

A STUDY OF FACTORS AFFECTING ATTRITION  
IN LATE FRENCH IMMERSION

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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FACTORS AFFECTING ATTRITION  
IN  
LATE FRENCH IMMERSION

By

CORINNE C. ELLSWORTH

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## ABSTRACT

This study was an attempt to develop an understanding of factors influencing attrition in Late French Immersion (LFI). The purpose of the investigation was to identify and describe the reasons students attribute to their withdrawal from LFI. The variables of gender, time of year and grade level of attrition, age, and number of years since students dropped out from the LFI program were also examined in relationship to the student's decision to drop out.

A written questionnaire incorporating a Likert type scale and open-ended questions was developed and administered to 73 students, and/or former students, of the former Avalon North Integrated School Board who had dropped out during the years 1986-1996.

Responses from the survey were analyzed and compared using the Chi Square test of independence at  $p < .05$  to examine levels of significance of variables as they relate to attrition in LFI. Comments provided by students in response to open-ended questions were discussed.

Findings from this study indicate that grade 7 students are at greatest risk for early drop out from the LFI program and, that students tend to leave at year end, rather than mid-

semester. Males were identified as having more negative perceptions of the LFI program than females, but were not found to drop out in greater numbers than females.

The primary reasons given by students in this study for attrition in LFI were concern with academic achievement and a perception that the program was too challenging. A significant relationship was identified between attrition in LFI and the variables gender, time of year and grade level of attrition, age, and number of years since students dropped out.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CPF	Canadian Parents For French
EFI	Early French Immersion
FI	French Immersion
LFI	Late French Immersion
L2	Second Language
<i>p</i>	Level of Significance
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

French Immersion (FI), since its inception in St Lambert, Quebec in 1965, has continued to develop and expand. The first experience at St Lambert involved students in an early immersion program. Today immersion programs exist at the early, middle and late entry levels, and are available in all provinces of Canada. In Newfoundland and Labrador, FI was first introduced in the mid 1970's.

Although extensive research has shown that students appear to benefit from the FI experience at the primary, elementary and senior high levels (Genesee, 1984; Husum and Bryce, 1991; Berthold, 1992; MacFarlane and Wesche, 1995), students do drop out of the program. Declining enrolment is of particular concern to administrators and teachers at the secondary level where enrolment, although starting out at a substantial number in primary, elementary or intermediate grades, may decrease to the point where FI class size for senior high grades is lower than the average class size in the English program. In fact, the number of students in senior high FI classes may be very small. This may create administrative difficulties in scheduling and an imbalance in teacher workload.

The question, therefore, arises "Why do some students drop out of French immersion?" Some factors related to the dropout question are probably similar for both Early French Immersion (EFI) and Late French Immersion (LFI) groups, while some may be specific to each program.

In Canada, attrition rates in French immersion programs may vary widely from year to year. Lewis and Shapson (1989) identified a 35% rate of attrition over a period of two years in nine schools from four British Columbia school districts. Duhamel (1985) reported a 20% rate of attrition among Manitoban students at the end of grade eleven and 40% at the end of grade nine. A study of attrition at the former Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's (1992) found, over a fifteen-year period commencing in 1977, that dropout rates ranged from 15% to 50%, while Halsall (1994), in a study of attrition at the secondary level in Canada, reviewed literature which reported attrition rates ranging from 20% to 80%.

Most studies on attrition in FI are based on reasons suggested by teachers, principals, and coordinators. The present study will analyze the LFI program within the former Avalon North Integrated School Board from 1986 to 1996 to determine the possible reasons for rates of attrition in LFI as perceived by students. Table 1.1 indicates that over this ten-year period, attrition in LFI at this school board fluctuated from 15 to 46% with an average of 28% per year.

TABLE 1.1

**ATTRITION IN LFI AT AVALON NORTH INTEGRATED SCHOOL BOARD**  
**1986-1996**

Class	Year	Class Size (Sept)	Dropouts		# Moved Away	Total # Dropouts	%
			M	F			
1st	86-87	31	5	2	2	9	29
2nd	87-88	27	1	2	1	4	15
3rd	88-89	26	4	7	1	12	46
4th	89-90	33	4	3	3	10	30
5th	90-91	40*	4	7	0	11	28
6th	91-92	39**	8	6	2	16	41
7th	92-93	47**	4	7	4	15	32
8th	93-94	46**	1	4	2	7	15
9th	94-95	52**	1	5	5	11	21
10th	95-96	68***	9	5	2	16	23
Totals:	10yrs	401 (enrolment)	41	48	22	111	28% (Avg)

\* 2 classes at one school

\*\* 1 class at each of two schools

\*\*\*1 class at one school and two classes at another school

As can be seen from Table 1.1, of the total of 401 students who had enrolled in LFI, a total of 111 did not complete the program. Of those 111 students, a total of 89 actually dropped out of the program.



The Avalon North Integrated School Board comprised the geographic area on the Avalon Peninsula of Newfoundland from the community of Bay de Verde, in the north, to the community of Whitbourne, in the south, and from the community of Norman's Cove, in the west, to the community of Georgetown, in the east. District enrolment in 1995-96 was approximately 6900 students. This geographically large school district was organized as a series of school systems with each system comprising a senior high school and corresponding feeder schools (elementary and primary).

FI was offered in one system only - the Bay Roberts system. The LFI program was introduced in 1986 in grade 7 at Holy Redeemer Elementary School. By 1990, as a result of an increased demand for the program, it was expanded to include a second stream of grade 7 LFI students at Holy Redeemer Elementary School; however, due to a high attrition rate in the grade 7 year, the following year there were only enough students for one class of grade 8 LFI. As well, in September 1991, another stream of LFI opened at Amalgamated Academy in Bay Roberts, a new middle school comprising grades 4 to 9. In September 1995, the LFI program at Amalgamated Academy expanded to include two classes of grade 7 LFI and, despite an attrition rate of 25% during the grade 7 year, two classes were maintained at the grade 8 level the following year. In September 1996, there were two classes of grade 7, one at Holy Redeemer and one at Amalgamated Academy. Currently, each of these schools has one stream of LFI at the grade 9 level which feeds into the senior high school, Ascension Collegiate.

## **1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The general aim of this study is to identify, describe and analyze attrition in LFI at the former Avalon North Integrated School Board. The primary purpose of the study is to identify the reasons students give for dropping out of LFI and to determine if there is any established pattern.

The second goal of this study is to identify the grade level and time of year when attrition most often occurs.

## **1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Some research on rates of, and factors contributing to, attrition in FI programs has been conducted in Canada (e.g., Hart et al., 1988; Lewis and Shapson, 1989; Bartlett and Morrison, 1992; Halsall, 1994; Obédia and Thériault, 1997). This study will investigate reasons former LFI students give for dropping out and determine whether or not the reported reasons for student attrition in LFI at the former Avalon North Integrated School Board are consistent with the results of other studies. The findings of this study may assist school boards in their planning, administration and implementation of FI programs. Findings should also serve to complement prior research available on FI education as

well as to encourage further research. Findings may also be useful to the Department of Education in planning curriculum or in the development of immersion policies.

#### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The questions investigated in this study were:

1. What are the reasons students give for withdrawal from LFI?
2. What are the most frequent reasons provided by students for dropping out of LFI?
3. At what grade level and what time of year does attrition most often occur?
4. Is there a relationship between the pattern of occurrences and reasons given?

#### **1.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

1. This study is limited to students in LFI at the former Avalon North Integrated School Board and results cannot be generalized to all FI dropouts in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador or elsewhere.

2. The survey instrument includes questions that students may not understand as were intended to be understood by the researcher (Cook, 1988).
3. This study is a pilot study and, therefore, subject to the limitations of a preliminary investigation.
4. This is a retrospective study. Therefore, although information may be recalled accurately, the respondents' recollection of past attitudes may be distorted (Gall, Borg and Gall, 1996).

## 1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMINOLOGY

To allow the reader to become familiar with certain terms used throughout this study, definitions are provided below. The first four definitions are taken from **The Report of the Policy Advisory Committee on French Programs** (1986).

1. French Immersion (FI): "a program designed for English-speaking students in which French is the language of instruction in the classroom for all or some of the subject areas and as much as possible, the means of communication in the school environment". (p.37)

2. Early French Immersion (EFI): "a program from Kindergarten to Level 3, beginning at the Kindergarten level with approximately 100% instruction in French. With the introduction of Language Arts and other subjects in English, the percentage of instructional time in French decreases somewhat as students progress through the varying grade levels". (p.37)
  
3. Late French Immersion (LFI): "a program from Grade 7 to Level III with approximately 70% instruction in French in Grades 7 and 8. The percentage of instructional time in French decreases somewhat as students progress through the varying grade levels". (p.37)
  
4. Core French: "a program of instruction in which students study the various aspects of French language during a regularly scheduled time slot as it is done in other subject areas". (p.31)
  
5. English Stream: The regular English program in a school.

## **1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

This study of the reported reasons for attrition in LFI is organized into five chapters. Chapter One describes the study, its purpose, significance, and limitations, and presents definitions of terms used throughout the study. Chapter Two provides a review of relevant literature about attrition in second language programs. The design and type of methodology used in the study are described in Chapter Three. Chapter Four presents the findings and discusses the analysis of data. The final chapter, Chapter Five, includes a summary of the findings and recommendations for further research.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, it is quite common for enrolment in any given FI program to decline by as much as 50% by the end of Level III. In a 1992 report on the organization and delivery of FI programs, the former Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's concluded that the attrition rate in its FI program was approximately 50%.

While extensive research and monitoring of FI programs have been conducted since 1965, few studies have addressed the issue of attrition in FI. Furthermore, as Obédia and Thériault (1997) indicated, it is difficult to interpret the findings from attrition studies for a number of reasons: schools and school boards do not necessarily keep records on attrition and enrolment records do not always distinguish reasons for withdrawal, attrition in different school boards may be related to different characteristics of individual boards, and the definition of attrition may vary from study to study.

This chapter will give an overview of selected research relevant to attrition in second language (L2) programs. More specifically the chapter will review attrition in L2 programs, attrition in FI at the secondary level, transferring of FI students to the English

stream, characteristics of transfer students, and the influence of attitude, motivation and length of study on attrition.

## **2.2 ATTRITION IN SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAMS**

The reasons reported for leaving the FI program do not appear to differ greatly from those given by students who discontinue the study of a L2 in general. Results from a study of core French dropouts in two Ontario secondary schools revealed that students tend to discontinue their L2 studies due to dissatisfaction with (a) the learning environment, (b) teaching methods, and (c) levels of proficiency (Massey 1994). In a 1991 study of 200 Foreign Language student dropouts in England, Aplin (1991) listed the following principal reasons why many students end their L2 studies by the age of fourteen: the dislike of teachers, poor test results, choosing another program, and a negative attitude towards the L2 in general.

These reasons, among others, for not completing the study of a L2 have been echoed by students who transferred out of secondary FI programs in British Columbia (Lewis and Shapson, 1989). A report from a study of the first seven years of a LFI program in Australia identified similar reasons why students leave the program (Berthold, 1992). As well, results from a Canadian Parents For French (CPF) questionnaire on attrition in



FI indicated that school board personnel across Canada highlighted concern with academic achievement, a lack of remedial personnel and resources, teacher related factors and program conflict as reasons for attrition (Halsall, 1994). In fact, a 1992 Canadian Education Association survey of 104 school boards across Canada determined that the principal reason for withdrawal from FI was choosing another course offering or program. Increasingly, more and more alternatives are being offered to students in Canadian schools which provide a wide choice of courses and concentrations other than FI studies.

The impact of the increasing number of course alternatives available to Canadian students on attrition in FI, then, is not a phenomenon unique to FI in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. However, because of the limited enrolment in FI programs in Canada, student attrition is of special concern for parents, teachers, and, in particular, administrators (Calvé, 1986).

In an effort to address this issue, school boards and other special interest groups have begun to conduct studies to determine the reasons why only a small number of students complete the program (Bartlett and Morrison, 1992; Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's, 1992; Halsall, 1994). Indeed, across Canada, approximately 40% of school boards have conducted surveys of FI graduates (Canadian Education Association, 1992).

Results from these surveys reflect a variety of factors related to why so few students complete the program.

The former Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's (1992) found that attrition in urban centres may reflect the "transient nature of the inner city population". (p.26) In a report on attrition in four Metropolitan Toronto school boards, 60% of student withdrawals from FI programs in Toronto during the 1986-87 school year were attributed to a change of residence of parents (Hart et al., 1989). In her survey, Halsall (1994) reported that two thirds of school board personnel identified family 'mobility' as a reason for high levels of attrition.

Social issues may be another factor contributing to the rate of attrition in FI. Peer pressure was cited as a reason why Australian French immersion students leave the FI program (Berthold, 1992). This factor is consistent with findings in Canada (Obédia and Thériault, 1997).

In the past, FI programs have been accused of being elitist, catering to students of high academic ability and high socio-economic status (Burns, 1983; Calvé, 1986; Walker, 1987). As an example, the lack of busing for FI students can be a deciding factor in determining who enrolls in FI as parents are often solely responsible for transportation (Halsall, 1994). Also, due to this factor, FI has been accused of being elitist because

children who enrol tend to be of parents who can afford to provide transportation (Burns, 1993). Transportation factors have been related to attrition in FI programs (Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's, 1992).

Five main areas of concern identified by researchers (e.g., Duhamel, 1985; Lewis and Shapson, 1989; Stern, 1991; Halsall, 1994; Obédia and Thériault, 1997) as factors contributing to student attrition in FI programs include a lack of remedial services, insufficient motivation or a negative attitude, and, at the secondary level, course or program conflict, concern with academic achievement and with preparation for post-secondary education, and dissatisfaction with the program and/or the teacher.

### **2.3 ATTRITION IN FI AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL**

Concern has been expressed about attrition at the secondary level, in particular, where course options are restricted because of limited enrolments and where scheduling may affect choice in other electives (Lewis & Shapson, 1989). The Canadian Education Association (1992) noted that "about one in five students drops out of French immersion classes once they reach high school, ten times the departure rate of elementary and junior high". (p.9)

More often, students are forced to choose between continuing in immersion or enrolling in other programs of choice (Lewis and Shapson, 1989; Lewis in Halsall, 1994; Obédia and Thériault, 1997). The Canadian Education Association (1992) reported that across Canada, there appears to be a developing trend in this direction. "Schools and services for artistically, athletically and academically gifted students are increasingly being offered and compete for students. Alternative schools and programs attract a similar clientele as immersion". (p.08)

Another concern identified by secondary students, but which may be true of students of all levels in FI, is the issue of academic achievement. Some students believe that they would have higher grades if they were in the English stream. For secondary students, grades are particularly important because students are planning for post-secondary studies (Lewis & Shapson, 1989; Halsall, 1994; Obédia and Thériault, 1997). In addition, Duhamel (1985) theorized that parents may feel that "poor academic performance [in secondary school] can have serious consequences for a student's future success". (p.822)

As well, some students are satisfied with the level of proficiency they have achieved and do not see the usefulness of continuing their studies in FI (Duhamel, 1985). This was reflected in Lewis and Shapson's (1989) study where the comment "I felt I already knew enough French" ranked among the top ten reasons for students leaving the FI program.

There are no established national or provincial criteria in proficiency for students successfully completing their FI studies. However, the awarding of diplomas or certificates to FI students at the completion of their program may stimulate students to fulfil all requirements of the program (Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's, 1992; Halsall, 1994; Obédia and Thériault, 1997).

It is possible that students in high school do not see an observable improvement in their skill level. In the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, after grade 8 the required percentage of instruction in FI drops from approximately 75 to 30 per cent. Although there are now a number of FI courses which have been developed for the secondary level, schools in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador tend not to offer more than the four credits required per year: two in *français* and two in *sciences humaines* or *études religieuses*. This reduction in the alternative course offerings in French at the secondary level might contribute to little noticeable improvement in language development. In studies of EFI students in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Tapp (1995) found little demonstrable language development at the junior high school level, and Dean (1996) found a similar trend among students at the senior high school level. In a study of the LFI program in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Drover (1988) reported that students were concerned with the lack of instructional time in French after grade 8. Most studies identify the lack of variety of courses as a principal detractor for

continuing in the FI program (Bonyun, 1985; Duhamel, 1985; Lewis and Shapson, 1989; Bannister, 1991; Halsall, 1994; Obédia and Thériault, 1997).

In addition, the significance of "parallel content" in French and English courses is often underlined by French immersion students who feel that they are either receiving inferior instruction or, in contrast, being tested on more challenging material resulting in lower grades (Lewis & Shapson, 1989; Halsall, 1994).

In studies by Lewis and Shapson (1989) and Husum and Bryce (1991) students mentioned that they felt more emphasis should be placed on speaking and less on grammar, giving them more opportunities to speak French in class and to interact with native speakers, for instance, by visiting francophone regions.

Massey (1994) conducted a survey of some grade 10 Core French students in Ontario to determine why students choose to continue or discontinue their L2 studies. From the students' responses, it was suggested that language teachers are striving too much for language accuracy, especially in written production. Language accuracy is neither the single nor the ultimate objective of FI programs (Calvé, 1986). For instance, attitude towards the L2 and the L2 group is also an objective which is perhaps equally as important as language proficiency (Ramage, 1990). According to Hawkins (in Morris, 1978) "We should treat with caution, arguments about relative failures at school subjects.

A great deal that is learnt in secondary schools is soon forgotten. It is often the journey that matters, the attitudes left by the experience". (p.177)

Another factor reportedly contributing to attrition includes the increased workload at the secondary level (Bonyun, 1985; Lewis and Shapson, 1989; Obédia and Thériault, 1997). Duhamel (1985) stated that for some students, their level of competence in French will not be sufficient and "the demands of the task [studying high school courses in the L2] will have proven too great". (p.822)

Teachers themselves may be a reason why students drop out of FI programs at the high school level (Lewis and Shapson, 1989; Halsall, 1992; MacFarlane and Wesche, 1995; Obedia and Theriault, 1997). When high school graduates in the Province of Saskatchewan responded to a survey by Husum and Bryce (1991), they indicated the need for teachers "both skilled in a subject area and in French". (p.140) Indeed, according to Duhamel (1985), if it is perceived that "the quality of teaching may be inferior to that offered in the regular program, there will be a strong incentive to question and/or abandon the immersion experience". (p.821) In contrast, 15% of Ottawa FI graduates in a study conducted by Bonyun (1984) commented on the high calibre of FI teachers, and in a survey of LFI students in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Drover (1988) indicated that one of the most frequently mentioned aspects was the high quality of teachers.

The nature and quality of the relationships between teachers and students may also be related to attrition in FI. Parents' dissatisfaction with the teacher and the inability of the teacher to address the needs of the child have been cited as reasons for dropout from the EFI program (Burns, 1983; Stern, 1991). Junior and senior high school students also identified "poor relations" with the teacher as a factor in attrition (Lewis & Shapson, 1989; Halsall, 1994). In a survey of Australian French immersion students, it was noted that the inability of one teacher in particular to develop satisfactory relations in the classroom led to general dissatisfaction (Berthold, 1992).

The tendency to have the same teacher for two or more years, especially in senior high, may also be seen as a negative factor (Lewis & Shapson, 1989). In contrast, Bonyun (1985) noted that, especially in a large school where students rarely have the opportunity to develop relationships with teachers, the rapport between student and teacher is fostered when students have the same French Immersion teacher for an extended period of time.

## **2.4 TRANSFERRING TO THE ENGLISH STREAM**

Research has often related attrition to the lack of remedial services available to address academic difficulties experienced in FI (Hart et al., 1989; Stern, 1991; Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's, 1992; Halsall, 1994; Obédia and Thériault, 1997).



At the primary and elementary school levels, attrition often reportedly occurs in EFI programs primarily because children experience academic and behavioral difficulties in the classroom (Hart et al., 1989; Stern, 1991). In the past, a common response by parents and teachers, under such circumstances, was to recommend the transfer of students experiencing these problems to the English stream (Stern, 1991).

Bruck (1985a; 1985b) compared students having academic difficulty and who transferred to the English stream with students having difficulties but who remained in the EFI program. Bruck (1985b) found that after one year of education in English, the academic skills of below average academic students who transferred to the English stream did not improve more significantly than those of students with such difficulties who remained in FI.

Furthermore, Genesee (1976a) reported from his previous studies, which compared low average immersion students to similar groups of English students, that low average students can have success in FI programs without incurring harmful effects in their English skill development. He stated that FI programs should not be limited to academically-oriented students, but that all children can profit from the FI experience. He suggested that any student experiencing academic difficulties in FI might have experienced the same difficulties in an English program, and that it is not necessarily the language of instruction which creates the problem.

Trites (1986) reported on his previous studies (Trites and Price, 1978; Trites and Price, 1979; Trites and Moretti, 1986) which were conducted to determine characteristics of children who experience difficulty in immersion programs. The findings in those studies were used to develop test instruments which Trites claimed could be used for the identification of such children prior to their entry into the program. In contrast to Bruck's findings, Trites suggested that students may be more likely to develop learning difficulties in EFI than in an English stream. Trites, disagreeing with Bruck, felt that students experiencing difficulties should be transferred to the English stream.

According to Cummins (1993), however, transferring a student from the FI program to the English stream may have a detrimental effect on the student's self-image and may, in turn, increase the feeling of failure. Trites (1986) did report "a mildly negative self-concept amongst the drop-out group in spite of having done well for several years in the English language program". (p.05)

Burns (1993) suggests that in the past, children have frequently been "systematically tracked out of immersion". (p.05) This has forced English stream teachers to deal with students struggling to reintegrate into the English stream and who may be further behind academically than if they had remained in FI. Indeed, Cummins (1993) stated that because students in elementary grades may not have received any formal English instruction, transfer students may be even further behind than they were in FI. As well,

evidence has been found that a significant number of teachers "counsel" students to drop out of immersion, thereby contributing to the problem of reintegration and attrition (Murtagh and Dirren, 1992).

Cummins (1993) suggested that it is not wise to "stream" FI classes on an academic basis, but rather to identify and assess individual students with problems and to provide remediation in French, enabling the student to remain in the program. Stern (1991) stated that students with difficulty in FI transfer to English programs because there are more remedial or support services available. She took the position that these students will have fewer difficulties in the English program.

Although many school boards state that FI is available to all students, when FI students experience difficulties, remedial assistance is often not available and, consequently, students are recommended to transfer to the English stream (Bruck, 1985a; Stern, 1991). Stern (1991) recommended that guidelines be established to assist educators who, with parents, must make decisions concerning students who encounter difficulties. She pointed to established guidelines in gifted and special education and suggested that uniform guidelines would help to ensure more consistent decision-making regarding students with difficulties in FI. She also questioned whether transfer to the English program is the "special education" option for FI students who cannot avail of remediation in their FI program.

At the secondary level, the lack of remedial services in FI may also contribute to the problem of attrition (Obedia and Theriault, 1997). Contrary to common belief, studies have shown that some LFI students require the same extent of remedial services or "extra help" as EFI students at the primary and elementary levels (Murtagh & Dirren, 1992; Halsall, 1994).

In summary, Bruck and Trites present opposing viewpoints on the question of suitability of the FI program for all children. The work of both researchers has been criticized on the basis of validity (Genesee, 1984). Further research in this area will be necessary before a definitive conclusion can be made.

## **2.5 CHARACTERISTICS OF TRANSFER STUDENTS**

In a report on attrition in early and middle FI programs in Ontario Hart et al. (1989) found that there was no socio-economic characteristic identifiable to dropouts, but that males drop out more frequently than females. Trites (1986) also reported that a higher proportion of dropouts are male. However, he found that these students tended to be of a lower socio-economic level and generally had fewer books at home and less pre-school nursery experience. Trites also found that students of lower IQ groups were more likely to drop out of immersion. Studies have shown, however, that while the development of

reading and writing skills in the L2 may be related to intelligence, fluency is not related to this factor (Genesee, 1976b; Cummins, 1993). Therefore, some students who drop out are capable of communicating in the L2, but experience frustration in written work and written evaluations.

Bruck (1985a) noted that students who drop out of EFI may have teachers who are not supportive and parents who are not committed to the program. She suggested that student attitudes and motivation may be reflective of parental attitudes and motivations. Unfortunately, when students transfer to the English stream, as Trites (1986) suggested, there may be a lasting negative effect on their attitudes towards the French language.

Trites (1986) also suggested that some students in EFI may experience a maturational lag. In follow up studies of primary FI dropouts, Trites found that after the age of nine or ten, these students "caught up" and he predicted that they would have had success if they had enrolled in LFI. However, Trites was unable to test this hypothesis as many of the dropouts in the groups studied expressed negative opinions towards FI programs and none chose to enrol in LFI.

## 2.6 ATTITUDE AND MOTIVATION

The role of attitude and motivation in L2 learning, and on decisions to discontinue L2 studies, has been explored by numerous researchers (e.g., Gardner et al., 1976; Morris, 1978; Ramage, 1990; Bannister, 1991). Most concur that a negative attitude affects the success a learner may experience. Brown (1987) stated that "L2 learners benefit from positive attitudes and that negative attitudes may lead to decreased motivation". (p.127) Gardner et al. (1976) stated that motivation to learn a L2 is closely related to one's attitude towards the target language and target language group.

According to a 1992 report by the former Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's, there are common time periods of departure from the FI program for students, namely at the end of primary (grade 3), elementary (grade 6) or junior high (grade 9). This factor is consistent with data compiled by Lewis and Shapson (1989) in a study of secondary FI students who left the program around grade nine. Morris (1978) stated that motivation is at its lowest point around the age of thirteen or fourteen and that the necessity of changing schools may have a detrimental impact.

Bannister (1991) conducted a study of the attitudes of grade 8 EFI and LFI students in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. She found that both groups had generally positive attitudes towards FI, but she recommended that a follow-up study of this same

group of students be completed when they reached high school to determine whether there was a continuity of this attitude.

Gardner et al. (1976) and Ramage (1990) found that attitude and motivation distinguish continuing students from discontinuing students in L2 programs. Gardner surveyed students learning French as a L2 at 5 different grade levels in 7 different communities over a period of three years. The results indicate that students who continue in their L2 studies are intrinsically motivated, possess a high degree of interest in learning the L2, and have strong positive attitudes towards the L2. In Ramage's study, second year French and Spanish students in three different United States high schools were surveyed and their teachers were interviewed. The results, when compared with end-of-year grades and registration in L2 courses for the following year, suggest that motivation both for students who continue and students who discontinue are similar. Ramage found a higher degree of intrinsic motivation among continuing students. Ramage's results are comparable to those of Gardner in that in each of the studies, continuing students were found to have an intrinsic desire to learn the language and a positive attitude towards learning to communicate with the target group. Gardner et al. (1976) identified this intrinsic factor as integrative motive. "It reflects a high level of drive on the part of the individual to acquire the language of a valued L2 community in order to facilitate communication with that group". (p.199) This may account for the persistence in

motivation that is characteristic of the student who continues in the FI program (Stern, 1983).

Graham (in Brown, 1987) refers to a more extreme type of motivation which he has termed assimilative. This is the desire on the part of the language learner to become an "indistinguishable member of the speech community". (p.117)

Students may also be encouraged to pursue L2 learning for career opportunities (Husum & Bryce, 1991). Gardner et al. (1976) term this practical aspect of learning a language as instrumental motive. This extrinsic factor is reportedly an important reason why parents choose to enrol their children in FI programs (Hart et al. 1989). This finding is consistent with findings in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador (Drover, 1988; Bannister, 1991).

Both integrative motivation and instrumental motivation may co-exist or be independent of the other. But, Gardner et al. (1976) suggested that the integrative motive is the overriding factor in learning a L2 and that integratively motivated students strive harder to acquire a L2. Indeed, Cummins (1987) emphasized that LFI students, in particular, need to be highly motivated if they are to experience success with the program, and Sloan (1991) stated that LFI students need "a higher than average motivation to cope with the challenge of a new language". (p.35) However, in a study of high school Core



French students in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Pack (1979) found that where geographic distance is a factor, instrumental motivation and parental encouragement are more important than the attitude towards the target language in determining who continues L2 study.

## **2.7 ATTITUDE TOWARDS L2 LEARNING AND LENGTH OF STUDY**

Relative to attrition in French immersion is the intensity and length of study of the L2. A decline in motivation, over time, has been noted in some students in FI programs (Gardner et al. 1976). They tire of the extensive time spent studying French, and if little change is made in the curriculum or approach to teaching, boredom can result (Canadian Education Association, 1992; Halsall, 1994). Walker (1987) reported that this can sometimes result in a negative attitude such as "I'm so glad I'm out - I'll never speak another word of French again". (p.15)

Rivers (in Rehorick, 1990) suggested that it is quite natural for students to stop being interested in certain subjects at certain times. She contended that to maintain student interest in L2 learning, the curriculum must be varied and that

The waning of interest in second language learning after five years would be a function of age and type of course ... often adults and adolescents feel they have achieved a level which satisfies them and the needs they had in mind. They can do what they want to do and that's enough. The students often reach a plateau in language learning and feel that language study has become 'more of the same thing'. (p. 286)

Dean (1996) hypothesized that during the acquisition of a L2 some students may "seem to reach a level of language proficiency whereby they appear to lack the motivation to improve". (p.27) Parkin (1981) noted that interlanguage, pidginization and fossilisation may contribute to the phenomenon of stagnation in language development. Hart, Lapkin and Swain (1991) suggested that high school students reach a plateau in their L2 language achievement prior to their final year of study. This "plateau effect" was noted by students who were dissatisfied with both the program and their progress in the Lewis and Shapson study (1989).

Kraemer and Zienwine (1989), in a study of students learning Hebrew as a L2 in South African schools, found that over a period of time attitudes towards learning a L2 became "less positive". These students felt that the long years of study required to master the language were not worthwhile. They were not instrumentally motivated and over a period of time lost their integrative motivation.

## **2.8 SUMMARY**

To reiterate, attrition rates up to as much as 50% in FI programs are not unique to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, but rather, a varying rate of attrition has been a concern for school boards across Canada.

Generally, students who enrol in LFI programs do so voluntarily. These students all have varying needs and in order to maintain their interest in the FI program, and to decrease the attrition rate of FI students in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, these needs must be addressed.

The various studies referred to above, identify factors reportedly related to high attrition rates. From the research cited, the primary factors related to attrition in FI include a transient population, a lack of remedial services, insufficient motivation, academic difficulty, dissatisfaction with the program and/or the teacher, and choice of another course offering or program.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION:**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the reasons students give for dropping out of the LFI program, to identify the time of year and grade level when attrition is most likely to occur, and to explore possible relationships between patterns of occurrences and reasons given. This chapter describes the design of the study, the sample population, the survey instrument, and the procedures for the collection and analysis of data.

#### **3.2 DESIGN OF THE STUDY**

This research study involved developing and field testing a student questionnaire on reasons for attrition in LFI and administering the questionnaire to students who have dropped out of the LFI program at the former Avalon North Integrated School Board between September 1986 and June 1996. (See Appendix A).

Since the primary purpose of this study was to identify the reasons students give for dropping out of the LFI program and to seek an understanding of these reasons by looking at variables such as gender, age, time of year, grade level, and number of years

since attrition occurred, a questionnaire was selected as the most appropriate method of collecting, organising, and analyzing data.

The questionnaire, one of the most commonly used methods of seeking descriptive information in education, has often been criticised. However, de Vaus (1986) suggests that many criticisms are actually reactions to poorly designed instruments and not to the method itself. According to de Vaus,

A questionnaire will be the product of the research problem, the theory, method of administration, and methods of data analysis. Although questionnaires have obvious limitations many of these can be minimized by careful thinking ahead and pilot testing. Good questionnaires do not just happen: they involve careful thinking, numerous drafts, thorough evaluation and extensive testing. (p.81)

### **3.3 POPULATION**

Those students who failed to complete all six years of the LFI program at the former Avalon North Integrated School Board were identified from school records and by school personnel at the three schools involved in the Bay Roberts system: Holy Redeemer Elementary School, Amalgamated Academy, and Ascension Collegiate.

Between September 1986 and June 1995 school records show that 111 students transferred out of the LFI program at the former Avalon North Integrated School Board (Table 1.1). From this number, school personnel indicated that 22 students had moved out of the Bay Roberts area. Students who moved out of the area were not included or canvassed in this study. Therefore, the number of students identified for inclusion in this study was 89.

### **3.3.1 PROFILE OF STUDENTS**

The students who participated in this study were identified from school records and discussions with school personnel. It was determined that from 1986 to 1996 there were 111 students who failed to complete the entire six years of the LFI program at the former Avalon North Integrated School Board (see Table 1.1). Of the 89 students identified to participate in this study, 73 completed the survey instrument. Of the 73 (82%) respondents to the survey, 37 were male and 36 female, ranging from 12 to 22 years of age. Forty-four (approximately 60%) of the respondents were still in school, in grades 8 to Level 3. Of the remaining 29 FI dropouts, approximately 90% are currently enrolled in a post-secondary program, having completed the requirements for a high school diploma. School records indicate, as well, that approximately 80% of FI dropouts

occurred at the end of a given school year, rather than mid-year, and that the majority of students (77%) who dropped out of LFI left during grades 7 to 9.

In the initial years of LFI at the former Avalon North Integrated School Board, a language aptitude test was administered to all applicants and acceptance into the program was based partly on the results of this test instrument. In recent years, this test has been discontinued but applicants still require a written recommendation from their grade 6 Core French and home room teachers and, as well, they undergo an interview screening procedure. Although emphasis is no longer placed on prior academic success, students who enter the LFI program do tend to be relatively high academic achievers.

### **3.4 THE INSTRUMENT**

The questionnaire (Appendix A) used in this pilot study was developed from comments received through informal discussions held with students who had transferred from the immersion program, from discussions held with immersion personnel at the former Avalon North Integrated School Board district and, as well, from reasons identified by other researchers, for attrition in immersion programs.

The questionnaire comprised three sections. The first section asked students to respond to a series of statements using categories on a Likert scale of 1-4 (with 1 indicating strongly agree and 4 indicating strongly disagree) related to general areas of concern previously identified by other researchers, namely, program factors, teacher factors, student factors, and other factors. The second section contained two open ended questions asking students to state the most important reason or reasons why they left the LFI program and allowing them to make general comments about the LFI program. The final section of the survey instrument requested students to provide personal information indicating their gender, age, academic status or occupation, grade level and time of year of attrition from LFI.

#### **3.4.1 FIELD TESTING OF THE INSTRUMENT**

The student survey was field tested in September 1996 by administering it to a sample of grade 7 and Level 3 students not participating in the study. The major objectives of the field testing were:

1. To determine if the instructions clearly indicated to the respondents how the survey was to be completed.



2. To determine whether adjustments needed to be made with respect to the level and clarity of language, to the topics covered by the questions, or to any other area in order to facilitate the accuracy of the study.

Adjustments and modifications were made to the survey instrument as a result of this field testing. The final form of the student survey was a) sent to the members of the sample who were no longer in the school system and/or b) administered to those members of the sample who were still in school.

#### **3.4.2 ADMINISTRATION OF THE INSTRUMENT**

Student dropouts, as identified from school records and by school personnel, were divided into two groups for purposes of administration of the instrument. Student surveys and cover letters (Appendix D) were sent to 39 students who had reached post-secondary age or status. Two weeks following the mailing of the student surveys, respondents who had not yet replied were individually contacted by telephone. At the time that telephone contacts were conducted, three students provided verbal responses to survey questions. In addition, twenty-six completed surveys were received by mail for a total of 29 respondents in this category.

The second group of respondents were those still attending junior or senior high school. Initial contact by telephone was made with the parents and guardians of these students to explain the intent and purpose of the study. Consent forms were then mailed to parents and guardians (Appendix C). A total of 47 (out of 49) consent forms were received with 45 affirmative and 2 negative replies. Survey instruments were then administered to those 45 students. Of the 45 surveys, one was not included in the final analysis of data because the respondent completed only one question, indicating that he/she had dropped out of FI after only two weeks in grade 7 LFI and, therefore, that he/she did not feel qualified to answer the survey questions.

No attempt was made to contact those students who had dropped out of FI due to family relocation reasons, as identified by school administrators and records. Overall, a total of 73 responses (83%) were examined in this study.

### **3.5 ANALYSIS OF DATA**

Once the questionnaires were completed and returned, responses from the completed surveys were coded and entered into SPSS, a statistical package used to perform the analyses (Norusis, 1994). Results were reported using frequency distributions to ascertain the most frequent reasons given by students for dropping out of the LFI

program, and the grade level and time of year when attrition most often occurs. Chi Square was used to test for levels of significance of variables as they relate to attrition in LFI. The level of significance  $p < .05$  was used for statistical tests as is conventional for small samples (de Vaus, 1986; Cowles and Davis, 1982). As well, according to Jaeger (1983),

In many research and evaluation studies, a level of significance equal to five percent (0.05) is used. This is partly based on tradition, and partly on thoughtful consideration. It says that the researcher or evaluator is willing to reject a true null hypothesis only five percent of the time. (p.149)

Discussion of the results of analysis of data is included in Chapter Four. Each of the independent variables (i.e. gender, time of year and grade level of attrition, age, and number of years since student dropped out) will be discussed as it relates to a possible relationship to attrition. Comments provided by students in response to two open-ended questions are discussed and used to corroborate, or otherwise support, the findings. Student responses to the open-ended questions are quoted verbatim; therefore, the language is unedited. Generally, only those differences found to be significant at .05 will be discussed. However, in some cases where it is felt that non-significant findings are of particular interest for further research or program design they are discussed.

### **3.6 SUMMARY**

This chapter provided a brief and general description of the design of the study, the population, a profile of the student respondent, the instrument, field testing and administration of the instrument, and an analysis of data. The next chapter presents findings and discussion of analysis of data.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **PRESENTATION OF RESULTS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will present the findings from the questionnaire completed by respondents who had participated in, but failed to complete, the LFI program between 1986 and 1996. The purpose of this survey instrument was to extrapolate information from students, themselves, as to the reasons for their withdrawal from the LFI program.

The survey instrument included three types of questions. The first section comprised four distinct groups of statements related to program, teacher, student and other attrition-related factors identified in the literature (see Chapter Two) and from discussions with FI teaching personnel. Students were asked to strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with each of these statements. For the purposes of analysis, the categories were later collapsed into agree and disagree.

The survey instrument also included two open-ended questions. The first question asked students to give reasons why they had left the LFI program, while the second question allowed these students to make any additional comments they wished regarding LFI. Finally, the survey instrument included a section on personal information related to each

student's gender, age, current academic status or occupation, as well as grade level and time of year of withdrawal from the LFI program.

Data analysis consisted of frequency distributions as well as the Chi Square statistic to test the level of significance of the variables gender, time of year of attrition, grade level, age, and number of years since attrition occurred as they relate to attrition for our sample.

## **4.2 FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTIONS**

To determine the most frequent reasons that students give for dropping out of LFI, frequency distributions were compiled using SPSS 6.1. Results are presented according to the four categories of statements as presented on the survey instrument, namely program, teacher, student and other. Statements most strongly identified by respondents as factors influencing their decision to leave LFI are reported in Tables 4.1 to 4.4 .

#### 4.2.1 PROGRAM FACTORS

From a list of thirteen statements related to program, four were selected most frequently by respondents as factors influencing their decision to leave LFI. These statements are reported in Table 4.1.

TABLE 4.1

FREQUENCY TABLE OF PROGRAM FACTORS INFLUENCING ATTRITION

Program Factor:	(N=73)	Agree		Disagree	
		%	n	%	n
Course content in FI program more difficult than in English stream		71.2	52	28.8	21
Course content in FI not interesting		50.7	37	49.3	36
Not enough opportunity to use French outside the classroom		74.0	54	26.0	19
Not enough contact with French speaking peoples		83.6	61	16.4	12

As Table 4.1 indicates, of the 73 respondents who participated in this survey, when referring to program related factors, approximately 84% noted the lack of contact with French speaking peoples and about 74% identified insufficient opportunity to use French

outside the classroom as factors contributing to student decisions to leave LFI. Slightly more than 71% of the respondents perceived the content in FI courses to be more difficult than that of equivalent English stream courses, and almost 51% stated that course content was not interesting.

Overall, respondents identified a lack of real or realistic situations in which to use the L2 outside the classroom setting and dissatisfaction with course content as two main types of program factors that contributed to their decision to leave the LFI program.

#### **4.2.2 TEACHER FACTORS**

The second group of thirteen statements which students were asked to rate on a Likert type scale referred to teacher factors. Table 4.2 contains those teacher factors which a substantial percentage of students indicated as influencing their decision to leave LFI.



TABLE 4.2

## FREQUENCY TABLE OF TEACHER FACTORS INFLUENCING ATTRITION

Teacher Factor: (N=73)	Agree		Disagree	
	%	n	%	n
The teacher placed too much emphasis on grammar	49.3	36	50.7	37
There was better instruction in English stream classes	41.1	30	57.5	42
There was not enough variety in methods of instruction from grade to grade*	37.0	27	57.5	33
Class instruction was not interesting	60.3	44	39.7	29
The teacher required too much perfection in written skills	50.7	37	49.3	36
The teacher gave too much homework	41.1	30	58.9	43

\* 13 missing cases reflect those surveys completed by some grade 7 students who did not respond to this question as they had no basis of comparing grade level instruction

Table 4.2 indicates that a majority of respondents (just over 60%) did not find class instruction to be interesting. More than one half (almost 51%) of students surveyed stated that the teacher required too much perfection in written skills, while almost one half (49%) indicated that too much importance was placed upon grammar in the LFI

program. Approximately 41% stated that they perceived class instruction to be better in the English stream, while 37% indicated that there was not enough variety in methods of instruction from grade to grade. As well, just over 41% maintained that the teacher gave too much homework. In general, students identified two main types of reasons related to teacher factors for leaving LFI: first, the quality and motivational level of class instruction and, second, teacher expectations in areas of homework and written perfection.

#### **4.2.3 STUDENT FACTORS**

The survey instrument included twenty-four statements describing possible student factors related to leaving LFI. Table 4.3 contains eight statements related to student factors that a high percentage of respondents reported as being most relevant to their decision to leave the LFI program.

TABLE 4.3

## FREQUENCY TABLE OF STUDENT FACTORS INFLUENCING ATTRITION

Student Factor:	(N=73)	Agree		Disagree	
		%	n	%	n
I was not satisfied with my level of oral proficiency		47.9	35	52.1	38
I was not satisfied with my level of written proficiency		50.7	37	49.3	36
I was not able to write in French very well		41.1	30	58.9	43
My grade average dropped after I enrolled in FI		82.2	60	17.8	13
When I was in FI I was afraid my grade average would drop		76.7	56	23.3	17
I had lower grades in FI than in other courses		74.0	54	26.0	19
I was afraid FI grades would not qualify me for university or scholarship		52.1	38	47.9	35
I was not confident in my French language ability		42.5	31	57.5	42

The data presented in Table 4.3 show that while slightly more than 82% of students were concerned that their academic average had actually decreased, almost 77% reportedly

feared that their average would decrease and 74% stated that their academic average was lower in FI courses than in English stream courses. As well, slightly more than 52% were concerned that they would not meet qualifications for university entrance or scholarship because of low academic grades in FI courses.

Other student factors identified as contributing to attrition were student dissatisfaction with their levels of proficiency regarding written (approximately 51%) and oral (almost 48%) production, lack of confidence in general French language ability (almost 43%), and the perception of an inability to write well in French (slightly more than 41%).

As can be seen from Table 4.3, large numbers of students tended to highlight concerns with academic grade performance and substantial numbers of students appeared to identify perceived weaknesses in their written and oral production skills as factors influencing their decision to leave LFI.

#### **4.2.4 OTHER FACTORS**

Statements which did not correspond to program, teacher or student factors for leaving LFI were included on the survey instrument in a category identified as "other factors".

Table 4.4 contains the two statements from this group which the highest number of respondents identified as factors influencing attrition in LFI.

**TABLE 4.4**  
**FREQUENCY TABLE OF OTHER FACTORS INFLUENCING ATTRITION**

<b>Other Factor:</b>	<i>(N=73)</i>	<b>Agree</b>		<b>Disagree</b>	
		<b>%</b>	<b><i>n</i></b>	<b>%</b>	<b><i>n</i></b>
There was no one at home who could help me with my homework		58.9	43	41.1	30
FI courses conflicted with another course I wanted to study		34.2	25	65.8	48

As Table 4.4 indicates, almost 59% of respondents identified the inability of parents or others (e.g. siblings) to assist with homework, and slightly more than 34% noted that FI courses conflicted with another course they wished to study as reasons for dropping out of LFI.

The frequency distributions in tables 4.1 - 4.4 indicate factors which students frequently identified as relating to attrition in LFI. With regard to program factors, students clearly identified a lack of opportunity to use their L2 outside the classroom environment and

difficulty of course content in FI in comparison to courses in the English system as contributing to their decision to discontinue. As well, related to teacher factors, many respondents noted that class instruction was not interesting and that there was too much emphasis on written production. Regarding student factors, respondents had a tendency to strongly identify a drop in, or fear of a drop in, academic grade average in FI courses as related to attrition. Finally, under the category of other factors, several students identified a lack of assistance with homework and course conflict as factors influencing attrition in LFI.

#### **4.3 STATISTICAL ANALYSES**

To determine whether or not a relationship existed between attrition in LFI and variables such as gender, time of year attrition occurred, grade level, age and the number of years since attrition occurred, the Chi Square test was applied using a level of significance of  $p < .05$  as indicative of significance. Results of these tests are described below.

#### **4.3.1 GENDER**

Results from the Chi Square test indicate the existence of a relationship between gender and attrition in LFI. Statements where significant differences were found to exist may be seen in Table 4.5.

**TABLE 4.5**  
**FACTORS IN STUDENT ATTRITION BY GENDER**

Factors	Male <i>n</i> =37	Female <i>n</i> =36	<i>p</i> < .05
(% Agree)			
<b>Program:</b>			
Course content was not very interesting	70.3	30.6	***
<b>Teacher:</b>			
Teacher graded my papers harder than those of other students in class	21.6	5.6	*
Class instruction was not interesting	81.1	38.9	***
Teacher gave too much homework	54.1	27.8	*
Teacher gave too many assignments	32.4	11.1	*
<b>Student:</b>			
I was not able to write in French very well	54.1	27.8	*
I had difficulty reading in French	43.2	16.7	**
I had difficulty understanding spoken French	35.1	11.1	*
I was not confident in my French language ability	59.5	25.0	**

\* =  $p \leq .05$     \*\* =  $p \leq .01$     \*\*\* =  $p \leq .001$



Table 4.5 indicates that there were nine statements in which significant differences were found to exist between male and female responses. From responses to these statements, it appears that males tend to have more negative perceptions about program, teacher and student factors than females. Males were more than twice as likely as females to state that they did not find class instruction to be interesting and just over 70% of males did not find the content of their FI courses to be interesting. Significantly more males than females were unhappy with the amount of work which was required by teachers. Significant differences were also noted in the perception of personal success experienced in FI, with males expressing a lack of confidence in their French language ability, especially in comprehension skills, when compared to females.

While the Chi Square test did not indicate any other significant differences in gender, some tendencies which might be of particular interest are found in Table 4.6.

**TABLE 4.6**  
**FACTORS OF SPECIAL INTEREST IN ATTRITION BY GENDER**

Factors	Male <i>n</i> =37	Female <i>n</i> =36	<i>p</i> < .05
	(% Agree)		
<b>Program:</b>			
Course content in FI program too difficult	43.2	27.8	NS
Not enough instruction about French culture	45.9	38.9	NS
<b>Teacher:</b>			
Teacher placed too much emphasis on grammar	56.8	41.7	NS
FI courses were graded harder than English stream courses	45.9	27.8	NS
There was better instruction in English stream classes	47.2	36.1	NS
Not enough variety in methods of instruction from grade to grade	46.7	43.3	NS
Teacher required too much perfection in written skills	56.8	44.4	NS
<b>Student:</b>			
I wasn't satisfied with my level of oral proficiency	54.1	41.7	NS
I wasn't satisfied with my level of written proficiency	59.5	41.7	NS
I was afraid my FI grades wouldn't qualify me for university or scholarship	59.5	44.4	NS
There was no one at home to help me with my homework	67.6	50.0	NS

As Table 4.6 indicates, there appears to be a greater tendency for males than females to perceive FI course content to be difficult and instruction to be better in equivalent English stream courses. As well, more males than females indicated that they had difficulty with comprehension and production skills. This finding seems to be consistent with the findings of a national assessment of 13 and 16 year olds in Canada (Council of Ministers of Education, 1994) which, although reporting findings from first language study, found that females outperformed males by as much as 20% in reading and writing skills in their mother tongue.

Overall, gender would appear to be a factor influencing attrition in LFI. While the dropout rate does not seem to be higher among males than females (Table 1.1), it does appear that males leave LFI for different reasons than do females.

In addition to providing responses to particular statements, the survey instrument asked respondents to provide two to three reasons for their decision to discontinue LFI. Respondents provided a total of 138 responses which were later collapsed into six categories for purposes of analysis. Gender differences in student comments may be found in Table 4.7.

**TABLE 4.7**  
**STUDENT COMMENTS RELATED TO ATTRITION BY GENDER**

Student Comment	(N=71)	Male	Female	Total
Academic Concerns	% n	26.5 18	34.3 24	30.4 42
Program Challenge	% n	27.9 19	14.3 10	21.0 29
Dislike of an aspect of LFI	% n	8.8 6	12.9 9	10.9 15
Decrease in Interest	% n	14.7 10	5.7 4	10.1 14
Transportation	% n	5.9 4	7.1 5	6.5 9
Other	% n	16.2 11	25.7 18	21.0 29
Column Total	% n	100.0 68	100.0 70	100.0 138

Note. Up to three responses were coded

As Table 4.7 indicates, females were more concerned than males with academic achievement. Males, however, were almost twice as likely as females to declare that they dropped out of LFI because they found the program too difficult or because they lost interest. These findings appear to be consistent with those noted in Tables 4.5 and 4.6.

In addition, Table 4.7 indicates that more females than males expressed a dislike for specific aspects of their LFI experience, such as dislike of the French language, the teacher, and other classmates. There was no apparent difference in gender among respondents who commented on transportation issues.

Other factors, such as illness, course conflict, and friends, were cited by a small number of respondents and, therefore, were collapsed into one category labelled 'other'. These factors will be discussed in a section on 'General Comments' near the end of this chapter.

#### **4.3.2 TIME OF YEAR WHEN ATTRITION OCCURRED**

Students were asked to indicate the time of year when they dropped out of LFI. The information was then coded as mid-semester or year end and an analysis of data was conducted using Chi Square to determine whether there were any significant differences in responses between students who dropped out during the school year and those who withdrew at the end of the school year.

Survey results indicated that only 20% of respondents left LFI in mid-semester, with the majority leaving in June, i.e., of the 73 respondents, 14 students left LFI mid-semester

and 59 at year end. The only significant difference identified (at  $p < .05$ ) was in response to the program statement "There was no special help provided for those students who experienced difficulty." Thirty-five per cent of students who left the program at year end agreed with this statement.

Although, statistically, it appears that there is a significant difference between groups of students who dropped out mid-year and those who dropped out at year end, it should be noted that the actual number of students who left mid-year was a relatively small number.

In addition to these significant differences between groups of students who left mid-year and those who left at year end, some tendencies in relation to statements on course content and French language abilities, might be of interest, and are found in Table 4.8.

**TABLE 4.8**  
**FACTORS OF SPECIAL INTEREST IN ATTRITION BY**  
**TIME OF YEAR OF DEPARTURE**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Mid-semester <i>n</i> = 14</b>	<b>Year End <i>n</i> = 59</b>	<b><i>p</i> &lt; .05</b>
	<b>(% Agree)</b>		
<b>Program:</b>			
Course content was too difficult	42.9	33.9	NS
Not enough instruction about culture	28.6	45.8	NS
<b>Teacher:</b>			
Too much emphasis on grammar	35.7	52.5	NS
Not enough variety in methods of instruction	33.3	47.9	NS
Teacher required too much perfection in writing	35.7	54.2	NS
Teacher gave too much homework	28.6	44.1	NS
<b>Student:</b>			
I was not satisfied with my level of oral French	64.3	44.1	NS
I was not able to speak French very well	42.9	30.5	NS
I was not satisfied with my level of written proficiency	57.1	49.2	NS
My written skills were not improving	42.9	28.8	NS
I had difficulty reading in French	42.9	27.1	NS
I was not confident in my French language ability	50.0	40.7	NS
No one at home could help with my homework	42.9	62.7	NS

As Table 4.8 indicates, there appears to be more of a tendency for students who left at mid-semester to feel that course content was too difficult and to express dissatisfaction with their level of French language skills than for students who withdrew at the end of the year. In contrast, students who left at year end tended to indicate that teacher factors and a lack of home support played a more major role in their decision to drop out of LFI.

Table 4.9 provides a summary of the comments made by respondents, who left LFI at different times of the school year, in response to an open-ended question asking them to state reasons for their withdrawal from the LFI program. Responses were collapsed into six categories for reporting purposes.



**TABLE 4.9**  
**STUDENT COMMENTS RELATED TO ATTRITION**  
**BY TIME OF YEAR OF DEPARTURE**

Student Comment	<i>N=71</i>	Mid-Semester	Year End	Total
Academic Concerns	%	29.6	30.6	30.4
	n	8	34	42
Program Challenge	%	33.3	18.0	21.0
	n	9	20	29
Dislike for aspect of LFI	%	14.8	9.9	10.9
	n	4	11	15
Decrease in Interest	%	7.4	10.8	10.1
	n	2	12	14
Transportation	%	.0	8.1	6.5
	n	0	9	9
Other	%	14.8	22.5	21.0
	n	4	25	29
<i>Column Total</i>	%	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
	n	<i>27</i>	<i>111</i>	<i>138</i>

Note. Up to three responses were coded

Table 4.9 indicates that, while both groups of students expressed a concern with academic achievement, there was a greater tendency for those who left LFI mid-semester

to consider program challenge (33.3% mid-semester vs. 18.0% year end) as related to a decision to discontinue. As well, students who left mid-semester were more likely to express a dislike for some aspect of LFI than those students who left at year end.

Although several students identified concerns with transportation as reasons contributing to their decision to drop out of LFI, these students tended to leave at year end. In addition, more students who left at the end of a year, and not mid-semester, mentioned a decrease in interest levels as a factor contributing to their decision.

#### **4.3.3 GRADE LEVEL**

Respondents to this survey were asked to specify the grade they were in at the time they left the LFI program. Table 4.10 indicates the number and percentage of respondents who left LFI by grade level.

**TABLE 4.10**  
**FREQUENCY OF ATTRITION BY GRADE LEVEL**

<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>(N= 73)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>
7		49.3	36
8		13.7	10
9		17.8	13
10		12.3	9
11		6.8	5
<i>Column Total</i>		<i>100.0</i>	<i>73</i>

As Table 4.10 indicates, almost 50% of the 73 student respondents who dropped out left by the end of grade 7, their first year in LFI.

Further analysis of data was conducted to determine if there were any significant differences in reasons reported for leaving LFI and grade level at which students discontinued the LFI program. Tables 4.11 - 4.13 indicate areas where significant differences by grade level of departure from LFI were found to exist, while Table 4.14 provides a summary of significant differences found in responses provided by students who dropped out in grades 7, 8 and 9.

An initial analysis was conducted to see if there were significant differences in responses provided by students who discontinued LFI in grade 7 and those who dropped out after grade 7. (see Table 4.11)

**TABLE 4.11**  
**FACTORS IN ATTRITION: GRADE 7 AND POST GRADE 7 DROPOUTS**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7+</b>	<b><i>p</i> &lt; .05</b>
	( <b>% Agree</b> )		
<b>Program:</b>			
Too many courses taught in French	50.0	21.6	**
<b>Teacher:</b>			
Not enough variety in methods of instruction	25.0	58.3	**
<b>Student:</b>			
My oral skills in French were not improving	36.1	10.8	**
I missed my previous school	36.1	16.2	*
<b>Other:</b>			
FI courses conflicted with another course	19.4	48.8	**
FI courses conflicted with another program	5.6	24.3	*

\* =  $p \leq .05$

\*\* =  $p \leq .01$

As Table 4.11 indicates, for students who dropped out in grade 7 there appears to be a relationship between students perception of oral skill development and attrition in LFI. Since grade 7 is the entry level for LFI in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, it is realistic to expect that students who are starting out in the program would be concerned with their level of oral skills. Almost one quarter of all respondents indicated this concern with oral production; however, it was reportedly more of a problem for those who left during the first year of the program than for those who left after grade 7.

A relationship also appears to exist between those students who previously attended a different school and the grade level at which they discontinued LFI. Students from outside the two schools offering LFI who wish to participate in the program are required to change schools. It is normal, then, that those students would miss their previous school. Although almost 80% indicated this was not a problem, it seems to have been more of a problem for those respondents who left by the end of grade 7 than for others.

Since grade 7 and grade 8 LFI differ from subsequent grades with respect to the percentage of instruction in which French is the medium of instruction, analysis was conducted to determine if there were any significant differences in responses related to this factor between those students who left by the end of grade 8 and those who left after grade 8.

**TABLE 4.12**  
**FACTORS IN ATTRITION: GRADE 8 AND POST GRADE 8 DROPOUTS**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8+</b>	<b><i>p</i> &lt; .05</b>
	<b>(% Agree)</b>		
<b>Program:</b>			
Not enough variety among courses taught in French	30.4	55.6	*
Too many courses taught in French	47.8	14.8	**
Not enough instruction about french culture	52.2	25.9	*
<b>Teacher:</b>			
FI courses graded harder than English stream	45.7	22.2	*
Better instruction in English stream classes	51.1	25.9	*
Not enough variety in methods of instruction	32.4	61.5	*
<b>Student:</b>			
I missed my previous school	37.0	7.4	**
<b>Other:</b>			
FI courses conflicted with another course	21.7	55.6	**
FI courses conflicted with another program	8.7	25.9	*
It was not my choice to enter FI program	4.3	18.5	*

\* =  $p \leq .05$     \*\* =  $p \leq .01$

Although significant differences exist in the responses given by the different groups of students at different grade levels for dropping out of LFI, as Table 4.12 indicates, by grade 8 there seems to be somewhat of a change in reasons students give for leaving the program. While grade 7 students still had some attachment to their previous school and were concerned with their development in oral skills, by grade 8 students tended to report feeling that they would receive better instruction and achieve higher academically if they were in English stream courses.

In the Intermediate grades (i.e., grades 7, 8 & 9) in the immersion schools studied, student timetables are relatively fixed, whereas after grade 9 students have a wide choice of course selection and move to another facility to continue their high school studies. Therefore, a further analysis of data was conducted to determine whether there were any significant differences in reasons given for dropping out of LFI between those students who left by grade 9 and those who left after 9. (see Table 4.13)

TABLE 4.13

## FACTORS IN ATTRITION: GRADE 9 AND POST GRADE 9 DROPOUTS

Factors	9	9+	$p < .05$
	( % Agree)		
<b>Program:</b>			
Not enough emphasis on speaking activities	23.7	0.0	*
Not enough instruction about French culture	52.5	0.0	***
<b>Student:</b>			
Difficulty in understanding spoken French	28.8	0.0	*
I missed my friends at another school	39.0	7.1	*
<b>Other:</b>			
FI courses conflicted with another course	28.8	57.1	*
It was not my choice to enter FI program	3.4	35.7	***

\* =  $p \leq .05$  \*\* =  $p \leq .01$ \*\*\* =  $p \leq .001$ 

As Table 4.13 indicates, after grade 9, respondents frequently acknowledged more of a problem with course conflicts as related to their decision to discontinue. While Table 4.10 indicates that attrition rates among respondents were lower after grade 9, 57% of



respondents who dropped out at the senior high level specified that FI courses conflicted with another course they wanted to study. As well, almost 36% of FI dropouts at the senior high level noted that it had not been their choice to begin the study of LFI in grade 7.

While Tables 4.11 - 4.13 indicate significant differences among reasons for dropping out of LFI as identified by students at the completion of grades 7, 8, and 9, respectively, Table 4.14 provides a summary of significant differences in factors in attrition for purposes of comparison among the different grade levels studied.

**TABLE 4.14**  
**SUMMARY TABLE OF FACTORS RELATED TO**  
**ATTRITION BY GRADE LEVEL**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>7 and 7+</b>	<b>8 and 8+</b>	<b>9 and 9+</b>
<b>Program:</b>			
Not enough emphasis on speaking activities			*
Not enough variety among courses taught in French		*	
Too many courses taught in French	**	**	
Not enough instruction about French culture		*	***
<b>Teacher:</b>			
FI courses graded harder than English stream		*	
Better instruction in English stream classes		*	
Not enough variety in methods of instruction	**	*	
<b>Student:</b>			
My oral skills in French were not improving	**		
Difficulty in understanding spoken French			*
I missed my previous school	*	**	
I missed my friends at another school			*
<b>Other:</b>			
FI courses conflicted with another course	**	**	*
FI courses conflicted with another program	*	*	
It was not my choice to enter FI program		*	***

\* =  $p \leq .05$     \*\* =  $p \leq .01$     \*\*\* =  $p \leq .001$

Note. Asterisk denotes a positive direction of significance

While significant differences occur between sub groups (for example between grade 7 and 7+), from Table 4.14 it is evident that at all three grade levels there are consistent differences in the area of course conflict. Considering the relatively small numbers of students who enrol in LFI, conflicts in scheduling with other courses do occur. It should be noted that, whereas the percentage of respondents, particularly those in grades 7 and 8, who agreed with statements in Table 4.14 tended to be significant, the actual number of respondents who agreed was quite low.

As well, a relationship may exist between the amount of course instruction in French and attrition in LFI. As Tables 4.11 - 4.14 indicate, significant differences in this variable were found to exist among students who left LFI at different grade levels. The differences were most significant among students who dropped out in grade 7 or 8. Fifty per cent of students who left by the end of grade 7 and about 48% of students who dropped out by the end of grade 8, felt that there were too many courses taught in French. After grade 8, this factor was no longer found to be significant. This is consistent with the reality that in grades 7 and 8 LFI, 75% of courses are taught in French, whereas, after grade 8, instruction in French decreases to approximately 30% per year.

Analysis of data shows significant differences between groups of students in the grade 8 and 9 categories with respect to the amount of instruction about French culture.

Slightly over half of the respondents in each of these groups indicated insufficient cultural instruction. After grade 9, however, students no longer felt that lack of French cultural instruction was significant.

In an open ended-question in section two of the survey instrument, respondents were also asked to provide reasons for their withdrawal from the LFI program. A comparison of student responses, by grade level, to this open-ended question may be found in Table 4.15.

TABLE 4.15

## STUDENT COMMENTS RELATED TO ATTRITION BY GRADE LEVEL

Student Comment		End of 7 <sup>a</sup>	End of 8 <sup>b</sup>	End of 9 <sup>c</sup>	After 9 <sup>d</sup>
Academic Concerns	%	26.2	26.2	27.7	42.3
	n	16	22	31	11
Program Challenge	%	24.6	26.2	21.4	19.2
	n	15	22	24	5
Dislike of an aspect of LFI	%	14.8	15.5	13.4	0.0
	n	9	13	15	0
Decrease in Interest	%	13.1	11.9	10.7	7.7
	n	8	10	12	2
Transportation	%	4.9	6.0	6.3	7.7
	n	3	5	7	2
Other	%	16.4	14.3	20.5	23.1
	n	10	12	23	6
<i>Column Total</i>	%	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>84</i>	<i>112</i>	<i>26</i>

Note. Up to three responses coded

a - Includes comments by students in grade 7

b - Includes comments by students in grades 7 & 8

c - Includes comments by students in grades 7, 8 & 9

d - Includes comments by students in grades 10 & 11

As Table 4.15 indicates, while respondents at all levels mentioned their concern with academic achievement in LFI, those who dropped out after grade 9 had the greatest

concern about this factor. In their comments, the older student dropouts often cited a fear that low averages in FI courses would limit their post-secondary study.

Although students at all levels of departure from the LFI program expressed concerns with the level of difficulty, those who left the LFI program in grades 7 and 8 commented on the level of program challenge more frequently than students who had been in the program for longer periods of time. This finding is not surprising considering the higher percentage of French instruction in the first two years of the program. Alternatively, it might also relate to the fact that, as students have more exposure to the French language, their language ability increases.

Students who dropped out of LFI during their first three years of the program often indicated a greater dislike for aspects of the program than those students who left at the high school level. As well, the younger student dropouts tended to express a slightly higher percentage of drop in interest levels in LFI.

Transportation was mentioned by students who left LFI at all levels, but this was not one of the most common reasons students cited for leaving the program. This issue, however, pertains mainly to those students who chose to travel long distances to attend a LFI program and, consequently, the overall number is very low.

#### 4.3.4 AGE

This survey, of factors influencing attrition in LFI, identified students who left LFI over a period of ten years. Therefore, because there was a wide spread of age differences among respondents, an analysis of data was carried out to determine whether any significant differences existed in responses between groups of students of different age levels. On the survey instrument, students were asked to indicate their current age. This information was then organized into three age groups: 12-14, 15-18 and 19-22 to reflect students who are in junior high school, senior high school and those who are of post-secondary age, respectively. Table 4.16 indicates factors for which there were significant differences between age groups.

**TABLE 4.16**  
**FACTORS IN ATTRITION BY AGE CATEGORY**

Factors	12-14 <i>n</i> =19	15-18 <i>n</i> =35	19-22 <i>n</i> =19	<i>p</i> < .05
	(% Agree)			
<b>Program:</b>				
Not enough emphasis on reading activities	36.8	17.1	5.3	*
Course content in FI program too difficult	52.6	45.7		***
Too many courses taught in French	73.7	25.7	15.8	***
Not enough opportunity to use French outside the classroom	47.4	88.6	73.7	**
<b>Teacher:</b>				
Class instruction not interesting	68.4	71.4	31.6	**
<b>Student:</b>				
My oral skills in French not improving	47.4	14.3	15.8	**
I was not able to write well in French	36.8	54.3	21.1	*
I had difficulty understanding written French	47.4	31.4	10.5	*

\* =  $p \leq .05$     \*\* =  $p \leq .01$     \*\*\* =  $p \leq .001$



As Table 4.16 indicates, with the exception of two statements referring to the perceived lack of opportunity to use French outside the classroom and to write well in French, respondents in the 12-14 age group, agreed more strongly than the older age groups with survey statements in Table 4.14 about program and student factors which influence attrition in LFI. About 74% of respondents aged 12-14 felt that the percentage of courses taught in French was too high, almost 53% found course content to be too difficult, and just over 47% stated that their oral skills in French were not improving and that they had difficulty understanding written French. As well, about 53% of respondents aged 12-14 indicated that course content was too difficult and almost 37% noted a lack of emphasis on reading activities.

Approximately 70% of respondents from each of the 12-14 and 15-18 age groups indicated that class instruction was not interesting. In addition, almost 90% of respondents aged 15-18, and just about 75% of respondents aged 19-22, expressed a concern with the lack of opportunity to use French outside the classroom. Among the 15-18 age group, just over 54% felt that they were not able to write very well in French and almost 46% noted the level of difficulty of course content.

Overall, there were some significant differences among the responses for the different age groups. More concerns with program and student factors were reportedly related to attrition by respondents in the younger age group than those in either of the older age

groups. The 15-18 and 19-22 age groups did note, however, that insufficient opportunity to use French outside the classroom contributed to their decision to drop out of LFI.

Two factors identified as significant among the 12-14 age group, namely the number of courses taught in French and oral skill development, were also found to be significant in the previous section at the grade 7 level.

Besides the Likert-type response questions, respondents to this survey provided comments to an open ended question which asked them to state the reason or reasons why they transferred out of LFI. Responses to this question, which were later categorized, may be found in Table 4.17.

TABLE 4.17

## STUDENT COMMENTS RELATED TO ATTRITION BY AGE

Student Comment	(N=71)	12-14	15-18	19-22	Total
Academic Concerns	%	21.9	34.8	30.0	30.4
	n	7	23	12	42
Program Challenge	%	21.9	24.2	15.0	21.0
	n	7	16	6	29
Dislike for an aspect of LFI	%	15.6	4.5	17.5	10.9
	n	5	3	7	15
Decrease in Interest	%	15.6	10.6	5.0	10.1
	n	5	7	2	14
Transportation	%	9.4	4.5	7.5	6.5
	n	3	3	3	9
Other	%	15.6	21.2	25.0	21.0
	n	5	14	10	29
Column Total	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	n	32	66	40	138

Note. Up to three responses were coded

As Table 4.17 indicates, the greatest percentage of comments by respondents in the open ended question on reasons for leaving LFI referred to academic concerns and program challenge.

A greater number of respondents in the older age groups expressed concern with academic achievement than did those in the 12-14 age group. However, approximately one quarter of respondents in the 12-14 and 15-18 age groups indicated that they found the FI program to be demanding. The higher percentage of French instruction in the LFI program combined with the initial exposure to L2 methods of instruction may have contributed to this finding among younger students.

#### **4.3.5 NUMBER OF YEARS SINCE ATTRITION OCCURRED**

From the personal information section on the survey instrument and in consultation with personnel from the three FI schools, two categories of student respondents were created: those who dropped out of the LFI program within the past year and those who left four or more years ago. Table 4.18 contains the results of the Chi Square test conducted to determine whether there were significant differences in responses provided by students who had dropped out recently (i.e., within the last year) and those who withdrew four or more years ago.

**TABLE 4.18**  
**FACTORS RELATED TO ATTRITION BY NUMBER OF**  
**YEARS SINCE STUDENT LEFT LFI**

FACTORS	WITHIN 1 YEAR <i>n</i> = 21	FOUR YEARS OR MORE <i>n</i> = 36	<i>p</i> < .05
	(% Agree)		
<b>Program:</b>			
Course content too difficult	57.1	19.4	*
Too many courses taught in French	57.1	19.4	*
<b>Teacher:</b>			
Teacher place too much emphasis on grammar	66.7	33.3	*
Class instruction not interesting	76.2	44.4	*
Teacher gave too much homework	61.9	30.6	**
<b>Student:</b>			
My oral skills in French not improving	42.9	13.9	*
I disliked the French language	33.3	5.6	*
<b>Other:</b>			
FI courses conflicted with another course	38.1	22.2	*
My parents disliked the French language	14.3	.0	*

\* =  $p \leq .05$     \*\* =  $p \leq .01$

Table 4.18 shows that in areas where significant differences were found, respondents who left LFI within the past year tended to agree more strongly with statements on the survey instrument than did those who transferred out four or more years ago.

Approximately 76% of those who left within the past year indicated that class instruction was not interesting, 67% felt that the teacher placed too much emphasis on grammar, 62% stated that the teacher gave too much homework and 57% maintained that course content was too difficult and that there were too many courses taught in French.

Responses of the two cohorts of students also revealed significant differences on two personal factors - perceived lack of improvement in oral French and dislike for the French language.

Overall, the most significant differences identified by respondents who only recently dropped out of FI and those who have been out of LFI for at least four years, tend to reflect program and teacher factors.

The data in Table 4.19 provides a summary of comments made by students, who have been out of LFI for one year and for four years, in response to the open ended question.

TABLE 4.19

STUDENT COMMENTS RELATED TO ATTRITION BY NUMBER  
OF YEARS SINCE STUDENT LEFT LFI

Student Comment		Within Past Year	Four or More Years Ago	Total
Academic Concerns	%	28.2	29.6	29.1
	n	11	21	32
Program Challenge	%	23.1	19.7	20.9
	n	9	14	23
Dislike of an aspect of LFI	%	10.3	12.7	11.8
	n	4	9	13
Decrease in Interest	%	17.9	7.0	19.1
	n	7	5	12
Transportation	%	10.3	7.0	10.9
	n	4	5	9
Other	%	10.3	23.9	8.2
	n	4	17	21
<i>Column Total</i>	%	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>71</i>	<i>110</i>

Note. Up to three responses were coded

As Table 4.19 indicates, while academic achievement appears to be as important today as it was for students who dropped out of LFI four or more years ago, those who left

within the past year tended to report finding the program more difficult and a higher percentage lost interest in FI.

#### **4.3.6 ANECDOTAL COMMENTS BY RESPONDENTS TO QUESTION ONE**

The first open-ended question asked students to state the most important reason or reasons why they withdrew from the LFI program. Seventy-one respondents made a total of 138 comments encompassing 18 different points which were later collapsed into six categories for purposes of analysis. Two students did not respond to this question. Student responses to the open-ended questions are quoted verbatim; therefore, the language is unedited.



**TABLE 4.20**  
**FREQUENCY TABLE OF PERSONAL**  
**REASONS INFLUENCING ATTRITION**

Category (N= 71)	Responses	
	%	n
Academic Concerns	30.4	42
Program Challenge	21.0	29
Dislike of an aspect of LFI	10.9	15
Decrease in Interest	10.1	14
Transportation	6.5	9
Other	21.0	29
Column Total	100.0	138

Note. Up to three responses were coded

From Table 4.20 it is evident that factors related to academic achievement are the most frequent reasons provided by dropouts for their transfer from LFI to the English stream.

*The french speaking program was to difficult for me and I was afraid of failing.*

*I transferred my study of french to english because I was not ready for the level of study in the french program. Therefore, my grade marks decreased about 20%.*

*French class grades were not up to par of my other courses.*

Table 4.20 shows that 21% of responses identified the challenge of learning a second language as an important reason for dropping out of LFI.

*The most important reasons why I transferred from French immersion to English again was because I couldn't write french well, my grades dropped alot, I couldn't understand alot of grammar, I was doing alot better, and had a lot better average in English.*

*The teachers expected to much knowledge of french than we were capable of.*

Almost 11% of responses reported in Table 4.20 mentioned a dislike for French or an aspect of the LFI experience as an important reason for leaving LFI.

*The main reason I transferred was because I did not get along with many of the teachers.*

*The most important reason was because I disliked the french language.*

*I did not like my class mates because they hated me and because I wasnt as smart as them.*

In addition, as identified in Table 4.20 just over 10% of responses cited a decline in interest as the reason given for withdrawing from LFI.

*I was losing interest in the French language.*

*It was not too difficult I guess i was just not interested.*

*Unfortunately, in grade nine when the number of courses in french was reduced to two my marks dropped also. I believe that school became far less interesting and far less challenging, and resulted in my lowered grades.*

Although only a small percentage of the total number of responses indicated transportation as a reason for dropping out of LFI, the percentage of students who travel from another region to participate in LFI is also small. Some of the respondents also questioned the value of travelling long distances to participate in a program that, after grade 8, had only 30% of instruction in French.

*The program was a good one. I learned much french during my year of study. But i found it difficult (so did my parents) in the transportation to and from school.*

*I transferred from the french to the english stream due to lack of transportation and in grade nine I found there weren't enough classes conducted in french.*

*I felt that for only 30% of French speaking courses and 70% english there was no point in travelling 25 minutes every morning rather than 5, to receive such a trivial amount of French.*

*I decided to leave the program not because of the quality of the program but due to the one hour and twenty minute drive to school. I decided that the remaining two french courses per year wasn't really worth it. I believe that if the program had more french courses in level II and III it would be very worthwhile for people near and far from school.*

Several respondents provided reasons for leaving LFI that were not as closely related to the main categories in Table 4.20. These reasons were compiled in one category labelled

'other' and account for another 21% of reasons given. Some students mentioned course conflict, friends, the lack of outside help and illness.

On course conflicts:

*French courses conflicted with science courses I wished to take.*

*I wanted to do different courses then the ones that the French immersion program had picked out.*

On friends:

*I completed grade 7 french immersion, went back to english in grade 8 to be with my friends.*

*Changing from Jr High to High School - getting back with friends I knew in grade six.*

On lack of outside help:

*I transferred back because I had no one to help me at home.*

*Nobody at my home knew anything about french.*

*My average dropped, and no outside help was available to me.*

On illness:

*I was very sick in grade 8 and unable to keep up. I missed alot of the class time and my memory was not very well. I would have been kept behind to repeat grade 8 most likely if ...*

*Because I was sick and in the hospital alot and could not keep up with the work.*

Some other comments worth noting were:

*I gave up too easily.*

*I was young and didn't know the difference.*

*I don't remember why. It was stupidity on my part.*

*I feel better because I feel smart not like when I was in french immersion.*

*I just did not enjoy the french program.*

Overall, of the reasons given by students for not completing the LFI program, academic concerns were mentioned most frequently. Just over 30% of responses cited a lower academic average in FI courses, a fear of failure or the importance of attaining good grades for university. Program challenge is also related to academic achievement in that when a student experiences difficulty and there is no supplementary support, particularly home-based support, a lower academic average and a corresponding decrease in interest level may result. The student may, as well, develop a dislike for the French language.

#### **4.3.7 ANECDOTAL COMMENTS BY RESPONDENTS TO QUESTION TWO**

A second open ended question allowed respondents to make general comments about the French immersion program. Fifty-nine students responded to this question providing 100

comments encompassing 21 different points which were later collapsed into five categories for purposes of analysis. (see Table 4.21)

**TABLE 4.21**  
**DISTRIBUTION OF PERSONAL COMMENTS REGARDING LFI**

Category (N=59)	Responses	
	%	n
LFI is a good program	32.0	32
Academic and program challenge	14.0	14
Leads to career opportunities	12.0	12
Regret not completing the LFI program	7.0	7
Other	35.0	35
<i>Column Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100</i>

Note. Up to three responses were coded

From Table 4.21 it is evident that the majority of respondents felt that LFI is a good program and that despite the fact that they did not complete the entire six years of LFI, they would recommend it to others.

*It is a good opportunity. I would encourage people to do it.*

*I think French Immersion is very good for people to get into.*

*I would advise for anybody to go to french immersion but to check out the school first.*

In Table 4.21, 14% of responses referred to academic achievement and program challenge. Comments referred to issues such as low marks, workload, level of difficulty of course content, and homework.

*The French immersion program is an interesting and challenging field to get into. it requiers a lot of hard work and dedication toward your work. I feel if anybody is ready to be challenged and like the French language, the French immersion program will give you an excellent opportunity to start early. I just happened to be a student who love French yet, I wasn't ready for the hard work to be put into it.*

As Table 4.21 indicates, 12% of responses mention that FI leads to career opportunities.

*It is easier to get a job. You could get a better education.*

*French Immersion is good to have for jobs.*

*Because French is essential to getting a good career in most cases.*

Of interest to note, 7% of responses expressed a feeling of regret for not continuing in LFI. Equally interesting is that 85% of respondents who voiced this opinion have been out of the FI program for four or more years.

*Overall I liked French immersion and I do regret dropping out. If I had the chance I continue with it or start over again and this time complete it.*

*Sometimes I wonder if maybe I shouldn't have given up so quickly and given my second year a chance.*

*I think that the French Immersion program, is an excellent program for those who wish to become fluent in the French Language. French Immersion is a program you should stick with. You shouldn't regret quitting like I do.*

Other responses to this open ended question include:

*Not having the opportunity to speak with other french speakers outside french immersion members lulled classmates into a false sense of 'bilingual security'.*

*did not learn anything.*

*I definitely think, could it be done, that there should be one in every school. I don't think it's right, that young people should not have the chance for a better education just because they don't, personally, have the resources. (transportation, finances)*

Despite the fact that respondents to this survey had all dropped out of LFI without completing the program, over 50% stated that FI was a good program.

As noted above, responses to the second open-ended question were found to support the main categories of reasons given in response to the first open-ended question. While, once again, respondents noted academic achievement, program challenge, a decrease in interest level, dislike for an aspect of LFI, and transportation as factors contributing to



their decision to transfer to the English stream, many responses made reference to the quality of the program.

#### **4.3.8 CONCLUSIONS**

As stated in Chapter One, the primary purpose of this study was to identify the factors contributing to attrition in LFI as provided by students. Analyses of data on the Likert type questions, corroborated by responses to two open-ended questions, identified a number of factors reportedly related to students' decisions to withdraw from the LFI program. The most common recurring factors related to academic achievement and program challenge.

Frequency distributions were used to identify the grade level and time of year when attrition most often occurs. Results of these frequency distributions indicated that students in the first year of the program (i.e., grade seven) are at greatest risk of dropping out and that attrition most often occurs at year end.

Finally, the Chi Square test found significant differences between variables such as gender, time of year and grade level of attrition, age, and the number of years since attrition occurred and reasons for discontinuing LFI.

In conclusion, the analysis of data conducted has shed some light on why some students reportedly leave LFI without completing all six years of the program.

#### **4.4 SUMMARY**

This chapter has reported the results of analysis of data using frequency distributions and the Chi Square test to determine whether or not there was a relationship between student responses to statements on possible reasons for attrition in LFI, and variables such as gender, time of year of attrition, grade level, age, and number of years since attrition occurred.

As well, other factors not necessarily statistically significant, but indicating possible trends and patterns of occurrences, were presented and discussed.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this study was to identify the reasons that students give for dropping out of LFI, the grade level and time of year when attrition most often occurs, the frequency of the reasons students give for dropping out, and to determine if there is any relationship between the pattern of occurrences and the reasons given. This chapter will provide a brief discussion of findings and make recommendations regarding program and further research.

#### **5.2 DISCUSSION**

Many different reasons were provided by respondents in this study for dropping out of the LFI program. Results of the investigation seem to indicate a relationship between attrition and a number of variables, particularly, gender, time of year and grade level of attrition, age, and number of years since the respondents dropped out of the program. While this study identified a relationship between these variables and attrition, further research would be necessary to explore the strength and nature of the relationships.

Some findings from this investigation echo those of previous studies. Respondents in this study cited academic concerns as the most frequent reason for leaving the LFI program. They tended to indicate that lower grades, or fear of lower grades, in FI courses influenced their decision to leave the LFI program. Dropouts generally felt that they would achieve higher academically in English stream courses. This finding is consistent with other studies of FI (Bonyun, 1985; Halsall, 1994; Lewis and Shapson, 1989; Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's, 1992; Obédia and Thériault, 1997) and Core French (Morris, 1978; Aplin, 1991; Massey, 1994).

Program challenge, including difficulty of course content and increase in workload, was reportedly the second area of greatest concern by many respondents. This is consistent with findings by Bonyun (1985), Lewis and Shapson (1989), Bannister (1991), Halsall (1994), and Obédia and Thériault (1997). Although Duhamel (1985) noted that this was especially true at the secondary level (i.e., grades 10 to 12), findings of this present study indicate that program challenge was a concern of both junior high and senior high school students at all levels (i.e., grades 7 to 12) of the LFI program at the former Avalon North Integrated School Board. Respondents frequently noted the difficulty of course content, the amount of homework, and the level of teacher expectation in the FI program as factors influencing their decision to discontinue the LFI program. A number stated that they were not prepared for the level of study required and that they could not keep up with the workload.

Dislike for an aspect of the LFI program was also found to be a factor influencing student attrition in LFI. Several respondents cited dislike of their teachers, classmates, the French language, course selection and course content as reasons for dropping out of FI. Similarly, Hart et al. (1989), Lewis and Shapson (1989), and Berthold (1992) found that when students were not happy with an aspect of the FI experience they wanted to drop out. Results of Core French studies by Morris (1978) and Alpin (1991) also note that dislike for an aspect of the L2 program may contribute to attrition.

Several respondents in the present study cited a decline in interest level as another important reason for dropping out of LFI. Gardner et al. (1976) found that motivation is closely related to attitude towards the L2, while Ramage (1990) noted that attitude and motivation are factors contributing to attrition in L2 programs. Bannister (1991) reported the importance of attitude and instrumental motivation among EFI and LFI students who were continuing in the L2 program, and Drover (1988), in her study of LFI in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, commented on the positive attitudes of students towards the LFI program. However, while Pack (1979) reported on the importance of a positive attitude among continuing students, he did not identify any significant relationship between student motivation and attrition in Core French.

Course conflict was another factor reported by respondents as influencing attrition in LFI. In a 1992 study, the Canadian Education Association found that opting for an

alternative course or program was the most frequent reason for attrition. Although that factor was not among the primary reasons for attrition given by respondents in this study, course and program conflict were identified as factors contributing to a decision to withdraw from the FI program, especially by senior high students. This is consistent with findings in other studies of both Core and Immersion students (Bonyun, 1985; Aplin, 1991; Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's, 1992; Halsall, 1994; Obédia and Thériault, 1997).

Transportation was another factor cited by respondents in this study as being related to attrition in LFI. Parents of students living outside the established busing routes are responsible for the transportation of their children to the immersion school. It is not always feasible for parents to either commit to six years of travel or maintain the financial and time commitments over a six-year period. Similarly, Hart et al. (1989) found that transportation was an issue in EFI programs, the Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's (1992) cited transportation as a reason for declining enrollment in FI, Burns (1993) noted that transportation (i.e., busing) is an impediment to ensuring universal accessibility in FI programs, and Halsall (1994) reported that transportation was a factor in attrition at the secondary level.

Some respondents in this study identified transportation and the amount of instructional time as reasons for dropping out of the LFI program. They did not perceive that the

reduction from approximately 75 to 30% of French instruction in grade 9 and senior high merited the financial and time constraints of travel. The reduction in number of courses offered in French was also identified in studies by Bonyun (1985), Duhamel (1985) and Halsall (1994) as influencing decisions to drop out of the FI program.

Respondents in this study also stated that they left the LFI program because they missed their friends and wanted to be with them. Berthold (1992) noted that peer pressure influenced students to dropout of an Australian FI program and Obédia and Thériault (1997) indicated that peer pressure was a factor in attrition among FI students in British Columbia.

The inability of parents to help with homework and studies was also reported by dropouts in this study as a factor contributing to their decision to transfer to the English stream. This is consistent with findings by Hart et al.(1989), Stern (1991) and Murtagh and Dirren (1992) who noted that when students experience difficulty and do not receive the assistance they need, they tend to leave the FI program.

In contrast to Trites (1986) and Hart (1989), results of the present study did not find that males drop out more frequently than females. However, males did appear to have a more negative attitude towards the L2 and to lose interest in FI more quickly than

females. Morris (1978) also reported that, among Core French students in junior high schools, males displayed more negative attitudes towards the L2 than females.

Research, mainly in EFI, has found that a large number of students drop out of FI at the end of junior high (Lewis and Shapson, 1989; Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's, 1992; Obédia and Thériault, 1997) or during senior high school (Canadian Education Association, 1992). Contrary to this, the current study shows that students are more likely to leave during their first year of LFI.

### **5.3 CONCLUSIONS**

The questions examined in this study were:

1. What are the reasons students give for withdrawal from LFI?
2. What are the most frequent reasons provided by students for dropping out of LFI?
3. At what grade level and what time of year does attrition most often occur?
4. Is there a relationship between the pattern of occurrences and reasons given?

The findings of this study indicate that:

1. Concerns with academic achievement and the level of difficulty of the program are the principal reasons for attrition in LFI.



2. The most frequently cited reasons for attrition in LFI include factors related to:

**Program:**

A lack of real or realistic situations in which to use the L2 outside the classroom setting, the level of difficulty and interest level of courses, and a dissatisfaction with course content.

**Teacher:**

The quality and motivation level of class instruction and teacher expectations in areas of homework and written perfection.

**Student:**

Concerns with academic achievement and oral and written production skills.

**Other:**

A lack of assistance with homework and conflicts in course or program scheduling.

3. The rate of attrition in LFI is the highest in grade 7 and more students leave the program at year end than at mid-semester.

4. There is a relationship between attrition in LFI and the variables gender, time of year and grade level of attrition, age, and number of years since the student dropped out of LFI.

**Gender:** Males, more than females, tend to have more negative perceptions about program, teacher and student factors related to LFI.

**Time of Year:** Students who leave at year end, rather than mid-semester, cite a lack of remedial assistance as influencing their decision to drop out of LFI.

**Grade Level:** During or by the end of:

Grade 7 many students expressed concern with oral skill development, the number of courses taught in French, course conflict, and methods of instruction. They also reported missing their previous school;

Grade 8 many students cited concerns with the number of courses taught in French and course conflicts. They also reported missing their previous school;

Grade 9 many students stated that there was not enough instruction about French culture and they noted that it had not been their choice to enter the FI program.

**Age:**

Younger students (12-14) tended to note program challenge, dissatisfaction with class instruction, the number of courses taught in French, and the level of French attained as related to attrition; older students (15-18 and 19-22) had a tendency to report a lack of opportunity to use French outside the classroom setting as influencing their decision to drop out.

**Number of Years Since Attrition Occurred:**

There was a tendency for recent dropouts to have a more negative perception of LFI than those who discontinued four or more years ago.

## **5.4 SUMMARY**

Findings from this study indicate that students in their initial year of LFI are at greatest risk of dropping out. As well, it appears that the tendency is for students to drop out at the end of a school year, not at mid-year.

Of all the reasons provided for attrition in LFI, the primary reasons identified in this study were concern with academic achievement and the perception that the program was too challenging. LFI students have an intrinsic desire to do well and if they perceive a course or program to be too demanding or challenging, they feel their academic average will correspondingly decrease. Most of the reasons for attrition in LFI provided by respondents may be related in some way to academic achievement. Unless students are motivated by something other than academic average, once they perceive their academic performance to be inadequate, they tend to consider transferring to the English stream.

Finally, there appears to be a relationship between attrition and gender, time of year and grade level of attrition, age, and the number of years since the student withdrew from the LFI program.

## **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM**

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations are proposed:

1. That School Boards support teacher efforts to establish contact between LFI students and French speaking peoples. This may, for instance, be achieved through travel, guest speakers, teleconferences, or the internet.

2. That guidelines be established for working with students who wish to transfer to the English stream.
3. That students who wish to transfer to the English stream be interviewed and required to complete a follow-up questionnaire.
4. That records be kept on attrition in LFI, including student reasons and counsellor perceived reasons why students transfer to the English stream.
5. That parents be informed of strategies for helping their child in LFI with homework.
6. That a teacher assistant be utilized, especially in grade 7 where students are more at risk of dropping out.
7. That programs for providing remedial assistance to students in LFI be explored. This may be achieved, for instance, through establishing phone help lines, creating peer tutoring programs, and by involving teacher assistants.

## **5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

The following recommendations for further study are suggested:

1. That a study be undertaken to investigate the nature and strength of a possible relationship between reasons for attrition and student academic average.
2. That the current study be replicated with EFI students to determine whether or not the factors related to attrition are similar or different.
3. That further research compare students who withdraw to their peers who continue.
4. That further research examine the progress of students who transfer to the English stream.
5. That specific needs of FI students in grade 7 be researched and addressed in order to reduce the rate of attrition in grade 7.
6. That further research be conducted to investigate the nature and strength of possible relationships between attrition and variables such as gender, age, time of year and grade level of attrition.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **ATTRITION IN LATE FRENCH IMMERSION**

## APPENDIX A

### ATTRITION IN LATE FRENCH IMMERSION

#### STUDENT SURVEY

A number of reasons have been identified for leaving the late French immersion program. Please identify those reasons which apply to you by choosing the most appropriate response to each question:

SA	=	strongly agree
A	=	agree
D	=	disagree
SD	=	strongly disagree

#### The Program:

- |    |  |    |   |   |    |
|----|--|----|---|---|----|
| 1. | There was not enough emphasis on speaking activities.  | SA | A | D | SD |
| 2. | There was not enough emphasis on reading activities.   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 3. | There was not enough emphasis on writing activities.   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 4. | There was not enough emphasis on listening activities.   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 5. | The course content in the French immersion program was more difficult than the course content in the English stream program. | SA | A | D | SD |

6.	The course content in the French immersion program was too difficult.	SA	A	D	SD
7.	The course content was not very interesting.	SA	A	D	SD
8.	There was not enough variety in courses offered.	SA	A	D	SD
9.	There were too many courses taught in French.	SA	A	D	SD
10.	There was not enough opportunity to use French outside the classroom.	SA	A	D	SD
11.	There was not enough instruction about French culture.	SA	A	D	SD
12.	There was not enough contact with French speaking peoples.	SA	A	D	SD
13.	There was no special help provided for those students who experienced difficulty.	SA	A	D	SD

**The Teacher:**

1.	The teacher placed too much emphasis on grammar.	SA	A	D	SD
2.	French immersion courses were graded much harder than the same courses in the English stream (e.g., social studies).	SA	A	D	SD
3.	Tests in the French immersion courses asked more challenging questions than tests in the English stream courses.	SA	A	D	SD
4.	The teacher graded my papers harder than those of other students in the class.	SA	A	D	SD

5.	The teacher did not know enough about the subject taught in French.	SA	A	D	SD
6.	The teacher was not fluent in the French language.	SA	A	D	SD
7.	There was better instruction in the English stream classes.	SA	A	D	SD
8.	There was not enough variety in methods of instruction from one grade to another.	SA	A	D	SD
9.	Class instruction was not interesting.	SA	A	D	SD
10.	The teacher required too much perfection in oral skills.	SA	A	D	SD
11.	The teacher required too much perfection in written skills.	SA	A	D	SD
12.	The teacher gave too much homework.	SA	A	D	SD
13.	The teacher gave too many assignments.	SA	A	D	SD

### The Student

1.	I was not satisfied with my level of oral proficiency.	SA	A	D	SD
2.	My oral skills in French were not improving.	SA	A	D	SD
3.	I was not able to speak French very well.	SA	A	D	SD
4.	I was not satisfied with my level of written proficiency.	SA	A	D	SD
5.	My written skills in French were not improving.	SA	A	D	SD

6.	I was not able to write in French very well.	SA	A	D	SD
7.	My grade average dropped after I enrolled in French immersion.	SA	A	D	SD
8.	When I was in French immersion I was afraid that my grade average would drop.	SA	A	D	SD
9.	I had lower grades in courses taught in French than in other courses.	SA	A	D	SD
10.	I was afraid that my grades in French immersion courses would not be high enough to qualify me for university or scholarships.	SA	A	D	SD
11.	My grades in the English stream courses were lower because of the time I spent on courses taught in French.	SA	A	D	SD
12.	I had difficulty reading in French.	SA	A	D	SD
13.	I had difficulty understanding written French.	SA	A	D	SD
14.	I had difficulty understanding spoken French.	SA	A	D	SD
15.	I was not confident in my French language ability.	SA	A	D	SD
16.	I disliked the French language.	SA	A	D	SD
17.	I disliked the teacher.	SA	A	D	SD
18.	I disliked my classmates.	SA	A	D	SD
19.	I disliked the school.	SA	A	D	SD
20.	I missed my previous school.	SA	A	D	SD



21.	I missed my friends at another school.	SA	A	D	SD
22.	I wanted to be with my friends in another class.	SA	A	D	SD
23.	I wanted to be with my friends in another program.	SA	A	D	SD
24.	I wanted to be with my friends at another school.	SA	A	D	SD

**(Other):**

1.	French immersion courses conflicted with another course that I wanted to study.	SA	A	D	SD
2.	French immersion courses conflicted with another program that I wanted to study (eg. Co-op Education).	SA	A	D	SD
3.	I had no transportation.	SA	A	D	SD
4.	Transportation was too expensive.	SA	A	D	SD
5.	The school was too far away from my home.	SA	A	D	SD
6.	It was too difficult to arrange transportation.	SA	A	D	SD
7.	There was no one home who could help me with my homework.	SA	A	D	SD
8.	My parents disliked the French language.	SA	A	D	SD
9.	My parents disliked French speaking peoples.	SA	A	D	SD
10.	It was not my choice to enter the French immersion program.	SA	A	D	SD

11. The province of Newfoundland and Labrador does not award a certificate of bilingualism to students who have successfully completed the French immersion program.

SA A D SD

**Please state the most important reason or reasons (2-3) why you transferred from the French immersion program back to the English stream program:**

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**Other comments you would like to make about the French immersion program:**

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**Personal Information:**

1. Your gender                      M                      F
2. Your age        12   13   14   15   16   17   18   19   20   21   22   23
3. Your current academic status:
- |                  |       |     |            |
|------------------|-------|-----|------------|
| grade            | 7     | 8   | 9          |
| level            | I     | II  | III        |
| university years | 1st   | 2nd | 3rd    4th |
| other:           | _____ |     |            |
4. Your current occupation: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Grade level when you left the French immersion program: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Time of year when you left the French immersion program:  
(Please circle one)
- |              |                    |
|--------------|--------------------|
| Mid-semester | End of Year (June) |
|--------------|--------------------|

## **APPENDIX B**

### **LETTER TO SCHOOL BOARD AND CONSENT FORM**

## APPENDIX B

26 June, 1996

P.O.Box 325  
Spaniard's Bay  
NF A0A 3X0

Dr. Max Trask  
Superintendent  
Avalon North Integrated School Board  
P.O.Box 500  
Spaniard's Bay  
NF A0A 3X0

Dear Dr. Trask,

I am writing to request approval from the Avalon North Integrated School Board to conduct a research project involving students within the School Board's jurisdiction who enrolled in the late French immersion program but left at some point prior to completing the program at Level III. The research will form the basis of my thesis which is a partial requirement for the degree of Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction at Memorial University.

The research proposal has been approved by the Ethics Committee at Memorial, which is chaired by Dr. Walter Okshevsky.

The aim of the study is to identify the factors which contribute to attrition in the late French immersion program. The focus of the study would be upon those students in the Bay Roberts system.

The research procedure would involve requesting students currently enrolled in the system and students who have graduated from Level III and who left the late French immersion program prior to completing the entire program to Level III to complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire would comprise a series of questions related to the courses they have

completed or are completing, impressions of materials used in the courses, effectiveness of presentation of the materials by the teachers, and, essentially, identify the reasons why the students left the late French immersion program. I assure that all information gathered will be dealt with in strict confidentiality and will be destroyed upon completion of my thesis.

Letters of consent will be requested of the participants who have graduated from Level III and from parents of students still enrolled in the school system. As superintendent, you would reserve the right to view the findings and research report before its submission to the thesis committee. Any information which the board felt should be kept confidential would be deleted. A copy of the thesis would be made available to the School Board upon completion of my program.

As verification of your consent please endorse the attached form.

I thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Corinne Ellsworth

I \_\_\_\_\_ give permission to Corinne Ellsworth to conduct a study of attrition in late French immersion as described in her letter of June 26, 1996. The Avalon North Integrated School Board will reserve the right to view the study before its publication and to indicate if any of the findings should remain confidential.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

## **APPENDIX C**

### **LETTER TO PARENTS AND CONSENT FORM**

## APPENDIX C

P.O. Box 325  
Spaniard's Bay  
NF A0A 3X0

16 September, 1996

Dear (Parent/Guardian),

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland. I am currently completing my thesis, under the supervision of Dr. Glenn Loveless, as partial requirement for the completion of the degree of Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction.

My thesis, or research, is to identify the reasons why students leave the late French immersion program before completing the entire program to Level III. Hopefully, the findings of my research may help present and future students who enrol in the late French immersion program.

The information which will form the basis of my thesis will be obtained from students who are currently enrolled in or have recently graduated from schools under the jurisdiction of the Avalon North Integrated School Board. This information will be obtained through the completion of a questionnaire wherein students will be asked to respond to a series of questions relative to the late French immersion program, such as the courses they have completed, impressions of materials used in the courses, effectiveness of presentation of the materials by the teachers and, essentially, identify the reasons why the students left the late French immersion program.

The questionnaires will be destroyed upon completion of my thesis. All information gathered in this study will be strictly confidential and at no time will individuals be identified.

I can advise you that this research meets the ethical guidelines of the Faculty of Education of Memorial University, the University, itself, and has the approval of the Avalon North Integrated School Board.



At this time, I request your approval to interview your child for this research. I assure you that participation by your child is completely voluntary and that he/she has the right to withdraw from the study without prejudice at any time and/or he/she is entitled to refrain from whatever questions he/she prefers to omit. Your child's participation in this research will be most useful and certainly most appreciated.

Should your child decide to participate in this research, I would be more than pleased to make available to you, at your request, the research findings upon the completion of my thesis.

If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me at 786-3513. If at any time you wish to speak with a resource person not associated with the study, please contact Dr. Steve Norris, Acting Associate Dean, Research and Development.

I would appreciate it if you would please return this sheet to me by October 7, 1996.

Sincerely,

Corinne Ellsworth

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I \_\_\_\_\_ (parent/guardian) hereby give permission for my son/daughter, \_\_\_\_\_, to take part in a study being undertaken by Corinne Ellsworth to identify the reasons why students leave the late French immersion program before completing Level III. I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and that my child and/or I can withdraw permission at any time. All information is strictly confidential and no individual will be identified.

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Date

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Signature

**APPENDIX D**

**LETTER TO STUDENTS**

## APPENDIX D

P.O. Box 325  
Spaniard's Bay  
NF A0A 3X0

16 September, 1996

Dear (Participant),

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland. I am currently completing my thesis, under the supervision of Dr. Glenn Loveless, as partial requirement for the completion of the degree of Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction.

My thesis, or research, is to identify the reasons why students leave the late French immersion program before completing the entire program to Level III. Hopefully, the findings of my research may help present and future students who enrol in the late French immersion program.

The information which will form the basis of my thesis will be obtained from students like yourself who are currently enrolled in or have recently graduated from schools under the jurisdiction of the Avalon North Integrated School Board. To obtain this information I request that you complete a questionnaire including a series of questions relative to the late French immersion program, such as the courses you have completed, your impressions of materials used in the courses, effectiveness of presentation of the materials by the teachers and, essentially, identify the reasons why students such as yourself have left the late French immersion program.

The questionnaires will be destroyed upon completion of my thesis. All information gathered in this study will be strictly confidential and at no time will individuals be identified.







