

LANGUAGE IMMERSION: A CASE OF COURS LUMIÈRE AND UNIVERSITY BASIC SCHOOL PUPILS

Anthony Y. M. De-Souza
ade-souza@ucc.edu.gh

Georgina Aglobitse
gaglobitse@ucc.edu.gh

Kodzo Dzevordzi
kodzo.dzevordzi@ucc.edu.gh

Mawuloe K. Kodah
mkodah@ucc.edu.gh

University of Cape Coast, Ghana

Abstract

Language immersion is considered as one of the best methods in current trends in language learning. Language immersion programme helps not only to learn how to speak a language fluently, but also to connect people from different sociocultural backgrounds and beliefs. This paper seeks to investigate the impacts of a four-week immersion exchange programme for pupils of University of Cape Coast Basic School (UCCBS) in Ghana and Cours Lumière (CL) in Togo. The study basically analyses feedbacks gathered from guest-pupils and their parents, both in Cape Coast (Ghana) and Lomé (Togo) through questionnaire. Quantitative and qualitative approaches were employed in the data analysis to arrive at findings which suggest that learning a foreign language in the place where it is spoken facilitates the ability to learn while making the experience of the learner enjoyable, exciting, and memorable. The feedbacks from the respondents also suggest that the pupils have experienced total language immersion in their new environment. Based on the findings of this study, recommendations are made so as to enhance the learning opportunities that this type of immersion programme can bring to pupils studying a foreign language.

Keywords: *Bilingual education; Home immersion; School immersion; Students' exchange; Two-way immersion*

Introduction

Foreign language immersion programmes were first introduced in the United States in 1971 as a way to incorporate intensive second language education into public elementary schools (Lenker & Rhodes, 2007). The ultimate goal of an immersion programme is to help students become proficient in the target language and to foster an increased cultural awareness while reaching a high level of academic achievement (Fortune & Tedick, 2003). This position applies to the case under study where French is studied as a Foreign Language by Ghanaian pupils, and English by Togolese pupils. These programmes are now viewed by educators and parents as a highly effective way of teaching foreign languages to children (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004).

Foreign language immersion is an approach to teaching another language that involves immersing students in the target language throughout the school day. The immersion language is adopted for teaching curricular contents and serves as a medium of communication in the school environment. The immersion language is not only a target but it is a means of learning (Nieminen, 2006).

The University of Cape Coast Basic School (UCCBS) and Cours Lumière's (CL) model of students' exchange programme therefore fits the description of an immersion programme, since pupils of both schools are instructed in either French or English during their stay in Togo and Ghana respectively. Even though French and English are second languages in Togo and Ghana, respectively, the former is considered as a Foreign Language in Ghana, while the latter as a Foreign Language in Togo. This means that Ghanaian pupils undergo intense language immersion in French during their stay in Togo, while their counterparts from Togo also benefit from English language immersion in Ghana for the same period. The kind of immersion they experience has two aspects:

- Home immersion, which is informal, is aimed at helping the acquisition of the language at home and within the host families. This kind of language learning is facilitated through personal interactions within the host families, socialization and outdoor activities in which the learner takes active part during a stay in the other country.
- School immersion, which is rather formal, integrates pupils into classrooms of their counterpart (or host child) to receive content instruction in the target language. Pupils sit in all subjects as regular students of the host school, and also take part in all forms of assessments programmed for pupils during the period. Because instruction is given in the target language, pupils are placed in a situation of active listening where all their cognitive resources are solicited to understand the target language. Pupils also engage in active language production during

classroom activities and tasks designed for various subjects, not only language-related ones.

The UCCBS and CL model combines three types of immersion identified in the literature: partial immersion, total immersion, and two-way immersion. For partial immersion, pupils in their respective schools and countries receive approximately 90% of instruction in the second language, while 10% of instruction is provided in the target language during periods allotted for the study of the foreign language as a subject on the timetable. In Ghana for instance, Basic School pupils have on average four periods of 35 minutes per week for the study of French while in Togo, Basic School pupils have on average three periods of 30 minutes each for the study of the English language. Therefore, whereas other subjects such as Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and Physical Education are studied using Second Languages such as French in Togo and English in Ghana, the same languages change status across the borders of these two countries and are studied as Foreign Languages in schools. These languages become minority languages in each case, which are given less hours on the teaching timetables. The time allocated to the teaching of these Foreign Languages can be estimated to 3 periods as against 48 periods for other subjects of the schools' curricular.

Pupils are deemed to be in a total immersion when they visit their counterparts abroad where all the content instruction is provided in the target language. In that case, it can be said that Ghanaian pupils experienced full or total immersion in French language during their 2-week stay in Togo, whereas their Togolese counterparts also experienced total English language immersion in Ghana for the same period.

Lastly, a third type of immersion that is known as the two-way immersion also characterizes the UCCBS and CL model. This type of immersion programme is popular in the United States of America. The two-way immersion is exemplified by the situation where pupils of the two schools and countries are given language instruction using two target languages.

Two-way immersion programmes combine language minority learners and language majority learners in the same classroom with the goal of academic excellence and bilingual proficiency for both groups of learners (Christian, Montone, Lindholm, & Carranza, 1997). It is a kind of dual language education that combines students from two language groups for instruction in both of their languages. Two languages are used for instruction, French and English, and two groups of students are involved – students who are native English speakers and students who are native French speakers. For instance, even though the dominant language in the learning environment is French for Ghanaian learners, they take part in English language lessons as any Togolese pupil in the host institution and vice versa. Also,

it is observed that host parents who can speak the foreign language as well as subject teachers often switch between the two languages whenever they perceive any difficulty in understanding on the part of the guest-pupils. In other words, the two-way immersion program is akin to what is called the bilingual immersion or bilingual education that uses two languages as medium of instruction for any part, or all, of the school curriculum (Andersson, Boyer, & Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1970). They provide the same academic content and address the same standards as other educational programmes. Their goals are to educate students to be bilingual and biliterate, enable academic achievement, and promote cross-cultural communication and understanding. Two-way immersion programmes vary greatly, yet share three key characteristics. These are: instruction in two languages; one language at a time; and peer-to-peer facilitated language sharing.

The focus of the study will be to showcase the immersion experience of UCCBS and CL in order to highlight perceived impacts on learners of English and French in the partner institutions. The study will be guided by the following research questions: What is the nature of the immersion programme of UCCBS and CL? What is the perceived impact of the immersion programme on pupils of UCCBS and CL? What has the immersion programme been able to improve in terms of language skills among participants? How does the immersion programme impact the language ability of learners? And what are the linguistic challenges faced by learners during the immersion programme?

The study seeks to expose the nature of the immersion programme of UCCBS and CL; identify perceived impacts on learners associated with the immersion programme; identify language skills that learners improved during the immersion programme; explain how learners improved their language ability during the immersion programme; and highlight some linguistic challenges faced by learners during the immersion programme and make the needed recommendations.

Thomas and Collier (2002) find that students in Maine whose heritage language is French experienced substantial increases in achievement test scores after participating in French-English two-way dual language programmes. According to these researchers, the quality of the learning environment has a direct impact on the acquisition by learners. UCCBS and CL two-way language immersion model aims at giving learners of English and French the opportunity to improve on their proficiency level as well as academic performance by combining what is called 'home immersion' with 'school immersion' within the programme. In other words, pupils benefitted from two learning environments, one, which is informal, and the other one being formal for improved academic performance in the two foreign languages.

Another researcher who has contributed significantly to cognitive psychology is Bialystok (2001, 2011). His works have shown that pupils who participate in dual language immersion programmes have improved working memory, superior executive control and better selective attention. These traits were exhibited by pupils who participated in the immersion programme in the two countries. It was observed that they responded more spontaneously to verbal requests in the foreign language and showed less influence of their L2 on their productions. Even minority language learners in the group were able to overcome their challenges of speaking the other language. This research therefore supports the conclusion that language immersion programmes can close the achievement gap between majority and minority learners of the foreign language (Lindholm-Leary & Genesee, 2014). Other studies also suggest that the cognitive advantage accumulates through the active use of both languages in the immersion environments (Callahan & Gandara, 2014; Luk & Bialystok, 2013; Yow & Li, 2015).

Finally, the contribution of Pascopella (2013) is also relevant for this study. His study recognizes the roles of stakeholders in the success of language immersion programmes as in the case of States such as Utah and Delaware who have allocated millions of dollars to fund state-wide dual language initiatives (Delaware Department of Education, 2015). In the UCCBS and CL models, various stakeholders played key roles in ensuring the achievement of set goals. First among these are parents who constitute the pivotal group for the existence of the programme, and on whose commitment its major principle is formed. This principle is captured as follows: "Host and get your child hosted". Secondly, the commitment of the schools and their active involvement in funding part of the budget, offering special foreign language lessons for guest-pupils, making room for classroom immersion in other non-language disciplines, and organising learning activities for guest-pupils, among others. Thirdly, other institutional stakeholders such as the Division of Academic Affairs of the University, the Department of French, the Legal and Consular Section, Protocol Section, the Transport Section, Campus Broadcasting Services and Parent-Teacher Associations of the UCCBS contribute various human, financial and material resources to the success of the programme.

Methodology

To achieve a more empirical and analytical work, the researchers adopted a mixed methodological approach, a combination of quantitative and qualitative designs. These two approaches helped to study the different aspects of the phenomenon under consideration. It also allowed for generalizability of qualitative findings and drawing on pluralistic views of the different stakeholders

of the exchange programme. The population of the study comprised of all parents/guardians and pupils of the UCCBS in Ghana and those of CL in Togo. Owing to the categorisation of the population and the nature of the subject-matter under study, stratified and purposive sampling techniques were adopted. Hence, the study considered 31 parents/guardians (14 from UCCBS and 17 from CL) and 57 pupils (30 from UCCBS and 27 from CL) as a sample. To attain a high level of completeness and correctness of data collected, only parents who hosted pupils and pupils who embarked on the exchange programme were sampled purposively. Questionnaire, of same questions for each category of respondents but in different languages based on the country of origin, was designed and distributed in person to the various respondents. The questionnaire solicited data primarily on the impact of home and school immersions on the pupils' language acquisition. Quantitative responses were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics 21 while qualitative responses were processed in Atlas.ti 6.2. The next segment of the paper reflects the outcome of the data analysis.

Analysis of Data

This section of the study will focus on the presentation of data gathered from pupils and parents and the subsequent analysis that generates relevant conclusions relating to the acquisition and learning of the foreign language. Tables 1, 2 and 3 display the distribution of respondents according to age, sex and classes.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Age

AGE (years)	UCCBS	CL	TOTAL
15	-	1	1
14	2	1	3
13	5	7	12
12	2	7	9
11	11	5	16
10	5	3	8
9	3	-	3
8	1	3	4
7	1	-	1
TOTAL	30	27	57

The age distribution of pupils from UCCBS who participated in the exchange programme is as follows: two (2) were aged 14 years; five (5) were aged 13 years; two (2) were aged 12 years; eleven (11) pupils were aged 11 years; five (5) were

aged 10 years; three (3) pupils were aged 9 years; one pupil was aged 8 and 7 years, respectively.

Concerning the age distribution of pupils from CL, seven (7) respondents were twelve and thirteen years, respectively; five (5) were eleven (11) years ; three were eight (8) and ten (10) years, respectively ; one (1) was fourteen (14) years; finally, one (1) pupil was 15 years.

In Piagetian terms, learners between the ages of 11 and 12 are strong readers and also start to use their language and literacy skills across the subject areas in school. It is at this stage that learners' communication and language develop. In Table 1, the distribution of respondents by age shows that learners within the ages of 11 and 12 have expressed more interest in the language immersion programme.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by Sex

SEX	UCCBS	CL	TOTAL
MALE	10	12	22
FEMALE	20	15	35
TOTAL	30	27	57

Twenty (20) girls and ten (10) boys from UCCBS participated in the exchange programme in Lomé (Togo). On the other hand, fifteen (15) girls and twelve (12) boys from CL participated in the programme in Cape Coast (Ghana). The sex of the pupils also helps in the placement of guest-pupils into host families. Some families, based on their composition, prefer hosting pupils of same sex as their children. Besides, same sex interactions among pupils outside classroom setting are equally healthier for extra curriculum activities which are beneficial to language acquisition.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Class

CLASSES	UCCBS	CL	TOTAL
CLASS 2/CP2	1	-	1
CLASS 3/CE1	1	2	3
CLASS 4/CE2	3	-	3
CLASS 5/CM1	4	1	5
CLASS 6/CM2	12	1	13
JHS1/6EME	3	9	12
JHS2/5EME	6	5	11
JHS3/4EME	-	8	8
-----/3EME	-	1	1
TOTAL	30	27	57

The statistics show the following distribution of UCCBS pupils according to their class: twelve (12) pupils were in Class 6; four (4) pupils were in Class 5; three (3) pupils were in Class 4; one (1) was in Class 3, and one (1) pupil was in Class 2. Participants from the University Junior High School comprise six (6) pupils in JHS2 and three (3) pupils in JHS1.

In the case of their counterparts from CL in Togo, the distribution according to class shows that one (1) pupil was in CM2 (corresponding to Class 6), one (1) in CM1 (corresponding to Class 5), and two (2) of them were in CE1 (corresponding to Class 3). From the High School of CL, fifteen (15) pupils participated in the programme in Cape Coast. They were made up of nine (9) pupils from 6^{ème} (corresponding to JHS1), five (5) pupils from 5^{ème} (corresponding to JHS2), eight (8) pupils from 4^{ème} (corresponding to JHS3) and finally, one (1) pupil from 3^{ème} which has no corresponding class at the JHS level in the Ghanaian system of education. In other words, the Junior High School level in Togo has 4 stages as against 3 stages in the Ghanaian system of education. The class placement is a kind of standardization which places the guest-pupils at the same level in the host institution. This is equally informed by the age distribution as captured in Table 1.

Professional background of host parents in Ghana and Togo

Host parents of UCCBS and CL can be categorized into various professional areas. In order to ensure a comfortable and safe environment for pupils who participated in the exchange programme, this criterion was considered, among others, in approving families that registered to host a pupil from the other country. The following professional categories were therefore identified: Lecturers/Educationists (5); Administrators (3); Architect (1); Nurse (1); Pharmacist (1); Pastor (1); Business Executives (4); Former Minister of State (1); Banker (1); Lawyers (2); Traders (2), Miners (2). From these data, it could be assumed that most parents involved in the exchange programme are middle-class workers. However, it should be noted that seven (7) parents out of the thirty-one (31) did not reveal their professions in the questionnaire. This nondisclosure, however, is of no significance for the study. The professional background of host parents was significant for their selection and also for the placement of the guest-pupils. This informs the desire of the organizers of programme to create similar family environment for the guest-pupils. It has been observed that this arrangement help the guest-pupils to feel at home in their new homes right from the onset and throughout their stay. This equally enhances the immersion experience at home.

Home Immersion Experience (HIE)

Pupils from UCCBS described their immersion experience when they visited Lomé for the two-week immersion programme. When asked whether they enjoyed their stay in the host-families in Lomé, 27 out of the 29 Ghanaian respondents enjoyed their stay, while 2 did not. One (1) did not enjoy the stay because he felt uncomfortable, and the other disliked pets, as the family had a dog which she feared.

When asked specifically about their stay in the host-families of their Togolese counterparts, twenty-four (24) pupils felt at home in the host-families to which they were assigned during their trip to Lomé, but five (5) did not. For many who liked their host-families, their host-parents were very kind and treated them like their own children (8 occurrences), helped them to speak French whenever they had communication challenges (7 occurrences), took them out to interesting places (5 occurrences) and gave them their favorite food (5 occurrences). This again shows that the social status and professional background of host parents is of significant value to the immersion experience and foreign language acquisition.

The Togolese pupils' experience in Cape Coast was not different from that of their Ghanaian hosts. Indeed, twenty-one (21) pupils from CL have reported that they have enjoyed their stay in Cape Coast, while five (5) did not enjoy it. Reasons that accounted for the positive feedback were similar in many instances to those expressed by their Ghanaian counterparts. Nonetheless, new ones have emerged such as: the welcome given them in their host-families (11 occurrences); enhancing their ability to speak the English language (9 occurrences); learning to help do things at home (4 occurrences); enjoying the special attention given by the host parents (1 occurrence); exposure to the Ghanaian culture (1 occurrence); and bonding with host-family (1 occurrence).

This implies that the Ghanaians exhibited their hospitality culture by warmly welcoming their visitors. Also, the extra-classes in the foreign language given to the Togolese pupils in Ghanaian homes captured the interest of the visitors. The visit to tourist sites, beaches and restaurants made the visitors enjoy their stay. Ghanaian pupils in Togo felt at home due to the comfortable homes that they were assigned to. The school environment as well as school activities also enhanced their confidence in learning the foreign language.

On the contrary, few Ghanaian pupils who did not enjoy their home in Lomé gave various reasons. According to one respondent, he did not like the manner in which the host-mother related to him (1 occurrence). He stated that the host was: "...annoying and bossy and she felt that because we were at her house, she would be boss over me". Some disliked some behaviors (2 occurrences) such as the host-son coming into her room without knocking. One pupil did not like the idea of

always having to make requests when she needed something from the host-parents (1 occurrence). Finally, one (1) pupil thought she should be treated as one of the host-children and not like a visitor (1 occurrence). On the other hand, some Togolese pupils explained their dissatisfaction by the fact that: they were not allowed to swim (2 occurrences); the house was too small with one toilet (1 occurrence); a teacher shouted at him/her (1 occurrence); and missing his/her parents (1 occurrence).

In cognisance of the positive feedbacks obtained from respondents from both countries, it can be concluded that the immersion experience in families had positive impact on the pupils who participated in the exchange programme. Indeed, pupils have enhanced their ability to speak the other language in home-settings with the other siblings. This experience has also ensured that pupils maintained close contact with the foreign language outside the school environment throughout the period of their stay in the host-families. Home environments foster the natural acquisition of language forms in context through the sociocultural activities pupils engage in (extra classes at home, watching movies, family outings, games and fun, etc.). Other pupils reported gains such as the opportunity to experience the culture of 'the other' and, for the first time in their lives, participate in house chores, and do things for themselves. These feedbacks prove beyond any doubt the fact that the family immersion aspect of the exchange programme was beneficial in facilitating the natural acquisition of the foreign language.

Table 4 below displays the perceived impact of the family immersion on expression.
Table 4: Linguistic Impact of the Immersion Programme

RESPONSE	UCCBS	CL	TOTAL
YES	27	23	50
NO	2	9	11
NO RESPONSE	1	1	2
TOTAL	30	30	63

Respondents from UCCBS and CL offered their opinions regarding the impact on their ability to express themselves in the other language. Fifty (50) pupils attributed their success to the family integration, while eleven (11) pupils thought otherwise. Two (2) pupils did not indicate their choice.

According to respondents that viewed the integration as beneficial, they were encouraged to speak the foreign language at home (8 occurrences), and others had language lessons at home (5 occurrences). Also, two (2) pupils benefitted from watching French movies (2 occurrences); two (2) pupils thought that the home immersion helped them to speak English spontaneously during activities without

thinking much about the language (2 occurrences); one (1) pupil had his errors corrected whenever he committed them (1 occurrence); one (1) pupil understood better the English of the host-child (1 occurrence); and another improved his French by watching French television channels (1 occurrence).

As a means to confirm the impressions given by participating pupils about their family immersion experience, parents were asked to share information they gathered from their children when they were in the host-families in the other country. They were also asked to share behavioral changes they have observed in their children when they returned from the trip. This approach helped to authenticate some of the responses given by the pupils so as to reduce the level of subjectivity in the data collected for the study. Most of the responses from parents corroborated what pupils revealed in their responses to the questionnaire.

According to the responses obtained, 26 parents (Ghanaian and Togolese) were satisfied with the counterpart families which hosted their children and they would like their children to be hosted in the same families during the next immersion programme. Respondents shared various observations regarding the impact the exchange programme had on their children. Generally, parents observed that their wards could now express themselves in the foreign language (25 occurrences). Others observed that their wards were exhibiting traits of the new cultures they came into contact with (15 occurrences). Other parents were happy that their wards have learnt how to do some house chores (2 occurrences). Two (2) parents observed that their wards have become calmer than they were before they went on the trip. Other respondents have also remarked that their wards behaved more independently than before (2 occurrences). A parent observed that her ward was less timid than she was before she went on the trip (1 occurrence). Another respondent thought that the ward was now mature and out-spoken than before (1 occurrence). A parent thought that the ward has gained more interest and love for the French language (1 occurrence). Finally, a respondent's daughter could now talk about Togo in real terms and relate with the country better than she did previously (1 occurrence).

Only 4 respondents would want a different family for their wards. This means that most parents regard the family immersion experience as positive. For those who thought otherwise, one (1) lamented the fact that her ward was not paired with her age mate, and therefore she could not communicate effectively during her stay at Cape Coast; another parent recommended that pupils are put in hostel facilities instead of the homes.

However, the family immersion was not without communication challenges identified by the participants. Various strategies were adopted to overcome these challenges which helped to improve the language skills of pupils. The following table shows the communication challenges in the host-families.

Table 5: Communication challenges in Homes

RESPONSE	UCCBS	CL	TOTAL
YES	20	9	29
NO	9	17	26
NO RESPONSE	1	1	2
TOTAL	30	27	57

Regarding the communication challenges in the host-families, 29 pupils from Togo and Ghana had communication challenges, while 26 pupils did not. Moreover, it could be observed that more Ghanaian pupils (20) had challenges speaking French in the homes than Togolese pupils (9) had in English in their host homes. This observation confirms the shared perception among Ghanaians that their francophone neighbors can speak better English than they (Ghanaians) could speak French in informal situations (at home, on the street, at the market, etc.).

The respondents gave various reasons for the challenges they faced. These included: lack of adequate vocabulary to form sentences (6 occurrences); inability to make requests in the other language (3 occurrences); inability to understand words used by their host (2 occurrences); and the inability of host-parents to speak the other language (2 occurrences). These challenges impeded effective communication between the host-families and their guests.

When asked how they overcome their communication challenges, pupils shared various strategies adopted. These included: using the foreign language on daily basis with their host (14 occurrences); responding in the other language to their host (9 occurrences); using signs and gestures to express themselves (9 occurrences); requesting for clarification from the host (7 occurrences); listening attentively to the explanations and corrections from their host (7 occurrences); using a bilingual dictionary to check meaning (7 occurrences); using simple French words to express themselves (3 occurrences); taking French lessons at home (3 occurrences); requesting that their Togolese host speak slowly to them (3 occurrences); using Google translator (3 occurrences); speaking broken French (1 occurrence); pointing objects in the house (1 occurrence); asking host-father to translate in French (1 occurrence); reflecting for a long time on what is said in English language (1 occurrence); and speaking Twi to the housemaid (in Togo) who can speak the language (1 occurrence).

It is interesting to note that pupils on their own devised strategies that responded effectively to the difficulties they were facing; among these are the effort to speak and understand the foreign language, seeking clarification or reformulation from their host, simplifying their message, checking meaning from a dictionary and

requesting their host to speak slowly so that they could catch the sentence. Adopting these direct strategies of learning has been proven to enhance the ability of learners to listen, understand and speak the foreign language (Rubin, 1972; Oxford, 1990; O'Malley and Chamot, 1991). On the contrary, other pupils adopted strategies which mostly rely on the use of translation from source language (their L1 and L2) to achieve understanding and communication in the target language (French or English). These strategies are less productive because they encourage more dependence on previous languages of learners to achieve communication goals. Hence, learners are not able to develop the spontaneous ability to deal directly with linguistic forms in the foreign language they are learning. More so, this habit may result in the fossilization of errors that are due to wrong translation in learners.

The variety of strategies adopted by learners is however an indicator that communication challenges encountered were more prevalent in the family and social environments than in the school environment. The perceived impact of the school immersion aspect of the exchange programme would be examined in the next section.

Impact of the School Immersion on the Learning and Expression in the Foreign Language

Another situation that contributed significantly to the learning and use of the foreign language is the school immersion. Pupils from Togo and Ghana benefitted from special language classes taught by competent language teachers in the two countries. They also joined classes in other disciplines such as Mathematics, Science, ICT, Creative Arts, Physical Education, etc., where French and English were the medium of instruction in Togo and Ghana respectively. All respondents (100%) agreed that teachers of UCCBS and CL who taught these subjects handled them professionally during these sessions. Forty-five (45) pupils also thought that the level of patience teachers exhibited in all subject areas encouraged them to express themselves in the foreign language. However, 9 pupils thought otherwise. Two (2) pupils did not respond to this question. In Table 6, we present the most favorable situation of the immersion.

Table 6: Immersion situations that Favored Learning

SITUATIONS OF IMMERSION	OCCURRENCES		TOTAL
	UCCBS	CL	
HOME IMMERSION	21	18	39
SCHOOL IMMERSION	15	8	23
JOINT ACTIVITIES	8	8	16
TOTAL	44	34	78

Responding to the question as to the situation that contributed significantly to their learning, 39 pupils indicated that the family immersion has greatly helped their learning and use of the foreign language, as compared to the school immersion which was chosen by 23 pupils. According to 2 pupils who gave out their reasons, they were given more attention at home. In addition, 16 pupils also thought that the joint activities such as the excursions, sports and parties also encouraged their use of the foreign language.

For those who thought that the family immersion has been most impactful, they proffer reasons such as: it facilitated the acquisition of the foreign language (3 occurrences); it provided them more opportunities to speak the foreign language fluently (2 occurrences); and they understood the foreign language when their hosts speak it (2 occurrences).

Others who thought the school immersion was rather beneficial outlined the facts that: it was easier recalling what was taught in the special language classes (2 occurrences); it kept them away from the family environment which was rather boring (2 occurrences); it provided the opportunity to learn together with other pupils and teachers (1 occurrence); and the teacher could speak the English language (1 occurrence). Finally, one pupil thought learning was better enhanced in a larger group through joint activities that were organized for them.

It was evident that many pupils benefitted from these three situations of learning stated in Table 6, since they picked multiple items in response to this question. However, looking at the figures obtained from the data, we can conclude that pupils from UCCBS improved their ability of using the French language in the home and school situations more than their counterparts of the CL did with regards to English language in Ghana. It can therefore be said that the immersion experience in Togo has recorded more significant impact on Ghanaian pupils owing to the quality of home and school environments where French was mostly used as language of interactions.

The skills in which pupils have improved during the stay is presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Languages Skills Improved By Pupils

LANGUAGE SKILLS	OCCURRENCES		TOTAL
	UCCBS	CL	
LISTENING	16	15	31
UNDERSTANDING	12	15	27
SPEAKING	9	18	27
READING	13	12	25
WRITING	9	9	18
OTHERS	-	2	2
TOTAL	59	71	130

On the question of skills in which pupils have improved during their stay in the other country, pupils have improved their oral skills, which include listening to the language (31 occurrences) and speaking the language (27 occurrences). These two skills were made possible through understanding (27 occurrences) of the active vocabulary in the other language (22 occurrences), which respondents reported they have acquired during the period. Regarding written skills, pupils have improved their reading of the foreign language (25 occurrences) and their writing (18 occurrences). Thus, it can be concluded that the immersion programme had more impact on pupils' abilities to express themselves orally in the foreign language than to write.

These findings are therefore consistent with findings of language immersion programmes' evaluation in Canada. Canadian researchers such as Lambert and Tucker (1972), Genesee (1987; 2007), Swain and Lapkin (1982), Johnson and Swain (1997), and Christian and Genesee (2001) have found that: (1) Immersion students achieve the same (and in some cases superior) levels of competence in English, their native language, in domains related to reading, writing, speaking and listening comprehension in comparison to comparable anglophone students in all-English programmes (Genesee, 2004); (2) immersion students also attain the same (and in some cases superior) levels of academic achievement in Mathematics and Science in comparison to control students in all English programmes; (3) at the same time, they achieve significantly higher levels of functional proficiency in French in comparison to English-speaking students in conventional French-as-a-second language classes; (4) immersion students generally achieve higher levels of proficiency in reading and listening comprehension skills (sometimes scoring as well as native French-speaking students) than on tests of speaking and writing; in all domains, their level of functional proficiency is at the advanced level; (5)

immersion students retain a strong sense of identity with English-Canadian culture while acquiring an understanding and appreciation of French Canadian and French-Canadian culture that is not seen, in general, in non-immersion students. All these traits were observed with pupils who participated in the immersion programme except for trait number (2) which remain goals yet to be attained by organizers.

Meanwhile, matching of core subjects in the two schools has been done and pupils have been taught Mathematics and Science in the foreign language by teachers of the host schools. However, no comprehensive evaluation has been conducted yet to measure the impact of this immersion on pupils' academic performance. The short duration of the programme prevented such evaluation. In other words, the impact on pupils' performance cannot be measured over a two-week period but over a longer period on pupils who have had continuous opportunities to participate in the immersion programme.

Finally, many respondents revealed having learnt something about the culture of the other country. For instance, pupils gave reports about the food, the local languages, the manners of greeting, and also a few negative scenes that made the visitors uncomfortable: entering a room without knocking; speaking the local language in the presence of the visitor; watching romantic movies, etc., together as a family, which are indicators of cultural shock as expected among pupils of different sociocultural background and upbringing.

Also, the data showed that there was an improvement in pupils' proficiency in the school environment. The impact on the oral skills (speaking, listening and understanding) of pupils of CL was much higher (48 occurrences) than that of their counterparts of UCCBS who recorded a total of 37 occurrences for these three skills. Therefore, the school environment at UCCBS was much beneficial to pupils of CL than the homes in which they were hosted. It should also be noted that some pupils have enhanced their pronunciation of English during their stay in Ghana (2 occurrences). The analyses thus far point to the fact that this exchange programme initiative has been largely beneficial to the pupils and their schools. On the basis of these analyses, the findings will be summarized and recommendations made in the next section.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study has revealed a number of key findings about the immersion experience of pupils of CL and UCCBS. Some of these were therefore highlighted towards the acquisition of the two foreign languages.

The results show that the family environment had a better impact on Ghanaian pupils' ability to use the foreign language, while the school environment rather impacted positively on their counterparts of CL. It therefore guided organizers of

the immersion programme to identify quality home environments in both countries where pupils not only feel at home but are able to harness their potential of using the foreign language. Also, they are encouraged to assign guest-pupils to same families over a period for easy adaptation and acquisition of language. At the same time, school authorities should ensure that all academic work is learner-centered and activity-based to engage fully the abilities of the visitors.

The school immersion aspect of the programme made less impact on pupils than the home immersion. Pupils spent more quality time in their host-families than at school, and the informal learning of the language outweighed the formal learning. Hence, an increase in the duration of the programme from 2 weeks to 4 weeks would provide the opportunity for more formal learning in the school environment while at the same time giving pupils the opportunity to adapt fully to their host-families. The schools' social activities meant for guest-pupils such as excursions, club rehearsals, and visits to heritage sites among others took away the time for formal teaching and learning in the classroom.

It was also found that certain activities organized for the guest-pupils rightly placed them in active situations of interaction using the foreign language. Among these are the music, dance and drama clubs, language games, mixed teams (guest and host pupils) for a football tournament, official visit to the Embassy of Ghana in Togo, live programmes on Radio ATL of the University of Cape Coast, and NANA FM of Lomé; visits to heritage sites where pupils interacted with tour guides giving exposés on slavery and cultural artifacts. These activities have had a great impact on the pupils who participated in the immersion programme. In the light of these findings, the study recommends that a lot more activities of this nature be identified to promote formal interactions in the foreign language while having fun.

Another notable finding has to do with the cultural immersion of the pupils from both countries. Indeed, reports suggest that pupils have had to set aside their cultural identity in order to accept the other culture. This can be seen in areas such as food, greetings, music and dance, home mannerisms, and even in the very practices that define the code of conduct in the visiting schools. For instance, the accompanying teachers had to psych pupils to eat certain dishes that were served at the school canteen. Another instance is how school discipline is enforced in the different countries: dressing and general appearance, body language, punishment, morning assembly, teaching and learning curriculum, classroom sitting arrangement, healthcare, parent-teacher-school relationships, among others. Both pupils and accompanying staff have acknowledged learning something different from their known practices in their respective countries. In this regard, it is recommended that pupils and teachers are given enough orientation on the culture of the school and country in order to promote understanding, acceptance, integration, and adaptation

but also to prevent cultural shocks among the pupils particularly.

Finally, there is the need for organizers of the programme to better engage stakeholders to raise the needed funds for the programme, since organizing activities across borders requires substantial funding, taking into consideration the constant fluctuation of the value of the national currency and exchange rates against the CFA Franc. Certainly, the cost of this programme cannot be borne by parents and the schools alone. Considering the resources required for the sustainability of the programme, in the light of the success already stated in the paper, there is the need for the organizers to solicit for the support of other potential stakeholders such as the foreign embassies, financial institutions, industry, telecommunication services and Government agencies to fund nationwide language immersion programmes for all school children who constitute the future workforce for the country. This initiative will accelerate the realization of government desire to make of the French language a second official language for Ghana.

This study cannot purport to have established the full impact of the immersion programme on pupils' proficiency in the foreign language and their academic performance in this subject area owing to time and material constraints. The findings were solely based on respondents' accounts of the immersion experience. In addition, it is believed that the immersion programme has also been beneficial to teachers and heads of schools who stayed with pupils throughout the duration of the programme. During the period, they met with management of the other school to discuss pedagogical practices in the respective schools for self-edification, on-hand experience and also for the attainment of best-practices. Visiting teachers were also given the opportunity to observe lessons in the other schools and to teach their subject area to classes of the host-institution. Thus, tracer studies could be conducted to measure the full impact of the immersion programme on the academic performance/language proficiency of pupils on one hand, while on the other hand, to determine the influence that this programme has on the managerial and teaching practices in the participating schools. Finally, another study could focus on the perception of pupils of the "other culture".

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