

## On the feasibility of English immersion programs in Japan

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### Abstract

The Japanese Ministry of Education has recently reaffirmed its resolve to “cultivate Japanese with English abilities” by introducing compulsory English in elementary schools. The goal appears to be to improve communicative competence by introducing English learning at the elementary school level rather than the middle school level. In other countries such as Canada and New Zealand, second language immersion programs at secondary, primary and pre-primary schools have been successfully developed and implemented, and research has indicated positive results in bilingualism in their enrollees. Developing similar immersion programs in the Japanese context seems enticing, yet comparatively only a handful of immersion programs exist in Japan. This paper compares the differences in programs in each of these three countries and discusses the feasibility of expanding the fledgling efforts of programs already established in Japan.

Keywords: bilingual education, language immersion program, second language acquisition

### Introduction

In most educational situations, foreign language instruction exists as a separate part of a curriculum. The foreign language is a subject of instruction, alongside other subjects like mathematics, science and history. In some foreign language classes, particularly higher-level content-based foreign language classes, the target language is a medium of instruction, rather than a subject of instruction. “Language immersion” refers to an entire curriculum at an educational institution, often at the pre-primary or primary school level, where the target language is the medium through which the majority of the school’s academic content is taught.

Immersion programs in schools are a relatively new idea in the realm of foreign language learning. From humble beginnings in Canada less than 50 years ago, immersion programs have been constantly being developed in a variety of socio-educational settings around the world. Given the positive achievements that research into immersion programs has reported, developing

English immersion programs in Japan seems an appropriate effort to consider in the context of the Japanese Ministry of Education's (2003) "Action Plan to Cultivate Japanese with English Abilities." However, immersion programs are not all the same, and factors that imply success in one socio-educational setting may not apply to other settings. This paper examines immersion programs in three settings: Canada, New Zealand and Japan, and explains partially why immersion programs in Japan remain, compared to the other two countries, relatively few in number.

## 1. Bilingualism: From detrimental to advantageous

Flawed research into childhood bilingualism during the 1930s and 1940s suggested that raising children with more than one language was detrimental to their cognitive development, promulgating myths that bilingualism was an unnecessary hardship imposed on them (Malakoff & Hakuta, 1991; Hoff, 2001). According to Malakoff & Hakuta (1991), these assumptions were based on the belief that "monolingualism is the cognitive-linguistic norm and that the child's cognitive system is fragile and designed to cope with only one language (p. 141)." Assumptions that monolingualism was the norm led to bilingualism being blamed for cognitive, social and emotional damage in young bilinguals (Hakuta, 1986). Exceptions to this stereotype did exist at the time, such as Leopold's (1949) observations of his bilingual daughter between 1939 and 1949, in which he suggested that "an early bilingual experience gives children an added control of language processing (Diaz & Klinger, 1991, p. 175)."

Two decades later, studies of middle-class French/English bilinguals by Peal & Lambert (1962) highlighted some advantages of being bilingual, including having broader cultural experiences and perspectives that monolinguals usually do not enjoy, which helped begin to dispel the negative stigma surrounding bilingualism. Subsequent studies (e. g. Liedtke & Nelson, 1968; Ben-Zeev, 1977; Hakuta & Diaz, 1985; Bialystok, 1991; Baker, 1993; Genesee, 1998; Genesee 2004) have further found that bilingualism positively influences the development of linguistic awareness, concept formation, visual-spatial reasoning and a more diversified set of mental abilities and flexibility (Diaz & Klinger, 1991; Baker, 2000; Hoff, 2001). Malakoff & Hakuta (1991, p. 141) observe that much research into bilingualism has focused on comparing bilinguals with monolinguals. However, because bilinguals experience the world through two alternating languages, the cognitive-linguistic experience of the two groups is considerably different, and therefore somewhat difficult to compare. On the other hand, Diaz & Klinger (1991) also observe that even though a number of studies on bilingualism have been criticized on conceptual or methodological grounds, "the convergence of positive findings across different measures and de-

signs is impressive (*ibid*, p. 170)." Therefore, while it is too simplistic to conclude that bilinguals have more advantages than monolinguals, it is difficult to deny that bilingualism, or communicative fluency in a second language to whatever degree, is a desirable asset.

## **2. French immersion in Canada: Promoting a second official language**

Second-language immersion education began in Quebec, Canada, as an experiment. Because Canada has a large population of French speakers as well as English speakers, both languages are official languages. In 1965, English-speaking parents, desiring their children to acquire French fluency in their predominantly French-speaking community of St. Lambert, Quebec, persuaded their school district administrators to set up a French-language immersion kindergarten, in which their children could become bilingual and bicultural while sacrificing neither their English ability nor their studies of other school subjects (Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Baker, 2000; Hoff 2001). Baker (2000) notes that the parents were concerned with their children's marketability. They believed that if their children could become bilingual in both French and English, it would imply better and broader employment opportunities in their children's future (Downes, 2000).

Since their beginnings in Quebec, French immersion programs have proliferated so that they are now offered in most primary and secondary English-speaking school districts throughout Canada. Meanwhile, a wide variety of immersion programs have been developed around the world, varying according to their social context and to the purpose the program(s) seek to fulfill. The purpose of the earliest programs in Canada was, locally, the promotion of French as an official second language. Genesee (2005, p. 6) lists this goal among others that immersion programs typically have:

1. Promotion of official national languages (e. g., French immersion in Canada)
2. General educational, linguistic, and cultural enrichment (e. g., French immersion in the U. S.)
3. Promotion of heritage/cultural languages (e. g., Basque immersion in Spain; Ladin immersion in Italy)
4. Promotion of important regional languages (e. g., German or French immersion in Europe)
5. Integration of minority groups to the majority language society (e. g., Slovakian immersion for Hungarian speakers in Slovakia)
6. Maintenance and development of indigenous languages (e. g., Mohawk immersion in Quebec; Hawaiian immersion in the U. S.)

### 7. Promotion of world languages (e. g., English immersion in Japan; Japanese immersion in the U. S.)

Well over a thousand studies have been conducted on these Canadian programs (Baker, 1993), and while the results are complex and varied with respect to how well students enrolled in the programs actually master two languages, the sheer number of programs as well as the number of studies evaluating them seems generally to attest to their success.

Immersion education programs also vary in terms of the age in which children enter the program and the amount of time spent in an immersion learning environment each day. Figure 1 shows roughly the percent of French and English used in a typical French immersion program in Canada.

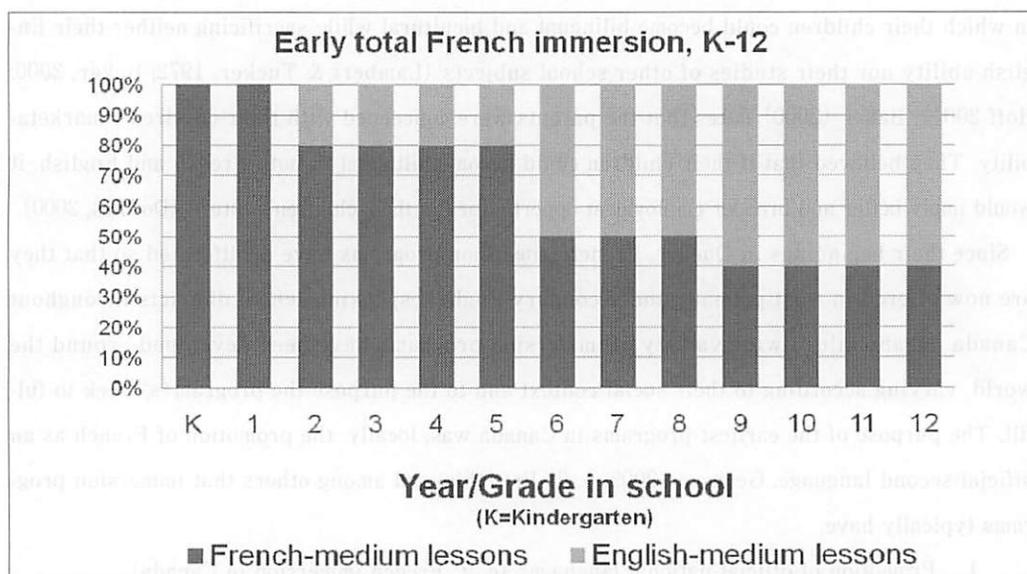


Figure 1. Early total French immersion, Canadian Anglophone school. (Baker, 2000, p. 131)

In the above representation of a typical K-12 early immersion program, it is clear that the percent of L2 (in this case, French) declines from 100% in early years to around 40% in later years. However, Figure 1 represents only one type of immersion scenario. Because primary schools and secondary schools are often separate, unaffiliated entities, it seems more feasible for a school district to accommodate a K-6 (or 7-12) program rather than a K-12 program.

Immersion programs further differ with respect to the age children enter the program and the amount of L2 they are exposed to. Generally, immersion programs fall into one of four categories:

- A) **Early total immersion.** Begins in kindergarten, L2 is used exclusively through Grade 2, declining thereafter.
- B) **Early partial immersion.** Begins in kindergarten, L2 is used about 50% through Grade 6, commonly one-subject one-language.
- C) **Middle immersion.** Begins in kindergarten, L1 used predominantly in kindergarten through Grade 2, increasing to over 50% in Grades 4-6.
- D) **Late immersion.** 80% emphasis on L2 in Grades 7-8, less thereafter according to subject.

Figure 2 compares a typical early total immersion program with a middle immersion program (adapted from Genesee, 2005, p. 11-12).

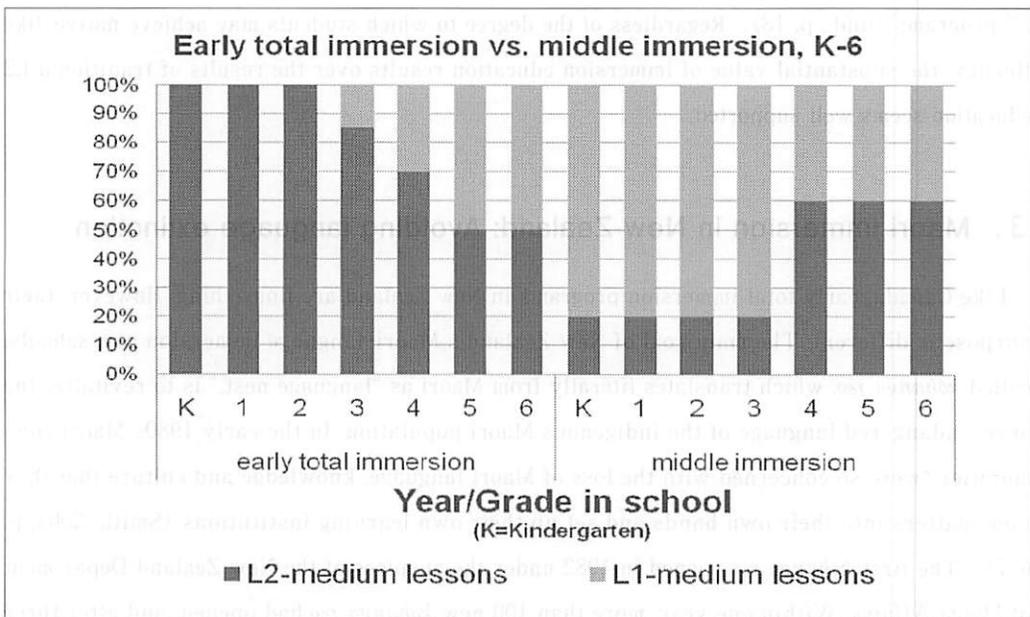


Figure 2. Early total immersion vs. middle immersion

A number of studies have focused on comparing these four types of programs—early total, early partial, middle, and late immersion (see e. g. Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Swain & Lapkin, 1982; Genesee, 1987). A condensed comparison is offered in Genesee (2005), in which he notes that “Relative to early total immersion programs, early partial and middle immersion programs provide reduced L2 exposure and increased L1 exposure. The question arises whether this influences L2 or L1 development. In fact, there is no evidence that increased use of L1 as a medium of instruction in either of these alternatives (early partial or middle) results in greater proficiency in L1 than that achieved in early total immersion programs (p. 20).”

Studies on late immersion programs versus early immersion programs have revealed mixed results, but the fact that some late immersion students perform as well as early immersion students “attests to the efficiency with which older students can learn second languages in school settings (Harley, 1986, cited in Genesee, 2005, p. 21).” However, with respect to the efficacy of immersion programs versus traditional L2 learning programs, immersion students’ L2 proficiency is “vastly superior” to their traditional program peers (Genesee, 2005, p. 17), and that the “performance of immersion students on tests that assess productive language skills, such as speaking and writing, is generally very impressive—they are able to understand and make themselves understood in all academic contexts and they demonstrate an uninhibited and creative use of the L2 for communication that is seldom achieved by students in more traditional L2 programs (ibid., p. 18).” Regardless of the degree to which students may achieve native-like fluency, the substantial value of immersion education results over the results of traditional L2 education seems well supported.

### 3. Maori immersion in New Zealand: Avoiding language extinction

Like Canada, early total immersion programs in New Zealand are flourishing. However, their purpose is different. The main goal of New Zealand’s Maori-language immersion pre-schools, called *kōhanga reo*, which translates literally from Maori as “language nest,” is to revitalize the once-endangered language of the indigenous Maori population. In the early 1980s Maori communities “were so concerned with the loss of Maori language, knowledge and culture that they took matters into their own hands and set up their own learning institutions (Smith, 2003, p. 6-7).” The first *kōhanga reo* opened in 1982 under the auspices of the New Zealand Department of Maori Affairs. Within one year, more than 100 new *kōhanga reo* had opened, and after three years there were 416 nationwide, attended by more than 6,000 children (Waitangi Tribunal Report, 1989). Such success can be seen in a considerable increase in the number of Maori children under the age of five who are fluent in Maori. From fewer than an estimated 100 children in the late 1970s, this number peaked in 1996 at 10,500 representing 21.9% of Maori children under age five (Waitangi Tribunal Report, 2010).

However, the initial bilingual successes of these pre-primary-school immersion programs was significantly mitigated when the children moved the out of the immersion program and into mainstream English-dominant primary schools that, at the time, offered very little Maori language and cultural support. Whatever fluency in the Maori language the *kōhanga reo* students may have achieved was lost after around six months (Waitangi Tribunal Report, 1989). One

solution to this problem was the development of Maori language immersion primary and secondary schools, called *kura kaupapa*. Originally these total-immersion schools were an alternative to, and operated independently of, the “mainstream” (English-dominated) educational sphere, focusing not only on Maori language abilities but on cultural heritage as well (for a detailed review see Smith 2003). Many of these *kura kaupapa* now receive Ministry of Education accreditation as well as government funding.

The other solution involved instituting Maori immersion programs in mainstream primary and secondary schools. Following a claim successfully lodged with the Waitangi Tribunal regarding the official status of the Maori language (Benton, 1996, p. 68), in 1987 the New Zealand government gave the Maori language official status (Maori Language Act 1987). Shortly thereafter in 1990, regulating authority for *kōhanga reo* was transferred from the Department of Maori Affairs to the Ministry of Education. This transfer of regulating authority was contentious in some respects (see e. g. Harrison & Papa, 2005; Smith, 2003), threatening to usurp the influence of Maori communities on what was taught and how, but on the other hand the move has expanded the potential for expanded bilingual Maori/English immersion education in schools nationwide (Harrison & Papa, 2005). Indeed, many issues still persist, such as the effectiveness of programs and the level to which they are implemented and supported in mainstream schools. The Waitangi Tribunal (2010) reported that despite the early successes of reviving the Maori language, much urgent work is still required to save it. In Japan, English immersion programs may encounter challenges similar to those that Maori immersion programs face in New Zealand, which include a shortage of quality teachers trained in Maori-medium education and a lack of educational resources preventing a full curriculum being taught in Maori.

In addition to the continuity and availability issues, immersion programs that teach a minority language to speakers of a majority language must sometimes face the reality that the minority language taught may in fact become a school-only phenomenon, with the majority language being used almost exclusively outside of school. There may be a considerable lack of opportunities to use the minority language within the community, along with a lack of cultural occasions that can provide an opportunity to actively and purposely use the second language (Baker, 2000). In these cases, successful outcomes of an immersion program may be related to the education system in which they exist. Factors such as student and teacher motivation, teacher preparation, parental attitude, community vitality and the number of hours spent per day in the second language classroom may significantly contribute to the success or failure of an immersion program, regardless of whether it exists in a majority-language-dominated social environment.

Notwithstanding the considerable and continuing effort it has taken to institute immersion

programs in a large number of schools, the fact remains that in Canada and New Zealand, these programs are now well established and, to varying degrees, successful in their goals of providing bilingual education. There is a considerable native French-speaking population in Canada (particularly Quebec), and Maori immersion programs in New Zealand have generally a high level of family and community support and involvement beyond the school, as well as increasing government sponsorship (Rau, 2009). However, in other socio-educational environments such an undertaking, however desirable its goal, is simply not as feasible.

#### 4. English immersion in Japan: Impractical, or simply unheard of?

In Japan, English is a compulsory subject for six years in nearly all secondary schools, and is widely offered—and often required—at Japanese universities. Private schools and conversation schools, meanwhile, are as ubiquitous as fast food restaurants, and yet, to the chagrin of the Japanese Ministry of Education, the number of Japanese who achieve even rudimentary fluency is paltry. Critics often point fingers at test-oriented and/or antiquated teaching methods, but in reality, the key problem seems to be that Japan is simply not a multilingual country. The almost wholly monolingual nature of Japanese society is what stymies the efforts of any language learning program to cultivate English abilities in Japanese people.

Long-standing issues concerning English education at the Japanese secondary and tertiary level are well documented. Where early immersion programs are concerned, however, the subject of English at the Japanese elementary and pre-elementary level must be considered, and Japan has only recently begun to do so. In Japan, the ability to communicate in English is prized and enviable—or else there wouldn't be so many schools offering it. Among other things, English ability can be a key to higher paying jobs or for entering high-grade tertiary institutions in Japan or abroad. Ironically, perhaps, while English holds high prestige, Japan as a whole is not a diglossic society—that is, a society in which two languages are used, where one language has high prestige and the other has low(er) prestige. (The word “diglossia” comes from Greek *διγλωσσία* (*diglōssia*), which originally meant “bilingualism”). Lai (1999) observes that, despite its popularity, English has no diglossic value as a higher language in Japan; it is not, as it is in Hong Kong for example, used as a medium of instruction at all public universities and in some government institutions (p. 216-217).

Most foreign language learning programs in Japan are of the traditional (non-immersion) sort: they teach the language, rather than teach through it. Moreover, there is an acute and inevitable lack of opportunity to use the language within students' environment outside the clas-

sroom, and educators and parents have mixed attitudes towards increased emphasis on foreign language learning. A June 2010 Japan Times article neatly summarizes the controversy over introducing compulsory English at elementary school, stating that while there were many proponents of making English compulsory at the elementary school level, there was also significant opposition. (For a balanced review see Ahara and Takiguchi, 2009 (in Japanese)). The article refers to several publications in which critics denounced the move as hasty and unnecessary (see e. g. Moteki, 2001; Otsu, 2005; and Torikai, 2006 (in Japanese)). The latter half of the Japan Times (2010) article, which offers English translations of excerpts from these publications, is reproduced below.

### **Who are the main proponents of compulsory English education?**

The Japan Business Federation (Nippon Keidanren), the nation's most powerful business lobby, strongly backs compulsory English at elementary schools, according to the book "Dosuru Shogakko Eigo" ("What to do with Elementary School English") by academics Shigemitsu Ahara and Masaru Takiguchi.

The book says Keidanren wants schools to train Japanese who can use English, which is necessary for major corporations to expand globally.

The business lobby said in a survey that numerous companies don't have enough employees proficient in English. This costs companies both time and money to rectify.

Keidanren said English education in Japan has been centered on reading and writing, and this hasn't improved students' abilities to listen and speak.

"To strengthen practical English proficiency, it is important to start English education from the earliest possible age and (children) should get accustomed to listening to English," the book says, quoting Keidanren's proposal in 2000.

Aside from the business lobby, parents themselves are considered major supporters of making English education compulsory in elementary schools.

The ministry said around 70 percent of guardians in its 2005 survey gave positive answers on making English compulsory in elementary schools.

### **Are there objections?**

Yes. The book "Dosuru Shogakko Eigo" says introducing English education at the elementary school level is "too hasty" because it could create a situation in which unlicensed teachers plan and execute lessons without proper training.

Kumiko Torikai, a noted simultaneous interpreter and a professor of cross-cultural communications at Rikkyo University in Tokyo, says there is no clear difference in the English proficiency of people who studied the language in elementary schools and those who took it up later.

"It seems to be a considerably reckless attempt (for the government) to make English compulsory even though there are no such data" supporting the usefulness of compulsory English education in elementary schools, Torikai says in her book "Ayaushi! Shogakko Eigo" ("Dangerous! Elementary School English").

Torikai also notes that historically famous figures mastered the language at very late ages. Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901), a philosopher who later founded Keio University in Tokyo, started studying English at age 24 and established an English-language school several years later.

"There are sufficient ways for people to master high-level English by starting to learn it beginning in junior high school," Torikai argues.

Hiromichi Moteki, author of "Shogakkoni Eigowa Hitsuyonai" ("English is not Necessary in Elementary Schools"), claims students will need 2,000 hours of training with native speakers to master the language. "You will never be able to make English your own unless spending some 'absolute time,'" Moteki says in his book.

Mutsumi Imai, a cognitive science scholar, said in the book "Shogakkodeno Eigokyoikuwa Hitsuyonai!" ("English Education at Elementary School is Not Necessary") that students should spend more time studying Japanese reading comprehension, composition, arithmetic and science because they can master English even after junior high school with motivation and good educational opportunities.

Imai said the ability to correctly analyze one's mother tongue, think logically, clearly summarize and correctly express one's notions in one's native language are the very foundations of learning other languages.

The seemingly vociferous opposition to the trend toward nationwide institutional adoption of English at the elementary level should not, we believe, seem out of place. The arguments against hurried, uncared-for implementation of English classes in order to mimic other East Asian nations such as South Korea and China seems reasonably justified. The implication of stiff institutional resistance to English creates a problem of potential discontinuity, aforementioned, similar to scenarios with Maori in New Zealand or French in Canada: pre-primary-level L2 successes are potentially cancelled when students move out of immersion programs and into L1-dominant schools with insufficient or no L2 support. Genesee (2005, p. 18) reminds us that "the full second language benefits of immersion are evident after 5 or 6 years of continuous participation" in an early immersion program, otherwise (students) are unlikely to demonstrate the same high levels of second language proficiency as students who stay in it until the end of elementary school.

## 5. Feasibility issues of early immersion programs in Japan

Early immersion programs in Canada are well established. Early immersion programs in New Zealand, while newer, have been increasingly well received and supported both by local communities and by national government. In Japan, however, there is no immediate or significant English-speaking community as there is a Francophone population in Canada, and there is no English-speaking culture or identity that needs preservation and revitalization as Maori does in New Zealand. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the number of early immersion programs in Japan is comparatively small.

This doesn't mean, however, that the demand is nonexistent or the possibility implausible. A

descriptive list of more than 100 schools that support bilingualism or offer bilingual educational programs is available at: <http://www.education-in-japan.info/sub202014.html> (retrieved 19 August 2011). Johnson (2007) discusses four of these schools that have become “models for immersion education” in Japan: Gunma Kokusai Academy, in Ota City; Seiko Gakuen, in Tokushima City; Uji Ritsumeikan High School, in Kyoto; and Katoh Gakuen, in Numazu City, Shizuoka. The earliest of these schools to institute a bilingual immersion program, Katoh Gakuen, is well documented by, among others, Downes (2000), Cummins (1998) and most notably Bostwick (2001, 2000, 1999, 1995), executive director of the Katoh Gakuen immersion program.

Bostwick (1999) states that Katoh Gakuen sprang from parents' dissatisfaction with the traditional English learning approach. This is similar to the situation in St. Lambert, Canada, where parents wanted their children to have better job opportunities in the largely Francophone community they were living in. In other words, in both situations parents strongly believed that L2 language ability would better their children's future. The difference in the two situations is that in St. Lambert, English-speaking parents were living in a French-speaking community. In Japan there is no such L2 (English-speaking) community. Thus, in the case of Katoh Gakuen, parents' considerations over their children's linguistic future were more abstract—perhaps idealized—than those of the parents in Canada.

Regarding the rigor of an immersion program compared to a traditional L2 content-based language class, Genesee (1987) states, “Generally speaking, at least 50 percent of instruction during a given academic year must be provided through the second language for the program to be regarded as immersion (p. 1).” Katoh Gakuen offers a full K-12 bilingual program which satisfies this 50-percent threshold, depicted in Figure 3.

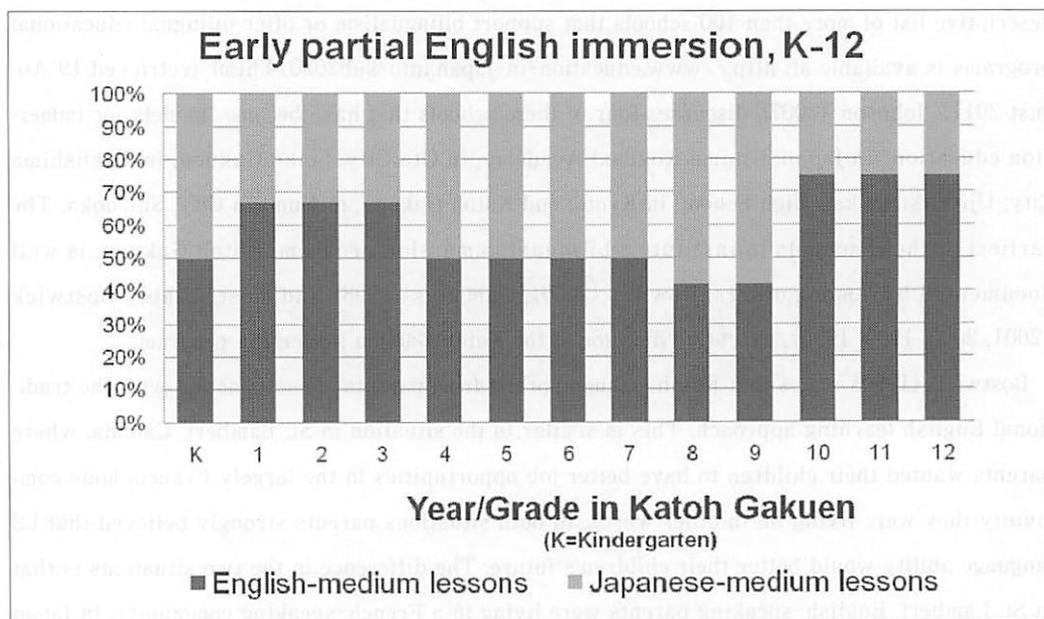


Figure 3. English immersion program, Katoh Gakuen

It is notable that English use rises to around 75% in grades 10-12, reflecting the emphasis on academic subjects including math, chemistry, history and language/composition. Katoh Gakuen is accredited both by the Japanese Ministry of Education as well as the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program, preparing students for admission to overseas universities. It is notable that, because of its Japanese Ministry of Education-accredited status, Katoh Gakuen follows the same curricula, and in some instances, uses the same materials (translated into English) as those used in the surrounding traditional Japanese schools in the same school district. Many of these International Baccalaureate graduates are accepted into overseas universities.

According to Katoh (1993), the primary goal of the program is to provide Japanese students with functional competence in the English language while maintaining high standards in Japanese language and scholastic achievement. Integrating these two curricula, the Japanese national curriculum and the International Baccalaureate curriculum, should be considered an impressive feat. Indeed, the outcome seems ideal: high school graduates with enough academic English to go to university overseas, and yet also with the same academic foundations as their Japanese monolingual peers. Considering that graduates of the immersion program have been increasingly doing this, school president Dr. Masahide Katoh's vision of constructing a "new type of English programme, one that would not only dramatically improve students' English ability to communicate in English, but also allow them to graduate from an accredited Japanese high

school and have the choice of taking university entrance exams in Japan or overseas (Downes, 2000, p. 5) " seems to have been well fulfilled. However, the decision on the part of parents to enroll their children in Katoh Gakuen's bilingual program is not as transparent as it may seem.

In addition to its bilingual program, Katoh Gakuen offers a "mainstream" program with courses taught in Japanese, which prepares students for acceptance to high-level Japanese universities. Bostwick (1999, 2000, 2001) and Downes (2000) discuss the reservations many parents have about how their children's Japanese identity will be affected—whether or not it would potentially be adversely affected—if the majority of their school life is in English (Bostwick, 1999). Because "language is a vital part of the development and expression of identity (Clyne, 2005, p. 1)," the fear of children not being able to fit into the society they live in seems not unreasonable. Intriguingly, as Downes (2000) observes,

Various questionnaires given throughout the programme have shown that parents believe that their children would benefit linguistically, culturally and cognitively from being in the immersion programme. However, the results of a 'forced ranking task', in which parents compared eight different programme objectives to each other and chose which one was most important, indicated that mastering grade level content, developing critical thinking skills, and learning to cooperate with others were given a higher priority than learning to communicate in English (p. 6).

Interestingly, he also notes that some parents' concerns "have even extended to fears that their children might want to live abroad as a result of graduating from the immersion programme (ibid., p. 6)." We must remember, however, that Downes (2000) is reporting on Bostwick's (1999) records of the reasons why some parents chose the mainstream (Japanese) program over the English immersion one. With regard to the latter, Downes (2000) points out that every effort is made to inform parents about what the immersion program entails, and to keep them updated often as to their children's progress (p. 6-7), in order to make the decision as informed and as reassuring as possible for parents.

What is most telling about the state of Japanese society—that is, of Japanese parents—to embrace immersion programs, we believe, is the survey result mentioned just above. It would seem that, inasmuch as most parents would like to broaden their children's future opportunities, and while many may believe that ability in English is a "good idea," there is still a reluctance to embrace the reality that a program that promotes full-fledged bilingualism isn't somehow detrimental to their child's development or identity. Downes (2000, p. 6) further observes:

In the first immersion programme in St. Lambert, Anglophone parents wanted their children to acquire the French language without becoming 'too French' in the process. While the Lambert and Tucker study (1972) showed that in addition to gaining superior French language proficiency, the students were identifying positively with French Canadians, negative consequences of bilingual experience have so far only been reported in schooling of minority children in Western countries

(Hamers & Blanc, 2000).

Genesee (1995) summarizes research into attitudes toward L1 culture as a result of immersion programs, indicating no negative impact on attitudes toward L1.

What these concerns seem to reflect, we believe, is a paradoxical desire on the part of parents. That is, they would like their children to be fluent in a second language, but only to the extent that it doesn't change who they are. If Kato Gakuen is one of Japan's most noted examples of a successful K-12 immersion program, it can be expected that proliferation of these programs will be incremental as long as myths about what it means to be bilingual persist.

## Conclusion

Immersion programs are new to the world of second language learning. Despite the bilingual results they produce which are, in cases such as Japan, astonishingly better than those of traditional language learning programs, there are myths about language learning that must be dispelled before these programs can be successfully implemented in any given school, community or country. Further, it remains that all successful immersion programs are not, and should not be, the same. That is, the comparatively widespread success of programs in Canada and New Zealand, for example, cannot be held up as successful models of what the Japanese Ministry of Education should copy exactly if it genuinely wants to cultivate Japanese with "communicative" English abilities.

As we have discussed, the existence or absence of an L2-speaking community as well as how willing the government is to promote an L2 nationally have significant bearing on the success of immersion programs. Promoting an official language (French in Canada), saving a dying language (Maori in New Zealand), and promoting a worldly foreign language (English in Japan) are each a different goal for immersion programs. However, they needn't be mutually exclusive. We believe that the biggest potential of success for any immersion program rests in the same change in thinking that, just a few decades ago, brought the topic of bilingualism out from under the shadow of doubt and into the limelight of the ideal. In each of the cases we have presented, this change started on a very local level: from a father watching his daughter grow up speaking two languages, to a small city in Quebec, to small communities in New Zealand. It would seem, the most significant factor in creating an immersion program in Japan lies in the ability to successfully enlighten people on a local level about what it means to be bilingual.

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## 日本におけるイマージョン・バイリンガル・プログラムの実現可能性

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### 概 要

近年文部科学省は、全国の小学校に英語教育を導入したことなどにより、いわゆる「英語が使える日本人」の育成のための戦略構想を敢行している。中学校よりも早めに英語と触れ合うことを必修にしたことにより、英語でのコミュニケーション能力の上昇を図れるであろう。カナダ及びニュージーランドには、第二言語のイマージョン・バイリンガル・プログラムが既に発達しており、かつ、このプログラムに関する研究も充実している。研究の結果により、プログラムを受ける生徒が第2言語をよりよく獲得できることが明確であるということからすると、外国で確立したプログラムを日本にもっと導入すべきだと考えられるが、日本に実施されているプログラムはいまだにわずかである。本論文はカナダ、ニュージーランドと日本におけるイマージョン・バイリンガル・プログラムを比較し、そのプログラムをこれから拡大する可能性を調査するものである。

キーワード：イマージョン教育、イマージョン、バイリンガル、プログラム、第2言語獲得

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