

Must not contain more than 3,950 characters (with spaces)

Name: **Example 1**

Student Number:

Predictors of French Literacy Success

The number of French language speakers has been declining in Canada in recent years (Statistics Canada). Much research and funding is invested in Canada's French Immersion programs, where French is used as the language of instruction to non-French students, raising concerns about the rate of French language attrition among its graduates. My research will focus on language maintenance and attrition in French Immersion program graduates, focusing on spelling and comprehension of French morphology.

Of key interest in this research project is maintenance of French morphology. Morphology marks parts of a language's grammar, such as plurality. This is contained within morphemes, the smallest units of sound that covary with meaning. For example, in English, plural is marked by the suffix -s (singular cat becomes plural cats. French morphology can mark plurality, gender (masculine or feminine), and person (first, second, third). This is often seen in "silent morphemes", or morphemes that are not pronounced, but are graphically represented (e.g., in the French adjective fatiguées, meaning tired, feminine gender and plurality are marked in the -es morpheme suffix but the morpheme is not pronounced). Silent morphemes often reflect syntactic elements of sentences. Morphological awareness, or one's ability to manipulate morphemes, is a foundational literacy skill (Sénéchal & Kearnan, 2010).

I am proposing a multi-part design: a background questionnaire, an assessment of persisting French morphological cognitive representations, and finally an experimental learning paradigm.

First, a set of demographic data, including French exposure and current French knowledge, will be collected in a questionnaire from young adults with additive English-French bilingualism, simultaneous English-French bilingualism and English monolingualism with some French education. Variables of interest include their French academic background, past exposure to French literature, daily French use, and French vocabulary.

The second part of my research will assess participants' French ability, specifically their writing and comprehension of French silent morphemes. While this is partly a long-term memory task, the morphological focus additionally provides data on their cognitive representations of French grammar.

The third part of my research consists of an experimental learning paradigm. Participants will be exposed to a fake language, taught the relevant morphology (including novel silent morphemes), then will be assessed on their ability to apply the learned morphology to new words. Two important questions will be assessed: (1) whether French ability from the assessment task transfers to success on the experimental task, and (2) if performance on both of these tasks is correlated with participants' French backgrounds. The questionnaire data will be analyzed in terms of each variable's contributed variance toward morphological success in the assessment and experimental tasks.

I began the first year of my two-year M.Cog.Sc. degree at Carleton University this past fall. Carleton represents a capital advantage for conducting my research. Through the University's undergraduate volunteer recruitment system, I will be able to collect data from a large and diverse community of young adult multilingual speakers with varying French backgrounds. To my knowledge, little to no research has been conducted previously on French language attrition in French Immersion graduates. The findings of this research will be immeasurably valuable for guiding future policy and curricula changes.

Statistics Canada. (2022, August 17). <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220817/dq220817a-eng.htm>
Sénéchal, M., & Kearnan, K. (2007). The role of morphology in reading and spelling. In R. V. Kail (Ed.), *Advances in child development and behavior* (pp. 297–325). Elsevier Academic Press.