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ORIGINAL PAPER

Immersive experience in teaching

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Abstract
Immersive learning is a learning strategy that, based on high-value technologies, provides artificial content and environments that replicate real-life scenarios. Simulating reality therefore increases student engagement and proactivity in learning. Immersive learning is more profound because the virtual environment allows us to simulate behaviors, decisions, and errors before applying them to real work. The ability to simulate reality with remarkable realism (visual, acoustic, dynamic) allows virtual reality to trick the brain into believing artificial information. We can induce perceptions, environments, and experiences by also modulating the various sensory channels. This is especially important in training and learning processes related to high-risk contexts (for example, medical and healthcare environments or construction sites). Immersive learning represents an effective solution in training and learning processes because, starting from a greater level of engagement, students develop and refine skills and techniques (know-how) in a highly stimulating environment. The effectiveness of virtual environments stems precisely from the spatial design achieved with methodologies borrowed from filmmaking, user interface design, and user experience. Spatial development enhances student immersion by acting on three levels: spatial presence (students enter another dimension); self-presence (students interact and their actions produce effects); and social presence (the virtual environment is capable of fostering interaction between participants). Combining virtual reality and training means exposing the world of education to a paradigm shift. First, in environmental terms, training shifts from a physical to a fully immersive experience. Second, in temporal and qualitative terms, users have the opportunity to learn more independently, according to their own time and space constraints. Finally, the roles of student and teacher are transformed, with the former becoming an active participant and the latter becoming a facilitator.
Keywords*: immersive learning, virtual environments, interaction, strategy, experience*

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Introduction

Today, information and communication technologies enable learners to process information more quickly and effectively. However, it remains the educator's responsibility to identify methodologies, strategies, and techniques to apply in the given context.

In their study on modern digital communication, Chirițescu and Păunescu (2026:80) examine how technology affects public discourse in two different ways: "the digital environment promotes both the expansion of access to information and the emergence of new challenges related to content validation, information overload, and the influence of algorithms on the communication process."

If the teaching method synthesizes the concepts and principles underlying the learning process, teaching methodologies provide the tools to apply it. For example, if blended learning and interactive lessons represent innovative teaching methods, they will be matched by innovative teaching methodologies such as e-learning, role-playing, learning by doing, and so on.

In her study on adapting teaching methods for modern students, Bărbuceanu (2025: 192) explains that children who grow up with technology think and act differently, requiring big changes in how teachers run their classrooms: "Digital natives grew up surrounded by technology, so it's second nature to them because they don't just use technology, they actually prefer it when they are learning. Their brains are wired and comfortable with screens and digital tools change how they process information and how they interact in class with their colleagues."

Discussing the evolving needs of modern learners, Stoian (2025: 223) emphasizes the importance of integrating technology-based learning tools into English language teaching: "alternative teaching methods are suited for digital natives, especially the methods that employ technology: to project the course, to create PowerPoint slides, to use visual aids including tables and diagrams for the presentation of IF-clauses types, to have digitalised multiple - choice exercises, to send via internet useful English materials, etc."

The revolution we are witnessing is impacting both schools and training institutions, which are increasingly oriented toward active learning. The student-teacher relationship is becoming more direct, and the exchange allows for enrichment of the learning process and better retention of knowledge. Students are the protagonists of their own learning and navigate the learning environment more consciously. Laboratory activities, known as learning by doing, represent one of the earliest forms of active learning strategies. While in the past, this time was used to practice skills, limited to available materials, today more can be done.

Thanks to immersive teaching, active learning is stimulated in virtual reality contexts. Students are immersed in realistic spaces that reproduce the reality they will encounter outside the learning environment and invited to interact. Immersive learning uses tools such as 3D projections, virtual reality headsets, and tablets to allow students to interact with the simulated space. This is how the immersive classroom was born, a place where mind and body are active and curiosity and interest are intensely stimulated.

Instead of teaching a language as an academic subject (focusing heavily on grammar rules, translation, and memorization), immersion places the learner directly inside a context where the target language is the primary medium of communication and daily operation.

Addressing the cognitive demands of language learning, Lăpădat and Lăpădat (2025: 260) detail how strategic reading practices and collaborative dialogue build deeper

critical thinking and inferential skills in foreign language students: "Instruction must protect processing capacity for integration, make inferential moves visible, and cultivate dispositions of curiosity and fair-minded scepticism. This requires a synthesis of extensive reading to build fluency, intensive reading to model and practice strategic reasoning, and dialogic routines that distribute the work of interpretation across a community of learners."

How Immersion Works in Language Teaching

Language immersion works by copying the natural way children learn their mother tongue: through daily experience and constant exposure rather than memorizing rules. In practice, schools approach this in three main ways. With total immersion, students spend their entire day listening, speaking, and learning strictly in the new language, completely avoiding translation. Partial immersion splits the day in half, using the new language to teach regular subjects like science, math, or history for about 50% of the time. Finally, two-way immersion brings together native speakers of two different languages in the same classroom, allowing students to learn each other's languages together as peers.

Language immersion takes several practical forms depending on the classroom setting, available technology, and the learner's specific goals. In public school systems worldwide, educational immersion programs, which were first pioneered at scale in Canada during the 1960s, teach standard subjects like math, geography, and history directly in the foreign language. By focusing on normal schoolwork, students build functional comprehension and pick up new vocabulary rapidly without spending hours on formal grammar drills.

Taking this idea a step further, task-based learning turns a new language into a practical tool for solving everyday problems, completing hands-on projects, and mastering specialized technical skills for workplace jobs. To make this experience even better, modern digital tools and virtual reality headsets place students inside realistic computer-made scenes. Learners can practice ordering food in a busy street market, discussing a business deal, or finding their way around a new city. This gives students a safe, relaxed space to build strong speaking confidence without ever needing to travel.

Finally, motivated adult learners frequently create their own micro-immersion routines by transforming their daily environments: switching their phone software to the target language, listening to foreign podcasts during commutes, reading literature without translating, and setting strict "no native language" rules for themselves during conversation practice.

Compared to traditional grammar-heavy classes, language immersion offers several distinct advantages that help learners speak more naturally. Because every lesson connects new words directly to real-world objects, physical actions, and immediate needs, students understand context far more easily than they would by memorizing dry vocabulary lists. This constant, active exposure breaks the habit of mental translation, training the brain to connect words directly to concepts without constantly translating back and forth to their native tongue. Ultimately, this steady flow of real-life listening and speaking builds natural speech rhythms and conversational fluency much faster than traditional rules-first instruction ever could.

The Foundations of Language Immersion: Proven Results from Real Classrooms

The idea of learning a second language by using it every day in real situations comes from a famous Canadian study done by researchers Wallace Lambert and Richard Tucker. The study started in the late 1960s, and the final results were published in 1972. Before this project, many teachers and parents worried about young children learning school lessons in a foreign tongue. They believed that children would struggle with their normal subjects, get confused, or lose their ability to speak and write correctly in their native language. To see what would actually happen, the researchers tracked a group of small English-speaking kindergarten children in Quebec who took all their regular school classes, such as math, science, and history, completely in French. Instead of memorizing long lists of grammar rules or doing boring language drills, these children used French as a practical tool every single day. They used it to read their textbooks, talk to their classmates, and solve everyday classroom problems. After following the children for several years, the researchers discovered three major results: the children learned to speak and understand French smoothly and naturally, reaching a level very close to native speakers. They learned math, science, and history just as well as other kids who were taught only in English. Their native English skills did not suffer at all. They read, wrote, and spoke English just as well as their peers. This important experiment proved that learning school subjects directly in a new language is completely safe and works very well. It changed language teaching forever and helped spread this natural learning method to classrooms all across the world.

After early studies proved that learning a second language through direct practice actually works, a researcher named Fred Genesee wanted to understand the details even better. During the 1980s, he looked at twenty years of information gathered from real classrooms. He compared several different teaching methods to see how and when students learn best. He studied programs where very young children started learning fully in a new language right from kindergarten. He also looked at programs that split class time equally between two languages, as well as programs that waited until middle or high school to start. His research showed two main things. Children who start learning a new language at an earlier age develop much better listening skills and talk far more naturally. Students of any age can easily understand hard subjects like math and science, even when those lessons are taught in a completely new language. By turning years of messy classroom data into simple, clear advice, Fred Genesee built a useful guide. School boards and decision-makers around the world still use his guide today to build great language programs for students.

How Language Immersion Works: From Science and Brain Research to Practice

Stephen Krashen created the main theory that explains why learning a new language by using it directly is so effective. In 1982, he showed that people do not master a language by memorizing grammar rules or long lists of words. Instead, we learn when we hear and read meaningful messages in relaxed, stress-free settings. He called his main idea “comprehensible input.” This means we naturally learn a language when we get information that is just one small step above what we already understand. To help students understand without using their native language, teachers use simple tools: visual pictures and drawing on the board, physical hand movements and gestures, real objects you can see and touch, hands-on classroom activities. By focusing entirely on interesting, real-life

topics instead of boring grammar exercises, immersion classrooms create the perfect environment for natural speech to grow.

Merrill Swain brought an important change to language learning by showing that just listening and reading are not enough to speak a new language perfectly. While studying long-term students in Canada, she noticed something interesting: the children understood spoken words and reading materials very well, but their spoken and written grammar still contained regular mistakes. In 1985, Swain published her research to introduce the Comprehensible Output Hypothesis, which explains why active practice is necessary. This idea shows that to really master a language, students must use it actively by speaking and writing it themselves. When students are encouraged to talk and write in real situations, they immediately notice the gaps between what they want to say and what they actually know. This active effort forces the brain to shift from just listening and reading to actively building sentences: speaking in real time encourages fast thinking, writing makes sentence design visible, and correcting errors builds true accuracy. Because of this discovery, interactive speaking and writing tasks are now a required part of any successful language learning program.

Roy Lyster focused on a common problem in full language immersion programs: students often learn to speak very smoothly, but they continue to make simple grammar mistakes. In his 2007 book, Lyster introduced a method called the counterbalanced approach. He proved that to truly master a new language, students need a steady balance between focusing on the subject they are studying and learning the correct structure of the language itself. Instead of forcing students back into boring grammar drills, his approach mixes helpful language tips directly into normal classroom activities: teachers guide students to notice their language choices while working on regular lessons, students practice grammar rules while solving real problems in class, learners move smoothly between understanding new facts and expressing those facts correctly. By guiding students to pay attention to both the lesson content and correct grammar, teachers help them speak easily and accurately in real life.

A famous study in 2009 by researchers Jared Linck, Judith Kroll, and Gretchen Sunderman showed what actually happens inside the human brain during language immersion. Before their work, most people believed that immersion worked simply because students spent more total hours practicing. However, Linck and his team proved that extra practice is only part of the explanation. The real secret is that the brain actively turns down the volume on a person's native language. In traditional classrooms, students usually translate every new word back to their native language before they can understand it. Immersion breaks this slow habit by placing learners in an environment where they hear and see the new language everywhere, from street signs to daily conversations with others. This environment forces the brain to quiet down the native language and connect new words directly to real-world objects and meanings. This important mental shift removes the delay caused by constant mental translation: students stop translating every sentence word for word in their heads, the brain learns to process new words instantly and naturally, conversational speech becomes faster, smoother, and much easier to use. By training the mind to think directly in the new language, immersion helps people reach natural fluency much faster than traditional classroom lessons.

The Evolution of Language Immersion: From Classrooms to Virtual Environments

Recent research in language learning focuses on Virtual Reality (VR), Extended Reality (XR), and how the brain processes information.

Antonina Dhimolea and Regina Kaplan-Rakowski (2022) revealed that immersive digital tools now allow learners to experience authentic language environments without leaving their home country. By studying research on 3D VR headsets, they proved that virtual environments create a strong sense of physical presence. This tricks the brain into feeling like it is actually standing in a foreign setting. Feeling as if you are really there activates the same natural brain processes as living abroad, helping learners connect new words directly to objects and interactive characters. The study highlighted three major discoveries about Virtual Reality. It creates a safe, low-stress environment where students feel much more comfortable speaking with virtual characters instead of facing a real classroom. It helps people learn and remember new vocabulary far better than flat computer or television screens. It delivers the best results when used regularly over time, rather than as a single, short-lived tech demonstration. By turning digital spaces into realistic practice spots, VR makes learning a language natural, engaging, and easy to access anywhere.

A 2024 study by Yueqi Weng, Matthew Schmidt, Wanju Huang, and Yuanyue Hao examined how modern digital tools like Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) affect younger students in primary and high schools. By looking closely at 33 different studies, the researchers proved that immersive digital environments consistently improve language learning for school-aged children in several important ways. First, interacting with 3D virtual worlds speeds up vocabulary learning by giving children clear pictures and hands-on clues for new words. Second, these interactive setups boost excitement and interest, making young students much more eager to practice every day. Finally, talking with virtual characters reduces the fear of making mistakes in front of classmates. This safe environment encourages kids to try out real conversations and build strong speaking confidence. However, the researchers also shared an important lesson for teachers: digital tools work best when combined with solid, proven teaching methods, rather than being used just as flashy digital gadgets.

In 2021, researchers Guido Makransky and Gustav Petersen created an important guide called the Cognitive Affective Model of Immersive Learning (CAMIL). This model explains how virtual reality changes the way students learn new information. Their research showed that realistic 3D environments give students a strong feeling of personal presence. This means learners feel as if they are genuinely standing inside the virtual world, which builds real curiosity and boosts their motivation to practice. However, the researchers issued an important warning for teachers and lesson planners. If a virtual world contains too many moving visuals or extra details, it can easily overwhelm the brain's memory limit. When the brain gets overloaded, students find it much harder to learn new vocabulary and understand complex grammar rules. To make sure virtual reality leads to real learning, teachers must design simple, step-by-step lessons. They should focus on helping students learn the language, rather than adding extra digital features.

A 2026 study by researcher Burcu Şimşek looked at information from 21 different projects involving more than 2500 students to see how virtual reality helps people practice active speaking and writing. The study proved that virtual reality tools give a clear, positive boost to these communication skills. The benefits are much stronger when students are learning a completely new language rather than practicing tasks in their native

tongue. The main reason for this progress is that virtual environments help students feel much less nervous about speaking out loud. By surrounding learners with helpful, interactive pictures and scenes, virtual reality creates a relaxed setting. Students feel far more comfortable taking risks, trying out new words, and expressing their thoughts without worrying about making mistakes in front of a real audience.

Recent research points to three main lessons about how virtual and augmented reality are changing the way people learn new languages. First, digital tools create a relaxed, low-pressure space that greatly reduces the fear of speaking out loud. By practicing inside a private, computer-made world, students can try out real conversations without worrying about making embarrassing mistakes in front of a live audience. Second, interacting with objects inside a three-dimensional space creates stronger mental triggers. This physical experience helps learners remember new words for a much longer time compared to using traditional paper flashcards or memorizing word lists. Finally, experts emphasize that technology by itself is not a magic fix. For virtual tools to work well, they must be combined with clear teaching plans that help students focus on correct grammar and vocabulary. This step-by-step guidance keeps learners from feeling overwhelmed by busy, complex virtual settings.

Creating an Immersion Environment for Technical English Instruction

Teaching specialized technical English works best when language learning is tied directly to real workshop actions. Mechanical students learn technical terms much faster when they connect words directly to physical machine parts and real hands-on tasks, rather than memorizing vocabulary lists. When using English becomes the only way to get a required tool or complete a job step, students speak out of real practical necessity instead of just trying to pass a classroom test. By maintaining a strict English environment in the workshop, teachers help students stop translating every word back to Romanian, training their brains to connect English technical terms directly to physical objects and machinery.

Classroom Management and Methodology in the International Garage

Teaching a technical subject entirely in English works best when teachers treat the classroom like a real international garage from day one. Start by setting clear rules: inside the workshop, English is the only language used, and the teacher acts as the shop manager who only responds to English requests. Instead of writing Romanian translations on the board, teachers help students understand by using physical tools, clear diagrams, hand gestures, and color-coded boards. Keeping lessons focused on one simple task at a time ensures students do not feel overwhelmed by too many new words and mechanical parts at once. When a student makes a language mistake, the teacher corrects it naturally by repeating the sentence with the right technical word rather than stopping the lesson to explain grammar. Finally, teachers can use practical moments, like asking for a tool at the equipment desk, as fun, everyday opportunities for students to practice simple English sentences.

Sample Lesson Plan: Machine Maintenance and Safety Advice

Lesson Title: Machine Maintenance and Safety Advice
Time Needed: 50 minutes
Goal: Learn how to give quick safety advice using **should**, **shouldn't**, and **ought to**.
Step 1: Warm-Up (5 minutes)

- **Where it happens:** in the regular classroom.

- **What happens:** start with a real workshop problem to grab attention.
- **Activity:** play a brief sound clip of a grinding machine or show a picture of an overheating engine.
- **Question:** ask the class: "*What is wrong with this machine?"* and "*What should the technician do right now?"*
- **Purpose:** get students focused immediately on real shop-floor problems.

Step 2: Learn the Language (12 minutes)

- **Where it happens:** in the regular classroom (at the board).
- **What happens:** learn the main advice phrases using mechanical examples.
- **Activity:** write three clear examples on the board:
  *You **should** check the oil level.* (Good practice)
  *You **shouldn't** touch hot pipes.* (Safety warning)
  *You **ought to** wear safety goggles.* (Strong recommendation)
- **Sentence Pattern to remember:** subject + modal word (should/ought to) + action verb
- **Practice together:** say the sentences out loud as a group to master the technical terms and pronunciation.

Step 3: Easy Worksheet Practice (13 minutes)

- **Where it happens:** at student desks in the classroom.
- **What happens:** complete a short written exercise to check grammar accuracy.
- **Task 1 (Matching):** connect the machine problem to the correct advice:
  Problem: "The gear is vibrating." → *Advice:* "You should tighten the bolts."
- **Task 2 (Fill in the blanks):** Choose *should*, *shouldn't*, or *ought to*:
  1. You _____ run the machine without the safety guard. (*shouldn't*)
  2. You _____ oil the chain before starting the motor. (*should*)

Step 4: Immersive Practice Activity (15 minutes)

- **Where it happens: Immersive Workshop Area** (At a mock workbench, test rig, or using a Virtual Reality headset).
- **What happens:** Students step into a hands-on workshop environment to practice a real breakdown scenario in pairs while wearing safety gear (goggles and gloves).
- **Role-Play Activity:**
  Student A (Machine Operator): reads a fault card (e.g., "*The hydraulic pressure is dropping rapidly"* or "*The belt is slipping"*).
  Student B (Technician): listens to the problem and gives 2 or 3 quick advice solutions using the target words ("*You should turn off the power"* or "*You ought to check the valve"*).
  Switch: students swap roles and try a new fault card.

Step 5: Wrap-Up and Review (5 minutes)

- **Where it happens:** back in the regular classroom.
- **What happens:** Review key safety points and fix common grammar mistakes.

- **Activity:** write 2 common grammar mistakes on the board (e.g., "*You should to check the valve"*). Ask the class to find and fix the mistake together ("*You should check the valve"*).

Pedagogical Analysis: Why the Immersive Lesson Plan Works

The immersive experience in this lesson plan functions by taking standard grammar practice and embedding it entirely within a simulated mechanical workshop environment. The hands-on activity in this lesson plan works by taking ordinary grammar exercises and placing them completely inside a realistic workshop setting. Right from the beginning, realistic machine sounds and clear pictures bypass old-fashioned textbook exercises. These tools immediately help students draw on their real-world technical experience. Every target phrase (*should*, *shouldn't*, *ought to*) connects directly to everyday job tasks, such as checking oil levels or inspecting loose gears. This direct connection helps students link grammar rules to standard work procedures without needing to translate every single word in their heads. During the role-play, students put on actual safety gear, like goggles and gloves, and stand around a real test rig or workbench. By doing this, they step into the roles of real machine operators and technicians fixing a breakdown. This physical movement and hands-on tool use shift their attention away from the fear of making speech mistakes. Instead, they focus entirely on solving the practical problem in front of them. This relaxed setup allows natural spoken English to come out easily under real workplace conditions.

Conclusions

Decades of classroom research and real-world teaching prove that learning a new language through immersion is safe and works very well. From early famous studies in Canadian schools to modern brain research, evidence consistently shows that learning school or technical subjects directly in a second language does not slow down a student's progress. Children still master their school subjects easily, and their ability to read and write in their native language stays just as strong. Instead of forcing students to memorize dry grammar rules, immersing learners in meaningful, real-life settings teaches the brain to connect new words directly to real objects. This trains the mind to process ideas instantly, removing the slow delay of word-for-word mental translation.

Traditional language immersion relies on physical surroundings, but modern digital tools like Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality open up brand-new possibilities for students. Immersive technology creates safe, low-stress settings where learners can practice real-time conversations, interact with 3D virtual objects, and build speaking confidence without worrying about making embarrassing mistakes in front of a live audience. However, technology by itself is simply a tool that needs proper guidance. To keep students from feeling overwhelmed by too many visual details and to help them remember what they learn over time, digital tools must be paired with clear, proven teaching methods. These step-by-step strategies ensure a healthy balance between open speaking practice and helpful grammar guidance.

In the end, whether students learn through hands-on workshop tasks, practical job exercises, or interactive virtual worlds, immersion changes language learning completely. It turns a boring school subject into a practical tool for solving real-life problems. By combining traditional teaching methods with modern technology, teachers create friendly,

stress-free spaces where students build natural speaking skills, correct grammar, and real job confidence.

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