

Two Languages, Many Worlds

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In my short time with you tonight I want to try and do three things:

- 1) Step back and look at some issues of language learning and bilingualism from not only a Japanese perspective but from a global perspective and very briefly share with you some things we know about immersion. Essentially, I would like to lay some of the ground work for what you will be learning about tomorrow and to perhaps stimulate or even challenge your thinking about language learning and bilingualism.
- 2) Provide you with a quick overview of our immersion program. Earlier today you had a chance to see various classes in action. Tonight I would like to give you a brief overview of the program so that you will be able to see the "big picture" of how the program is organized.
- 3) I would like to allow some time at the end of my talk for you to ask questions about the program.

The title of my talk is Two Languages, Many Worlds and I would like to start with four statements and ask you to answer "True" or "False":

Which of the following statements are true?

1. There are many more bilingual or multilingual individuals in the world than there are monolingual. Being monolingual is a minority human condition.
2. Two out of every three children around the world are now being raised to speak two or more languages.
3. More children in the world are educated through a second or foreign language, than there are children educated exclusively through the first language.
4. Over 1 billion people are learning English as a second or foreign language.

As you may have already guessed, the answer to each of these questions is TRUE.

Humans have the innate capacity to become bilingual or multilingual.

We know this from international surveys that indicate that there are many more bilingual or multilingual individuals in the world than there are monolingual (Crystal, 1997). So if you can only speak one language you are in the minority of human experience. In addition, there are many more children throughout the world who are educated through a second or foreign language, at least for some portion of their formal education, than there are children educated exclusively through the first language (Dutcher, 1994; Tucker, 1999). In many parts of the world, bilingualism or

multilingualism constitutes the normal everyday experience. The results from published, longitudinal, and critical research undertaken in varied settings throughout the world indicate clearly that the development of multiple language proficiency is possible, and indeed that it is viewed as desirable by educators, policy makers, and parents in many countries (Tucker 1999).

For those of us who live in a generally monolingual society, we might be surprised at the reality of multilingualism around the world. Crystal (1997) gives an example of this: in Luxembourg everyone speaks Luxembourg, German, French and English. A boy growing up in this context might find that his mother speaks French as her first language, his school friends speak English, the man at the butcher shop speaks German and his grandmother speaks Luxembourg. Someone born into such an environment doesn't get confused; he can speak easily to anyone in any of these languages. Moreover, when he goes to study a new foreign language, he can acquire that easily, too.

We also know that in India, there are between 100 and 200 languages in use. Many Indians hear as many as five to ten languages and can speak and understand them all.

Immersion has been studied intensely for the past 40 years. We now know a lot about immersion. However, here in Japan, immersion still may be considered revolutionary or extreme in its approach to language instruction. I think it's difficult for most Japanese to even imagine immersion and naturally assume that it's an impossible task. I hope that what you saw today convinced you of the possibility that immersion can work in Japan.

Myth: Students' 1st language will suffer if they start learning a foreign language before their 1st language is established.

Learning two or more languages in childhood is not a cause of language disorder or language delay. Unfortunately, there are "experts" everywhere who advise parents of young children not to introduce a second language until the first one is well established. It is often claimed that hearing two or more languages will confuse the child and lead to grave problems in acquiring their first language.

Unfortunately, these claims are no more than personal opinions and are not based on any empirical evidence. There is no documented evidence to date that learning two or more languages leads to delays or disorders in language acquisition when this is done within an **additive** bilingual environment. Too many "experts" generalize their conclusion on early language learning on research conducted in **subtractive** learning environments. This is a bit like comparing apples and oranges.

Additive Bilingualism

One of the great insights or concepts that has evolved over the 20 years is the concept of additive bilingualism. Fred Genesee defines additive bilingualism as the: "acquisition of a second or third

language at no cost to the home language or culture.” Additive Bilingual environments promote acquisition of two or more languages without the loss of the first language. This is contrasted to “subtractive bilingualism” which is characterized as the loss of the child’s home (first) language. An example of a subtractive bilingual environment would be a Japanese child going to live in a foreign country without extensive Japanese language support. In this context, where the majority language (i.e. the majority of speakers in the community) is not Japanese, the child will very likely begin to lose their first (Japanese) language. An example of an additive bilingual environment would be where a Japanese child, living in Japan (surrounded but Japanese language and culture) spends a few hours everyday learning another language. In this context, the majority language is Japanese and therefore the student is in no danger of losing his or her first language and has the added benefit of learning another language.

One of the things that we have learned over the years about second language learning and bilingualism is that children have a tremendous capacity for learning two or more languages. The gift of bilingualism or multilingualism is not for the elite few. We have learned that very young children have the capacity for bilingualism. So that is not the obstacle we face. The question is not, “CAN our children become bilingual?” The real question is, “Under what conditions can we best facilitate bilingualism?” So the challenge we face as educators and parents is how to create learning environments for children that allow them to avail themselves to this innate capacity. Luckily, we can draw upon a vast knowledge base in creating the optimal conditions to develop bilingualism or multilingualism in our students. There are also a number of effective models of foreign language education so I would encourage anyone interested in starting or designing a program to take a look around and see what others are doing here and in other parts of the world and see what works and what fits with your own program goals. This concept of additive bilingualism is at the core of the immersion model and is critical to its success.

You must believe in the importance and the possibility of bilingualism.

This is especially true in immersion. I think too often we underestimate what children are capable of and I think we, as educators have to hold high expectations for our students and ourselves.

For those of us who “suffer” from monolingualism in countries like Japan and America you actually have to convince people of its importance and its possibility. This isn’t true in other parts of the world where bilingualism or multilingualism is just something you have to have in order to accomplish the everyday events of your life. But here in Japan, you need to believe in the possibility and importance of additive bilingualism with all of your heart and you need to believe that children are capable of this. We know that programs that promote additive bilingualism also protect the student’s first language development and also provide the best chance for students to acquire two or more languages. We know the brain is capable of doing this and in well-run immersion programs there is no loss to the students’ first language.

Before we started our immersion program there was a great deal of doubt and skepticism as to if it could succeed and if we could attract enough students to enroll in this “unproven” immersion program. I can remember that my “mantra” to Dr. Katoh and the other individuals involved in starting this program was, “If you build it, they will come.” (a phrase adapted from the film “Field of Dreams”). We now have over 560 students in the program. We built it and students did come!

English is becoming (for better or worse) the *lingua franca* of the globalized world.

It has been estimated that one in five of the world’s population speaks English with a good level of competence, and within the next few years the number of people speaking English as a second language will exceed the number of native speakers. Linguist David Crystal puts a case for English as *the* global language. He estimates 30% of the world population are already “reasonably competent” in English, and that about one billion people are learning it. According to a 2001 survey, when Europeans were asked what language they find the most useful besides their mother tongue, 75% of respondents answered English.

Other studies have shown that over 80% of the scientific, technological or academic production in the world today is done in English. In most countries and industries, knowledge of English is an invaluable asset in the labor market. Multinationals in companies like Nissan in Japan, use English as their corporate language. English is fulfilling the functional need for a *lingua franca* in our “global village”.

In “monolingual” countries where there are fewer natural opportunities to acquire a second or third language, the role of the school takes on immense importance.

In Europe, and in many other places in the world there are natural opportunities to learn a second or third foreign language. Unfortunately, Japan is not one of those countries. For this reason, schools have a very important role in developing foreign language proficiency in students. Our goal should not be just bilingual but it should also include being biliterate. When I was a student, communication was primarily a local event. Now that the global village is a reality, the way we communicate has changed as well. We communicate not just locally but globally as well. If we are truly going to prepare our students for this global village, students need to be able to communicate in other languages and to be open to other cultures and ways of thinking.

What is “Immersion”?

Immersion has become the most successful method of acquiring a foreign language. Immersion is “a school based program in which at least 50% of content instruction is presented through the medium of a second or foreign language during some part of elementary and / or secondary school” (Fred Genesee, 1987).

Immersion Education is one type of content-based foreign language instruction. The foreign language is not taught as a class but is used as a means of communication. In Katoh School's case, English is not taught as a class but is used as the medium of instruction for the regular school curriculum. The curriculum provides an interesting context for real, meaningful communication.

Many different program models

The principle goal of immersion education is to provide students with functional competence in a foreign language without negatively affecting their primary language ability or their achievement in other academic subjects. As mentioned earlier, immersion education also aims to develop positive attitudes and cultural sensitivity towards the target language group without detriment to the children's own social-psychological wellbeing or cultural identity. Immersion is most often intended for children speaking the majority language.

Total Immersion

In total immersion, instruction in the second language starts out at 100%, gradually decreasing to approximately 50 - 80% by the end of elementary school. In early total immersion programs, primary language literacy instruction typically does not begin until second or third grade. Total immersion students usually learn to read in their second language before they learn to read in their primary language.

Partial Immersion

This type of program provides students with at least 50% of classroom instruction through the medium of the second language. This percentage typically remains constant through elementary or early junior high school. The actual academic subjects that may be taught in the second language and the subjects taught in the primary language are the local school's option.

Early Immersion

Early immersion begins in either kindergarten or first grade and often, but not always, continues in some form through high school. In early total immersion, 100% of classroom instruction is conducted in the foreign language during the first two or three years, gradually dropping to 40 - 80% by junior high school.

Delayed or Middle Immersion

Delayed immersion typically begins in grade four or five (ages 9 - 10). In these programs, use of the second language as a medium of instruction is delayed until the middle grades in elementary school. Accordingly, students in delayed programs first learn literacy skills in their primary language. Many

of these programs offer FLES (Foreign Language in Elementary School) type instruction in the target language in the earlier grades, before students begin their immersion experience.

Late Immersion

Late immersion programs postpone intensive use of the target language until grade six or seven (usually at the start of the middle school or junior high school), and usually after at least several years of FLES instruction in elementary school. Late immersion programs often conduct most instruction in the foreign language. This total or near total immersion typically lasts one or two years and then the amount of content taught in the foreign language is reduced in the following years until graduation from the program.

Katoh School Course Options

Katoh Gakuen's English Immersion Program begins in pre-school (age 3). Upon completion of the preschool / kindergarten students may apply for the elementary immersion program. There are approximately 50 students who graduate from this program each year. Because of space limitations, the elementary can only accept 40 students into the elementary immersion program. Therefore, about 30 children (approximately 60%) from the kindergarten are accepted into the program. The remaining ten, grade one students come from outside Katoh Kindergarten.

At the end of grade six, students have a number of options: continue in the immersion program (at the junior & senior high level we call this the Bilingual Program); transfer to the "Core" program (the Japanese based program at the secondary school); transfer in to the "Alpha" program (an accelerated academic program aimed at getting gifted students into top universities); or transfer to another school. About 60 - 65% of the elementary students typically choose to continue in the Bilingual Program at the junior high level.

Upon graduation from junior high, students may choose to continue in the Bilingual Program: move to the Core program, or transfer outside of Katoh School. About one-half to two-thirds of these students continue at the high school level. Approximately half of the bilingual students who graduate from high school choose to apply for universities in Japan and about half go on to universities abroad.

Each school building - preschool/kindergarten, elementary and the junior/senior high school ~ has an immersion track and a regular (or core) track. Students may select either program but are asked to not switch to another program until they graduate from the program they are currently enrolled in (kindergarten, elementary, or junior high school).

The Goal of the Program:

The goal of the program is to provide Japanese students with functional competence in the English

language while maintaining their cultural identity and high standards in Japanese language and scholastic achievement.

Specifically, there are five central, underlying goals of our Immersion Program:

- 1) Achieve functional proficiency in English.
- 2) Master subject content at appropriate grade levels.
- 3) Maintain and continue to develop skills in their primary language.
- 4) Acquire an understanding and appreciation of other languages and cultures that will in no way detract from their appreciation of their own home culture.
- 5) Develop the personal qualities of respect, creativity and sincerity.

Unique Features of the Immersion Program at Katoh Gakuen

There are several unique features of the English Immersion Program at Katoh Gakuen that should be noted.

Most of the Mombukagakusho (MEXT) approved textbooks that are used in the school have been translated into English. At the elementary level this includes all of the Math and Science textbooks as well as some of the Social Studies units. In the junior high school, Math, Science, Geography, and Economics textbooks have been translated into English.

The school holds dual accreditation. We are a Japanese national, Mombukagakusho accredited school. From the start of 2000, we also received authorization from the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) for the Middle Years Program and the later the Diploma Program. All students who graduate from our program receive a Japanese high school diploma and those passing the IB exams receive the International Baccalaureate Diploma with a Bilingual Certificate. We are the first Japanese school to receive authorization from the IBO.

Summary of Recent Program Evaluations

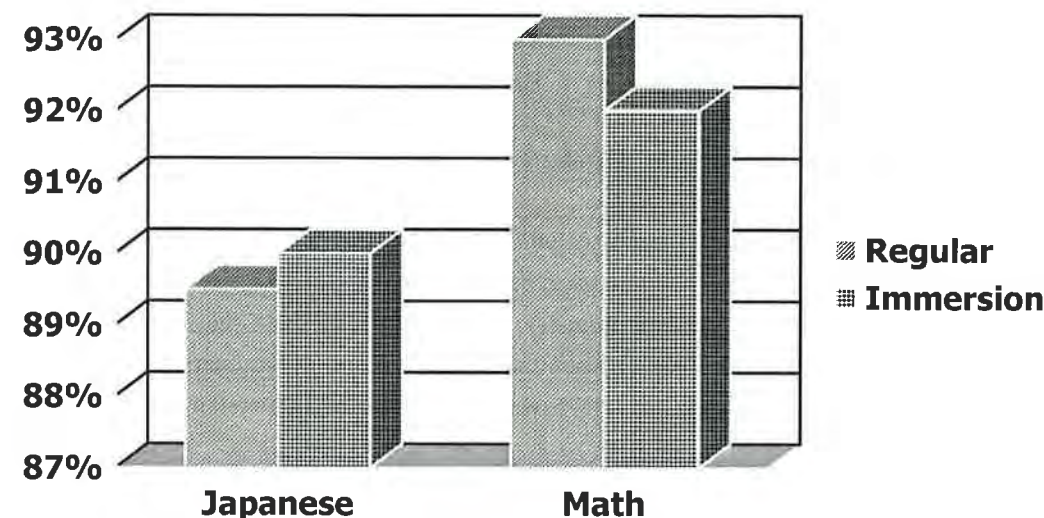
We have conducted ongoing formal and informal assessments of the students' progress not only in English proficiency but also in first (Japanese) language development, academic achievement and cultural identity (Bostwick 2001). I would like to share some of the most recent data related to these important issues.

To follow the progress of our students we look at how the immersion students are doing in comparison to other students in Japan and other students at Katoh Gakuen. To make sure the comparisons are fair we check students' socioeconomic status, after-school Study (e.g. juku, akapen, private tutors) and IQ. Our analyses of these three variables indicate that both immersion and non-immersion students in the comparison groups are very similar.

Japanese Proficiency & Academic Achievement

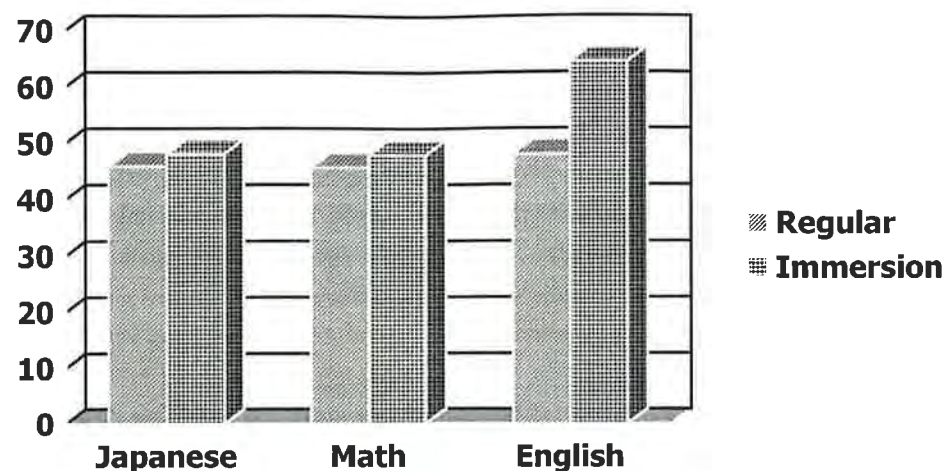
Analysis of students' progress in Japanese language development show that immersion student

demonstrate similar development – despite spending a majority of their time learning through a foreign language (English). The following data summarize the levels of achievement in Japanese and other subject areas. For simplification, Graph 1 includes the combined scores in Japanese and Math in grades 1-6 on the Shizuoka Prefecture Tests. There were no statistically significant differences found between the immersion and non-immersion students in Japanese language development or Math achievement at the elementary school level. (Scores are represented as percent correct on the tests.)



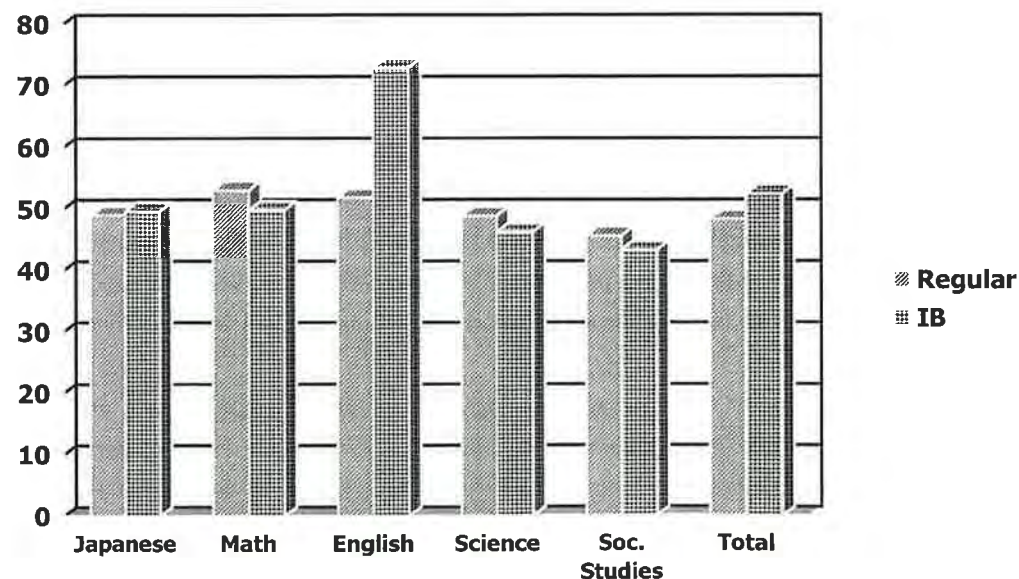
Graph 1: Elementary Shizuoka Prefecture Test Results (Grades 1-6 combined)

At the junior high level three subjects were included in the analysis: Japanese, Math and English. For simplicity, the scores at each grade level (7-9) have been combined. Although there continues to be no difference between immersion and non-immersion students in the areas of Japanese and Math there was a significant difference in English proficiency as measured on the “Gaibu” tests. (Scores are reported as *T* scores (50 is the average for normative group taking this test and 10 points equals one standard deviation.)



Graph 2: Junior High *Gaibu* Test Results (Grades 7-9)

At the high school level five subjects were assessed. As with the previous graphs, all of the data from grades 10 – 12 were combined. The same basic pattern from the junior high test data continues to emerge. It should be noted that the “non-immersion” group includes both the Core and Alpha classes. There is no significant difference between the immersion and non-immersion students in four of the five subject areas. English is the exception where the immersion students score significantly higher.



Graph 3: High School Test Results (Grades 10-12)

We can represent English proficiency of the immersion students in two other forms of assessment; the STEP Eiken test and the TOEFL. Chart 1 indicates the grades and the number of students who were able to pass various levels of the Eiken test (level 1 is the highest level). Eiken test results indicate a surprising degree of English proficiency for the students in the immersion program.

Chart 1: Eiken Results for Students in the English Immersion Program (2004-05)

	5	4	3	Pre-2	2	Pre-1	1	Total # of Eiken students	Total # students in class
Grade 12					8	12	0	20	22
Grade 11					6	6	2	14	14
Grade 10					12	1	1	14	17
Grade 9					7	0	3	10	12
Grade 8			1	5	20	1		27	28
Grade 7		1	0	1	13	2		27	27
Grade 6		5	15	16	8			44	44
Grade 5		3	11	17	8			39	48
Grade 4		5	6	7	2			20	57
Grade 3	1	4	9	3				16	36
Grade 2	2	2	5	4				13	41
Grade 1								0	0

Students in grades 10 -12 took the computerized version of the TOEFL. A perfect score on this test is 300 and 213 (equivalent to 550 on the older version of the TOEFL) is considered to be a “passing” score needed to enter most universities in North America.

Chart 2: TOEFL Test Scores – Class Averages for Students in the English Immersion Program

Grade	Class Average
Grade 10 (高 1)	199 (530)
Grade 11 (高 2)	209 (545)
Grade 12 (高 3)	213 (550)

In general, we have observed that students in the English Immersion Program demonstrate high levels of listening comprehension, a functional level oral proficiency, and relatively good but not always native-like pronunciation of English. Although they demonstrate relatively high levels of proficiency, the immersion students are still prone to common grammatical errors in tense, agreement, and use of prepositions. In comparison to native speakers, the immersion students also have a more restricted oral vocabulary to draw from and make less use of idiomatic forms of the language.

Japanese Identity

Many Japanese worry that intensive exposure to English and foreign teachers might jeopardize the students' Japanese identity. Simon Downes (2001) conducted an interesting study in which he tried to investigate this issue.

He found that the exposure to English and foreigners did make the students more open to other ways of thinking but was not enough to loosen their basic identification as "Japanese." Ironically, the immersion students demonstrated greater knowledge AND appreciation of Japanese culture than other non-immersion students in the study. I don't have time today to go into the full details of his findings but he concludes his study with the following statement; "... the immersion experience not only promotes positive attitude towards other cultures but also seems to foster a heightened sense of identity towards the child's own culture."

What have we learned from our experience of immersion in Japan and around the world?

The results of our program tend to generally mirror the results of evaluations of immersion programs in North America. We can summarize the results as follows:

- 1.) No negative effects on Japanese development.
- 2.) No negative effects on academic achievement.
- 3.) Students maintain a strong Japanese identity.
- 4.) Most immersion students develop very positive attitudes towards English and other cultures.
- 5.) Students do not experience unusual stress and students have very positive attitudes towards the program.
- 6.) Parents strongly support the program but also have high expectations for the program.
- 7.) Students develop high levels of English proficiency but do not become native-like speakers.
- 8.) Immersion is VERY difficult to implement successfully.

From this we can make two further conclusions:

Content-based foreign language instruction is more effective than traditional methods of foreign language teaching.

The most general lesson to be learned from immersion is that integrating second language instruction with academic or other content matter is a more effective approach to teaching second languages than methods that teach the second language in isolation. We also know that content-based foreign language learning is effective because it places language within a meaningful context. Language is not a subject to study but a tool to be used for communicative purposes in authentic situations. Research has shown over and over that integrating language and content promotes higher levels of language proficiency than traditional forms a language instruction.

"Not all content teaching is necessarily good language teaching."

Merrill Swain was one of the first researchers to make the above observation. Our understanding has evolved over the years and we also know that content-based language learning may not ALWAYS or AUTOMATICALLY be the optimal method of foreign language learning. In other words, content-based foreign language instruction, or immersion, by itself, does not guarantee successful language learning. We have learned that it requires more than just comprehensible input. It requires more than just teaching the content of the curriculum through the foreign language. Successful immersion programs don't just happen because they teach the content in the foreign language. Among other things, we now more clearly understand that effective language immersion programs plan for the integration of language and content; teachers systematically help students notice less salient or more difficult aspects of the language; they provide numerous opportunities for students to produce language (both speaking and writing); and provide corrective feedback to students in a methodical and consistent way.

In summary, immersion CAN be effective. The difference is in the details but the children are up to the challenge. It is up to everyone involved in the program to rise to this challenge because we know that "the world is a richer place when it speaks with many voices, and it will be a more peaceful place if all can be heard" (Vincent Buck). It is our hope that in our shrinking global village by giving children two languages to communicate and think in, they will have access to many worlds and countless opportunities, both personally and professionally.

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