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**Immersion Program: The Indian Context**

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**Abstract**

Second language acquisition (SLA) has always been a concern and a field of interest to the theorists, practitioners, and learners. This concern and interest paved the way for the emergence of a number of methods and approaches such as ‘immersion program’ from time to time. In Indian educational context, immersion program has been implementing for a long time.

In this paper the rationale of learning English as a second language by Indian students and the peculiarity of the implementation of immersion program in Indian context is presented. To find the effect of immersion program on incidental second language acquisition statistically, two immersion schools in Mysore, India were studied. The results confirmed the success of immersion program in second language acquisition in Indian context.

**Keywords:** immersion program, second language, acquisition, teaching method, SLA

**1. Introduction**

Throughout the history of second language teaching/learning, various methods and approaches have been applied to help students in learning / acquiring a second language. One of them which have been recently developed is immersion program that tries to integrate target language (i.e.,

English) as a second language instruction with subject matter or content – area instruction. This important innovation provides opportunities for students to learn regular school subjects while developing competence in a language. The subject matters are determined based on the curriculum which may consist of maths., science, and other course materials students are currently studying.

## **2. Immersion Program**

### **2.1. Definition**

Immersion program is defined as a method of foreign or second language instruction in which the regular school curriculum is taught through the medium of the target language. The most commonly used definition of immersion comes from Fred Genesee of Mc Gill University, one of the world's leading authorities on immersion education. In his book "Learning Through Two Languages: Studies in Immersion and Bilingual Education" (1987, Newbury House), he provides the following definition of immersion: "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. Programs in which one subject and language arts are taught through the second language are generally identified as enriched second language programs." (p. 1)

Unlike a traditional language course where the target language is the subject material, language immersion uses target language as a tool. In other words, in this program the target language is not the subject of instruction, but it is the vehicle for content instruction as well as the object of instruction. For example, in English immersion program, English is not the subject of instruction; rather it is the medium through which a majority of school's academic content is taught.

### **2.2 . Types of Immersion Program**

Since the first immersion program in Canada (1960), a number of different immersion programs have been implemented all over the world. Immersion programs are categorized in different categories based on two factors: *age* and *extent*.

**2.2.1. Age:** It refers to the time at which the program is initiated. In terms of the time of initiation, immersion program is classified into four groups:

*i. Early Immersion:* In this type of immersion commencing at the age of 5 or 6, students begin learning a second language in pre – school, kindergarten, or first grade of primary school.

*ii. Middle Immersion (delayed immersion):* It initiates at the age of 9 or 10 when the students are at the later primary school.

*iii. Late Immersion:* Starts sometime between the ages of 11 and 14 when the learners are at the secondary school.

*iv. Late Late immersion:* Begins at the university level.

**2.2.3 . Extent:** It denotes the percentage of curricular content covered in the L2. Based on this factor immersion programs can be divided into two types:

**Total Immersion:** Programs in which the entire curriculum is taught in L2 are classified as *total* or *full* immersion. In this type of immersion almost 100% of class time is in the foreign language and the subject matters are taught in the foreign language. In situations where comprehension is hampered, the teachers apply some techniques like dramatization, demonstration, definition, and realia, to resolve incomprehensibility. Since all subjects are delivered in the target language, a threshold level of proficiency is required by the learners.

**Partial Immersion:** In partial immersion program about half of the class time is spent in teaching the subject matters in the target language. In other words, at least 50% of the curriculum is delivered through the language of instruction.

### **3. Rationale of Learning English as a Second Language in India**

Learning English as a second language after one has learned the first language (mother tongue) is a necessity for the Indians. To justify the claim it should be noted that one of the characteristics of India in comparison to other countries is its variety in the number of live languages being spoken in this country, the characteristic which can rarely be found in other countries. Kachru (1983) states ‘the Indian constitution recognizes fifteen major languages and the Census Report identifies over 1,652 languages and dialects’ (P.67).

Furthermore, English is the state language of some states in eastern India, Meghalaya and Nagaland and Mizoram. Besides it is the main medium of instruction in most institutions of higher learning at the postgraduate level. Kachru continues “As a medium for inter-state communication, the pan-Indian press and broadcasting, English has been used as a most powerful tool both before and since India’s independence (P. 71)”

It shows that the impact of English is not only continuing but also increasing. Taking into account the above justifications, the parents strive to find the shortest and the most economic way to help their children learn English. Through immersion program they can fill this need most effectively, i.e., along with learning the academic subjects; the students can acquire English as a second language as well.

### **4. ‘Immersion Program’ in India**

Regarding the types of syllabus, different types of immersion programs are implemented in India. In State Syllabus (S.S.), in terms of *type* of immersion, ‘Partial’ is applied because less than 50% of class time is spent in English as the target language; moreover, all subjects are not instructed in the target language. And in terms of *extent* ‘late (delayed)’ immersion is implemented since English is not used as a medium of instruction.

In the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) scheme, two different types of immersion programs are implemented. According to this syllabus in the state schools, since only some subjects are instructed in English ‘partial’ immersion and because it starts from the initial stages

‘early’ immersion is implemented. In private schools, the ‘total’ and ‘early’ immersion program is implemented since all subjects 100% are instructed in English from the very beginning levels.

In the third syllabus, i.e., Indian Council for Secondary Education (ICSE), the ‘total’ and ‘early’ immersion program is implemented. It is comparable with the private schools in the aforementioned syllabus. From the very initial stages all subjects are presented in English and 100% of the class time is spent in the target language.

#### **4.1. Peculiarity of Indian Immersion Program**

In India the medium of instruction is the *Indian English (IE)* as a variation of Standard English. Of course it should be noted that “The cover term Indian English does not mean that there is complete homogeneity in the use of English in India, nor does it imply that all the Indian users of English have uniform proficiency in understanding and performance.” (Kachru 1983, p. 69)

Why Indian English is a unique variation of English? The answer to this question may be hidden under the interest in uniqueness in Indian and related South Asian communities. India (and other related South Asian nations) enjoys a lot of uniqueness. Some of them are mentioned here. (Please read India as nations of the Indian subcontinent for our purposes here.) Saree is the unique garment which is worn by the Indian women. Rupee is the unique Indian currency that no other country uses it. Indian music is also unique in the world. Wherever you hear it, you can easily identify it as Indian. Perhaps the Indian nation’s eagerness toward uniqueness encourages them to have a unique way of using English namely *Indianized English* (Kachru 1983) or Indian English.

So, *English* is a metaphor for the unique variation of English which is spoken by the Indian people. It is interesting to know that a number of different subvariations can also be found.

#### **Subdivisions**

According to Kachru, these subvariations have come into existence because of three parameters: region, ethnic group, and proficiency. A detailed elaboration of the issue seems unnecessary. But it deserves to be noted that considering different native languages such as Hindi, Malayalam, Kannada spoken in India, variations of Indianized English such as Hinglish, Manglish, and Kanglish are respectively coined, too.

Kachru states that the linguistic characteristics of Indian English are transparent in the Indian English sound system (phonology), sentence construction (syntax), vocabulary (lexis) and meaning (semantics) (1983, p. 66).

Some of the specifications of immersion program in Indian context in terms of students, subjects, staff, curriculum, and teachers are elaborated as follows.

##### **4.1.1. Students**

Students of the immersion schools come from different ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds that generally reflect the population of the district that they live in.

For instance, in the two immersion schools where I settled my study, in each class there are students with different home languages such as Hindi, Malayalam, Telugu, English, and so on. Of course the majority of these students' home language is Kannada. The number of students ranges between 45 to 50, and the students experience a coeducational system at all levels. Their easy interaction and collaboration are effective factors in their enhancement in the mastery of the contents of various subjects and target language acquisition. In all the observed classes, I witnessed considerable active participation of learners both in asking questions and seeking clarifications and in answering the teachers' questions. All these activities were being done in English successfully.

#### **4.1.2. Subjects**

The students are instructed in subjects such as maths, science, English, social studies, music, and computer. All these subjects are presented 100% in English. As one of the English teachers explained in the interview, by teaching English their purpose is twofold. At the initial stages the purpose is to improve the students' proficiency and their comprehension ability. But at the higher levels, teaching English as a subject is not for the purpose of proficiency but to teach literature and the very special skills they need in writing. In order to save the native language, the local language of any state is also taught as a subject. In these observed schools, Kanada is being taught as the native language of the majority of the students.

#### **4.1.3. Staff**

One of the main problems in the implementation of English Immersion Program in many countries where English is considered as a second or foreign language is the lack of qualified and proficient instructors. In India, because of the very long term immersion program implementation, a plethora of educated people possessing efficient proficiency and qualification in English is available. So it makes the implementation of immersion program quite convenient in the Indian context. As far as I observed the staff were speaking in the target language i.e. English among themselves and with the students at the educational (academic) milieu.

#### **4.1.4. Curriculum**

The curriculum of the immersion program schools is the same as the non-immersion program ones. One of the differences is the instruction of some extracurricular courses such as computer and music. Definitely, instruction of these courses can provide a more extensive exposure to the target language. The other difference is in the amount of time spent on teaching English as a subject. In immersion schools, many more hours are devoted to this subject in comparison to the non-immersion schools. Especially at the lower levels they provide a situation in which both learning the target language through formal teaching of English and acquisition of target language through the instruction of other subjects can take place.

#### **4.1.5. Teachers**

Immersion program in the Indian context benefits from bilingual teachers. So in its exact sense immersion program is additive in this context. Since the teacher knows the first language of the learners, s/he can sometimes use it to deliver content.

The candidates willing to be employed as teachers to teach in immersion program in Indian context should meet some criteria. As the principles of the schools claimed in the interview, the prerequisite condition for these candidates is having an impeccable Indian English accent. The most fluent ones in Indian English will be selected to pass some specific training courses. They are so prejudiced in favor of Indian English that having a native or native like British or American accent by the candidates is not taken for granted as an advantage for the candidates by the authorities.

The main concern of teachers in teaching subjects is to deliver the meaning as it is the predominant goal in any immersion program. To succeed in their attempts, the teachers apply various techniques and strategies. For instance, the very common characteristic of all teachers' speech is "teacherese" especially at the lower levels in order to help the learners to have an effective comprehension of oral presentation.

Furthermore, a variety of available realia are used by teachers to make the content comprehensible to the students. Here is as an example of what I observed in a science class where the teacher was teaching science to her students at the second grade of primary school. The topic of the content for that session was 'Light'. In order to present the word 'light' the teacher attempted dramatization, playing a scenario by closing all windows, and turning off the lamps. In order to introduce the sources of light, she used a considerable number of realia such as lantern, torch, matches, candle, and lamp. This is just an example of how the instructors in immersion classes try to deliver meaning without utilizing the learners' native language.

The other observable common feature among the teachers is their less sensitivity to pronunciation. I witnessed fluctuations in the pronunciation of words by the teachers and students. For instance, the word "reflection" was pronounced differently in terms of stress pattern. It seems that they are not concerned with observing the phonological rules in oral production such as segmental and suprasegmental features as the native speakers of the target language are. As the English teacher claimed in the interview, they are quite reluctant in emulating the American or British accent. "If we speak English in either American or British accent, we will be blamed on being ostentatious or doing show off", she added.

## **5. A statistical view on the effect of immersion program on incidental SLA in Indian context**

To find the effect of immersion program on incidental second language acquisition statistically in Indian context, two immersion schools in Mysore, India were studied. In both of these two schools, total immersion is being implemented.

### **5.1. Research Question**

In relation to the effect of immersion program on incidental second language acquisition in Indian context, the following major question is stated.

*What is the effect of immersion program on incidental second language acquisition?*

This major question is followed by three minor ones as:

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- 1) *What is the effect of immersion program on incidental comprehension of second language?*
- 2) *What is the effect of immersion program on incidental production of second language?*
- 3) *What is the effect of immersion program on incidental comprehension and production of second language components?*

## 5.2. Hypotheses

Following the above questions, the related null ( $H_0$ ) and directional (alternative) ( $H_1$ ) hypotheses are stated.

- 1) **a.  $H_0$ :** Immersion program has no effect on incidental second language acquisition.  
**b.  $H_1$ :** Immersion program has a positive effect on incidental second language acquisition.
- 2) **a.  $H_0$ :** Immersion program has no effect on incidental comprehension of second language.  
**b.  $H_1$ :** Immersion program has a positive effect on incidental comprehension of second language.
- 3) **a.  $H_0$ :** Immersion program has no effect on incidental production of second language.  
**b.  $H_1$ :** Immersion program has a positive effect on incidental production of second language.
- 4) **a.  $H_0$ :** Immersion program has no effect on incidental comprehension and production of second language components.  
**b.  $H_1$ :** Immersion program has positive effect on incidental comprehension and production of second language components.

## 5.3. Methodology

### 5.3.1. Design and sampling

In terms of research method, this study falls into the category of “quantitative” one as it involves data collection procedures that result primarily in numerical data which is then analyzed by statistical methods. In terms of design, with respect to its question which tries to seek the effect of variables, it is experimental.

In terms of sampling, it is both ‘availability or convenience sampling’ and ‘purposive sampling’. It is ‘availability sampling’, since the samples selected from two schools in Mysore for this study are the most convenient and available for the researcher. It was neither economically nor logistically possible for the researcher to choose samples from other cities in India. On the other hand, it was ‘purposive sampling’ since the subjects were chosen based on purpose of the study.

### 5.3.2. Participants

In this study, in order to provide a logical and data-based answer to the question, two homogenous groups of students at the level of first and second standard from two immersion



schools named St. Joseph's Primary and St. Joseph's Central schools in Mysore, India were selected. These groups were nominated as group one (G1) and group two (G2) respectively. Each group was composed of 40 students of each school, 80 students in total. The participants were both male and female. Both groups were studying at schools with the same medium of instruction. The students were taught all subject matters in English. In fact, being educated through immersion program, learning English was a by-product for them.

#### **5.3.4. Instrument**

In this study various 'paper and pencil' tests were used for different purposes such as pre-test, post-test, homogeneity determination, and incidental comprehension and production of second language. Some of them were available in the market, but some others had to be constructed by the researcher and validated in their own specific ways.

#### **5.4. Pretest**

Two types of tests were used as pre-test. One was used to determine the homogeneity of the participants and the other to determine the students' entry behavior.

##### **5.4.1. To homogenize the subjects**

The measuring instrument to determine the participants' homogeneity was YLE (Young Learners English) series produced by Cambridge University. Regarding the level of difficulty, it is at three different levels as 'Starters', 'Movers', and 'Flyers'. Each of which is composed of two separate sections: 'Listening' and 'Writing and Reading'. The researcher administered the 'Starters' for group one (G1) and the 'Movers' for group two (G2).

##### **5.4.2. To determine the entry behavior**

In order to measure the participants' true ability in comprehending and producing the second language incidentally as their entry behavior, the researcher administered a pre-test to the first standard students (G1). Since the researcher couldn't find an appropriate test for this purpose, he had to construct it himself. He called it an 'Incidental Test'.

###### **5.4.2.1. Incidental Test**

Regarding the major question of this study: "*What is the effect of immersion program on incidental second language acquisition?*" the main purpose of this study was to measure the extent of incidental language acquisition by the students. To meet this goal, the researcher needed a very authentic test. Finding a prepared and standardized test in the market to satisfy this need was not convenient for the researcher. Moreover, a comprehensive one appropriate for the participants' level was even rarer. So the researcher was obliged to construct a test with the mentioned qualifications himself.



As the first step, he drew a table of specification containing grammar, collocation, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. To make sure that the items being tested were “acquired” and “not learned consciously”, the researcher referred to the teachers and the text books. In other words, the researcher got sure that the items were presented in a way that measure the students’ knowledge of second language acquired through their exposure within the period of two academic years at school. Since the main purpose was to measure their ability on ‘incidental comprehension’ and ‘incidental production’ of the second language, the test would cover two different aspects i.e. ‘comprehension’ and ‘production’. Based on the predetermined goal, a test containing 50 items in the form of selection, essay type, and recognition on grammar, vocabulary, collocation, and reading in comprehension and production types was constructed to measure the above mentioned competencies.

This was a Norm – Referenced Test (NRT) since it was not measuring any specific instructional objectives; but, it was designed to measure a kind of learners’ global language abilities in second language comprehension and production in grammar, vocabulary, etc. In order to find the appropriateness of this newly developed test, the researcher administered it in a parallel class as pretest. Then the researcher has gone through item analysis process. The researcher analyzed the items in terms of item facility, item difficulty, and item discrimination. Subsequently the researcher has modified the items that their analysis outcome was not located in the predetermined indexes.

Having determined the appropriateness of each individual item through item analysis, the researcher had to determine the validity and reliability of the whole test, something which must necessarily be done for all newly developed test. Since this test was a Normed – Referenced Test (NRT), the researcher tried to validate it through ‘criterion related validity’. So the validity coefficient of this test and a parallel standard one had to be estimated.

Therefore, in order to determine the validity of the researcher made test, along with administering the pretest, the students were given another standard test namely ‘Flyers’ of YLE series produced by Cambridge University simultaneously. It contained 50 items in different types and it was composed of reading, vocabulary, and grammar.

Having scored the papers, the researcher tried to find the correlation coefficient between these two tests through **Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient**. The observed correlation ( $r_{xy} = 0.68$ ) showed that there was a close positive relationship between the researcher made test and the standard test. So it could be claimed that it was valid.

The next step was to determine its reliability. Among the various existing ways of estimating the reliability of a test, the researcher used KR-21 formula to determine the reliability of his test, since it seems more objective. Based on this formula the observed reliability ( $r \approx 0.71$ ) showed that this test had an acceptable reliability. This sufficiently valid and reliable test could be used as a convincing instrument to measure the extent of the ability of students in producing and comprehending the second language incidentally.

### 5.5. Post-test

The post-test was administered at the end of the academic year to the Second Standard students (G2) to measure their terminal behavior which is defined as their incidentally acquired comprehension and production ability after being exposed to English for a period of two years. The test which was used for this purpose was also the ‘incidental test’.

### 5.6. Procedure

To accomplish the purpose of this study, the following procedures were followed. First, four groups, two from first standard and two from second standard of two immersion schools were selected randomly considering that all have passed Lower Kindergarten (LKG) and Upper Kindergarten (UKG) in English medium centers and being non-native English speakers. Being from two different educational centers, St. Joseph’s Primary School in Vijayanagar 2<sup>nd</sup> Stage and St. Joseph’s Central School in Lakshmipuram in Mysore, the participants were definitely required to be homogenized. Therefore they were given two different standard tests of YLE series produced by Cambridge University as pre-test to determine their homogeneity. For this purpose the “Starters” was used for G1 and the “Movers” was applied for G2.

To test the homogeneity of the two groups, the researcher went through a *t*-test analysis, the results of which appear in the following tables.

**Table 1 : *t* – test for Pre-test Scores for homogeneity of group one (G1)**

Groups	N	M	S	d.f	<i>t</i> -observed
St. Joseph’s Central School	40	28.99	7.044	78	0.6118
St. Joseph’s Primary School	40	29.70	5.919		
$P < 0.05$			$t$ -critical = 2.000		

According to the Table above, the *t*-value (*t* observed) being 0.6118 with concern of the degree of freedom of 78 and the level of significance of 0.05, is smaller than the *t*-critical (2.000). So it proves that the difference between the two groups of students from two schools is not significant and they are considered as homogeneous.

**Table 2 : *t* – test for Pre-test Scores for homogeneity of group two (G2)**

Groups	N	M	S	d.f	<i>t</i> -observed
St. Joseph’s Central School	40	45.075	6.054	78	0.9139
St. Joseph’s Primary School	40	44.90	8.198		
$P < 0.05$			$t$ -critical = 2.000		

According to Table 2 the obtained *t*- value (*t* observed) is 0.9139 with concern of the degree of freedom of 78 and the level of significance of 0.05, is smaller than the *t*-critical (2.000). So it can be concluded that the two groups of students of the two schools are homogeneous.

When the groups were proved to be homogenous, the first test (pre-test) was given to the G1 to measure their ability in incidental second language comprehension and production as their entry behavior. After that, to gain more information about the true implementation of immersion program in the aforementioned schools, the researcher could attend different classes in the two schools, St Joseph's primary school and St. Joseph's central school, regularly within the academic year. Through this direct contact with the teachers, staff, administration, and curriculum, and the text books, the researcher could gain a bunch of fruitful experiences and information which could not be found in any article or book.

In the second half of the last month of the academic year, the researcher administered the incidental test to the second standard students (G2) in both schools as post-test in order to measure their terminal behavior and the amount of progress made by them in second language (English) acquisition. The obtained scores were compared and interpreted to achieve the final result.

### **5.7. Data Analysis**

To test the hypotheses (null and directional) of this study, the researcher used a *t*-test to compare the means obtained from the two groups. All statistical procedures were carried out using EXCELL with alpha set as .05. As mentioned before, the primary aim of this study was to examine carefully the effect of immersion program on second language acquisition. In fact, the researcher wished to determine whether using immersion instructional program had a significant effect on the second language acquisition of the SL learners.

### **5.8. Results**

The scores obtained from two groups, group one (G1) and group two (G2), were first tabulated. The total score of the test was 50 with 25 points allotted to comprehension which is shown in table as (TC) , Total Compression, and 25 points to production which is labeled as (TP) , Total Production. The scores of each of these two phases, comprehension and production, were broken into some components of language as grammar comprehension (GC), vocabulary comprehension (VC), collocation comprehension (CC), reading comprehension (RC), grammar production (GP), vocabulary production (VP), collocation production (CP), and reading production (RP). Hereafter especially in the tables and in the statistical process these abbreviations will be used.

Each of these components was allotted a share of the total score depending on their importance. Not only were the total scores compared with each other but also the scores of each component in two aspects of comprehension and production with respect to gender factor, male and female, were compared separately to determine the effect of immersion program on each one. Since the total score of the test in this study was 50, in order to make the analysis and comparison of

results easier, the researcher converted them to the scale of 100 (percentage). Both the total scores and the scores of each part are presented in percentage. It is shown in table 3.

**Table 3 : Means of G 1 & G 2 in Percentage Scores**

Groups	Gender	G C	V C	C C	R C	G P	V P	C P	R P	T C	T P	T.C&P
G 1	F	29.35	37.56	30.81	30.13	26.32	26.54	16.21	13.62	33.54	20.18	26.56
	M	24.62	37.79	26.51	27.32	24.39	19.06	14.41	12.20	29.32	17.16	22.53
	F&M	26.98	37.67	28.66	28.72	25.35	22.80	15.31	12.91	31.43	18.67	24.54
G 2	F	45.10	78.37	80	62.16	44.45	61.08	77.83	50.67	67.16	59.16	62.91
	M	46.69	73.48	85.58	60.46	32.76	61.39	80.46	47.09	66.86	55.44	60.95
	F&M	45.89	75.92	82.79	61.31	38.60	61.23	79.14	48.88	67.01	57.30	61.93

The standard deviation of the obtained scores of group one (G1) and group two (G2) was computed through Excel software and is shown in table 4.

**Table 4 : Standard Deviation of G1 & G 2**

Groups	Gender	G C	V C	C C	R C	G P	V P	C P	R P	T C	T P	T.C&P
G 1	F	8.99	10.90	13.81	16.56	8.90	11.66	13.19	13.68	6.61	6.39	5.31
	M	7.99	15.13	16.16	17.09	9.86	13.05	12.59	13.77	10.91	8.20	8.45
	F&M	8.49	13.10	14.98	16.82	9.38	12.35	12.89	13.72	8.76	7.29	6.88
G 2	F	18.15	27.23	27.80	19.20	13.55	28.26	21.49	19.08	12.45	11.95	11.17
	M	18.03	30.77	23.22	21.29	14.96	31.28	21.59	21.96	12.99	13.37	12.20
	F&M	18.09	29	25.51	20.24	14.25	29.77	21.54	20.52	12.72	12.66	11.68

### 5.8.1. The Effect of Immersion Program on Second Language Acquisition

As it was mentioned earlier, the primary goal of this study was to find out the effect of immersion program on incidental second language acquisition. So the researcher posed his primary research question as “*What is the effect of immersion program on incidental second language acquisition?*” Following this question, the researcher gave the appropriate tests to two groups of participants to find the possible answer. The obtained scores were put in the scale of percentage in order to facilitate the statistical analysis and make the computation easier. Since the computation was mainly around the means of the two groups, the researcher decided to apply

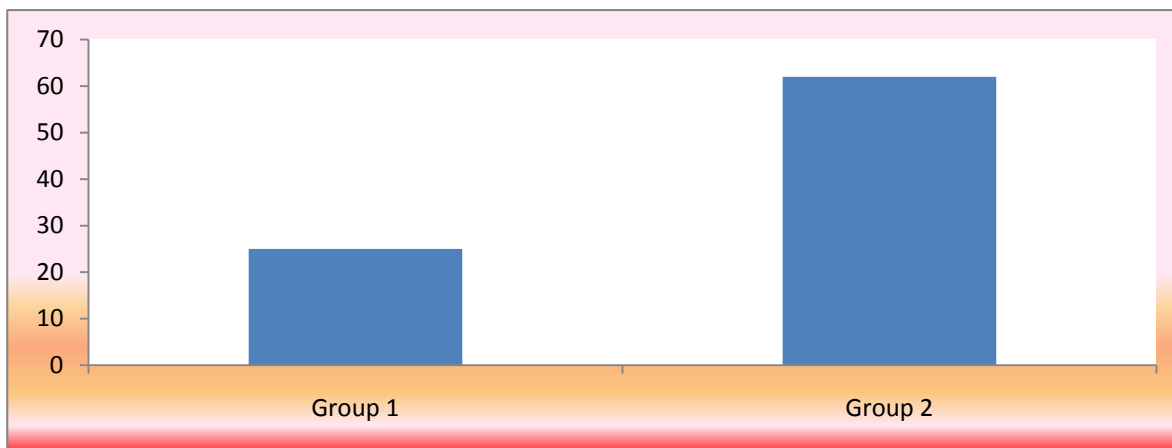
the *t*-test statistical method to meet his goal. In order to apply the *t*-test formula, the researcher had to calculate the mean and standard deviation of the scores obtained by the two groups; as he had already done and results were shown in tables 3 and 4.

Having found the mean and the standard deviation of the two sets of scores of both group one and group two, the researcher applied the *t*-test formula; the results are presented in table 5.

**Table 5 : *t* – test for Total Scores of G1 and G2 on Incidental SLA**

Groups	N	M	S	d.f	<i>t. Observed</i>
Group 1	80	24.51	7.38	158	2.53
Group 2	80	61.93	11.68		
<i>P</i> < 0.05		<i>t. Critical</i> = 1.98			

According to table 5, the *t. observed* (2.53) is far greater than the *t. critical* (1.98) obtained from the *t. critical* table with the level of significance of *P* < 0.05. It shows that the difference between group one and group two in the obtained *t. value* is quite significant. In other words, immersion program had a great positive effect on acquisition of the second language. So the null hypothesis: “immersion Program has no effect on second language acquisition” is rejected. On the other hand, the directional (alternative) hypothesis “immersion program has a positive effect on incidental second language acquisition” is supported.



**Figure 1: Means of Total Scores of Group 1 and Group 2 on Incidental SLA**

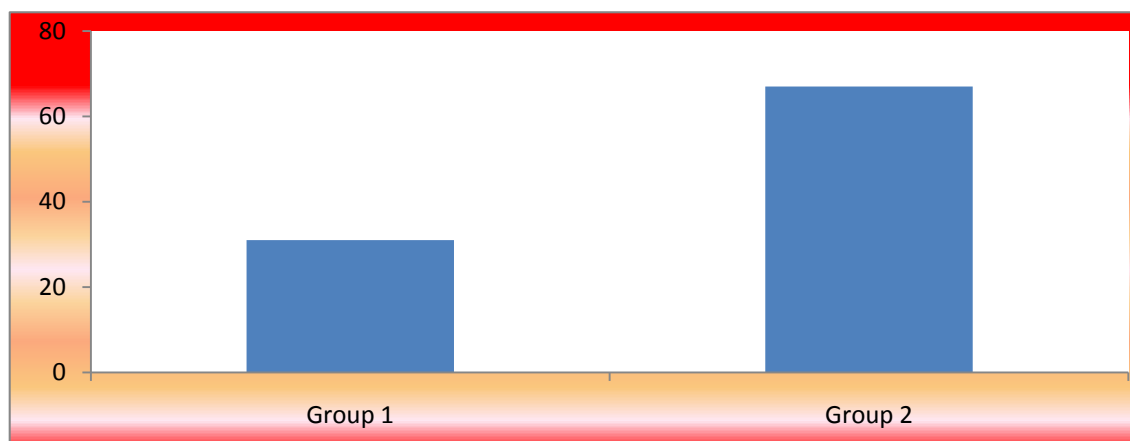
### 5.8.2. The Effect of Immersion Program on Incidental *Comprehension* of Second Language

Apart from the major question of this study which was elaborated in 5.8.1, there were three other minor questions regarding the second language acquisition. These questions give heed to two main phases of second language acquisition as: ‘*comprehension* and *production*’ and the *components* of language. The first minor question in this regard was “*Does incidental comprehension take place through an immersion program?*” In order to find the answer to this question, the researcher extracted the scores related to the comprehension phase from the total scores to measure the learners’ ability in incidental comprehension of the second language. The total raw score of the comprehension (TC) was 25 out of 50. He changed all the scores of each component to the scale of 100 (percentage) so that he could do the computation more easily. Then he put them in the *t*-test formula in table 6 to find the answer to the above mentioned research question.

**Table 6 : *t* – test for scores of G 1 and G 2 on Incidental Comprehension of SL**

Groups	N	M	S	d.f	<i>t</i> . Observed
Group 1	80	31.43	8.76	158	2.93
Group 2	80	67.01	12.72		
<i>P</i> < 0.05		<i>t</i> . Critical = 1.98			

As the table above shows, the *t*. observed equaled 2.93 that is considerably higher than the *t*. critical value (1.98) which was obtained from the table in appendix ‘S’. What can be inferred from the data in this table is that the learners’ performances in the two groups are significantly different. In other words, group two (G2) was more successful than group one (G1) in terms of incidental comprehension of the acquired second language. Since their difference is statistically significant, consequently the researcher can safely reject the second null hypothesis : “*Immersion program has no effect on the learners’ incidental comprehension ability in second language*”.



**Figure 2 : Means of the scores of two groups on Incidental Comprehension of SL**

### 5.8.3. The Effect of Immersion Program on Incidental *Production* of Second Language

As it was stated in the previous part, the process of second language acquisition was to be studied in two aspects: *Comprehension* and *Production*. Here the researcher tried to find out the answer to the second minor question about the effect of immersion program on ‘incidental’ production of the second language. The question was “*Does incidental second language production happen through immersion program?*” So the total scores of the groups were broken into comprehension and production scores based on their performance on the comprehension and production items of the test. This time, the scores reflecting the learners ability in the production of the acquired second language were separated and were converted into the scale of 100 (percentage) for easier statistical processing. The total raw production score (TP) was 25 out of 50 which was converted into 50 out of 100.

Having changed the raw scores of incidental production into percentage, the researcher started to compare the means of the two groups to find the answer to his research question. So he fed the obtained scores into *t*-test formula and computed the results as shown in table 7 below.

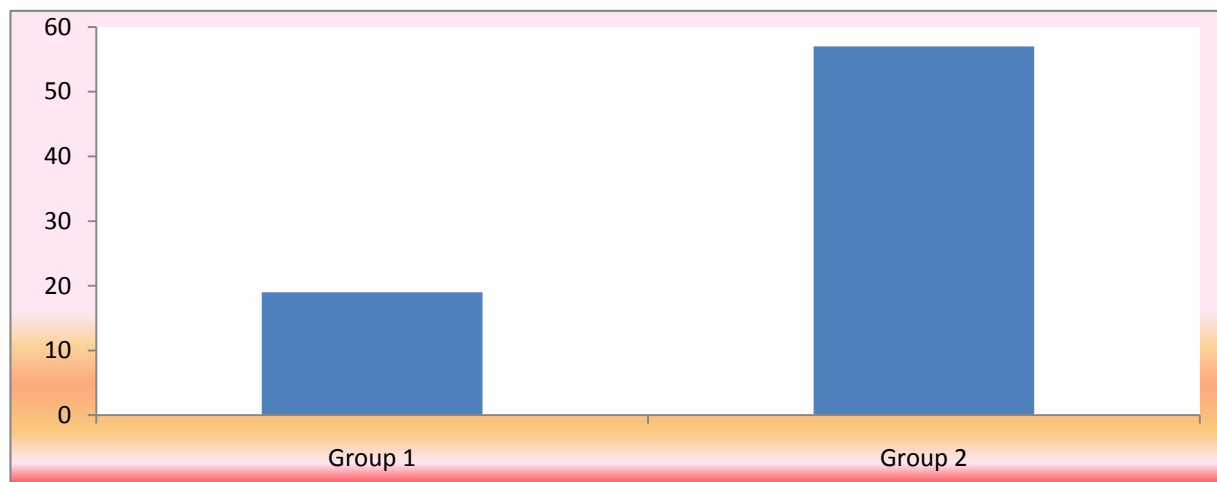
**Table 7 : *t* – test for the score of two groups on Incidental Production of SL**

<b>Groups</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>d.f</b>	<b><i>t</i>. Observed</b>
Group 1	80	18.67	7.29	158	5.97
Group 2	80	57.30	12.66		
<i>P</i> < 0.05			<i>t</i> . Critical= 1.98		

As we can see in table 4.9 the two groups (G1 & G2) with the same number of participants (N) but had different means (M), 18.67 and 57.30, and standard deviation (S), 7.29 and 12.66, appeared remarkably different in their performance on producing the acquired second language. By comparing the *t*. observed and *t*. critical values, the difference is strongly approved. As it is shown in the above table, the *t*. observed value equaled (5.97), whereas the *t*. critical value with the degree of freedom (d.f) of 158 and the level of significance (probability) of (*P*<0.05) in the table of *t*. value equaled (1.98).

Clearly there is a very remarkable difference between these two *t*. values. So the researcher can conclude that immersion program is greatly effective on incidental production of the acquired second language. Consequently the null hypothesis saying, “*Immersion program has no effect on incidental production of the acquired second language*” can be safely rejected. The directional hypothesis saying: “*immersion program has a positive effect on incidental production of second language*” is confirmed.





**Figure 3 :** Means of the scores of the two groups on Incidental Production of SL

#### **5.8.4. The effect of Immersion Program on Incidental Comprehension and Incidental Production of the *Components* of Second Language**

When we talk about a language, we mean a package composed of several components. Because of this, the researcher was interested in finding out the participants' entry and terminal behaviors on each of the components of the second language they were supposed to acquire.

From among all the components and skills of the language, the researcher chose some of them which were more feasible to study and gave tests on them to the participants. As the limitation of the study, it was not possible for the researcher to test all of them. Based on the tests given to the groups, the components were tested on eight aspects. They were grammar comprehension, vocabulary comprehension, collocation comprehension, reading comprehension, grammar production, vocabulary production, collocation production, and reading production.

So not only were the total scores of the groups broken into incidental production and incidental comprehension, which had already been analyzed in tables 6 and 7 respectively, but also they were broken into the aforementioned components of language and were put in the *t*-test formula for the analysis separately.

To analyze the obtained scores on the components of the language in terms of comprehension and production, the researcher classified them into two sets of tables. In the first set, he presented the results of the *t*-test for components like grammar, vocabulary, collocation, and the reading skill in relation to comprehension. The results are displayed in tables 8, 9, 10, and 11.

**Table 8 : *t* – test for incidental Grammar Comprehension (GC) of two groups**

Groups	N	M	S	d.f	<i>t. observed</i>
Group 1	80	26.98	8.49	158	5.89
Group 2	80	45.89	18.09		
<i>P</i> < 0.05 <i>t. Critical</i> =1.98					

**Table 9 : *t* – test for Incidental Vocabulary Comprehension (VC) of two groups**

Groups	N	M	S	d.f	<i>t. observed</i>
Group 1	80	37.67	13.10	158	2.79
Group 2	80	75.92	29		
<i>P</i> < 0.05 <i>t. Critical</i> =1.98					

**Table 10 : *t* – test for Incidental Collocation Comprehension (CC) of two groups**

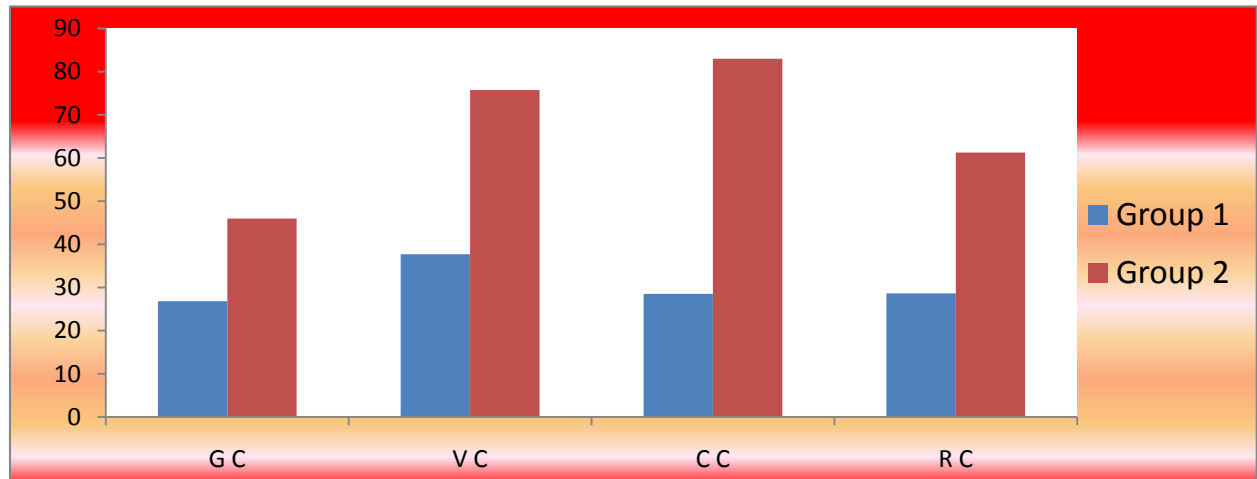
Groups	N	M	S	d.f	<i>t. observed</i>
Group 1	80	28.66	14.98	158	5.47
Group 2	80	82.79	25.51		
<i>P</i> < 0.05 <i>t. Critical</i> = 1.98					

**Table 11 : *t* – test for Incidental Reading Comprehension (RC) of two groups**

Groups	N	M	S	d.f	<i>t. observed</i>
Group 1	80	28.72	16.82	158	2.40
Group 2	80	61.31	20.24		
<i>P</i> < 0.05 <i>t. Critical</i> = 1.98					

According to the above tables, the *t. observed* of grammar comprehension (GC) equaled 5.89, vocabulary comprehension 2.79, collocation comprehension (CC) 5.47, and reading comprehension 2.40. As it is revealed, in all cases, the *t. observed* value is higher than *t. critical* value. It means that the difference is significant and quite remarkable. So the null hypotheses: *Immersion program has no effect on the incidental comprehension of second language components and reading skill' is rejected.* On the other hand, the researcher can accept the alternative (directional) hypothesis *'There is a positive effect of immersion program on*

incidental comprehension of language components like grammar, vocabulary, collocation, and reading skill’.



**Figure 4 :** Means of *Incidental Comprehension* of the two groups on each of the Second Language Components as well as reading skill

The second category of the scores was related to the incidental production of the components of the second language and the reading skill. In order to find out the difference between the learners’ performance in terms of their incidental production of the components of the second language like grammar, vocabulary, collocation, and reading skill, the researcher put the obtained scores in *t*-test formula; the results are shown in tables 12, 13, 14, and 15.

**Table 12 :** *t* – test for Incidental Grammar Production (GP) of two groups

Groups	N	M	S	d.f	<i>t. observed</i>
Group 1	80	22.80	12.35	158	3.95
Group 2	80	61.23	29.77		
$P < 0.05$		$t. Critical = 1.98$			

**Table 13 :** *t* – test for Incidental Vocabulary Production (VP) of two groups

Groups	N	M	S	d.f	<i>t. observed</i>
Group 1	80	25.35	9.38	158	2.76
Group 2	80	38.60	14.25		
$P < 0.05$		$t. Critical = 1.98$			

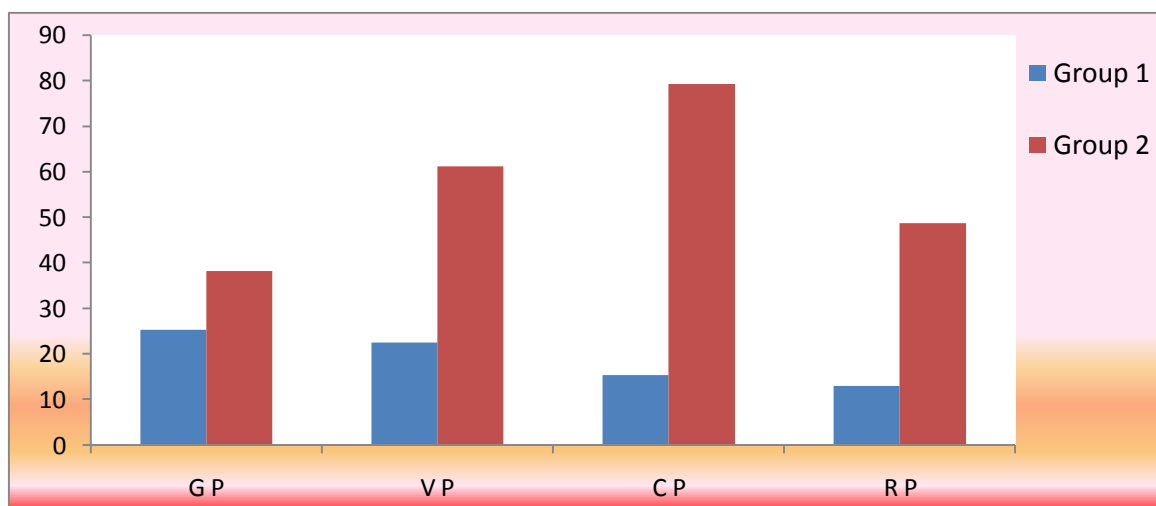
**Table 14 : *t* – test for Incidental Collocation Production (CP) of two groups**

Groups	N	M	S	d.f	<i>t. observed</i>
Group 1	80	15.31	12.89	158	2.66
Group 2	80	79.14	21.54		
<i>P</i> < 0.05		<i>t. Critical</i> = 1.98			

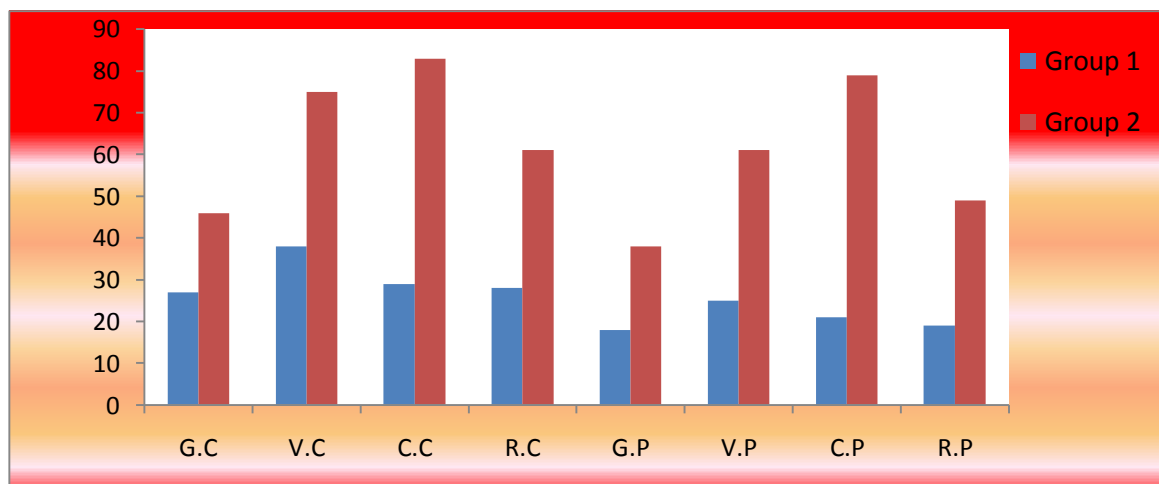
**Table 15 : *t* – test for Incidental Reading Production (RP) of two groups**

Groups	N	M	S	d.f	<i>t. observed</i>
Group 1	80	12.91	13.72	158	2.70
Group 2	80	48.88	20.52		
<i>P</i> < 0.05		<i>t. Critical</i> = 1.98			

As we see in the above tables, the *t. observed* of grammar is 2.76, vocabulary 3.95, collocation 2.66, and reading 2.70 in incidental production. All of these obtained *t. observed* are above the *t. critical* value (1.98). It shows that the difference between the two groups in incidental production of grammar, vocabulary, collocation, and reading skill is significant and statistically remarkable. So the null hypothesis : “*Immersion program has no effect on incidental production of the acquired second language components*” about grammar, vocabulary, and reading is strongly rejected. For these components, the alternative (directional) hypothesis: “*Immersion program has a positive effect on the incidental production of the components of the acquired second language*” is supported.



**Figure 5 :** Means of Incidental *Production* of two groups on second language components as Well as reading skill



**Figure 6 :** Means of Incidental *Comprehension* and *Production* of two groups on Second Language Components as well as reading skill

## 5.8. Discussion

Before beginning a discussion of the results, it is important to restate that this study is mainly interested in determining (exploring) the effect of immersion program on incidental second language acquisition. Thus the extent of improvement in incidental production and incidental comprehension of English as a second language at schools where the target language is the medium of instruction was studied. The evaluation of other methods, their success or failure was not concerned. Moreover, it was out of the scope of this study to evaluate the curriculum and educational status of the schools.

All results of the pretests and post tests were presented in detail in the previous pages. They were also summarized and analyzed through application of relevant statistical process and were reflected in related tables and figures.

In what follows, the researcher will discuss and explain the effect of immersion program on the incidental acquisition of second language in respect of comprehension and production. In addition, its effect on the acquisition of some language components like grammar, vocabulary, collocation, and reading skill exclusively will be discussed.

### 5.9.1. Discussion Relevant to the major Question

The major question of this study ‘*What is the effect of immersion program on incidental second language acquisition?*’ addressed the acquisition of a second language through the immersion program. In this study, in order to determine whether a second language is acquired effectively through an immersion program or not, the researcher gave some tests to his subjects. Through these tests he could measure the extent of their success in second language acquisition through the implementation of the program. The tests which have been used for this purpose, contained items of linguistic forms on language components like grammar, collocation, vocabulary, and

reading skill. The items pertaining to each of them were mainly those which were not explicitly taught to the students by their teachers, but the students were exposed to in their text or work books and around their subject matters. (The researcher verified this through surveying their English text books and probing their teachers).

The students' successful performance in the post test (shown through the difference in their means) revealed that language acquisition has taken place through the implementation of the program. Moreover, the higher value of  $t$ . observed (2.53) obtained through the application of the  $t$ -test formula on the scores of the two groups than the  $t$ . critical value (1.98) confirms that the effect of immersion program is positive (See table. 5). In other words, it can be claimed that incidental second language acquisition takes place effectively through implementation of an immersion program. So the researcher statistically rejects his null hypothesis and accepts his positive directional (alternative) hypothesis: *Immersion Program has a positive effect on second language acquisition*. The only justification which can be made about such incidental language acquisition can be that along with the perception of the meaning (content, subject matters), the language of the instruction is also perceived.

As it was mentioned earlier, immersion program is meaning oriented. One of the primary characteristics of this program is its focus on meaning, or as Ellis (2005) puts it, that instruction is 'predominantly focused on meaning'. Delivering meaning is the primary priority. So, when the meaning and content are delivered to the learners in target language, the language is also incidentally acquired. This outcome is in direct line with Krashen's "input Hypothesis".

According to Krashen (1984) comprehensible input is "the only true cause of second language acquisition". The input hypothesis claims that an important condition for language acquisition to occur is that the acquirer understands (via reading or hearing) input that contains structures 'a bit beyond' his or her current level of competence i.e.  $i + 1$ . It also supports the findings of about one thousand researches done over 30 years claiming the program's success. Moreover it justifies the shift away from teaching language in isolation to integrating language and content instruction during the last 10 years.

Based on the success of the learners in acquiring the second language in this study who were mainly the primary students, the general rule for learning a new language which says "the earlier, the better" is also supported. Children's minds are like sponges at the earlier ages, and they seem to simply absorb an incredible amount of information at a fairly quick pace. With a younger student, you can afford to try out an immersion program and see if the reservations can be outweighed by the gain in language skills.

In terms of the importance of the factor of age in learning/acquisition of a language, Chomsky has a unique idea. According to Chomsky, the best age for learning/acquisition of a second/foreign language is before the 'puberty age'. Before this age a learner can learn/acquire a target language with the native accent. After that age, particularly in oral articulation, he or she can never perform like a native speaker. Thus it seems justifiable to implement an immersion program, early type, at schools to expect native like speakers at the end of the curriculum.

### 5.9.2. Discussion Relevant to Incidental Comprehension

As it was reported in results, the researcher had broken the major question about the effect of immersion program on second language acquisition into two minor ones. The first one “*What is the effect of immersion program on incidental comprehension of second language*” was about the students’ ability in incidental comprehension of the acquired second language.

Regarding the results shown in table 6, revealing a higher *t.* observed value (2.93) than the *t.* critical value (1.98); it has been proved that incidental comprehension of the acquired second language takes place through an immersion program. Naturally at the initial stages and at the beginning of program implementation, the learners may have problems in comprehending the target language as the medium of instruction. To cope with the problem, the teachers use strategies and techniques like body language, visuals, manipulatives, exaggerated facial expressions, and expressive intonation to communicate the meaning. If the importance of this is not properly taken into consideration by the teachers and the immersion program staff, it can potentially cause various problems.

One of its greatest manifestations would be a high rate of student drop-out from the program. Keen (1993) for example, reported that in the province of Alberta between 1983-84 and 1990-91, attrition rates from immersion program ranged from 43% to 68% by grade 6, 58% to 83% by grade 9, and 88% to 97% by grade 12. Definitely, not all drop-out from the program reflects academic difficulties. At a high extent it happens because of the improper meaning transmission. So the first weeks and days may seem intolerable by the students and their parents. This period is called the adaptation period by the theorists.

### 5.9.3. Discussion Relevant to Incidental Production

As the result showed (Table.7), immersion education had a very considerable effect on the incidental production of the acquired second language. This is confirmed by the existing wide difference between the *t.* observed value (5.97) and the *t.* critical value (1.98). By comparing the acquired means in comprehension of the two groups (G1: 31.43 and G2: 67.01) with the mean in production (G1: 18.67 and G2: 57.30) the difference between students’ receptive and expressive skills can be understood. It shows that through interaction in target language, the students’ expressive (productive) ability has remarkably improved.

The difference of about 40 scores between the means of group one and two in incidental production signifies a leap in the students’ enhancement in second language production ability. Although their improvement in productive aspect of the second language is visible, their greater improvement in comprehension (receptive aspect) is even more significant. In other words, by comparing the obtained means (67.01) in the incidental comprehension, it reveals that their greater success happened in comprehension.

This finding is exactly in line with Baker’s, C. (1993) claim who says “early immersion students acquire more success in proficiency of receptive skills like reading and listening comprehension of the second language at the initial years. The rate of improvement in production of course may



differ from one type of immersion to another. As Campbell (1985) declares, in long run partial immersion does not produce better English language achievement than total immersion. However, the initial language in English achievement associated with total immersion does not occur in partial immersion.

#### **5.9.4. Discussion relevant to the incidental comprehension and production of Second Language Components**

Based on the results of this study, not only are the differences between the two groups in terms of second language acquisition and its two aspects of comprehension and production but also in the components of language such as grammar, vocabulary, collocation, and reading skill are statistically significant.

Of course, it should be noted that the rate of improvement was not the same in all components. According to Tables 8 – 15 among the aforementioned language components and reading skill, the participants gained the lowest mean score in grammar in both comprehension and production. Of course regarding the nature of immersion program, the students' lag in grammar in comparison to the other components and skills is quite expectable for the researcher. He justifies that it may be because in language immersion program, grammar has a totally different purpose from that conventional language teaching (non-immersion program). Grammar is not taught as separate rules which help to produce structures and models. It is rather a medium of language use and effective instruction. The content of communication is more important than the formal accuracy for the children want their meaning to be understood and that they are able to communicate in the new language. The teacher encourages the use of immersion language, and does not pay too much attention to the correction of the grammatical and structural mistakes. The corrections are made indirectly so that they do not hinder communication.

The above discussion, on the other hand, justifies the learners' higher obtained means in vocabulary, collocation, and reading in incidental comprehension as well as in production of the acquired second language. We can see in the result report that the highest level of improvement took place in those components and skill which are meaning based. It is quite in accordance with the researcher's expectation and the expected immersion program outcomes. So the researcher strongly and statistically could reject the null hypothesis and his alternative, positive directional, hypothesis: *immersion program has a positive effect on incidental comprehension and production of language components* was supported.

#### **5.10. Conclusion**

1. As far as the researcher observed various immersion classes of different levels at different immersion schools, the immersion students acquire the target language in two ways: a) through learning the contents (subject matters) like math, science, social studies, and language arts b) through the extracurricular activities as well as interaction with the peers, teachers, and school staff out of their formal educational settings. In all of these opportunities, they experience the language which they will require to use in the real life situations. However, in EFL classes such opportunities may not be provided for the learners

to interact with each other in the target language to enhance their communicative skills. So the researcher specially based on his own observation concludes that immersion students' success particularly in effective communication in target language is partially for the opportunities that they are provided to use the target language communicatively at times other than their formal educational period.

2. The researcher has found out that one of the main reasons of the program's success in the process of second language acquisition may be related to the contents themselves through which the target language is presented. Normally the contents in immersion education are composed of science, social studies, and math which are quite authentic and real. Moreover, what they cover in these contents are in direct relation with their interest, need, and future life. So the interest and need motivate these students to learn the contents, and along with covering the contents, they acquire the language as well. However, in other methods mostly language is presented in some fake and unreal contents and topics which may not fill any of their needs. Furthermore, they intrigue no interest in the learners toward acquiring the second language. So lack of such very effective factors, can at least slow down the process of language learning.
3. As the results of the tests showed and as it was discussed in the previous chapter, there was no significant difference between the male and female students in terms of second language acquisition, although it was expected to be. The researcher infers that the difference between learners in respect of gender in language acquisition may be demonstrated at the higher levels where they receive a high amount of exposure. At the primary levels with a limited amount of exposure, no significant difference is visible. So the extent of difference is directly related to the extent of exposure. The more input the learners receive, the more probable difference between them in terms of gender is shown.
4. The participants of this study performed more successfully in components which were 'meaning oriented' like vocabulary than the 'form oriented' ones such as grammar. It could mean that getting meaning and using what has been perceived is much easier for the learners than application of the proper grammatical rules. In other words, the process of language acquisition can be more facilitated through focusing on 'meaning' than focusing on 'form'. It is in direct line with the immersion program's goal i.e. establishment of an effective communication through focusing on fluency. Unlike the traditional methods which mainly focused on the accuracy in language use through explicit and deductive teaching of the linguistic forms of the target language, in this program, accuracy is just concerned to the extent that communication is not interrupted. The most emphasis is put on fluency.
4. The students showed a far greater ability in the comprehension of the second (target) language than in production. It remarks that through the exposure to the target language, the immersion students receive in their educational settings, their decoding ability surpasses their encoding one. In fact, they gain a higher qualification in recreative skills like reading and listening than the creative ones like speaking and writing.

## 5.11. Implications

1. Immersion program can be applied as the only instructional program by the teachers for the purpose of second language teaching, not mixed with other school program(s). Unlike some educational centers where the students receive the instruction half day in L1 and in another half in L2, in the two chosen schools where the researcher has done his study, students were exposed to the *total* immersion program and had all their school programs only in the target language (L2). However, in the combined L1 and L2 situations, it might make students feel tired and they could not benefit from the immersion program. The program will be successful and of benefit to the language learners, if it is used as an individual and independent program.
2. It seems that immersion program can be more successful and lead to a more positive and significant effects when used for ESL learners. In this study, the students were all ESL learners and benefited, to a varying degree, from exposure to English language (language of instruction) outside their schools. That is to say, in an ESL environment, language learners hear and need to use the second language outside their classes and this fact can make language learning easier and more successful. In an ESL environment, immersion students focus on the content in their classes and they just see the linguistic forms indirectly, but they have enough chance to repeat linguistic forms outside the class, so these forms are repeatedly encountered and are consolidated in their mind.
3. Based on what the researcher found in this study and his own long experience as an EFL instructor, he recommends that for the EFL learners, the partial immersion program or communicative language teaching method with an active approach to grammar can be more beneficial than the total (full) immersion. However, an explicit teaching of grammar would be of benefit to the EFL students, because they can learn and use it along with the activities they do around the syllabus. In an EFL environment, especially where learners are not exposed to the second language outside the class, communicative courses of language instructions can also be successful because learners pay attention mostly to language and not to the content and learn the second language by doing related tasks in the class.

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