

Attitude and motivation in SLA among Japanese students in Immersion Education

Liu Xiaofei

Graduate School of Education, Waseda University

Liuxiaofei@akane.waseda.jp

Abstract

The purpose of this research is on one hand to describe attitudes and motivation in learning English as a second language among Japanese students in the partial Immersion program in Ritsumeikan Uji High School. It determines students' attitude towards their experience through the program as well as the program itself. The present investigation suggests that immersion students' attitudes toward English Education they experienced are generally positive and that their positive attitudes towards learning enhances acquisition of English and promotes communication skills. However, there is one drawback that they are poor at learning other subjects such as math, science and history. The present paper discusses how to supplement this pedagogical drawback.

Keywords

Immersion education, attitude, motivation

1. Introduction

Immersion Education as a bilingual education program requires that at least half of the curriculum be implemented through the medium of the target language (Lessow-Hurley, 2005). The restriction of using students' first language in the education process is most remarkable feature of Immersion Education. Currently, many types of immersion program such as partial immersion, full immersion, have been brought to life with a view to meeting differing needs of learners placed in different circumstances.

1.1 History of Immersion Education

Immersion programs first started in the Canadian province of Quebec in the early part of the 1960s. In face of the great demand for high proficiency of French, a group of parents at St. Lambert came up with the idea of teaching their children French right from kindergarten through the medium of the target language. The success of the experiment, achieved at St. Lambert led to the wide and rapid spread of immersion education throughout Canada during

1970s and 1980s.

1.2 History of immersion in Japan

In Japan, the immersion education started in the last part of the 20th century. Katoh Gakuen first implemented the English partial immersion program in its Gyoshu Junior High School in 1998 and then in its High School division in 2001. Hereafter, many institution adopted immersion education. For example, Seiko Gakuen implemented an English immersion program which is called International English and Culture in 2000. The same year, Ritsumeikan Uji High School started its partial English immersion program.

2. Methodology

All the data was collected at Ritsmeikan Uji High School. Seven teachers and administrators kindly answered questions about the English immersion program that implemented there. In addition, 50 immersion students volunteered to fill out the questionnaire based on their English immersion experience. Furthermore, observation of various classes and students' performance has been done. Students who cooperated to the questionnaire survey are all Japanese high school students who have been learning English for more than 6 years.

3. Results

Immersion students have positive attitude towards learning English in general. 84% of them are satisfied with the program and 88% of them think they have improved the till they wished to. Their positive attitude towards the program enhances the acquisition of English and improves the proficiency of listening and speaking. According to the questionnaire survey, 26% of the students find their scores of TOELF and TOIEC have been improved. In addition, 34% of the students feel more confident in daily conversational English.

Secondly, immersion students are generally extrinsically motivated in learning English. 21 out of 50 students thought that their goal of learning English was to be able communicate with people with different cultural backgrounds. Students' interest in English in English as a passport to their

future careers, for there were a considerable number of students who expressed their goals were to excel in a major foreign language so that they could get a good job, all because English plays a very important role in job hunting as well as promotion in future career. It is clear that the immersion students learn English based on a highly regarded outcome such as good job, high proficiency of English in order to study abroad, competence to communicate with different people, rather than from the enjoyment or the pleasure throughout the program.

Thirdly, students' comprehension of different subject concepts varies a lot. Based on the actual observation of different classes, most students can understand perfectly about subjects such as English reading comprehension and Japanese History. During these classes, they participate actively in class activities and motivated in answering questions asked by the teachers. However, it seems that they have difficulties in comprehending subjects such as Math and Science. During these classes, fewer students volunteer to answer questions. Most of the students remain silent and some of them even fall asleep. According the result of questionnaire survey, some students do consider their experience to be imperfect on account of some drawbacks. A total of 10, students think their understanding of math, science classes is not sufficient.

4. Discussion

Attitude as an important part of learning a language has drawn many researchers' attention. Most of the researchers on the issue have concluded that student's attitude is an integral part of learning and that it should, therefore, become an essential component of second language learning pedagogy (İnal. 1992). In addition, attitude towards the study of a foreign directly influences the procedure and proficiency of the acquisition of a foreign language (Gardner. 1991). In fact, W. E. Lambert's study first link attitudes to second language acquisition. Lambert (1955) discussed the case of two American graduate students who had very positive attitude towards learning French and this positive attitude was highly responsible for their high level of competence in learning their second language. Attitude towards acquiring a second language as a general factor that affects the language proficiency can be decomposed into the attitudes towards the language, the attitude towards the learning situation and the attitude towards oneself.

Attitude toward a second language can be positive as well as negative. Positive attitude toward a language can be expressed both in the interest and curiosity of the language and the culture. On contrary, negative attitude toward the language can be seen from the

phenomenon of repulsion and rejection of learning the language. Students who are curious and interested in the target language turn to be more successful in mastering the language than those who do not like or even against the language or the culture.

Attitude toward the learning situation and environment is a very important factor to the students' achievement of a second language, which includes the evaluation of the target language course as well as the teachers. Satisfaction to the language course may not be an accelerator to their success in language achievement. However, the dissatisfaction will definitely counteract their language development. The evaluation to the course can help school and teacher to adjust their teaching methods and the education material, in order to make the program more suitable for the learner to achieve their goal.

Attitude toward oneself plays a crucial part in the students' language study. Self-confidence involves a lot in the process and progress of language study. For many language students, it is common that sometimes they felt less confident and anxious when using a second language for communication. However, quite often the opportunities of using a foreign language are rare. In the case of English immersion in Japan, the main source of English speaking experience is in the classroom. According to Gardner (1991), he expresses that self confidence with the second language could result from successful positive experience in the classroom, while the unpleasant or unsuccessful classroom experience could give rise to the anxiety of continue the study and use the language.

5. Conclusion

English immersion in Japan has opened up new horizons for learning English without pressures from the torture of examination hell. It increases the exposure of students to the English culture and language and is expected to nurture positive attitude to the target language and heighten motivation to learning the language.

6. Reference

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