors, managers, and officials;
3. clerical and sales, skilled and semi-skilled workers;
4. unskilled workers;
5. unemployed, welfare, retraining allowances, etc.

Subjects with two parents employed at different levels were placed in the higher classification, on the assumption that socioeconomic status of the family is derived from the parent whose occupation is more highly ranked. Subjects in single-parent homes were rated according to the occupation of the parent they lived with. Table 2 shows the number of subjects in each classification for the two modes of writing and reveals that the two groups of

TABLE 2
SES for Subjects by Group and Mode

	<i>IMM</i>		<i>ENG</i>	
	<i>Nar.</i>	<i>Arg.</i>	<i>Nar.</i>	<i>Arg.</i>
1. Professionals	8	7	8	8
2. Semi-professionals	6	6	8	8
3. Clerical	12	15	13	14
4. Unskilled	1	1	1	1
5. Unemployed	1	1	2	2
Totals	28	30	32	33

students are remarkably similar in socioeconomic profile. A chi square test reveals that SES has the same distribution in both groups ($X^2=0.59$, $df=4$); consequently, any differences between the groups cannot be attributed to SES.

Since the Windsor Separate School Board administers IQ tests only by referral in cases of evident need, no data are available on the intellectual ability of the students.

Procedures

The subjects were asked to write two compositions, one narrative, the other argumentative, two weeks apart in the final months of their grade 8 year. In six schools the compositions were written in May; in the seventh they were done in June. Both writing stimuli were selected from those proven successful in field trials for the Ontario Assessment Instrument Pool (1982). The narrative topic required the students to write from personal experience about someone, perhaps themselves, who always seems to cause trouble for others, and suggested as a possible title, "Trouble always starts when _____ is around." The arguments replied to the question, "Should young teenagers be spanked?" Students were invited to consider both sides of the question and to propose reasonable alternatives. Cooperating teachers provided a few minutes for the students to discuss the topics amongst themselves before settling in to write. Forty-five minutes were given one day for an initial draft, which was then collected, and 45 the next for revising and polishing the draft. Students could use dictionaries and other standard reference materials, but were not to seek assistance from others or to discuss their papers once writing had started. After the final writing sessions, the papers—identified only by number and photocopied—were returned to the teachers.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The immersion students wrote 28 narratives with a mean length of 328.04 words, while the regular pupils submitted 32 papers averaging 384.16 words. The 30 arguments by the immersion group had a mean of 239.90 words; those of the 33 regular students averaged 248.67 words. The differences between the groups are not significant at the .05 level.

Every script in the sample was scored in three ways corresponding to different aspects of writing performance: holistic scoring as a measure of overall quality; T-unit analysis as a measure of syntactic maturity; and error frequency as a measure of surface feature control. All results were tested by one-way analysis of variance for significant differences between the groups at the .05 level.

Holistic Scoring

To determine whether there were any differences in the overall quality of the compositions written by the two groups of students, the scripts were rated on a 10-point scale according to standard holistic scoring procedures by three experienced teachers with no connection to the participating schools. While the evaluators were aware of the nature of the research, the scripts were presented to them in a random sequence without identification as to group and with additional papers from the original population so that, as far as possible, the teachers were simply evaluating sets of narratives and arguments written by grade 8 students. The three scores were then averaged for each script. The results of the holistic scoring are given in Table 3. The differences between the immersion students and those in the regular English program are not significant in either set of compositions.

Syntactic Analysis

Two scorers calculated independently four measures of syntactic maturity for each script following principles based on those of O'Hare (1973, pp. 48-49) for segmenting into T-units and for treating directly quoted discourse. Differences in scoring, of which there were remarkably few, were discussed until both scorers were in agreement. Three of the measures are those found by Hunt (1970) to be the most reliable indicators of syntactic maturity: words per T-unit (W/T), words per clause (W/C), and clauses per T-unit (p. 6). So that comparisons could more readily be made with Loban (1976) and Pringle and Freedman (1985), the clauses per T-unit were reported as dependent clauses per T-unit (DC/T), a change that reduces each score by one because the main clause in the T-unit is not counted. A fourth

TABLE 3
Statistics from Holistic Scoring

<i>Mode</i>	<i>IMM</i>	<i>ENG</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>
<i>Narrative</i>				
Mean	5.93	6.18	0.23	1,58
SD	2.22	1.79		
Minimum	1.33	2.67		
Maximum	10.00	10.00		
<i>Argument</i>				
Mean	5.47	5.62	0.09	1,61
SD	1.90	1.95		
Minimum	2.33	1.00		
Maximum	9.33	9.67		

measure, the number of words in dependent clauses expressed as a percentage of the total number of words in the T-units (WDC/T%), was calculated for further comparison with Loban's reference study. The scores for syntactic analysis of the narrative compositions are given in Table 4 and those for the arguments in Table 5. For comparison the scores from Hunt (1970) and for the students Loban (1976) selected at random from his larger sample are included in Table 4. These comparisons, however, should be made cautiously. Hunt's results are based not on students' compositions but on a test instrument. Loban's study does not differentiate between modes of writing. It has since been shown that mode significantly affects the complexity of written syntax. Argument makes the greatest demand on a writer's syntactic resources and narration the least (Crowhurst, 1980; Crowhurst & Piche, 1979). Loban's "typical samples of the subjects' written language were secured on an annual basis (one composition per year)" (p. 4). There is no way of knowing whether he reports scores for writing in modes other than narrative. Nevertheless, other studies have consistently reported scores similar to Hunt's and Loban's. This suggests that their scores may be taken to represent typical performance. Two measures—words per T-unit and dependent clauses per T-unit—can be compared more confidently with the results reported by Pringle and Freedman (1985), whose study does differentiate between modes. Table 4 includes their scores on these measures for personal narrative writing while Table 5 lists those for argument. Tables 4 and 5 show scores for syntactic maturity that are remarkably close on all four measures in each mode. Furthermore, the scores are in line with those reported by the studies cited for comparison. It should be noted too that

neither group of students consistently displays higher mean scores. The immersion students score higher on two measures, in narrative writing, while the regular students are higher on three and the immersion students on one. The differences in the scores do not approach significance at the .05 level for any one of the eight measures reported.

Error Frequency

The scorers independently classified and counted the following surface errors in each script: spelling, sentence errors (e.g., comma splices, fragments), punctuation (e.g., periods omitted, unnecessary capitals), verb errors (e.g., subject-verb agreement errors, tense shifts, incorrect verb forms) and pronoun errors (e.g., shifts in person, incorrect forms).¹ Differences in scoring were discussed until agreement was reached. To permit the analysis of scripts of varying length, the number of errors within a category was converted to a ratio expressing the frequency of the error per 100 words.

Since "error" in writing often varies with the eye of the beholder, the view of surface error taken in this study requires comment. To insure consistency the scorers adopted a rigid approach to the conventions of written language. In general, if a standard school composition text considered something an error, it was judged an error in this study. Consequently, errors were counted that in other contexts might well not have been considered errors at all. For example, sentence fragments were counted as errors even when they could reasonably be defended on rhetorical grounds. When an indefinite pronoun was followed by plural pronoun (e.g., "Anyone can see if they open their eyes"), it was counted an error in pronoun reference without regard to the defensible position (adopted by the National Council of Teachers of English in the United States, among others) that the plural "they" is preferable to the sexist "he."

Tables 6 to 10 report for each mode of writing the frequency of the five major classifications of surface errors, together with the results of the statistical test for whether the educational stream of the students is a significant variable at the .05 level. The scores do not include every error the students made. In Table 7, for example, there is no entry for dangling participles. In Table 9 there is no entry for multiple negation. These and many other errors, did occur in the students' writing, but with such low frequency that they have not been included in the tables.

As Table 6 makes clear, the educational stream of the subjects has no significant effect on their spelling in either mode of writing. The high standard deviations, particularly those greater than the mean, indicate that there is considerable variance within each group and that the mean has been influenced by very weak performance by a small proportion of the students

TABLE 4
Means (Standard Deviations) for Syntactic Complexity in Narrative

	<i>IMM</i>	<i>ENG</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Hunt</i>	<i>Loban Random</i>	<i>Pringle/ Freedman</i>
W/T	10.27 (1.66)	10.45 (1.82)	0.16	1,58	9.84 (3.06)	10.37 —	11.15 —
W/C	6.99 (1.12)	7.18 (1.10)	0.41	1,58	6.79 (1.12)	— —	— —
DC/T	0.48 (0.12)	0.46 (0.14)	0.41	1,58	0.43* —	0.50 —	0.43 —
WDC/T%	28.95 (5.64)	27.74 (7.41)	0.49	1,58	— —	26.30 —	— —

*Hunt's Subordinate Clause Index for grade 8 is 1.43. Subtracting 1 from each score will produce a mean score for DC/T that is 1 less than his reported figure. That score has been listed here for comparison.

TABLE 5
Means (Standard Deviations) for Syntactic Complexity in Argument

	<i>IMM</i>	<i>ENG</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Pringle/ Freedman</i>
W/T	13.76 (2.51)	13.83 (3.01)	0.01	1,61	14.09
W/C	7.48 (0.93)	7.65 (1.61)	0.25	1,61	—
DC/T	0.82 (0.29)	0.85 (0.45)	0.14	1,61	0.84
WDC/T%	43.07 (11.98)	41.81 (14.90)	0.13	1,61	—

TABLE 6
Means (Standard Deviations) for Misspellings per 100 Words

	<i>IMM</i>	<i>ENG</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>
<i>Narrative</i>				
All Misspelled Words	2.04 (2.23)	2.13 (1.63)	0.04	1,58
Different Misspelled Words	1.94 (2.00)	1.97 (1.47)	0.00	1,58
<i>Argument</i>				
All Misspelled Words	2.64 (3.20)	2.42 (2.50)	0.10	1,61
Different Misspelled Words	2.42 (2.57)	2.12 (1.98)	0.28	1,61

in the group. Thus there are in both groups students who make very few spelling errors indeed.

Analyses of variance also indicate that the subjects' educational stream does not significantly affect the frequency of the three major sentence errors in either mode of writing. For both groups the standard deviations on all measures are greater than the mean, an indication that only a small number of subjects make many of these errors while others make few, if any.

Statistical analysis shows no significant differences between the two groups in their control of those conventions of punctuation measured. This is surprising since quotation marks and capitalization are used differently in the two languages. Indeed, errors in use of quotation marks are the only ones made more frequently by the immersion students in both modes of writing. Immersion students also make more errors of capitalization in argument, as one might expect, but make fewer in narrative. As with spelling and sentence errors, consistently high standard deviations reveal that in both groups a small number of students make a good many of these errors, while other students make very few of them.

Analyses of variance reveal that no difference between the immersion students and the regular English students is significant at the .05 level, although the difference in the total number of verb errors in narrative writing comes very close to being so. Comparison favours the immersion students. Subjects from the regular English program make the greater number of errors as a group. The high standard deviations again indicate that some stu-

TABLE 7
*Means (Standard Deviations) for Sentence
 Errors per 100 Words*

	<i>IMM</i>	<i>ENG</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>
<i>Narrative</i>				
Run-on Sentences	0.59 (0.96)	0.60 (1.01)	0.00	1,58
Comma Splices	0.25 (0.51)	0.51 (0.66)	2.69	1,58
Fragments	0.23 (0.37)	0.16 (0.35)	0.51	1,58
<i>Argument</i>				
Run-on Sentences	0.39 (0.61)	0.23 (0.53)	1.30	1,61
Comma Splices	0.29 (0.42)	0.41 (0.48)	0.98	1,61
Fragments	0.22 (0.33)	0.28 (0.43)	0.41	1,61

dents in both groups make these errors with comparatively great frequency, while others make them seldom, if ever.

Once more the statistical procedure also reveals no significant differences between the groups, and, again, the high standard deviations show that a small number of students within the groups make many of these errors while the others make very few.

SUMMARY

In overall quality, syntactic resources, and control over surface conventions, no differences in the writing of students in French immersion and regular programs were found to be significant at the .05 level. In not one of the fifty measures of writing performance reported do differences between the two groups reach that level of significance. In only one measure, the total number of verb errors in narrative writing, does the difference even approach significance, and then comparison favours the immersion group.

TABLE 8
*Means (Standard Deviations) for Punctuation
 Errors per 100 Words*

	<i>IMM</i>	<i>ENG</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>
<i>Narrative</i>				
Period Errors	0.15 (0.35)	0.39 (0.62)	3.37	1,58
Question Mark Errors	0.06 (0.18)	0.00 (0.23)	0.09	1,58
Comma Errors	0.91 (0.86)	1.23 (1.13)	1.50	1,58
Quotation Mark Errors	0.33 (0.87)	0.20 (0.75)	0.40	1,58
Capitalization Errors	0.35 (0.64)	0.57 (1.07)	0.86	1,58
Total Errors	1.83 (2.39)	2.54 (2.67)	1.16	1,58
<i>Argument</i>				
Period Errors	0.07 (0.25)	0.06 (0.17)	0.06	1,61
Question Mark Errors	0.10 (0.26)	0.08 (0.19)	0.06	1,61
Comma Errors	1.53 (1.61)	1.10 (0.91)	1.69	1,61
Quotation Mark Errors	0.12 (0.34)	0.03 (0.11)	2.14	1,61
Capitalization Errors	0.35 (1.11)	0.15 (0.30)	0.95	1,61
Total Errors	2.23 (2.08)	1.47 (1.16)	3.27	1,61

TABLE 9
Means (Standard Deviations) for Verb Errors

	<i>IMM</i>	<i>ENG</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>
<i>Narrative</i>				
Form Errors	0.03 (0.12)	0.07 (0.12)	0.98	1,58
Agreement Errors	0.01 (0.05)	0.04 (0.12)	1.18	1,58
Shift Errors	0.07 (0.16)	0.13 (0.26)	1.38	1,58
Total Errors	0.11 (0.19)	0.25 (0.32)	3.98	1,58
<i>Argument</i>				
Form Errors	0.03 (0.13)	0.14 (0.32)	2.88	1,61
Agreement Errors	0.09 (0.19)	0.04 (0.16)	1.10	1,61
Shift Errors	0.06 (0.15)	0.10 (0.25)	0.65	1,61
Total Errors	0.23 (0.28)	0.32 (0.52)	0.66	1,61

CONCLUSION

The results of this study should be treated with caution. The two groups may not be similar where information about students' intellectual ability is lacking. Only one grade has been studied, an important restriction in the light of studies that suggest comparative differences vary with grade level (Lambert, Tucker, & d'Anglejan, 1973; Genesee, 1974; Genesee & Stanley, 1976). Although there is no reason to think so, it is possible that this cohort of students was exceptional and that others would perform differently on the same measures. One may find with further research that literary activity in students' homes, parental attitudes, reading habits, and other variables influence the development of writing ability.

Nevertheless, results comparing students' performance over a wide range of variables are impressively consistent. Furthermore, scores on those mea-

TABLE 10
*Means (Standard Deviations) for Pronoun
 Errors per 100 Words*

	<i>IMM</i>	<i>ENG</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>
<i>Narrative</i>				
Form Errors	0.07 (0.14)	0.06 (0.14)	0.01	1,58
Shift Errors	0.03 (0.12)	0.03 (0.09)	0.00	1,58
Reference Errors	0.03 (0.11)	0.08 (0.18)	1.37	1,58
Total Errors	0.24 (0.37)	0.23 (0.31)	0.01	1,58
<i>Argument</i>				
Form Errors	0.14 (0.42)	0.02 (0.07)	2.76	1,61
Shift Errors	0.22 (0.32)	0.24 (0.30)	0.14	1,61
Reference Errors	0.27 (0.43)	0.54 (0.75)	2.90	1,61
Total Errors	0.68 (0.70)	0.84 (0.75)	0.79	1,61

asures where comparison to other studies is possible are in line with established norms. On the evidence available, their performance is that of typical grade 8 students.

These results support the view that, in the long run, the amount of instructional time spent in a second-language immersion program has little effect on achievement in the native language. Despite thousands of hours of instruction in French, these grade 8 students display writing competence in English fully equal to that of children who received those thousands of hours of instruction in English. It seems improbable that their competence could be attributed to the relatively few hours of formal language arts instruction they received. What seems more likely is that cross-lingual transfer takes place, and that, as Cummins has argued, "literacy-related skills

are manifestations of a common underlying proficiency" (1983, p. 123). Their education in French, along with unexamined contributions from their homes and lives outside the school, have made these French immersion students sufficiently literate to write well in their native language.

NOTE

¹ A copy of the error classification employed in the study is available from the author.

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In dieser Arbeit wird ein Vergleich angestellt zwischen der schriftlichen Ausdrucksfähigkeit in zwei Modi: Erzählmodus und Argumentationsmodus. Die Untersuchung vergleicht die Fähigkeiten englischsprachiger Schüler der 8. Klasse, die in französischsprachigen Schulen erzogen werden, mit denen einer Gruppe vergleichbarer Kinder in einem regulären englischsprachigen Unterrichtsprogramm. Die Aufsätze der Schüler wurden verglichen im Hinblick auf allgemeine Qualität, die in ganzheitlicher Sicht bewertet wurde und syntaktischer Reife, die durch Analyse der "T-units" bewertet wurde. Als dritter Vergleichspunkt bot sich eine Prüfung der Oberflächenmerkmale, die sich anhand der Frequenz ausgewählter Fehler messen ließen. Zusätzlich dazu wurden die Wertungen für syntaktische Reife verglichen mit denen, die in größeren Untersuchungen dieses Aspekts der Entwicklung des schriftlichen Ausdrucks dargestellt werden. Fünfzig Variablen des schriftlichen Ausdrucks unterscheiden sich nicht bedeutend auf dem .05 Niveau. Die Untersuchung bestärkt die Ansicht, daß Erziehung in einer zweiten Sprache die Sprachfähigkeiten in der Muttersprache nicht negativ beeinträchtigt.

Este trabajo compara en dos formas la escritura, narrativa y argumentativa, de los estudiantes de habla inglesa de octavo grado educados en escuelas de habla francesa con los de un grupo similar de niños que llevan un programa regular en inglés. Los trabajos de los estudiantes son comparados detalladamente de principio a fin y calificados a la perfección por madurez sintáctica y medidos por análisis de unidad-T y su presentación medida por la frecuencia de errores seleccionados. Además, las calificaciones de madurez sintáctica son comparadas con las presentadas en estudios más profundos de este aspecto de desarrollo de la escritura. Cincuenta variables de escritura no difieren significativamente en el nivel .05. El estudio sostiene fuertemente el punto de vista de que la educación en una segunda lengua no debilita las habilidades de la lengua nativa.

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