

advantage in an immersion program, since they already know what it means to learn a new language. There is no need to fear that learning the immersion language at a young age - be it as a second or as a third language - is too demanding.

## How about the home language?

Immersion aims for additive bilingualism and multilingualism, which means that the children's home language should not suffer by learning the immersion language. Special emphasis should therefore be put on an age-appropriate development of the home language and that the home language is actively promoted. If families already promote their language(s) at home, there is no reason to expect deficits.

## Should my child learn the majority language (German) first?

Families speaking a minority language at home are often afraid that their children will not learn the majority language well, all the more so when the children attend an immersion program. If the home language is actively promoted (in the family), no deficits are to be expected. Children need to learn concepts and content first, no matter in which language. If a child knows what a rabbit is, they can easily learn that it can also be called "Kaninchen", "adatavsan" (Turkish) or "conejo" (Spanish). They only need to link concepts and new words.

Immersion teachers/caregivers take care that the children also learn the majority language (German) terms. This can be done in the immersion classroom or by cooperation with the subject(s) taught in the majority language (for example German class). In this way the children can learn terms in the immersion and in the majority language (German). In kindergarten and day nursery this dual learning this is achieved by one caregiver speaking only the majority language with the children.

## How can I support my child's language development?

Talk to your child as much as possible in the language you yourself feel most comfortable with. This could be German, Turkish, Albanian or any other language. Encourage your child to talk to you, too, about as many things and topics as possible. TV, videos or DVDs are not adequate substitutes for verbal interaction between you and your child. Reading and joint book reading also helps to strengthen language development. Read a book to or with your child and encourage her to read herself. Visit the public library together and let your child borrow the books he likes, no matter in which language these books are written. It is not recommended that you speak the immersion language with your child, if it is not also the language you feel most comfortable speaking. The same is true for the majority language (German). Otherwise your child will not feel that you are an "adequate" partner in communication and this does more damage to language development than that it helps.

Christine Möller, Thorsten Piske

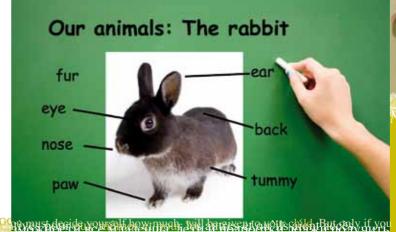
## FMKS e.V. Frühe Mehrsprachigkeit an Kindertageseinrichtungen und Schulen

Steenbeker Weg 81 D 24106 Kiel

Fax /Tel. (Sprachbox) +49 321 21241488

+49 431 3890479 www.fmks.eu fmks@fmks.eu





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#### What is Immersion?

Immersion can also be called a "language bath". Children are immersed in a new language, the immersion language. Immersion means that children acquire the language in a natural way instead of being formally instructed. In day nurseries and kindergartens one of the caregivers speaks the immersion language with the children. At school, regular subjects such as science, math or gym class are taught in the immersion language. Immersion education has a dual focus on content and language (especially communication). Immersion has become well-known due to its success in Canada. In Germany and Europe there are also many successful immersion programs, some of which have been running for a very long time.

## Is immersion suitable for my child?

All children, even children with (learning) disabilities and special needs, and also adults can benefit from immersion. Additionally, it does not matter whether the immersion language is a child's second language or, after home language and the majority culture language (German), already the third one.

### Are there different kinds of immersion?

Immersion programs can best be distinguished through the age of onset and the amount of time caregivers or teachers use the immersion language. Early and intensive immersion has proven most successful. That is why immersion in day nursery/kindergarten and at elementary school should be combined. Immersion should begin in elementary school at the latest and the number of subjects taught in the immersion language should be as high as possible, especially at the beginning. Any immersion program should aim for continuation at secondary school, where at least some subjects should be taught in the immersion language.

#### How does immersion work?

Basically in the same way "regular" day nurseries, kindergartens and schools work, only that caregivers or teachers speak English with the children. They take extra care, though, to ensure that the children understand the contents despite the new language. This can be done via contextualization: If a caregiver or teacher wants to communicate what a rabbit is, they simply show a picture. If a teacher wants to communicate what "raise your hand" means, she puts up her own hand. Through such methods children are easily able to learn the news words and infer their meaning. After only a couple of weeks, they are well adjusted to the caregiving/teaching in the immersion language. Similar methods are used for more complex topics, such as "animals", "weather" or "healthy foods".

## Which languages can be used for immersion?

All languages. English is the most popular choice in Germany due to its status as a global communication language. But there are also programs in, for example, French, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish, Czech, Turkish, Russian and Sorbian. Albanian, Arabic or any other language can be used just as well.

The structure and language(s) of an immersion program always need to be adapted to the specific context: Who are the participants? Which resources exist? If the student population is made up to similar extents by children speaking Turkish and children speaking German, for example, half of the subjects could be taught in Turkish and the other half in German. Such programs have been very successful with English and Spanish in the United States, but they also exist in Germany.

# Who are the teachers/ caregivers in an immersion program?

At state schools, immersion teachers need to have the same formation as their colleagues. But they also need to have a high competence in the immersion language. In day nurseries and kindergartens there are no standard requirements. Besides an adequate professional formation, all caregivers need to speak the immersion language very well. Mostly, they are native speakers or persons with a near-native competence in the immersion language. However, caregivers also need to have at least some competence in the majority culture language (German): they have to be able to understand the children.

## What are the results for the foreign language?

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Children can reach a significantly higher level of competence in the immersion language than they could in "normal" daycare or "normal" schools. By the end of kindergarten children are easily able to understand a large range of everyday utterances, even if they themselves do not speak in the foreign language. By the end of elementary school they are able to freely talk about a wide variety of topics. Also, early contact with a foreign language can help to increase language awareness and to avoid a possible reluctance in communicating in the foreign language.

## Will my child learn enough?

Yes. A lag in content subjects is possible in the early stages of elementary school, especially for children who enter school without any prior knowledge of the immersion language, for example from kindergarten. The children first need to learn how to cope with the new language. Any initial lag disappears quickly, however. Overall, children taught immersively achieve at least as good results as their monolingually taught peers.

Children who would have problems in regular classes can even benefit in a special way from Immersion, for example due to the teaching methods used in immersion. Also, all children are just starting to learn the immersion language so that different proficiencies in the school language (German) are of far less concern than in regular classes. Children who speak a minority language at home may even be at

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