

# ***MIXED-CASE FORMAT AND LEXICAL DECISION PERFORMANCE: Initial Uppercase Is Special***

College of Sciences and Health Professions

**Student Researchers:** Julia C. Harvey Azzolina, Lois M. Rotuno, and  
April D. Waltonen\*

**Faculty Advisor:** Albert F. Smith

## **Abstract**

Previous research has shown that there are phenomena that may require a route to word identification by means other than through letters. For example, in a lexical decision task, in which an experimental participant is asked to determine if a string of letters is a word or not, responses to items in a MIXed caSE format are slower than to items in PURE UPPERCASE or pure lowercase formats. In this experiment, we investigated the effect of different mixed-case formats on lexical decision performance, focusing on the type and location of the case transition. Twenty-four students participated in a lexical decision making experiment, consisting of twelve blocks of sixty-four six-letter items. Each block contained an equal number of words and pseudowords (nonwords that conform to rules of English orthography) presented in eight different case formats (e.g., travel, TRAVEL, Travel, tRAVEL, traveL, TRAVEL, traVEL and TRAVel). We found that mean response times to Initial Uppercase, PURE UPPERCASE and pure lowercase formats were all faster than the mean response times to all other MIXEd casE formats, suggesting that perception of initial uppercase items—a standard orthographic form in English—is different from that of other mixed-case formats.