



THE BRIDGE: FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

Immersion Teaching Strategies Observation Checklist

by Tara Fortune, Ph.D. Candidate, Second Languages and Cultures Education, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis

The Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) fourth annual summer institute on immersion education brought together immersion teachers, curriculum specialists, and administrators to better understand effective immersion pedagogy. Professional development activities drew from a variety of perspectives including research in immersion classrooms, practitioner expertise, as well as an engaging parent panel. In an effort to integrate research and practice-based information, institute participants collaborated to create a new professional development tool—the Immersion Teaching Strategies Observation Checklist.

Observation can be a powerful learning tool for teachers (Wajnryb, 1992). This observation checklist can be used to facilitate useful observation in a variety of ways. For example, pre-service or in-service immersion teachers might use this tool independently to explore their own teaching practices either through audio- or videotape of themselves while teaching. Peer coaching or partnering with another immersion teacher to observe and provide valuable feedback over the course of an academic year is a second possibility (see Belisle's 1999 article in the ACIE Newsletter [Vol. 2, No. 3] for more information about this technique). Thirdly, immersion administrators or curriculum and instructional assistants could use the checklist to assist the observation of individual teachers or to work over time with grade-level teams. It is important to keep in mind that targeting one or two of the seven checklist categories may at times be more valuable than tackling all seven.

This Immersion Teaching Strategies Observation Checklist reflects the topics addressed during the Summer Immersion Institute 2000 as well as the experiences of the participating immersion teachers. It was modeled after the San Jose Unified School District's Two-Way Immersion Teaching Strategies Observation Checklist. It remains a work in progress, as does our understanding of effective immersion pedagogy. We are glad to make it available to immersion educators across the United States and throughout the world.

REFERENCES

- Belisle, T. (1999, May). Peer coaching: Partnership for professional practitioners. *The ACIE Newsletter*, 2 (3), 3-5. The Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.
- Wajnryb, R. (1992). *Classroom observation tasks: A resource book for language teachers and trainers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Immersion Teaching Strategies Observation Checklist

Teacher _____ School _____ Grade Level _____ Number of Students _____ Date _____

Observer _____ Lesson Observed _____ Start _____ Finish _____

Each of the following seven category labels identifies a key pedagogical goal in immersion settings. The subsequent descriptors illustrate what the effective teacher does in the classroom to achieve these goals.

The immersion teacher aims to:	Observed	Not Observed	Not Applicable	Comments
1. Integrate language, content, and culture				
• Contextualizes and organizes curriculum around content-based thematic concept(s)				
• Specifies content-obligatory and content-compatible language objectives for each lesson				
• Identifies theme-related culture learning goals to introduce products, practices, and perspectives				
• Selects appropriate language and culture learning objectives that follow from content goals				
• Uses authentic songs, poems, literature, rhymes, artifacts to teach language and culture				
• Evaluates language, content, and culture learning for each lesson/unit				
2. Attend to continuous language growth and improve accuracy				
• Elicits and holds all students accountable for self and peer repair				
• Attends to errors in both oral and written language				
• Uses a variety of effective feedback techniques including elicitation, metalinguistic cues, clarification requests, repetition, recasts, explicit correction, and non-verbal cues				
• Differentiates between feedback on form versus meaning, e.g. "I like that idea. How might you say it more precisely?"				
• Creates opportunities and activities to assist students in noticing and producing less frequently used, accurate language in oral and written form				
• Focuses corrective responses on predetermined language objectives based on the lesson and the developmental level of the learners				
• Balances use of feedback with flow of lesson				

The immersion teacher aims to:	Observed	Not Observed	Not Applicable	Comments
3. Make input comprehensible				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses body language, TPR, visuals, realia, manipulatives to communicate meaning • Solicits and draws upon prior knowledge and experiences with new themes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a variety of pre-reading and pre-writing activities to make language and content more accessible, e.g. advanced organizers, etc. • Breaks complex information and processes into component parts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes frequent use of comprehension checks that require learners to demonstrate their understanding • Selects and adapts instructional material for learners' developmental level • Establishes routines to build familiarity and allow for repetition 				
4. Create an L2-rich learning environment				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extends students' language repertoires by teaching synonyms and antonyms • Displays a variety of words, phrases, and written text throughout classroom and hallways • Invites native speakers to participate in the classroom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes available a variety of target language reading and resource materials such as dictionaries, thesaurus, encyclopedia, etc. • Surrounds learner with extensive oral and written language input 				
5. Use teacher talk effectively				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulates and enunciates clearly • Slows down and simplifies language when developmentally appropriate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rephrases and repeats messages in a variety of ways • Varies intonation to mirror messages • Recycles past, present, and future vocabulary and language structures consciously • Models accurate use of language • Limits amount of teacher talk 				

The immersion teacher aims to:		Observed	Not Observed	Not Applicable	Comments
6. Promote extended student output					
• Plans for and employs questioning techniques that encourage extended discourse and foster higher-order thinking					
• Structures and facilitates high-interest, student-centered activities					
• Uses output-oriented activities such as role plays, simulations, drama, debates, presentations, etc.					
• Makes use of a variety of grouping techniques such as dyads, think-pair-share, small groups, etc.					
• Promotes learning from and with peers, e.g. peer editing, peer tutoring					
• Communicates and consistently reinforces clear expectations about language use					
• Creates a non-threatening learning environment					
7. Attend to diverse learner needs					
• Includes a range of language abilities in student groups					
• Uses cooperative group learning					
• Plans for diverse learner needs based on linguistic and cultural backgrounds					
• Surveys student interests to allow for student choice					
• Invites students to share different problem-solving approaches and learning strategies					
• Makes use of a wide variety of activities through learning centers where students can work at a level that is appropriate for them					
• Reinforces concepts and language considering a variety of learning styles such as visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic, etc.					
• Fosters development of multiple intelligences					