

Issues on Teaching Strategies for Immersion Education

Tjahjaning Tingastuti Surjosuseno

Robert J. Johnson

Abstract: Immersion education is described and discussed in this paper since it has already been successfully implemented in countries where English is used as a Second and First Foreign Language such as in Singapore and Hungary (Johnson & Swain, 1997). Different models using varying percentages of the target language on campuses allow for different levels of success at each institution. Following a discussion on the relative usefulness of each strategy for teaching immersion education in English as the First Foreign Language (EFL) classes, this paper concludes that only eight of nine strategies can be used in teaching immersion education in EFL classes in Indonesia.

Keywords: immersion education, teaching strategies.

Immersion education is an educational strategy in which teachers instruct most, if not all, content using the medium of a new language to be learned. This new language is known as the "target" language or the "L2". Immersion education is a form of bilingual education in which learners are "immersed" in the new language (Bartlett & Erben, 1995; Snow, 1987) which metaphorically is a type of "linguistic bath".

This paper will provide a historical overview of immersion education before each type of immersion education is defined and described. Then, the discussion which follows synthesizes elements of the various definitions

Tjahjaning Tingastuti Surjosuseno is a lecturer at Widya Mandala Catholic University, Surabaya. Robert J. Johnson is a Senior Lecturer at University of Houston - Downtown.

proposed by Bartlett and Erben (1995), Snow (1987), Genesee (1987) and Crawford (1998). The synthesis from the definitions is followed by a discussion on strategies for teaching immersion education, together with the possibility of using each strategy in teaching English as the First Foreign Language in immersion education.

Immersion Education originated in Canada and has spread to continents such as Australia and Asia. The term immersion education was first employed by concerned Canadian parents of children who spoke English as their first or native language (L1) in what is known as the Saint-Lambert experiment (Snow, 1987). In this experiment in 1965, English-speaking Canadian parents expressed a great desire for their children to have a functional knowledge of French in order to participate fully in their society that included French-speaking sub-cultures. In the early 1960s, French programs delivered by school systems did not meet parents' expectations in developing a sufficiently high level of language proficiency.

In response to the expressed concern of these Canadian parents, a team of French psychologists from McGill University established a French immersion program at Saint Lambert in 1965. This program provided for the early immersion of learners in a totally French-speaking environment with the aim of providing the children with the opportunity to become bilingual, biliterate and bicultural (Snow, 1987). An intended outcome of this immersion education programme was that learners should be able to use the L2 in a meaningful and communicative way. The principles of immersion education are described below

THE PRINCIPLES OF IMMERSION EDUCATION

Since 1965, immersion education as first implemented at Saint-Lambert (Canada) has been exported throughout the world. Adopted and adapted in a multitude of educational environments, it has ten principles as noted by Boiziau-Waverman, (1991: 32), indicating that immersion education: fosters natural L2 learning in the classroom; permits students to develop communicative competence; encourages students to develop higher level thinking and world knowledge, skills reflective of the society and culture where the target language (L2) is spoken; reflects a wholistic approach to teaching; reinforces experiential learning; considers teachers and students as human resources and the teacher is a linguistic resource; emphasizes messages before form, while the mainstream curriculum is

negotiated by immersion students in the L2; provides extensive and intensive language exposure; values both L1 and L2.

The above principles are supported by Bartlett and Erben (1995) and Quellet (1990). Furthermore, Bartlett and Erben (1995), Snow (1987), Genesee (1987), and Crawford (1998) described various models of immersion education which are identified below.

TYPES OF IMMERSION EDUCATION

Immersion is described and discussed as a language instructional strategy because it has already been successfully implemented in countries where English is used as a Second and First Foreign Language such as in Singapore and Hungary (Johnson and Swain, 1997). Various models of immersion education are described below, which clarifies the definitions introduced by Bartlett and Erben (1995), Snow (1987) Genesee (1987) and Crawford (1998). These authors mention nine types of immersion education, namely: (a) early total immersion; (b) early partial immersion; (c) delayed immersion; (d) late or post-secondary immersion; (e) quasi immersion or language enrichment; (f) double immersion; (g) two-way bilingual immersion; (h) structured or modified immersion and (i) partial post-secondary immersion. The major differences among each of these various types of immersion are related to the time or period at which the immersion instruction begins. For example, early immersion begins in kindergarten, Year 1 or Year 2 and may be either total immersion or partial immersion, while delayed immersion begins in Year 4 or Year 5. Other differences include the amount of instruction provided in the L2, and the duration of the use of L2 as the medium of instruction.

Early Total Immersion. The L2 is used in 100% instruction from Kindergarten to year 2 with L2 being used as the medium of instruction. In year 3, the L2 is reduced to 60% of instruction. In years 4,5, and 6 the L2 is further reduced to 40%.

Early Partial Immersion. The L2 is used in approximately 50% of instruction in Kindergarten and years 1,2, and 3 (Snow, 1987 & Genesee, 1987). Several variations are apparent in introducing the L1, in either year 2 (Genesee, 1987), year 3 (Genesee, 1987), year 4 (Genesee & Lambert, 1983; Genesee, 1987), or year 5 (Genesee, 1987).

Delayed Immersion. The L2 is not taught in the early years but it is introduced in year 4 or 5.

Late or post secondary Immersion. The L2 is used as a medium of instruction at the end of elementary school or at the beginning of secondary school.

Quasi Immersion or Language Enrichment. Less than 50% of the content is delivered in L2. This Type of immersion education follows the total or partial immersion program conducted in primary or secondary schools. The aim is to enrich the language program.

Double Immersion. Two non-native languages are used as mediums of instruction. The two languages are usually selected for economic, social, religious or cultural reasons.

Two-way-Bilingual Immersion. In two-way, language majority and language minority students coexist in the same class with the objective of both groups of students becoming bilingual. Usually, the language minority language (such as Spanish in the U.S.) is used most of the time with increasing percentages of the majority language being introduced as the two groups proceed through the grades (Crawford, 1998).

Structured or Modified Immersion. In this variation, the dominant societal language is used almost exclusively in the instruction of language minority students; the teacher knows the minority language but only uses it for clarification (Crawford, 1998).

Partial post secondary Immersion. The L2 is used in 50-84 percent of the tertiary program. The focus on instruction may be on culture, context and content knowledge related to the L2 on general subjects related to the learners' discipline (Bartlett & Erben, 1995).

GENERAL TEACHING STRATEGIES IN IMMERSION EDUCATION

This section initially defines the term 'teaching strategy' which is suitable for use in teaching EFFL in Indonesia and provides examples of various teaching strategies identified in the literature. The term English as the First Foreign Language (EFFL) is unique to the Indonesian context and means that in Indonesia English is used as the primary foreign language (after the native Indonesian language) because of its functionality in meeting the needs of the Indonesian people for tertiary education, travel and status.

This issue uses the definition of teaching strategy proposed by Stewart-Dore (1993) which is a planned procedure, used systematically by teachers, to enable learners to achieve learning goals. Strategies are com-

monly employed by teachers to achieve learning objectives. Barry and King (1998) support Stewart-Dore's view and add that a teacher should be able to choose strategies which are suited to the background of the learners, the learning objectives and the content of texts.

Strategies commonly employed by teachers to achieve learning objectives are: drill and practice; demonstration; imaginative strategy; guided discovery; concept attainment; media; exposition; experiential language; analytical language; experiential-analytical language; group discussion; and simulation games. Each of these strategies will be further defined below.

The drill and practice strategy (Barry & King, 1998) is based on repetition. It may be used before, during and after reading activities. A drill and practice strategy is not used frequently in EFFL in tertiary education in Indonesia since learners do not need to rely on memory primarily, since they are able to locate unknown words in a dictionary. This strategy is more common in elementary, junior and senior high school but it is not used normally in EFFL in tertiary education since tertiary learners are encouraged to become critical readers and this strategy promotes rote learning (Paul, 1991).

The demonstration strategy (Barry & King, 1998) is used when the teacher models the type of behavior learners are required to perform. This strategy is most useful in elementary to second year of senior high schools in EFFL classes in Indonesia since the teacher models the L2, but, normally, it does not stand alone. It may be integrated with other strategies such as the media or exposition strategies.

The imaginative strategy (Barry & King, 1998) is a process whereby the teacher encourages learners' original thought and the expression of that thought through movement. This strategy may be used to encourage critical thinking in EFFL in Indonesia, it can be from elementary to senior high schools since it aims to develop learners' own thought and creativity. For example, learners may create a new and original story in the L2 and depict that story through mime or movement to music. When using this strategy, learners develop higher order thinking skill which may be translated to the critical reading context.

The guided discovery strategy (Barry & King, 1998) assists learners to solve problems and understand ideas or concepts. It is especially applicable for teaching mathematics. When using this strategy, the teacher

follows three steps: establish setting (the setting should be suitable for the topic), explore the case, and discuss the problems or questions. This teaching strategy is not yet applicable in EFFL classes since mathematics is not yet presented in EFFL classes in Indonesia.

The concept attainment strategy was developed by Bruner (Barry & King, 1998) and focuses on helping learners to classify, organize and categorize information into a meaningful intellectual framework through games. This teaching strategy may be used in EFFL classes since it encourages students to value or classify new information.

The media strategy (Barry & King, 1998) is a planned procedure for teaching in which various kinds of visual aids such as video-cassettes, pictures or any form of visual information for learning are used. The objectives of the media strategy are to develop and enrich learners' knowledge and skill. It may be used before, during and after reading activities. The media strategy is useful for developing higher order thinking skills in EFFL since it encourages analysis and evaluations of situations from outside the classroom context. Learners gain knowledge through real-life situations. The strategy consists of three main steps: setting the scene before reading activities; broadcasting during reading activities; and following up after the activities. This strategy is very useful in EFFL classes in immersion education since it will enrich learners' knowledge and skills.

The exposition strategy (Barry & King, 1998) is used to decode information as quickly and meaningfully as possible. Learners are involved by responding to questioning. There are four major steps in the exposition strategy: setting the scene by giving background knowledge about the text; presenting the material; providing an engaging activity; and checking learners' understanding and encouraging learners' transfer of material to real life. This strategy may be used in EFFL since the strategy encourages learners to analyze, apply, synthesize, and evaluate information in immersion classes.

The experiential language strategy (Barry & King, 1998) focuses on using the target language in an oral way. The emphasis is on making meaning and using the oral form of the L2 naturally as a vehicle for understanding content subjects (Harley, 1993). Free practice is used and the teacher also may include the use of repetition. Learners may engage in tasks, such as problem solving, role playing or projects. This strategy is appropriate for encouraging higher order thinking in EFFL, especially when the teacher provides a model of proficient conversation.

The analytical language strategy (Stern, 1991; Barry & King, 1998) focuses on the target language in a written way. It assumes the language is reproduced accurately and that it is based on certain rules of the language in exercises. Learners focus on structural, functional and socio-cultural aspect of language. This strategy is applicable for teaching structure and writing classes in immersion education in EFFL classes.

The experiential-analytical language strategy (Barry & King, 1998) derives from the combination of the experiential and analytical languages strategies described above. This strategy uses the target language in the context of situation or topical control where the main emphasis is on making meaning and using the language in an oral or written way, naturally and accurately based on the rules of the language. The experiential-analytical language strategy uses free practice, both written and oral, and may include repetition. Learners engage in problem solving, role playing or projects. This strategy is suitable in teaching EFFL since it is able to combine the strengths of both the experiential and the analytical strategies and encourages learners to focus on the use and usage of language while simultaneously considering the meaning and context of the interaction.

The group discussion strategy (Barry & King, 1998) is frequently used in EFFL since learners are able to practice the L2, to debate and to exchange ideas with their peers. This strategy has four major steps: organizing the group, setting the task, discussion, and presentation of findings. This strategy is useful in immersion education to reach the goal of teaching since the level of abstraction can be altered depending on the discussion topic.

The simulation games strategy (Barry & King, 1998) may be used occasionally to re-create, as closely as possible, a real life experience. The simulation games strategy has four steps: setting the scene, preparing to play the simulation, playing the simulation, and summary or post game discussion to draw out important principles, values, or understandings.

The immersion education strategy has been the subject of several debates (see, for example, Bartlett & Erben, 1995; Bernhardt, 1992; Day, 1991; Stern, 1991). Bartlett and Erben's (1995) report on Immersion Education argued that there is enhancement in learners' grammatical abilities as a result of immersion education. In contrast, Bernhardt (1992) found that learners' grammatical abilities in immersion education needed attention, while Day (1991) argued that learners' grammatical abilities were weak but their oral proficiency in the L2 improved using the im-

mersion education strategy. Stern (1991) suggested using both analytical and experiential teaching in language teaching to be successful in developing learners' receptivity and productivity.

In summary, each of the teaching strategies identified above may be suitable for use in EFFL classes in immersion education except the drill and practice strategy and the guided discovery strategy (at least until mathematics is taught in EFFL classes in Indonesia). The drill and practice strategy is not suitable for tertiary EFFL classes since learners are able to use a dictionary or other reference tools in place of memorization which does not promote valuing and seeking information. The outcome is superficial learning. The guided discovery strategy is mainly used for mathematics subject matter and consequently it is not available for EFFL classes. Each of the remaining strategies in one form or another may be suitable for developing higher order thinking skills in EFFL classes and may be used singly or in combination with other strategies. For example, the teacher may use media, group work and questioning to recall, guess, make judgements, evaluate and draw conclusions from reading to enhance learners' understanding and higher level thinking skills. Learners work in groups, actively debating and exchanging ideas. All these activities encourage learners to develop higher level thinking skills that are able to promote learners' ability to read critically.

CONCLUSION

As stated in the introduction, the purpose of this paper was to provide an overview of the applicable issues on teaching strategies for immersion education in EFFL classes in Indonesia with a discussion on the history of immersion education and models of immersion education with varying percentages of instruction provided in the target language.

In considering the strategies in immersion education, it was concluded that eight strategies are useful in developing learners' knowledge of both language and content in EFFL classes through the medium of immersion education.

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