

English Language Immersion Programme for faster language mastery and creativity enhancement; a Conceptual Analysis

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Abstract

This research paper undertakes to explore the conceptual constructs of applying 'Language Immersion Programme' in our classrooms. Nowadays the world is behind multidisciplinary/holistic/integrated approach as regards to teaching learning process. Immersion approach of learning language endeavors to integrate language items with content parts. Instead of attempting to teach English language as a separate block, immersion programme offers subjects like biology, geography, mathematics prepared in a lucid way after diluting systematically selected language parts ranging from correct spelling to proper pronunciation. By immersion it is meant that something is to dip/submerge/plunge in water or something in liquid form. Here the denotation is that the target language is immersed or plunged into the discipline/content to be learned. The figurative meaning of immerse is also quit relevant. It means 'involve some one deeply in a particular venture'. Instead of

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introducing a grammar-ridden package, which culminates in neuro–psycho disorders among learners, this immersion programme helps better materialize the idea content and language integration in an easier and interesting way. Along with guaranteeing higher level of language competency immersion programme endeavors to approach and handle the learning contents in a divergent and aesthetic way thus helping learners boost up their language creativity as well.

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Introduction

The outputs of modern education are highly rich in academic excellence in Indian scenario whereas they are comparatively poor in linguistic competency by which they have to suffer a slow down at international levels academy and vocation. So, assuring linguistic competency has become a foremost challenge of modern education around the world. Conventional grammar-centered teaching methods are proven to be less conducive for promoting proficiency and fluency in the language. So we have been continuously ‘testing and throwing’ different methods and techniques for accelerating English language teaching.

Towards Integrated Approach

Language learning can be made easier through the integration of content with language and it can be made practical through myriads of ways among which a very pivotal one is language immersion programme. The approach that differentiates language from subjects and views language learning as a separate attempt seems to be lesser applauded these days. As subjects merge with other subjects resulting in multidisciplinary outlook, language also tends to get diluted in the learning stuff. There are various methods

which try to put in practice this integrated approach among which some significant ones are:

- Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)
- Content-based Language Teaching (CBLT)
- English Across the Curriculum (EAC)
- Bilingual Integration of Languages and Disciplines (BILD)
- Content and Language Integration in Primary CLIP
- English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI)
- Foreign Language Immersion Program (FLIP)
- Content-based Instruction (CBI)
- Content-based Language Instruction (CBLI)
- English as an Academic Language (EAL)
- Foreign Languages as a Medium of Education (FLAME)
- Languages Across the Curriculum (LAC)
- Teaching Content Through English
- Teaching English Through Content

Language Immersion: start and track

The root of Immersion programme in the form of bilingual education can be traced back to 3000 BC. But as an exclusive form immersion education has been started in Quebec, Canada. In 1965. Despite the fact that, it was started for immigrant communities, Immersion programme has been practiced globally these days for teaching second language in a swifter and easier way and has brought about large-scale results.

Immersion can be done with any subject like physics, geography, history, mathematics, management, anthropology and even statistics. In language immersion classroom only the target language is used and it creates the same ambience of learning mother tongue naturally. This method help learners to get rid of the roundabout way of pooling ideas in mind in one language and translating it in other language as the learners getting used to the structures and patterns of the target language naturally. Learners are expected to get extra proficiency in English when they actually try to produce increasingly

complex sentences in the same language. All materials and instruction of immersion programs are in English. For this reason, teachers and instructional support staff are not supposed to speak a language other than English to the least.

According to the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA), ‘language immersion education has heralded benefits such as academic achievement, language and literacy development in two or more languages, and cognitive skills’. Furthermore, Immersion method pays added attention to increase the linguistic creativity of the learners as well. In order to have an emotional appeal in the linguistic interaction, creative elements are so essential. If acquiring a language is comparatively easy, acquiring creativity requires continuous exercises and conducive exposures.

The foundations of immersion

- A second language can be easily learned when the learning context is totally exposed to it and absolutely mute to mother tongue
- A second language is easily acquired when it is communicated through various experiences of classroom such as subjects/contents, games, instructions, activities and discourses with arts, crafts, and sports songs and rhymes, stories and narrations etc
- Taking a language as a separate entity is less effective in contrast to an interdisciplinary approach to language learning
- A learning approach that focus on variety of linguistic forms are useful than sticking on grammatical syllabus
- When language learning is done inadvertently through the process of learning content areas, learners are motivated and their confidence level is enhanced

Stages of Immersion

Based on the age level, immersion programme can be categorized in to three sections. Early Immersion, for the learners between the age of 5 or 6 is the first one. The

second stage is Middle immersion for the age group of 9 or 10. The final stage which is called as Late Immersion is scheduled for the students learn between the ages of 11 and 14.

Wave lengths towards different subjects

The effect of immersion will be varying as per the nature of each subject. For example humanities subjects are more indulgent and affable to language immersion whereas science subjects are lesser. When science subjects use very minimum resources of language social science has much to say, refute, defend, convince and corroborate by making use of powerful potentials and properties of language. When science deals with objects and substances which do not have life and blood, social science speaks about societies which are formed of individuals. It has to narrate about human cultures and civilizations.

So far as the handling of language by Mathematics is concerned it is quite pitifully Shylockian. Hence, the application of immersion programme helps open new horizons of wide and wild linguistic exposures to the learners of mathematics as well. The immersion programme is so viable because wherever a subject item appeared it is easy to relate it with English language either linking to spelling, grammar, pronunciation, figures of speech or anything of that sort. No doubt, by going through ten classes of this language-subject immersed ambience a Mathematics student will become more fluent and confident in language both in speaking and writing.

General Procedure for implementing immersion

For implementing immersion packages in our schools we have to go through a precise procedure having different steps. In the very outset learning materials have to be prepared based on immersion method. Proper planning, designing, grading and linking language items to content parts, preparing tasks, worksheets and activities etc come in this phase. Subsequently the materials must undergo validation process by expert educationists.

Lesson plans have to be prepared and orientation classes must be conducted duly. As immersion teachers are likely from other subject areas, teacher texts explicitly describing the classroom procedures and supplying in depth level guidance have to be scientifically developed. After a typical try out it can be implemented in our schools.

Glimpses to certain immersion extracts

a. Maths

When 'circle' is taught in mathematics class, the teacher gets innumerable chances to intelligibly intertwine the language items. For eg, the lesson on circle may discuss radius, diameter, and the circumference. Here, radius is long, diameter is longer and circumference is the longest. As anybody can imagine that, this is the best chance to introduce 'degrees of comparison' with examples. Furthermore the relation of radius with diameter offers another chance for improving language creativity. 'Diameter is equal to two times the radius'. The same sentence can re-written as - the radius is half the diameter. Here not only the word pattern is changed but the angle of view is also altered, a better way towards boosting creativity up. The lesson on circles necessarily talks about 'arc' and 'arch'. Both are same in singular form, but they take different plural forms. When 'arc' simply becomes plural receiving the suffix an 's' 'arch' has to be given 'es'. These types of simple yet essential items can be immersed to mathematics.

b. Physical Science

In the case Physical Science this kind of immersion is possible. For eg, while teaching Gravitation the word 'centre' is unavoidable. Centre is middle of something whereas center is the headquarters of some institutions. Again, it can be related to American-British spelling difference. When teaching state of equilibrium, the experiment using 'three-tiered

stands' appears in discussion. Here a Physics teacher gets a golden opportunity to introduce the importance of right pronunciation. The word tier is mispronounced generally.

c. Social Science

In teaching social science as well, language immersion is best possible. Historic events can be narrated using first person in Synectic model which will help boost up learners creativity. Correct use of verbs such as narrate, describe and explain can be discussed in the class. Spelling correction like century, forty is also possible. Grammatical item like 'one of the most' etc can also be immersed judiciously.

Conclusion

As the immersion programme having proven to be highly effective its wider attention has to be given from the educational experts of our country. If content experts and language monarchs work together in the presence of illuminated men of letters, no wonder, we can make wonders in the field of second language education. As our country is rich with knowledgeable giants and we lack transnational hegemony only because of language proficiency, this immersion programme can be a better alternative!

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